

Cultural Representations of Aging Masculinities

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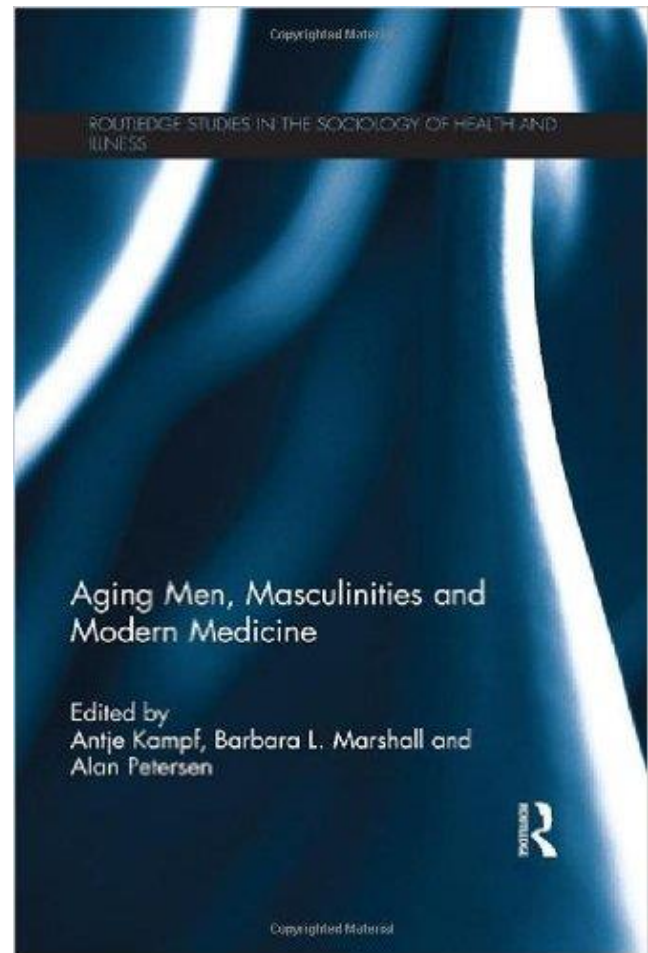
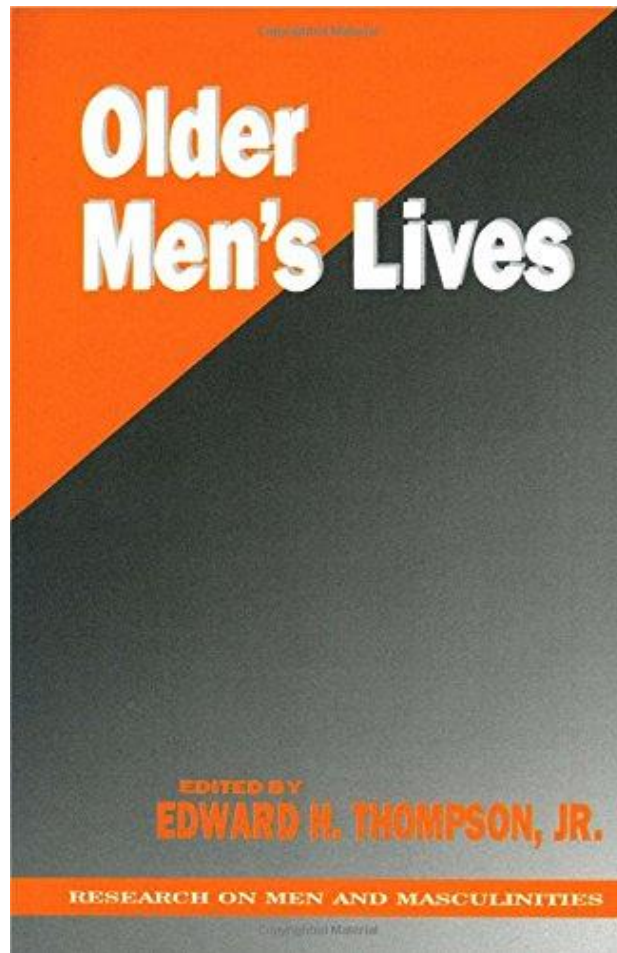
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“Gendering Age: Representations of
Masculinities and Ageing in Contemporary
European Literatures and Cinemas”
(MASCAGE), 2019-2022: www.mascage.eu

INTRODUCTION

- Gerontology→ little attention paid to gender and masculinity studies
- Age studies→ youth focus
- Aging studies→ **older women**/"men's studies"
lacking a gender perspective (Thompson, 1994)
- Gerontology→ no gender (men and women as a homogeneous group); Gender studies→ ageless
(men as a homogeneous group→ **middle-aged male**→ "**hegemonic masculinity**", Connell 1995)

Sociological/ biomedical foci



OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the intersections between masculinity and aging studies (**INTERDISCIPLINARY**)
- To rethink older men and masculinities from the Humanities—cultural, literary, and film studies (**TRANSNATIONAL**)
- To explore the intersections between aging and ethnicity, class, sexuality, etc. (**INTERSECTIONAL**)

GENDER (WOMEN)

“Growing old...affects women much more than men.”

S. Sontag, “The Double Standard of Aging” (1970)

“Women are kept from growing.”

B. Friedan, *The Fountain of Age* (1993)

“It is women who have often reported a very specific horror of ageing.”

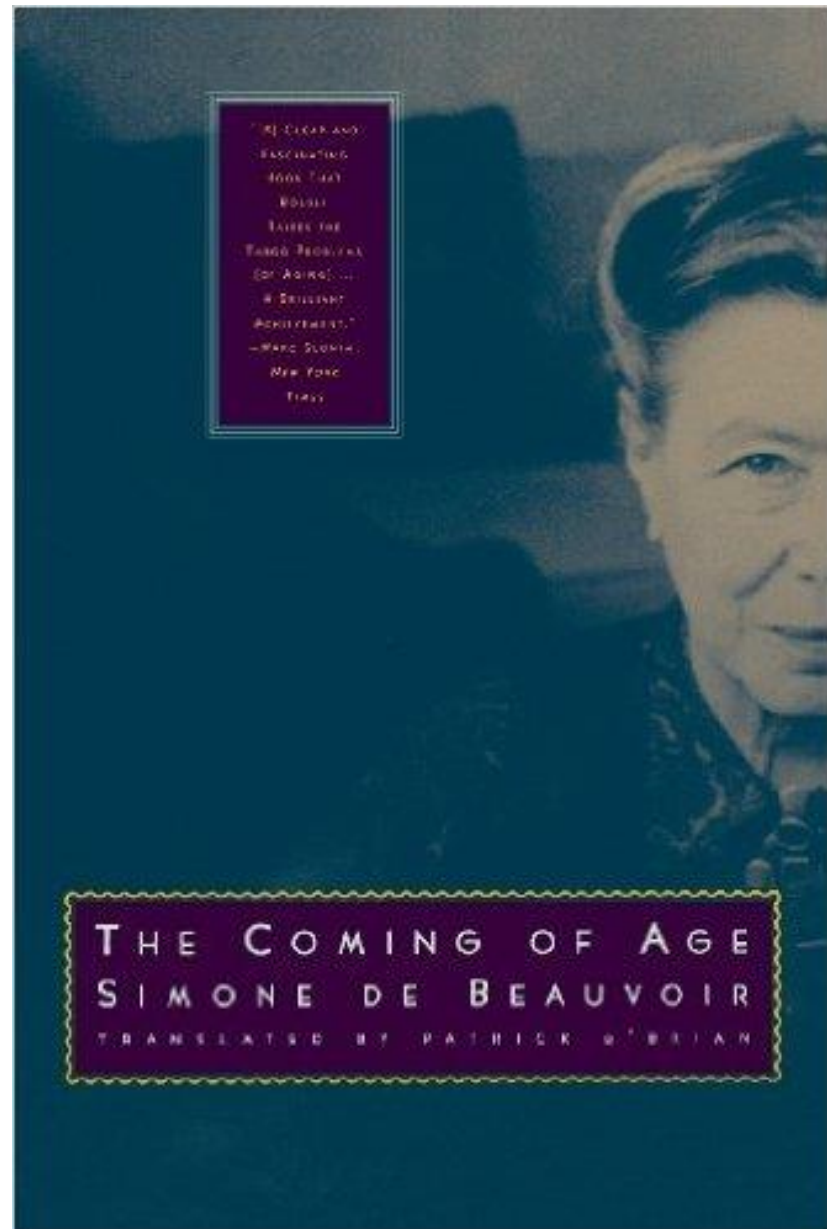
L. Segal, *Out of Time* (2013)

**Simone de Beauvoir, *La
vieillesse* (1970)**

**Aging as female erotic
invisibility:**

“How is it that time, which has no form nor substance, can crush me with so huge a weight that I can no longer breathe?...Never again!...It is not I who am saying goodbye to all those things I once enjoyed, it is they who are leaving me”

Force of Circumstance, 1963, pp. 672, 673.



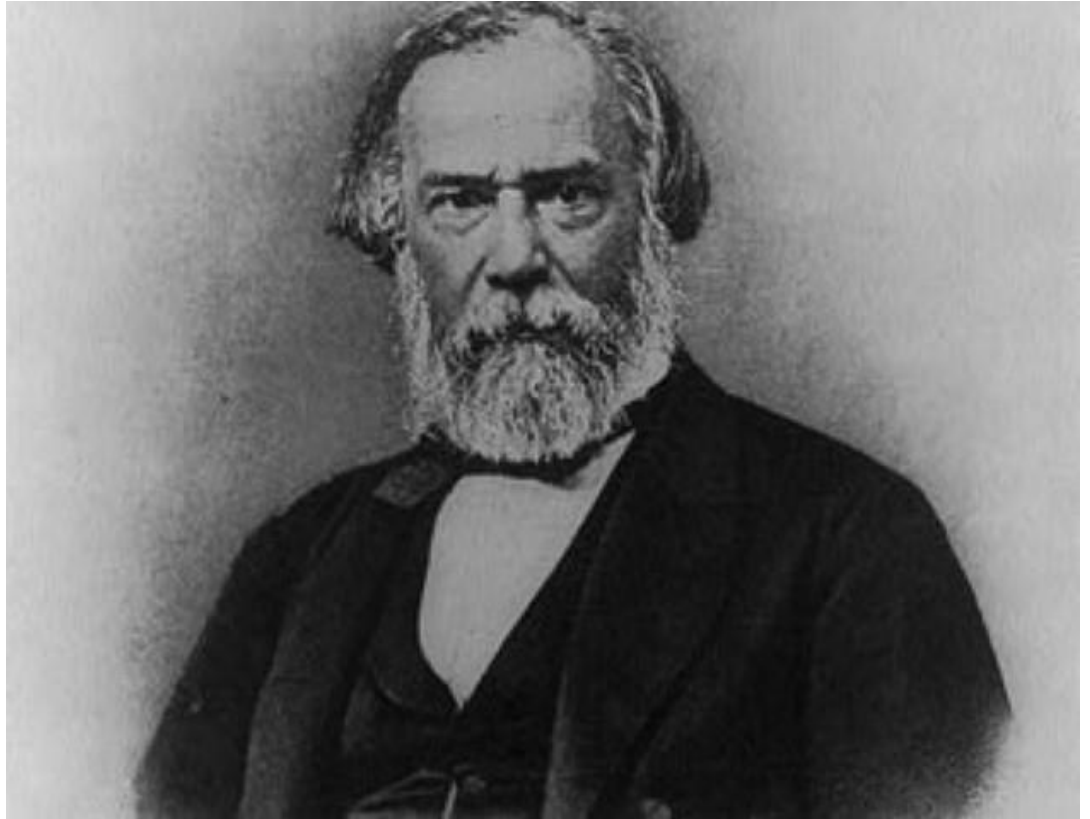
**Charles-Édouard Brown-Sé-
guard (1817-1894),
Laboratory at the Collège
de France**

Fragility → common to older men
and eunuchs:

1889 (15 days), 72 years old,
extract from testicles of
guineapigs and dogs → more
energy (urinary stream increased
by 25%!)

“If it were possible to inject, without danger,
sperm into the veins of old men, one would
be able to obtain with them some
manifestation of rejuvenation at once with
respect to intellectual work and physical
powers of the organism” (Brown-Séguard)

Extract from bull testicles to stop
aging (200,000 injections)→
“essence of masculinity”



**Charles-Édouard Brown-Séguar
d (1817-1894),
Laboratorio del Collège de
France**

-Ridiculed by other doctors:
“senile aberrations”

-Caricatures

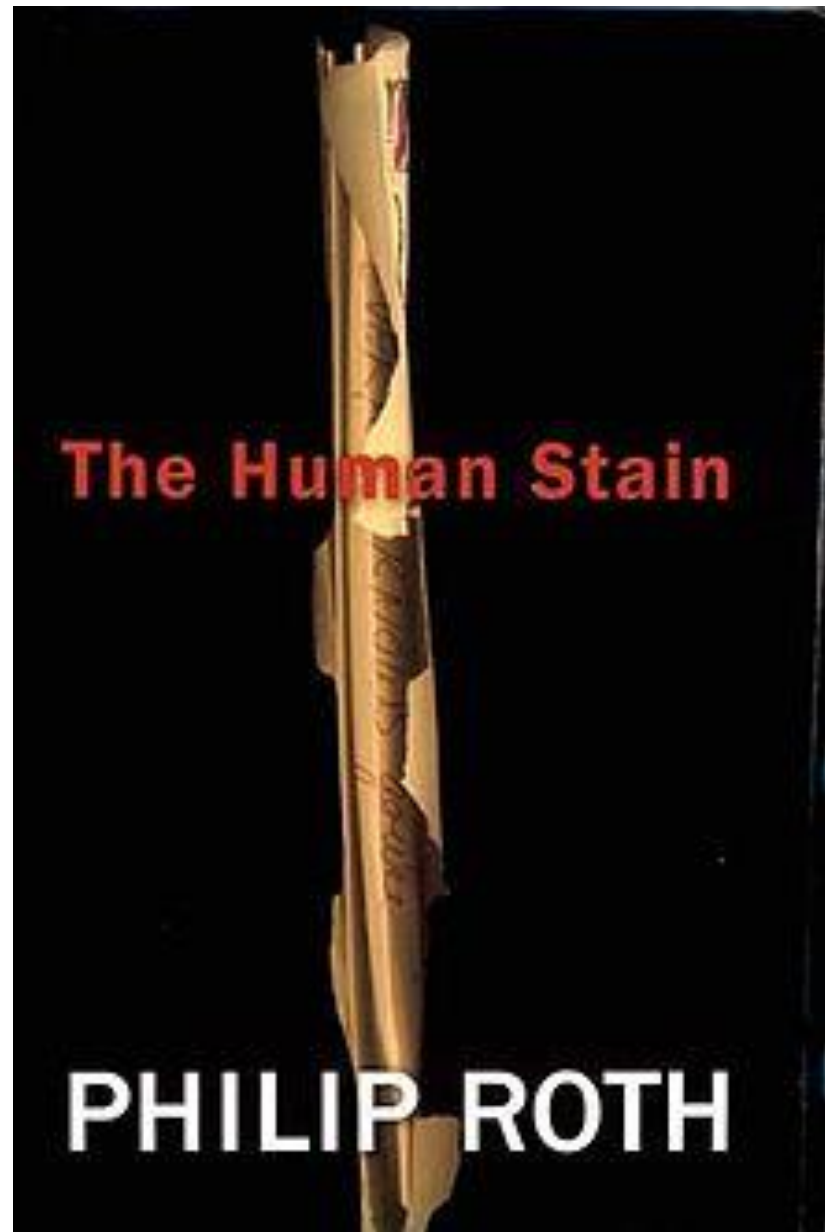
-Placebo effect + 1 blood
poisoning → Brown-Séguar died
three years later (75)



Philip Roth, *The Human Stain* (2001)

Aging as feminization:

“...unable to shield himself against the pitiful sorts of temptations with which the aging male will try to compensate for the loss of a spirited, virile manhood...Primus could tell from Coleman’s demeanor that he’d guessed right about the Viagra” (p. 80)



**J.M. Coetzee, *Slow Man*
(2005)**

Feminization:

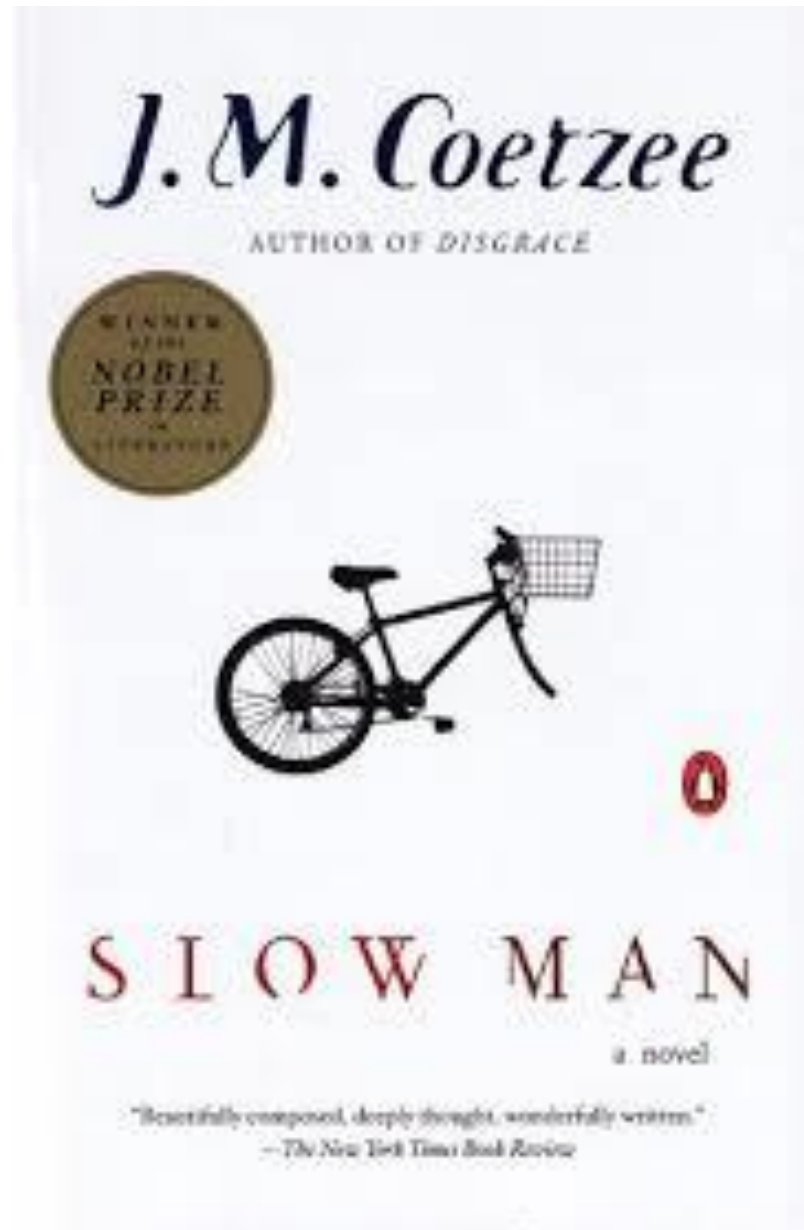
“...this zone of humiliation with no place to hide from the pitiless gaze of the young” (p. 13)

Gender stereotypes associated with older men:

“Being a **lecherous old goat** is part of the game” (p. 14)

“...a **diminished man**...a man not wholly a man...a half-man, an after-man, like an after-image; the ghost of a man” (pp. 32, 33)

“...does not like to be treated as a **child** or an idiot” (p. 24)



Continuous theory models

“Unlike the imagery of demasculinization caused by aging, the premise we begin with is that masculinities always matter in men’s lives. A ***striving*** for a continuity of gendered practices and identities is expected”

(p. 2; emphasis added).

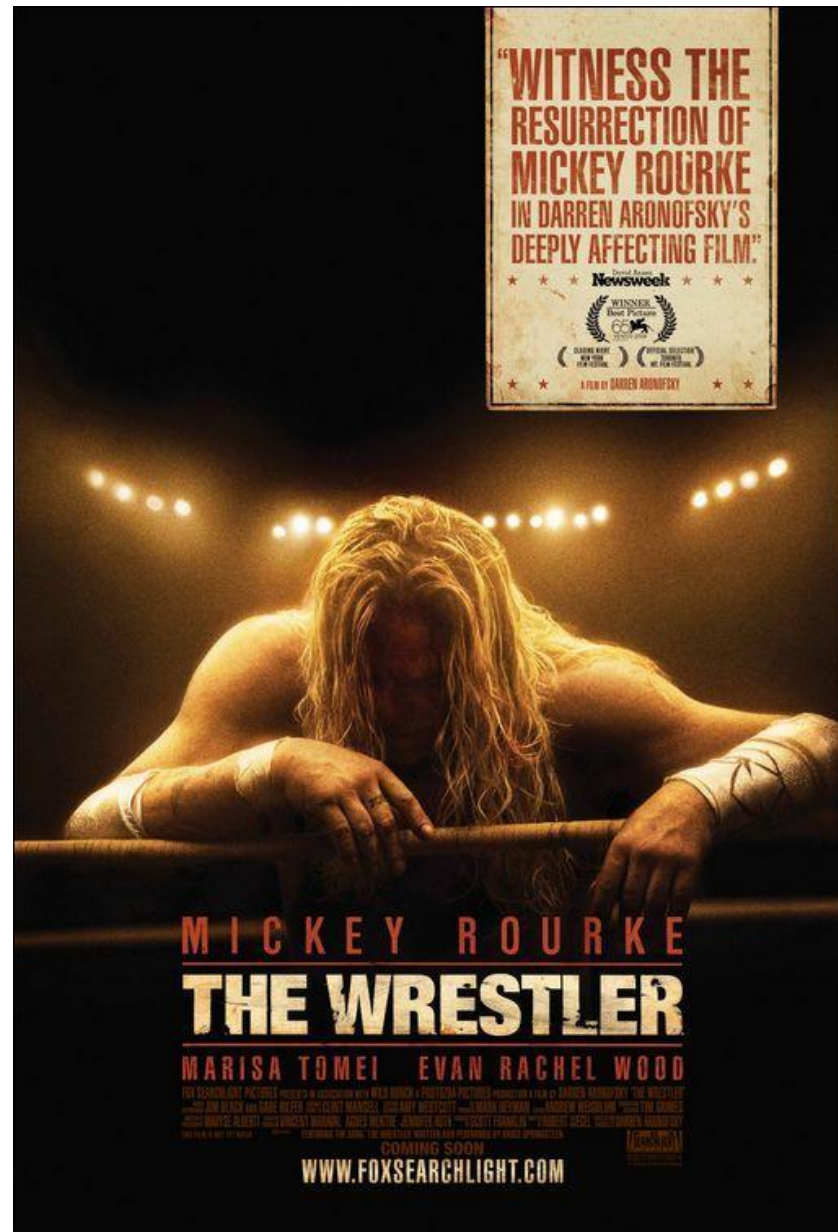
“Older Men’s Blueprint for ‘Being a Man’”

by E. H. Thompson & K. Barnes Langendoerfer

In *Men and Masculinities*
(in press).

The Wrestler
(2009), Dir.
Darren Aronofsky,
con Mickey
Rourke

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61-GFxjTyV0>



Mickey Rourke
(young/older)



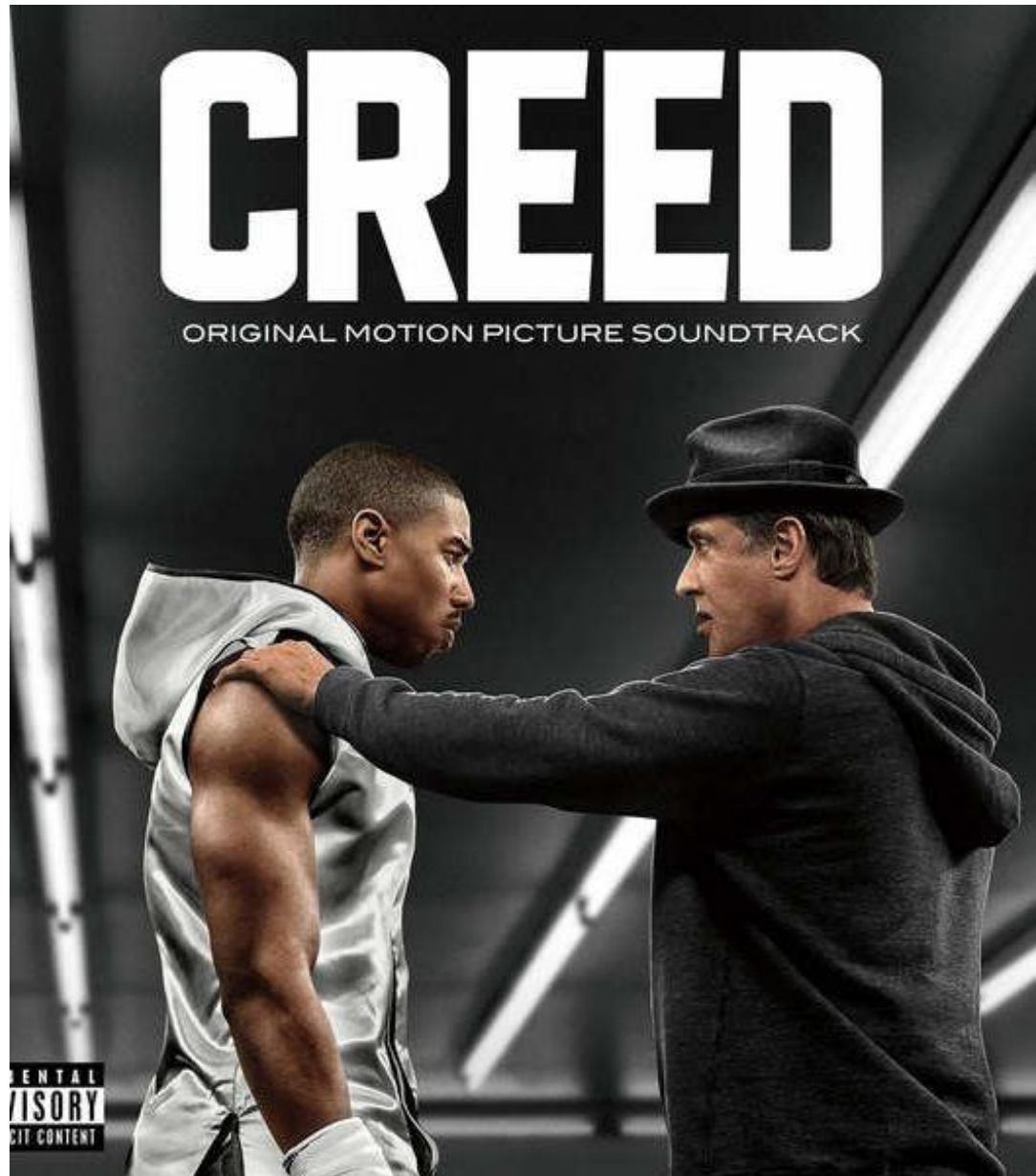
“The Expendables”
(2010, etc.), Dir.
SYLVESTER STALLONE
(MICKEY ROURKE,
BRUCE WILLIS,
HARRISON FORD, J.C.
VANDAMME, ARNOLD
SCHWARZENEGGER,
etc.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KtYRALe-xo>



“CREED” (2015), Dir.
RYAN COOGLER, CON
SYLVESTER STALLONE
AS ROCKY BALBOA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uv554B7YHk4>



*INDIANA JONES
AND THE
KINGDOM OF THE
CRYSTAL SKULL
(2008), Dir.
STEVEN
SPIELBERG,
STARRING
HARRISON FORD
(as father)*



INDIANA JONES
(2008)

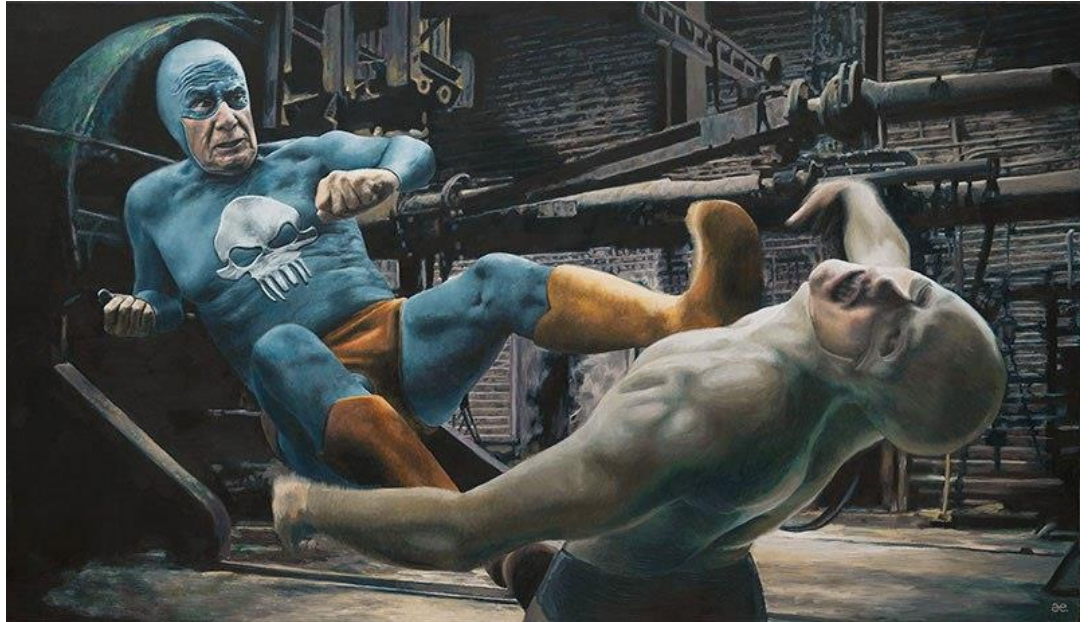
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAdJf4wTC5Y>



ANDREAS
ENGLUND, "AN
AGEING
SUPERHERO"
(paintings by
Swedish artist).

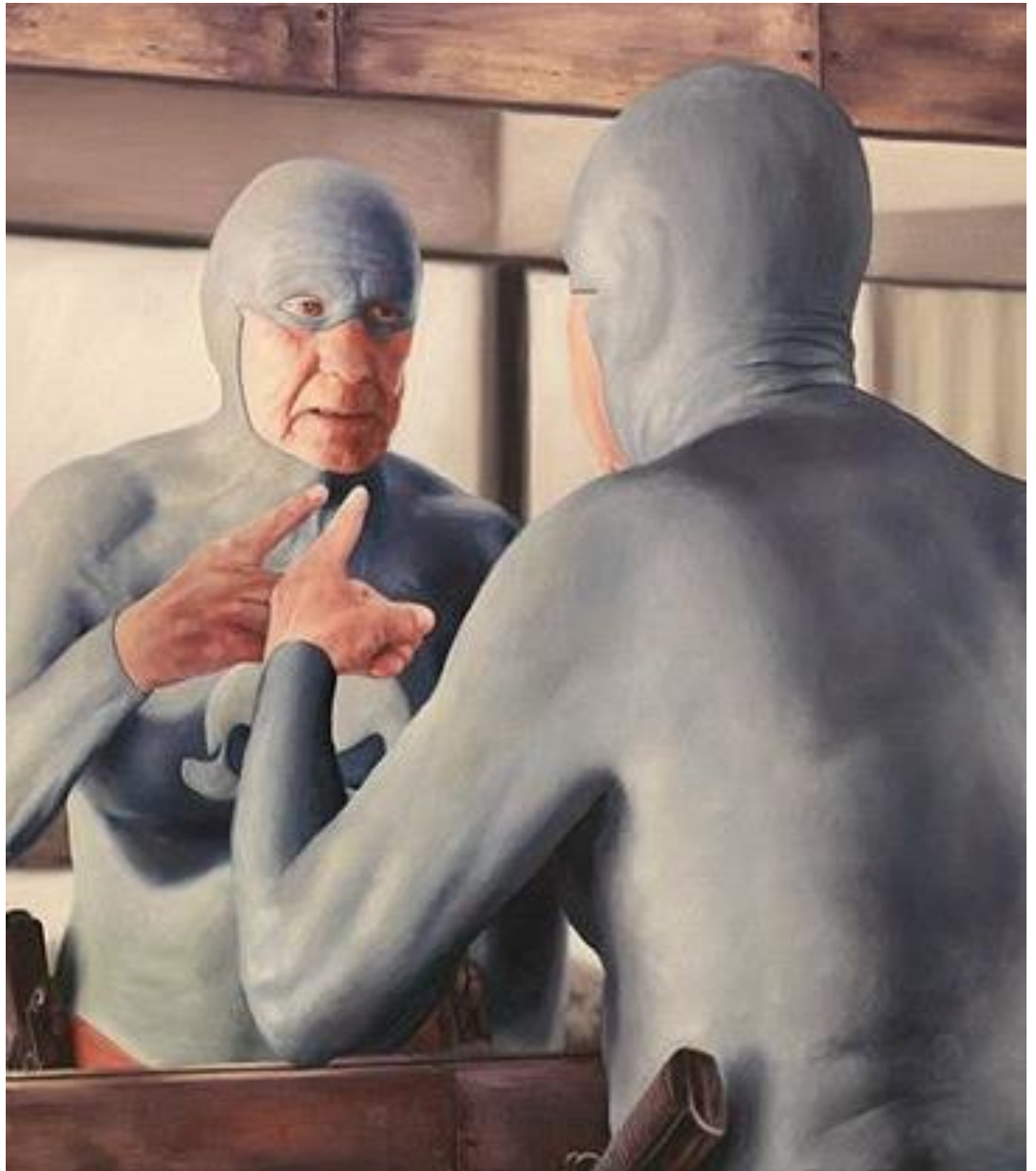


ANDREAS ENGLUND, "AN AGEING
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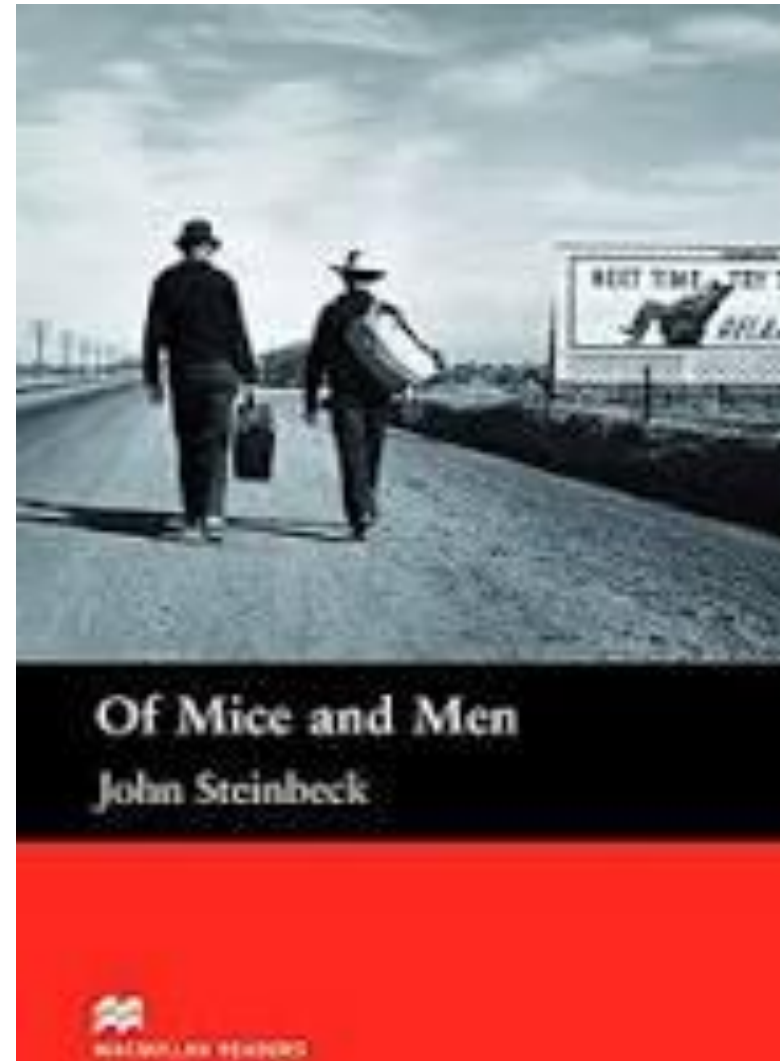
"In an ongoing series of photorealistic oil paintings called the *Aging Superhero*, Swedish artist Andreas Englund takes us into the candidly humorous life of an anonymous superhero who has probably seen better days. Though he still puts up a tough fight, the wear and tear of battling crime has taken its toll on this elderly action figure" (Christopher Jobson, 2013)



CLASS (older men as unproductive and obsolete):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRGOhLyLS9Q>

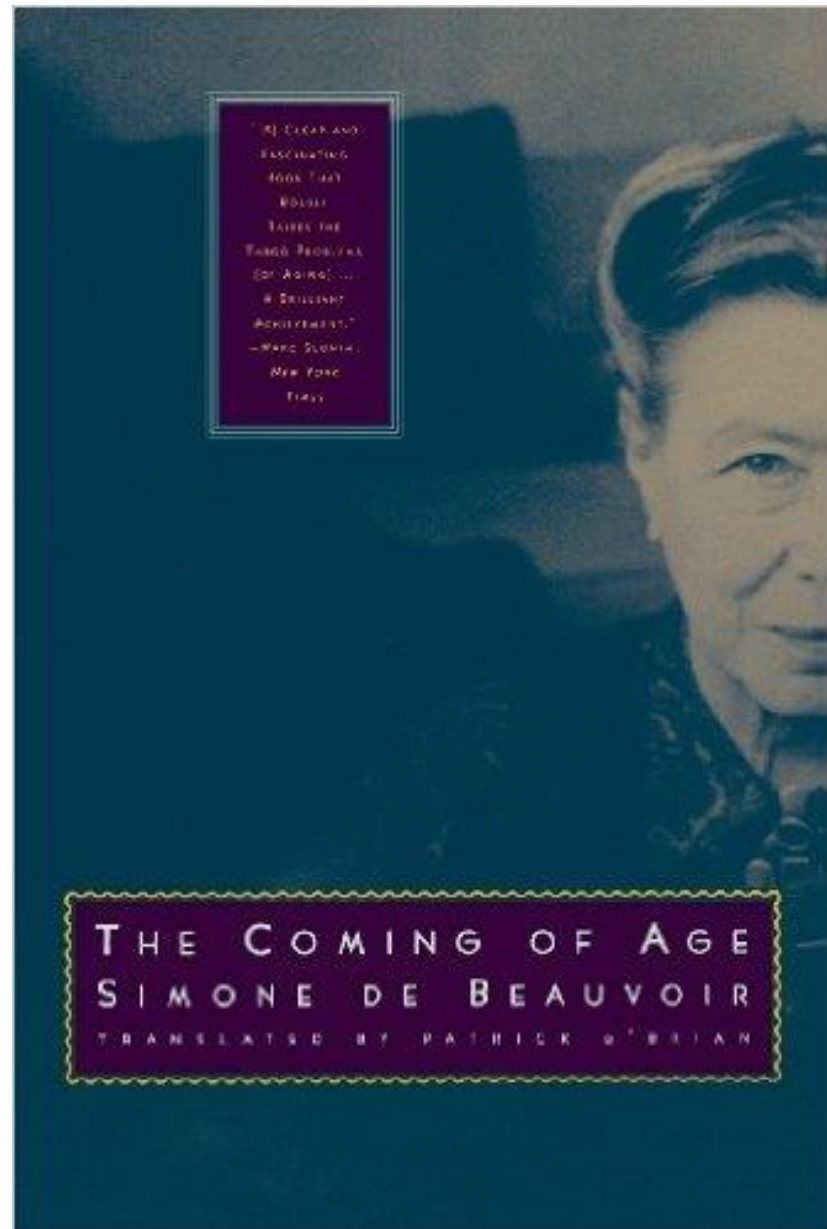
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJUtiOm9dLY>



Simone de Beauvoir:

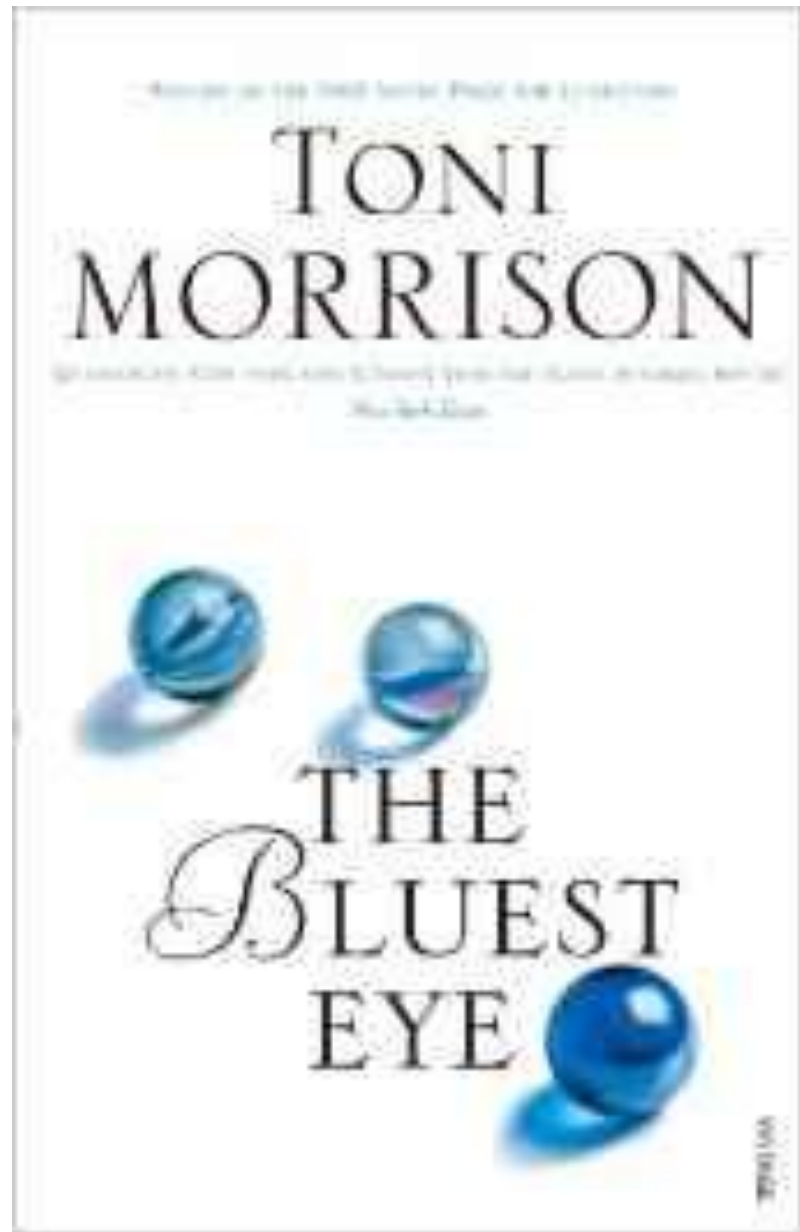
“How is it that time, which has no form nor substance, can crush me with so huge a weight that I can no longer breathe?...Never again!...It is not I who am saying goodbye to all those things I once enjoyed, it is they who are leaving me”

Force of Circumstance, 1963, pp. 672, 673.



ETHNICITY:

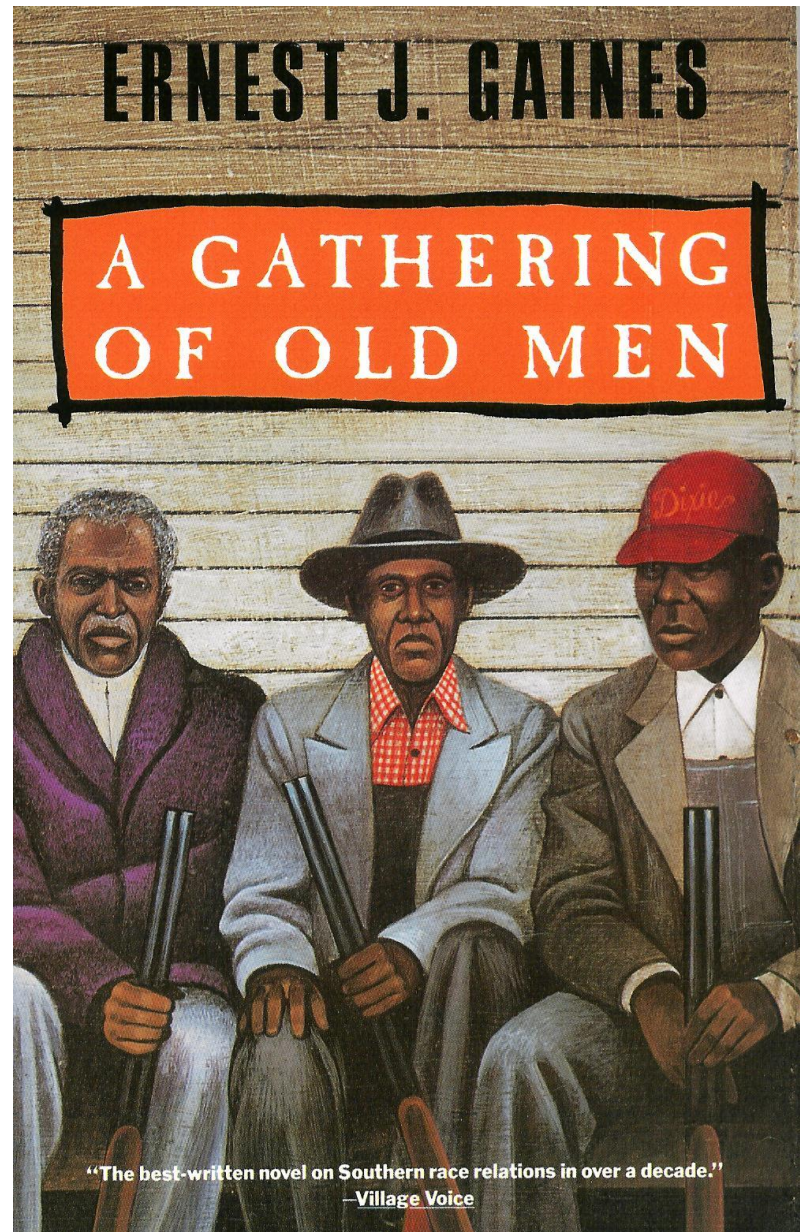
“Then they were old. Their bodies honed, their odor sour...They were through with lust and lactation, beyond tears and terror. **They alone could walk the roads of Mississippi, the lanes of Georgia, the fields of Alabama unmolested.** They were old enough to be irritable when and where they chose, tired enough to look forward to death, disinterested enough to accept the idea of pain while ignoring the idea of pain. **They were, in fact and at last, free**” (1970, p. 137; emphasis added).



Challenging the White man → remasculinization of African American male:

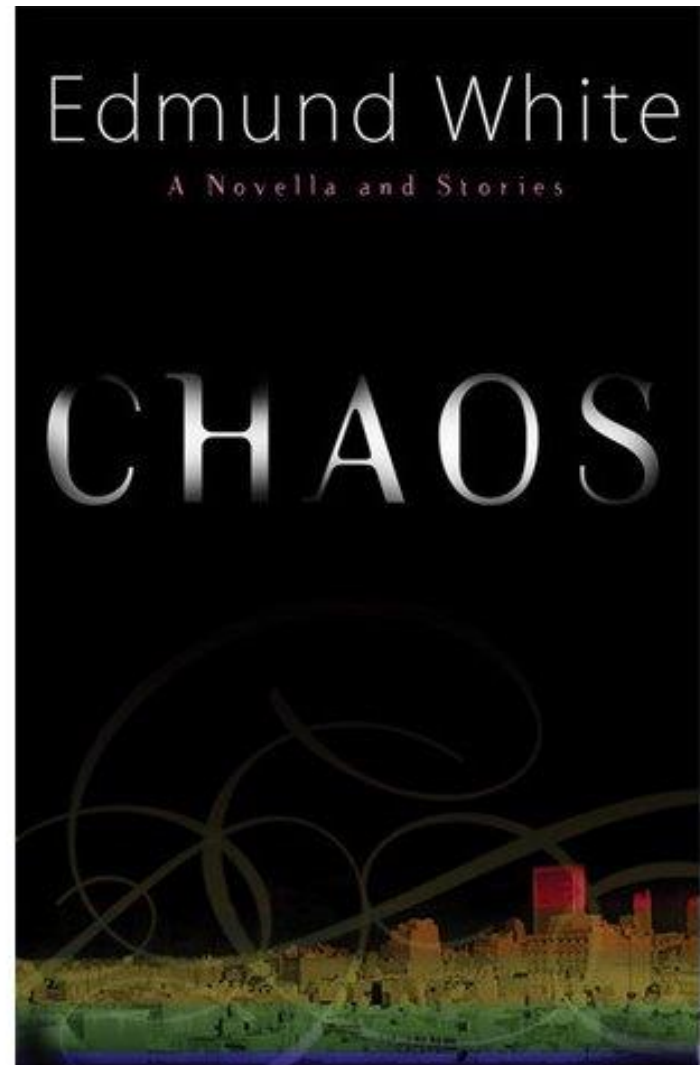
Charlie Biggs: "I'm fifty now. Fifty years of 'busing. All my natural-born black life I took the 'busing and never hit back...As long as I was Big Charlie, Nigger boy, I took it...But they comes a day! They comes a day when a man must be a man" (1983, p. 189)

"...a man who had been a boy fifty years" (p. 193)



SEXUALITY:

“His sex ambitions were still the same—to have sex with every man in the world. He would have been a perfect whore, since he found every man *do-able*” (White, 2010: 21).



RELIGION (Judaism):

- “Zakein” (old) = wise → “He (Abraham) grew old and came along in days” (*Genesis* 24:1)
- "You shall rise before the aged (gray-haired) and show **deference** (*hiddur*) in the presence of the old (*zaken*); you shall fear your God: I am the Eternal" (*Leviticus* 19:32).
- **Length of days** is assured for those who honor their parents and follow the rules of God (*Exodus* 20:12)

RELIGION (Islam):

- "Your Lord has commanded that...you be kind to your parents. If one of them or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them a word of disrespect, or scold them, but say a generous word to them. And act humbly to them in mercy, and say, "My Lord, have mercy on them, since they cared for me when I was small." (*Coran*, 17:23-24)
- Respect to older men **BUT** also patriarchal cultures→
- E.g. Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers* and/vs. Lailia Halaby's *West of Jordan* (2003), Alicia Erian's *Towelhead* (2005), and Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home* (2008) (neopatriarchy vs. new intergenerational relations).

“The whole man must be re-made if we wish the old person’s state to be acceptable.”

Simone de Beauvoir,
The Coming of Age,
p. 543

