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Masculinity in Crisis: Separatism and the Search for the Deep Masculine in *Spartan Planet* (1968) by Arthur Bertram Chandler

1. Introduction

The 20th century has seen a great outburst of feminist separatist science fiction. Some American female writers created utopian novels in which they tried to imagine improved societies with increased status of women. As radical feminist tendencies were flourishing in the second half of the 20th century, for some feminist writers such a state could only be achieved by rejecting males. It was considered that the proper way of eliminating the patriarchal system is to remove men from society and to introduce a new social order based on the matriarchy. For a number of feminist writers, society with no masculine features at the same time disposes of social discrimination and inequalities.

All-female societies are more common in literature, but some science fiction writers of the 20th century, for example Bertram Chandler or Lois McMaster Bujold, incorporated in their novels the portrayal of male single-sex world. Female-only worlds already started to appear at the turn of the 20th century. The first two well-known female-only utopias are *Mizora* by Mary Bradley Lane (1881) and *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1915). It is only in the second half of the 20th century that more novels start to appear. However, the highest density of the literary trend falls in 1970s and 1980s when the classics of science fiction genre, such as *The Female Man* by Joanna Russ (1970), *Houston, Houston, Do you read?* by James Tiptree Jr. (1976), *Motherlines* by Suzy Mckee Charnas (1978) or *The Gate to Women's Country* by Sheri Tepper (1988), were published. What is also important is the fact that single-sex worlds may be divided into two categories: those separatist worlds/societies that for some reasons separate themselves but are aware of the existence of the opposite sex, and those that have no knowledge about the existence of the opposite sex. Furthermore, some of the novels, especially the early ones, can be classified as utopias that present a harmonious, idyllic female worlds, while the novels published in the 70s and 80s, especially those written by male authors, incorporate dystopian images. It may be thus assumed, that there was a two-stage evolution concerning single-sex worlds. The first female writers invented attractive, female only utopian societies, then men responded with portrayals of repressive and demonic matriarchies.

While the reasons for the emergence of female single-sex societies are quite obvious, as women wanted to image a world in which they would be able to break out of their subordinate roles, the motivations behind the creation of male-only worlds remains an intriguing and open question. I would argue that there are three possible hypotheses explaining why such novels emerged. First of all, such texts may have sought to combat the purported feminization of manhood and to solve the crisis in male identity by proposing separated lands of masculinity, untainted by feminizing forces – usually with the use of mythological representation, archetypes or elements of the sacred. Some men feared that feminism was going too far and consequently tried to protect themselves, their entitlements and superior social position, by separating from women. Yet the creation of fictional male-only worlds may also be a way to satirize feminism and radical separatist assumptions. It may be an attempt to ridicule existing literary feminist utopias which, in a revolutionary way, idealized female separatism. Finally, male-single sex worlds may also serve as a response to such anti-feminist backlash. Those texts, like Chandlers's *Spartan Planet*, would build upon some masculinists ideas to ironically criticize misogynist tendencies. Moreover, many female-only novels written by male authors also incorporate the dystopic images of the matriarchal future. Such works, as for example Edmund Cooper's *Gender genocide* or Poul Anderson's *Virgin Planet*, strongly criticize and oppose the idea of female-only worlds by presenting demonic reinterpretations of such future.

2. Masculinity Crisis

Masculinity crisis is a kind of identity crisis experienced by men who, due to variety of factors, feel incomplete in their masculinity. Sociologist Raewyn Connell, who specializes in masculinities, explains the concept of the crisis in masculinity, proposing that it emerges when a disruption or transformation in normative practices within gender relations occurs:

As a theoretical term 'crisis' presupposes a coherent system of some kind, which is destroyed or restored by the outcome of the crisis. Masculinity, as the argument so far has shown, is not a system in that sense. It is, rather, a configuration of practice within a system of gender relations. We cannot logically speak of the crisis of a configuration; rather we might speak of its disruption or its transformation. We can, however, logically speak of the crisis of a gender order as a whole, and of its tendencies towards crisis. Crisis tendencies may, for instance, provoke attempts to restore a dominant masculinity. (Connell 1993: 13)

As Connell points out here, such disturbance and crisis tendencies may cause the backlash effect involving the emergence of some tendencies to revitalize and restore masculinity in its dominant form. Moreover, she acknowledges that masculinity enters a state of crisis when men cannot accomplish the expectation of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2000: 10). According to Connell and Messerschmidt, hegemonic masculinity "embodies the currently most honored way of being a man, it requires

all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimates the global subordination of women to men” (Connell, Messerschmidt 2005: 832). Hegemonic masculinity is thus perceived as the most socially valued form of masculinity to which every “real” man should aspire. Accordingly, some men experience a crisis of identity when they cannot approximate those valued forms of masculinity which they have internalized, and which include such qualities of ideal manhood as power, authority, supremacy or hardness.

A similar process is discussed by Katarzyna Więckowska, who also sees interconnection between the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and masculinity crisis. She describes hegemonic masculinity as “the most visible form of masculinity, embodying notions of culture, authority and leadership” (Więckowska 2014: 16). Więckowska also makes an interesting point, claiming that masculinity crisis may lead to a backlash against those forces that threaten men’s identity and are perceived as dangerous: “If hegemonic masculinity is formed against a set of others that are simultaneously extrapolated and internalized, then the notion of masculinity in crisis implies a time of intensified production of others, accompanied by a reinforcement of various borders and by a backlash against the forces designated as dangerous” (2014: 17). Such dangerous forces, which destabilize masculinity, may include changes in the labor market, family and patterns of intimate life or changes in the positions of women in social and economic spheres (David 2006: 111–112).

The above mentioned social and economic transformations, which are perceived as threatening forces, emerged, to a great extent, along with women’s emancipation. Sociologist, Michael Kimmel links the emergence of masculinity crisis with the rise of feminism which is said to question and challenge the traditional understanding of gender:

The rise of feminism in late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century United States provoked a variety of responses among American man and prompted what we might call crisis of masculinity, because the meaning that had constituted traditional gender definitions were challenged. Men’s responses included a frightened retreat to traditional configurations, and demarcation of new institutional spheres for the vigorous assertion of a renewed masculinity. (1987: 262)

Therefore, Kimmel argues that men have been experiencing profound crisis of masculinity, since the turn of the 20th century, due to the modernization of social life and the development of the feminist movement which constituted a threat to the meaning of hegemonic masculinity and men’s position of power (1987: 261). Hence, it may be assumed that feminism destabilized traditional gender roles, social units and relationships, and as a result, men no longer know how to be real men. It was believed that feminism propagated inequalities by unfairly privileging women and that equality is a feminine value that threatens male identity and causes masculinity crisis.

Blaming feminism for causing the crisis and disruption in both masculinity and traditional gender roles, gave rise to a variety of movements that opposed feminism and to some extent disagreed with the principles of women’s emancipation. Kimmel claims that men’s responses to feminism can be divided into three ideological

categories: antifeminist, masculinist and profeminist response” (1987: 262). While antifeminists excluded women from the public realm and demanded that they return to the private sphere of home, the masculinist response “opposed the perceived feminization of American culture and sought to create islands of untainted masculinity and purified pockets of virility in separate institutions that could socialize young men to the hardiness appropriate to their gender” (Kimmel 1987: 263). It may thus be assumed that some separatist men chose to isolate themselves from women, in order to revitalize their masculinity and to escape from feminizing forces of feminism.

3. Masculinism

In Western countries, masculinism is one of the most recent manifestations of antifeminism. It is based on the idea that women now govern men, who are urged to revolt, organize opposition, reclaim their lost masculinity, and demand rights. Its discourse claims “that women, women’s values in general and feminists in particular, dominate men and contemporary society at large” (Blais, Dupuis-Déri 2021: 23). Moreover, “Men, seen as currently grappling with an ‘identity crisis’, are depicted as the victims of feminist struggles, which have resulted in the supplanting of patriarchy by matriarchy” (*Ibidem*). Even though masculinism is considered a recent phenomenon, the concept is not new, as it was already coined in 1914 by Charlotte Perkins Gilman who described masculinists as the “opposition of misogynist men to women’s rights”; “men’s collective political and cultural actions on behalf of their own sex” (Allen 2009: 152).

Masculinism asserts that since men are in crisis and suffer because of women, particularly feminists, the solution to their problems involves curbing the influence of feminism and revalorizing masculinity. According to masculinists, feminism destabilized traditional gender roles, social units and relationships. Consequently, men are lost in their identity as they don’t know how to be a “real” man (Blais, Dupuis-Déri 2021: 24). Such antifeminist tendencies already started at the beginning of the 20th century, but the height of the movement in the USA took place in 1970s and ‘80s as a reaction to second-wave feminism, especially radical feminism. Masculinists feared that feminism was going too far and was taking away men’s rights and entitlements. According to American sociologist Michael Messner, “The growth of the feminist movement, the emergence of counterculture and the sexual revolution, were perceived by some members of the men’s movement as a threat to men and their privileged positions. This resulted in the emergence of a conservative, hostile attitude towards feminism” (1998: 257). Therefore, it is believed that men are in crisis because of the feminization of society and that the development of feminist movements poses a threat to real masculinity. Messner also draws attention to the fact that masculinism incorporated separation from women and creation of male only institution which would enable men to develop and maintain their masculinity: “Masculinist responses to men’s fear of social feminization resulted in men’s creation of homosocial institutions in which adult men, separated from women could engage in ‘masculine’

activities often centered around the development and celebration of physical strength, competition and violence” (1997: 9–10).

Furthermore, in his discussion on the influence of feminism Nicholas Davidson argues, that masculinists claim that destabilization of society is caused by the lack of masculine values which should be celebrated and restored:

Where the feminist perspective is that social ills are caused by the dominance of masculine values, the virist [masculinist] perspective is that they are caused by the decline of those values. What ails society is ‘effeminacy’. The improvement of society requires that the influence of female values be decreased and the influence of male values increased. (1988: 274–275)

It may thus be assumed that masculinists’ fear of feminism led them to consider separatism and revitalization of manhood as the possible solution to alleged feminization of society and loss of male power and dominance. Obviously, such separatists ideas also met with some opposition and critique even within men’s movement. A way of responding to the discussion of revitalizing the manhood is also literary reaction that appeared in speculative fiction. One of such reactions is Chandler’s *Spartan Planet* in which the author creates such mono-sex society rather as a critique to the idea of enhancing male separatism caused by the fear of feminist advances.

4. Mythopoetic Men’s Movement

A similar idea of separatism and desire to restore masculine values may be found in the theories proposed by mythopoetic men’s movement which may be considered a branch of masculinism. As Kimmel asserts: “Mythopoeists were largely gender separatists [...] they said, they were ‘masculinists’—of men, by men, and for men” (2013: 106). Comparably to masculinism, the mythopoetic movement is also considered to be a part of the antifeminist backlash: “This mythopoetic discourse appears to be part of contemporary antifeminist backlash” (Messner 1997: 17).

Since the early 1980s, the mythopoetic men’s movement has been a loose collection of organizations engaged in the men’s movement which developed as a reaction to the second-wave feminism. The mythopoetic men aimed to liberate men from the perceived constraints of the modern society that kept them from being in touch with their true masculine nature (Messner 1997: 18). The main theories of the movement were proposed by Robert Bly who aimed at presenting a symbolic, metaphorical and poetical description of male identity. In *Iron John* (1990) he attempts to find and revitalize an ancient, mythological world in which masculinity was supposedly instinctive. Bly claims that masculinity is challenged by modern institutions like industrialization, but most of all, by feminism. Hence, to survive, men need to learn the lessons from the past – follow some mythological archetypes that may be of great importance to modern men who are lost in their identity. As he claims: “The images of adult manhood given by the popular culture are worn out; a man can no longer

depend on them” (Bly 1990). Bly problematizes the softer and receptive masculine ideal, suggesting that feminism was to blame for rendering men too sensitive, too kind, and too empathic:

Meanwhile, the feminist movement encouraged men to actually look at women, forcing them to become conscious of concerns and sufferings [...]. As men began to examine women’s history and women’s sensibility, some began to notice what was called their *feminine* side and pay attention to it. (Bly 1990: 2)

The problem of manhood nowadays is the “softer receptive male” (*Ibidem*), by which he means that modern men are characterized by low self-esteem and vulnerability. Bly also blames the female empowerment for the crisis in masculinity and for the increasing blur of gender roles. As Timothy Beneke claims, “Bly’s basic story is that an array of forces has brought men to a state of malaise and identity crisis: the most recent wave of feminism which has softened men excessively” (1995: 154).

To solve this crisis, as asserted by Bly, it is essential to go back to the old myths and to reinterpret mythological prototypes and archetypes of masculinity and femininity as they may serve as the basic exemplar of one’s identity and self. What men should seek and reclaim is the inner male self, the part of their lost masculinity, namely the deep masculine: “We have to accept the possibility that the true radiant energy in the male does not hide in, reside in, or wait for us in the feminine realm [...] but in the magnetic field of the deep masculine. It is protected by the instinctive one who’s underwater and who has been there we don’t know how long” (Bly 1990: 8). According to Beneke: “‘Deep masculinity’ is a pan-cultural, trans historical essence, built into the male psyche and (presumably) biology, which is men’s true, ‘deepest’ identity” (1995: 155). Therefore, men should search for some deep or essential masculinity and return to something primal, heroic, and deeply resonant about themselves as men and, consequently, they will be able to reconnect to the deep masculine.

What mythopoetic men propose is to retell myth or legends and engage in their exegesis as a tool for personal insight. By mythological reinterpretations of masculinity men should attempt to find and reclaim the real male essence of deep masculinity and instinctive male world. However, the solution which is offered is not limited to learning from the archetypes and myths. The deep truth of masculinity can only be reclaimed by being a part of a collective male identity, being surrounded by other men and celebrating masculinity together, without being exposed to the feminine realm.

The idea of mythologized male world may seem to be some utopian phantasies in which men separate themselves from any feminine influences in order to celebrate their masculinity by revitalizing their inner essence with the use of mythological archetypes. At the first sight, Chandler’s text may seem like an example of reclaiming an archetypical collective male identity by mythopoetic idealization of male bonding, inspired by Greek antiquity. However, the case may be just the opposite. Given the dystopian features of the novel and how the main female character is portrayed, it may be argued that *Spartan Planet* uses the idea of mythologization and the Deep Masculine to criticize such masculinist phantasies of separatism.

5. Spartan Planet

Such separatist projects proposed by masculinists, and especially by mythopoetic men, are also visible in literary fiction, mainly in the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, anti-misogynist reactions opposing such masculinist ideas can also be traced in speculative fiction. Science fiction is a kind of social genre that it is very often used to effectively challenge the concept of gender or sexuality, also by proposing sex segregation or separatist societies (Attebery 2003: 107). This kind of literary trend incorporates portraying the societies that are either all male or all female.

Science fiction of the 20th century saw the construction of utopias in which the authors tried to imagine improved societies with increased status of women. As some feminist writers believed that with the rejection of males and patriarchal system, the society could be peaceful, harmonious and free of any ills, many novels, like Gilman's *Herland* or Bradley Lane's *Mizora*, presented separatist female-only matriarchies. The texts which present male-only worlds also emerged within the genre of science fiction, however, they were largely outnumbered by the novels that incorporated female-only worlds.

Bertram Chandler was an Anglo-Australian author of pulp science fiction. However, before his writing career began, he had served as a merchant marine officer. His experience aboard the ships is visibly reflected in his novels where we can usually encounter life on the spaceships as well as the representation of the relationships among crew members. He wrote over 40 novels and 200 works of short fiction but yet, he is most well-known for his *Rim World series* and *John Grimes* novels. Grimes, Chandler's principal protagonist, is a space sailor travelling among various planets. The topic of sex is quite frequent in Chandler's novels. The stories usually present rather stereotypical representation of gender in which women aboard are passive passengers while men serve as commanders and active protagonists.

Spartan Planet (1969) written by Bertram Chandler is one of three English-language works that incorporate the concept of men single-sex world, in the second half of the 20th century. The other two are *Crime and Glory of Commander Suzdal* (1969) by Smith Cordwiner and *Ehtan of Athos* (1986) by Lois M. Bujold. Cordwiner's short story depicts a planet where femininity is carcinogenic in all Earth species. Therefore, all the females gradually die out from cancer and soon the Earth becomes a men-only land. Reproduction is possible with the use of artificial wombs which are implanted into the abdominal cavity enabling men to bear boy children. Further generations of men-only world consider females as mythical, deformed creatures or monsters. Moreover, masculine society is full of extreme violence and brutality. The latter, *Ethan of Athos*, incorporates all-male planet to which women have no access. The title and the storyline are an obvious reference to mythical *Mount Athos* in northeastern Greece which is a site of an important center of Eastern Orthodox monasticism. It is widely known that women are not allowed in any of the monasteries of *Mount Athos* or anywhere on the mountain itself. In the novel, women are completely forbidden to enter the planet as all men believe that females are dangerous and bloodthirsty creatures. Artificial external wombs are used for reproduction,

however the men still need to trade with females from other planets in order to gain egg cells necessary for the reproduction. All three men-single sex novels share some similarities. First of all, they have some clear references either to mythology or the sacred. Moreover, the novels present females as savage, misshapen and dangerous creatures that men should fear and avoid, while men are presented as soldiers or warriors. The means of reproduction are rather similar as well. Male-only worlds use advanced technology, like artificial wombs, in order to produce or bear male babies. Interestingly, *Crime and Glory of Commander Suzdal* and *Spartan Planet* were published exactly the same year, while *Ethan of Athos* was published 17 years later. All the novels, however, incorporate rather dystopian imageries. In case of *Spartan Planet* the dystopian male-only world is also depicted with irony.

The story of Chandler's novel presents a male-only society, which has been out of touch with the rest of humanity, modeled after the ancient Sparta. On the male single-sex planet lands a ship with representatives from the galactic federation, in order to take a survey of the land. The crew consists of John Grimes, a male, and twelve female officers, but the only one who we really get to know is Margaret Lazenby who takes an active part in the development of the story. Grimes and Lazenby are given permission to discover the male society and to carry out research on its functioning. Spartan men are fascinated by the strange creature called "woman" and they think of her as a monster or alien, fearing her "hypnotic powers". Moreover, the appearance of the visitors, especially women, has catastrophic effects and destabilizes the whole society. The deconstruction of male-only society is, however, depicted as something positive in the novel. The old dystopian, fascist-like order is destroyed which was one of the secret goals of the visitors. This argument may also be supported by the fact that the main female protagonist, Margaret Lazenby, is portrayed as a strong woman who takes decisive actions and does not hesitate to fight when needed. Therefore, it may be assumed that the main female character in male-only world actually acts like a feminist.

The reproduction on the planet is possible due to birth machines operated by the Priest, who are the highest cast. After the babies are born some of the men, those who are described as less masculine, take care of them in the special facility called *Crèche*. If the child is said to be weak or "deformed"¹ it is instantly killed on "Exposure Day".

The portrayal of the world is quite interesting as it is strongly and precisely based on ancient Sparta. The first and most obvious aspect are the names of the protagonists, all of which are inspired either by mythology or Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The men on the Spartan planet are among others: "Brasidus" – who according to mythology was a Spartan officer during Peloponnesian War; "Telemachus" – the son of Odysseus and Penelope, who is believed to have lived in Sparta, "Leonidas" – a Spartan king; and "Diomedes" – one of the leaders in the Trojan War.

Moreover, Spartan men wear traditional Spartan uniforms "He [Achron] got into his black and silver uniform tunic, buckled on his heavy sandals and then, plumed

¹ Deformed in the context of the Planet Sparta means lacking male genitals, although they might be handicapped as well.

helmet under his arm” (Chandler 1969: 17). The social structure mimics that of ancient Sparta as well, as the men are divided into Helots², Perioikoi³, Priests, Warriors, with the King having the highest social position. Some of the traditions have also been maintained, including *Apothetae*—the killing the weak infants. On the other hand, the society is also technologically advanced – it possesses advanced weapons, mechanic chariots, and most importantly, a birth machine that produces men, generation after generation, through the modification of the chromosomes.

The representation of masculinity, apart from being straightforwardly rooted in ancient mythology, celebrates a valued form of masculinity and those values associated with hegemonic masculinity, like strength, competitiveness, assertiveness, confidence, and independence, while at the same time disposing of stereotypically feminine values like being gentle, compassionate, emotional, and dependent. Furthermore, Spartan men are presented in a hypermasculine manner. Hypermasculinity is an exaggerated image of hegemonic masculinity, as it overemphasizes the ideals and traits stereotypically attributed to men, such as physical strength, aggression, sexuality, and dominance, thereby reinforcing them. Hypermasculinity also incorporates the convictions that any emotional display is perceived as feminine, that men should be assertive in their relations with women and that violence is a necessary male attribute (Kimmel, Arson 2004: 418).

In the novel the men are portrayed as violent and aggressive warriors who are often involved in criminal activities: “Crime was not rare on Sparta and it was usually of a violent nature” (Chandler 1969: 15). They find pleasure in engaging in duels with another men: “[In the club] Achron: any good fights? Brasidus: I don’t know. There seemed to be one starting just as I left. Achron: And you didn’t join in? You must be sickening of something” (Chandler 1969: 16).

Furthermore, Spartan men eat in a “barbarian” way, with their hands, without using any utensils. From the description of a meal, we also learn that they eat mostly bread and raw meat: “the crusty bread, the joint of cold meat, the jugs of beer” (Chandler 1969: 17). Spartan men drink from bottles rather than glasses and they prefer wine and beer to non-alcoholic beverages.

Additionally, any form of convenience is perceived as an unnecessary comfort or even as being decadent. Spartan men use uncomfortable chairs and sleep on the floor due to the fact that comfort is unbecoming for men. When Brasidus first meets John Grimes in his cabin on the spaceship, he is surprised and bewildered by the luxury and comfort of that place, as it was unprecedented on the planet Sparta: “Brasidus remained standing until he received a grudging nod from his superior. Then he was amazed by the softness, by the comfort of the chair into which he lowered himself. On Sparta such luxury was reserved for the aged – and only for the highly placed aged at that, for Council members and the like” (Chandler 1969: 32). Brasidus directly relates to this kind of luxury as being decadent which may indicate that such comfort is viewed by the men in the negative way and that they despise of any kind

² The slaves of the Spartans.

³ Group of non-citizen inhabitants in ancient Sparta.

of “softness” and comfort, as explained in the novel: “the un-Spartan luxury in which Grimes lived – luxury utterly unsuitable for a man” (Chandler 1969: 31, 37).

Men on the planet Sparta also despise of any form of expressing emotions. Being tough, stone-cold and insensitive is seen as a gift. Even though, there also are some effeminate men, they have inferior positions in the social structure and are not reckoned with. Their duty is to take care of newborn children in the *crèche*, as they are the only ones who possess any caring qualities. Other men on the planet visibly despise parenthood, as taking care of the children is not viewed as a manly value. Interestingly, the intimate relations on Sparta are homosexual. There is, however, a clear distinction into dominant and submissive partners.

Another interesting aspect of Spartan society is that, until the arrival of the spaceship, the men on the planet Sparta have no idea about the existence of women. All references to females have been erased and the history has been rewritten. At some point we learn that this is simply governmental propaganda, for the highest cast, the priests⁴, are aware of the existence of the opposite sex. Moreover, they have their own secret harems, in which they spend some pleasure time. When the Spartans learn about this secret, they start the riots since they are simply outraged by the fact that the existence of women has been kept as a secret. They demand “access” to females, for the reason that when they encounter women, apart from being confused, they also feel a natural drive and desire towards them.

Accordingly, as “female” is a nonexistent concept to Spartan men, the perception of women is presented in quite a peculiar way. When they first encounter a woman, they perceive her through the following terms: “The strange looking man”; “the owner of the strange deformity” (Chandler 1969: 24); “alien men with bumps on their chests”; “Peculiar looking spaceman”(Chandler 1969: 7); “This being, then, could be deformed, or a mutant, or an alien”; “Somebody muttered, What a strange looking creature!” (Chandler 1969: 23). It is clearly visible that what the Spartans find extremely bewildering is the physical appearance of females. To some extent, they do not even consider them as being human; rather they view females as strange creatures with physical deformities: “Brasidus looked more closely [at the picture of Arcadian women and men]. Roughly half of the figures were human – and the rest of them were this mysterious Margaretlazenby. So that what he must look like un-clothed. The deformity of the upper part of the body was bad enough; that of the lower part was shocking.” (Chandler 1969: 33).

Moreover, what also confuses Spartan men are the pronouns as they are simply unaware of the existence of terms like “she” or “her”. They thus refer to women using pronouns “he”: “Haven’t you met anybody like her on your planet? Like what? Doubtless some exotic beast you’ve run across on your travels. But, Lieutenant Commander, you keep on using these odd pronouns – ‘she’ and ‘her’. Are they confined to Arcadians?” (Chandler 1969: 35). Therefore, at some point it may be considered that the Spartan men are portrayed in a paradoxical manner. On the one

⁴ In the novel the priests are also called “doctors”. In fact, the doctors belong to the cast of priesthood.

hand, they are represented as strong, masculine warriors, while on the other hand, their naivety, simplicity, silliness, and lack of knowledge about the world may seem to be quite childish. Moreover, referring to female body as “deformity” may be seen as a way to inject humor and irony into the novel. It also suggests that men’s bodies are the norm in relation to which the Spartans judge the “deformities”. The name “Arcadians” is meaningful itself. As this term which describes an image of idyllic and idealized place, it stands in opposition to the general dystopian image of male-only world in Chandler’s novel.

The novel serves as a ground for an interesting analysis of masculinity, gender, and antifeminism, especially, taking into consideration the fact that at the end of the novel we actually learn that the planet of Sparta was set up by a man and his male crew. The Capitan is described as a misogynist who, due to his contempt for women, decides to create all-male planet: “Doric – the ship from which this Lost Colony was founded – had an all-male crew, under first Capitan. This same Capitan was a misogynist, a woman hater” (Chandler 1969: 151).

The Capitan chose to set up a new male society by reenacting the old mythical world of Sparta owing to the fact that this particular myth enabled him to first of all, emphasize manhood and mainly virtues, and secondly, to easily dispose of any female influences: “Spartan woman suffered the lowest status. Sparta was the state that specialized in all the so-called manly virtues. Sparta was the military power” (Chandler 1969: 151). Therefore, the myth of Sparta was chosen as it was a society in which women suffered the lowest status, thus it was not a difficulty for the founding fathers to erase all traces of females. As Sparta was also a military power and the state that specialized in manly virtues, the myth was revitalized to create a new hypermasculine society. The Capitan and his supporters were simply able to foist a mythical history upon the rising generations and create a new all-male planet, separated from any female influences which he, as a misogynist, found harmful for men. To create the new manly society, he eradicated the feminizing forces, so that the men would be able to reclaim their lost masculinity and find the real male essence. As it is explicitly said that the founders of Spartan Planet shaped it with misogynist ideas in mind, it may be seen as a clear hint that the colony is a dystopian world, and the novel itself is anti-misogynist. Chandler’s going back to the mythologized manhood is highly ironic and thus, he is not supporting masculinists’ ideas by depicting the men-only society and their values. What the author does, is just the opposite: it is a critique of such mythologized men-only world.

6. Conclusion

The concept of mythologized single-sex society may serve some writers as a tool to explore gender differences but also to propose mythological reinterpretations of masculinity. Such a portrayal may also serve as an attempt to find the inner male self – the Deep Masculine, by revitalizing ancient, mythologized male world. Bertram Chandler’s science fiction novel *Spartan Planet* is visibly based on the idea

of mythologization as it attempts to go back to the ancient mythological archetypes of manhood. Even though it was written about twenty years before the publication of Bly's *Iron John*, it is possible that already in the 1970s, some men were feeling oppressed by the increasing feminist empowerment and, as a result, they sought a solution in separation and mythological archetypes of wild and strong warriors in order to reclaim the real male essence of deep masculinity and instinctive male world. They perceived feminism as one of the reasons for the feminization of manhood and he therefore made an attempt to protect "true masculinity" by revitalizing ancient myths.

Both hypermasculinity and masculinism are in many ways reflected in Chandler's separatist text which presents single-sex male world. Men's bodies and behavior in those societies are portrayed in an exaggerated manner, with the emphasis on stereotypical male traits like aggression, violence, strength and dominance. The attempt to revitalize the "real" manhood by drawing from mythological archetypes is clearly visible. It seems however, that in this case literary fiction portrays a desire to create isolated lands of masculinity, away from any threats from feminizing forces not in order to solve the alleged crisis of masculinity and maintain real and valued manhood but to satirize those masculinist, separatist attempts. In case of *Spartan Planet*, the exaggerated representation of hypermasculinity may be perceived as ironic due to the fact that the men are portrayed as slightly childish or infantile. It seems as if Spartan men were children lost in the galaxy, isolated from the real world and any form of knowledge. Therefore, the novel is clearly ironic in the representation of manhood and masculinity, especially taking into account that the novel was primarily entitled "False Fatherland". This title obviously plays with its definition as it can be defined as one's native country in general context, however, in this particular contextualization, it can be understood as a land of the founding fathers. Furthermore, the adjective "false" also ironically summarizes the plot of the novel, where the land was created by a misogynist who set his own society on the basis of his own beliefs and the whole idea of the Spartan Planet turns out to be a big lie. The ironic effect may support the hypothesis that fictional male-only worlds aimed also at satirizing masculinist beliefs and the ideas to revitalize manhood. The conclusion may thus be that male separatist fiction may also ridicule antifeminist tendencies proposed by masculinists. The mythologized male-only planet was set up by misogynist who wanted males to reclaim their lost masculinity and escape from femininity. Such idea is presented in a clearly dystopian context in which men are portrayed as victims of authorities and as people whose lives are built upon a lie. The society in *Spartan Planet* seems to be almost fascist like, with a totalitarian regime, class hierarchy and erasure of the past. *Spartan Planet*, being ironic and exaggerating hypermasculinity as well as stereotypical male values, may ridicule and put into questions the idea of men's separatism. Arguably, Chandler's text may serve as a clear critique of male separatism, masculinism and antifeminist tendencies. Ironically, the author uses the ideas of Deep Masculine and male essence, which were propagated by masculinists, to ridicule such approach by presenting archetypical collective male identity and mythopoetic idealization of male bonding in dystopian, fascist-like context.

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the way in which the idea of masculinity and possible solutions to its perceived crisis are presented in the science-fiction novel *Spartan Planet* (1968) by Arthur Bertram Chandler. At the center of this novel is a separate male single-sex society, in which the opposite sex remains an unknown concept. The men's planet is modeled after the ancient Sparta, and its society is strongly based on the old mythological archetypes of manhood. Arguably, the concept of a mythologized single-sex society may serve some writers as a tool to explore gender differences but also to propose mythological reinterpretations of masculinity. Such a portrayal may also be interpreted within the historical context of second-wave feminism, as an attempt to find the inner male self – the so-called “Deep Masculine” – by revitalizing the ancient, mythologized, instinctive male world. On the other hand, in *Spartan Planet* the possible mythological reinterpretations of masculinity are being criticized by the novel given its dystopian characteristics and the irony. Arguably, in the case of Chandler's text mythologized men-only worlds is used to ironically criticize masculinist separatist ideas, misogynist tendencies and antifeminist backlash.

Keywords

masculinity in crisis, masculinism, science fiction, separatism, feminism, anti-feminism