AN EXPOSE OF MACHO CHARACTERS
IN LOUIS L'AMOUR'S WESTERN NOVELS:
BRIONNE, THE CALIFORNIOS, AND HONDO

Suatu Pengungkapan Para Tokoh "Macho" Dalam Tiga Novel
Cowboy Karja Louis L'Amour Brionne, The Californios, dan Hondo

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Captain John Smith and his ship called 'Mayflower' sailed for Virginia with one hundred and forty people aboard. It took four months sailing and thirty-nine people had died on the voyage (Baym, 1989:9). It seemed that the characteristics of the immigrants had strong spirit to motivate and drive them to go to the new land. The hostile Atlantic waves had caused death to many of them on their exodus. Indians were also hostile at that period. John Smith considered that the Indians were barbarous and savage, and he regarded the Indians as unregenerate, crafty, covetous, and malicious (Fine, 1984:21).

During the eighteenth century some new people had moved to the West. These men were very brave, strong in body, and hardworking. Tindal (1989:41) said that "most of these settlers were young males. They were under twenty-five years old." These young males were tested their personalities such as physical and non-physical strength. Those who were able to survive these requirements would become the winners as true macho males. Robertson (2990:115) stated that "the adaptation of backwoodsmen, frontiersmen, or the pioneers to the life in the wilderness was an important part of the creation of wilderness myth of American Character."

Related to those statements above, the writer of this study presents L'Amour's three novels, Bravura, The Californios, and Hondo, as the objects to be analyzed. James Brionne, Sean Mulken, and Hreno Lane, as three protagonists within these three western novels, personify the true Meaning of "Macho". They also have "Macho" characteristics such as strength, bravery, virility and manliness but retaining sensitivity. These characteristics support the image of the "macho" male. The macho character is represented in American daily life, as represented in many works of art, like novels.

The main objective of this study is to trace the phenomenon of the macho characters in the Western Frontier in America and social issue related to this social phenomenon where the macho character still exists and expose into how the macho character lives and manifests his existence in American Society as well as in American Western novels.

Theoretical Approach

The analysis of this thesis is concentrated on utilizing the American Studies method first offered by Henry Nash Smith. In his essay Can Ameri-
can Studies Develop a Method? As quoted by Kwist and Turpje (1980:14), Smith says that "the best thing we can do, in my opinion, is to conceive of American Studies as a collaboration among men working from within existing academic disciplines, but attempting to widen the boundaries imposed by conventional method of inquiry."

Literary theory is essential in analyzing L’Amour’s novels. Abrams’ (1979:22), “expressive approach” is applied which stresses the inner point of view of the authors. It believes that “a work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combine product of author’s perceptions, thought, and feelings.”

Historical approach is also used as an element of the American studies approach. This approach is related to Tremain McDowell in American studies method “Past, Present, and Future.” It means that background of the novel, author, and characters unity. These three novels: Bronco, The Californios, and Hondo are related to McDowell’s method that deals with historical and socio-cultural condition for the background of these novels.

Sociological approach also concerns a social phenomenon of American society in L’Amour’s three novels. This approach is applied to describe the relationship between the macho characters and American society.

Method of Research

This study is based on library research conducted in different places. The primary data used in the analysis are taken from Louis L’Amour’s three novels: Bronco, The Californios, and Hondo. His letters, autobiographies, and notes are also applied, considered being representative to the study.

American Journals, articles, critical essays, and theoretical writing are included as secondary data. These data are collected from the libraries of the University of Indonesia, Gadjah Mada University, and United States Information Service (USIS) in Jakarta.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

“Macho” is a word that is currently used in many countries in the world. The younger generation perceives this word to mean “looking like a tough man”, and believes that wearing jeans or “looking like Rambo” makes one “macho”. This is not the true sense of the word of
"macho" but is in fact, posturing characteristics of a "macho" image in society.

According to Radom House Dictionary of The English Language (Sein, 1986:558), "macho" is a Mexican-Spanish adjective typifying male characteristics, as strong, brave, virile but retaining sensitivity. These characteristics support the image of the "macho" male.

It can not be denied that the characteristics of "macho" exist in many western novels. Cavellu (1978:195) said that "Cooper as the founder of western novels presented his heroes, Natty Bumppo, Chingachgook, and Uncas are the men of the wilderness." Natty Bumppo fights the Indians in order to save lives of the White American settlers. However, Cooper's hero, Natty Bumppo does not always fight with the Indians. In fact, he makes friendship with the Indian Chief Chingachgook and Uncas. It seems that Cooper tried to bridge the wide mis-understanding between the White and the Indian.

Generally, a western hero is handsome, young, strong, in body, skillful in using guns, intelligent, protector, skillful in riding horse, and good fighter. The hero defends the oppressed and protects the weak againsts bandits. The theme that the "strong" will survive and the "weak" will not, exists in many American Western novels. The hero does not believe of murdering or taking revenge because of his attitudes as truly macho. Those who do murdering or taking revenge are weak characters and only posture a sense of macho.

Protagonists As True Machismo

James Brionne is a hero, in the novel of the same name Brionne which is described as a protagonist. He is tough, tall and wide-shouldered. His face is weathered from years of serving as a Major in General Ulysses Grant's army, fighting the Indians. There is something in his demeanour that makes his enemy third twice before attacking him.

After the death of his wife, Brionne decides to take his son Mat into the wilderness of the West to rebuild their lives. This shows of strength, both physical and non-physical, to Brionne's friends and to his son indicates that Brionne is considered as a macho male because these attitudes. He chooses a path whereby he will indoctrinate these macho attitudes into his son.

It is characteristic of the macho character that Brionne teaches Mat to protect people, particularly women. The opportunity to teach Mat this lesson presents itself when they are travelling on a train. When grass-tire threatens to engulf the train, and Brionne instructs Mat to take care of
the only female passenger, Miranda Loften.

"It's grass-fire, Mat," his father said; "you must take care of this lady. She don't know about such things and she may be frightened. But stay inside the car." He glanced around. Brionne spoke to one of the passengers: 'Private. Go forward along the board and round out all the men.' (p. 24)

In a macho manner, Brionne takes complete control of the situation, leading the other passengers in fighting the fire. In the sustained 'spirit' of machismo, Brionne actually wants Miranda to take care of his son, but is unable to admit that truth to either his son, or Miranda. Brionne's energy and ability to save the train and all the passengers are exhausted.

James Brionne uses rifle and Colt. He does not use until he is sure the position of his enemies. He can move very fast just like a ghost, very carefully, and tries not to cause any sounds that can invite the enemies.

Every single step of Brionne seems so flippant. Brionne knows exactly what kind of sound that can emerge in the night especially in the deep weather like that time. Holding a gun, he steps forward and bends his head down so that he can stay close to the ground. It seems that Brionne always considers his every single step. It is also because of Brionne's carefulness so that he can defeat his enemies one by one. His careful and quick movement makes him easily observe his enemies and hear any sounds that are caused by the enemies.

Although Brionne hears the sound of guns, he is not afraid. Moreover, he holds a gun that is always ready to shoot whenever he wants to. His accurate shot can defeat one of his enemies, Tardy Benton, a friend of the Allards.

Not only a tough guy, Brionne is also very adaptable and able to make plans quickly, without consultation - subjected only to his male pride. Brionne shows his macho ability from the very beginning of the novel until the final chapter.

In the novel entitled The Californios, a person that is the main character is Sean Mulkerin, the son of Jaime and Eileen Mulkerin. Sean is not only a sailor but also a reliable cowboy. In the true "macho" imagery of L'Amour's hero, Sean is strong in body, bold, and gallant. He is handsomely, dashing and his face shows strength coupled with kindness. Friends and enemies give careful consideration before challenging Sean in any respect.

Although a younger version of Brionne, Brionne and Sean share the same characteristics and personality traits. Sean too epitomizes the meaning of the term Macho. He is a strong man and also reliable. He
knows the ways of the mountain and the forests, he is confident in any given situation whether on land or sea. In his youth, he is able to kill wild animals such as mountain lions. He can wade through dangerous waters, without hesitation, and faces every situation with courage and determination. Sean’s father, Jaime Mulkerin, is not only a sailor, but also has served in the army, and is an reliable hunter, instilling the macho characteristics into Sean and then adequately training his son in the ways and meaning of true machismo.

Sean is not only skilled in using guns, but also skillful in modifying the guns and fixes them. Sean is very careful in traveling such as when he goes to the mountain to find the Old One. Sean is always alert knowing that he’s always followed by Zeke Wooston and his friends. Besides that, Sean is very sensitive and skillful in avoiding a danger. He moves so fast on hearing a suspicious sound. This is due to his experiences and trains instinct to always free himself from danger.

Sean always loads his gun to anticipate the existence of a danger that might happen at anytime. He is always ready with his gun on hand, moreover if he and his mother go to seek for gold in the mountain. Realizing the danger that might come at anytime, his gun is always in his hand.

Sean took up his Colt rifle and moved away from the fire but after a few minutes he was back. “Seems quiet enough,” he said. They sat together, talking very little, enjoying the night, the rest, and the food as well as the smell of wood smoke and coffee. (C. 107)

Even in relaxing and resting, Sean is always alert to face all the possibility of the danger that happens anytime. His skill in using guns is beyond any doubt. When he comes across with Zeke Wooston and Andres Machado and their men who follow him, Sean is fully self-confident. In such a situation, he is quite sure to defeat his enemies. Machado admires Sean’s skill as a sharp shooter.

No reason to be worried about Sean, since he can handle some troubles that might appear. Sean has enough experience his male pride automatically respond. Besides that, he is strong, brave, and good in fighting. So it seems all right for Sean to be in the forest, he can survive and fight against Wooston’s followers.

The main character of the novel entitled Hondo is a man called Hondo Lane. He is a half-Indian by breed, and lives with an Apache Indian tribe, for five years. His facial appearance is weathered and strong like an adventurer. There is no tenderness reflected in his face. He has only tenacity, strength, and virtues. Hondo is not only tough, but also brave.
He wanders alone through the Indian areas that are known to be savage and wild. From his experiences in living with the Indians for five years, he learns how to hunt and tame wild animals. Hondo perfects these skills and becomes more adept than most men.

Hondo’s characteristics and personality are truly within the personification of macho. He is not only tough and brave but he is also very strong. Living with the Indians he has learned how to use an axe. All people wonder and are amazed at his ability, at the way he swings his axe when he’s splitting woods. The swinging of Hondo’s axe is certain and skillful in modifying sing such as when always alert know- his friends. Besides things danger. He moves his experiences and us in his stance of a danger in his gan on hand, in his mountain. Real- his is always in his in a few minutes he is talking very little little, of wood smoke and y self-confident. Is his Machado admits! he can handle someth- his male pride brave, and good in rest he can survive

Unlike Brionne, Cotton Allard seems posturing characteristics of a macho in society. Cotton Allard is the male antagonist in Brionne. His physical appearance also epitomizes the macho characteristics and traits. Red and strong, little is young, strong, muscular, and tough, but Cotton is the antithesis of this face. He has the “brionne” in personality. Cotton Allard is not of good moral standing, ugh, but also bravely educated, expressing his maleness by means of fear. It is Cotton
Allard who causes the death of Brionne's wife, in an attempt to exact revenge on Brionne.

Cotton Allard comes to Brionne's house to take revenge. Unfortunately, he does not find Brionne at home therefore, Cotton Allard kills Brionne's wife, taking what he can from the house, before setting it alight. Cotton Allard and his friends seek revenge for any perceived wrong-doings and act in a manner that is more like a posturing of the macho image.

Cotton Allard knows Brionne for a brave man. He also recognizes that he does not possess Brionne's courage and defeats his enemies by means of wild and cunning. Devoid of principles and perhaps even conscious of Brionne's things, he moves and leaves the place. Cotton Allard is not a man worthy of emulation. His misguided sense of male pride and masculine virility make him uncharacteristically macho in personality.

Cotton Allard is more uncivilized than the Indians. He kills people without considering whether the victims are men, women, or children. He feels disappointed because the opportunity to kill Brionne and Mat has not presented itself. He vows to kill Mat, as Mat has witnessed Allard murder Mat's mother.

That woman https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethel_Monroe, I remember told Hoffman. "O, Cotton's killed twenty-five, thirty men I know of nine of them in face up gun battle and he's killed five, five women, but none of them ever made two think twice. Only that Brionne woman." (B. 56)

Brionne instills fear into Cotton Allard, as one is fearful, when one recognizes traits in another that one does not possess. Brionne possesses all that Allard pretends to possess - bravery, strength, male pride, and masculine virility. Fearless only before those weaker than himself, Cotton Allard is fearful of Brionne and thinks twice when the opportunity comes to kill Brionne.

Both James Brionce and Cotton Allard have the same physical appearance as macho characters, but they are different moral standards and attitudes. In other words, James Brionce keeps the true macho characteristics, but Cotton Allard does not.

Zeke Wooston has "macho" appearance, like others of people frighten of Sean Munken. Both friends and enemies are also afraid of Zeke Wooston. He has a big body, tough and cruel. He has great power since he is a little boy when he grows up, he is respected by many people. That is why he is very proud of his power, even many people are afraid of him. As antagonist in The Californias, he does not have macho charac-
teristics. He has just had posturing one, he is a kind of tricky person.

Another bad trait of Zeke Wooston is even though he does not like Machado, he needs Machado's help very much. He does not want to dispute with Machado. Wooston realizes that he might not continue his journey because he does not have enough followers.

Wooston was angry, but he had no wish to have troubles with Machado, whom he might need very badly, but he did not wish to pursue a chase into this wild country with only his own group. There were too few of them. (C.110)

As a macho male Wooston has to pay attention to other people who ever they are. Wooston does not care about Russel's condition. What he cares about is that he does not like if failures and mistakes have happened. As a result, he will not let Russel live longer. However, for Sean's friends, Wooston is not more than a thief.

Another antagonist in Honda is an Apache man, Silva. He is feared both friends and enemies. He has a tall and muscled body and he is also broad - chested which reflected his strength and his tenacity. Silva is not as tall as Honda Lane but his body is stronger and more powerful. It is caused by his environment and his way as Indian Apaches' life.

Generally, the men of Apache are not too tall but they are extremely strong and tough. They have also amazing courage, and with the courage is something that needed by a man that is considered as "macho". Silva is brave and tough but he hates a small boy named Johnny. He points his gun at Silva's who is grasping his mother. Unexpectedly, the gun explodes and hits Silva's head. It is shocking everybody includes Vitoro, the chief of Indian Apache. Vitoro makes Johnny his brother by blood and Johnny will be under his protection. Johnny is called a small warrior of the Moon Dog Lodge of the Chiricahua Apache. This makes Silva more hated Johnny.

Silva treats woman badly. After the accident happens to Silva, he comes several times to Angie home and intimidates her. Once, he says to Angie, "May be soon, you be my square." (H.92) This contradicts to Vitoro's speech that "an Apache woman for an Apache man - a white woman for a white man." (H.77) Silva aces without being known by the Indian chief, Vitoro. This attitude also contradicts with the characteristics of macho character who has to protect woman from dangerous situation.

Vitoro and other Indians watch Silva and Honda fighting. With his macho sensitivities, Honda feels the sharp point of the knife rip his shirt, then he stomps down hard with his both on Silva's bare foot and stashes
with his knife edge. Silva twists away but the knife leaves a red line that rapidly turns red with blood along the shoulder.

Hondo pressed forward against the heat, holding the knife in the wound to prevent his with drawn. They went to the ground and Hondo caught Silva's hair and forced his head back, exposing the gnawed throat, then he put the edge of his knife against the throat of the Indian and looked up at Vitore. (H113)

For Indian Apaches, a man who wins the fight, though he is an enemy will be respected as a warrior. Silva is defeated by Hondo. They really keep their promise, Hondo is free. Silva leaves the place and promises to himself to take revenge. This is not the macho characteristics, because taking revenge is not the attitude of the real macho character, but more the attitude of the weaker character.

At least Silva leads his people to fight against military. He meets Hondo in the battle who also leads the military. This makes him very happy because Silva gets chance to take revenge, he really wants to kill his big enemy, Hondo. Silva has a bad temper that makes him weak in the battle, he cannot control his emotion to defeat his big enemy. Unlucky for him, Silva cannot kill Hondo, but he is killed by Hondo in the fight.

CONCLUSION

True machismo has been depicted by names Brieone, Sean Mulkerin, and Hondo Lane both physical and non-physical. They are strong in bodies, their facial appearance are weathered like adventures. They also have true of macho characteristics such as emotional, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic personality. Unlike James Brieone, Sean Mulkerin, and Hondo as the protagonists who have true machismo, Cotton Allard, Zeke Woodson and Silva do not have the moral standards and attitudes of true macho characteristics. That means they are only posturing characteristic of macho.

These three protagonists consistently show their macho characteristics from the very beginning of the novel until the final chapters. The male principle in L'Amour's novels seem generally consistent with the traditional Western formula. The true macho characters are independent, reliable and courageous, for example James Brieone, Sean Mulkerin and Hondo Lane trust nothing but their weapons, horses, and the caution with which they ride. The strongest macho male is he who can stand alone.

The concept of macho changes from era to era. The machismo exists in L'Amour's novels: Brieone, The California, and Hondo represent the nine-
teenth century where lot of places are still wilderness. Nowadays there is modern macho who portrays his era. Sylvester Stallone is one of famous actors in the world who plays some movies such as Rambo and Cliffhanger. He is a tough guy and a protector of the weak. It seems that machismo still exists in American society which always changes from time to time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


