Abstract

In the wake of the First World War, the figure of the war hero was the epitome of contemporary hegemonic masculinity. Having proven his will to fight in the name of the mother country, stars and medals were put on his body as signifiers of his masculinity, and statues were erected in his honor. The bodies of these returning soldiers, however, were often severely altered during the war as many men came home permanently wounded or crippled. As a result, the war hero paradoxically signified two things at once: he is at the same time hyper-masculine and yet feminized by his impairment (this idea can be traced from Aristotle via Freud to present-day associations of vasectomies with emasculation). In my conference contribution I will demonstrate—by engaging with texts by D.H. Lawrence and Ernest Hemingway—how the figure of the disabled white man calls attention to a hitherto unmarked body, and how disability feminizes bodies and thus complicates the idea of hegemonic masculinity. With this, the white, male and disabled war veteran engenders a reevaluation (1) of the construction of masculinity via the material body, and (2) of how disability as an intersectional category can add to our understanding of the (de)construction of masculinities. Via exemplary readings of D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and Ernest Hemingway’s *Fiesta: The Sun also Rises* I will illustrate that canonized literary texts register a distinct anxiety with contemporary constructions of masculine identities as strong and “whole” bodies. My talk will show how disabled male bodies in early twentieth-century literature foreground the fragmentation, complexity, and constructedness of a masculinity in crisis in a world troubled by the highly gendered enterprises of war and the imperial conquest.