MASCU LINITIES

a journal of identity and culture

Issue 1

January - June 2014
ISSN:

CONTACT

e-mail
editors@masculinitiesjournal.org
masculinitiesjournal@gmail.com

Murat GOC
English Language and Literature Dept.
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Pamukkale University
Denizli, Turkey
EDITORIAL BOARD

Editors

Murat Goc
(Pamukkale University)

Ozlem Duva Kaya
(Dokuz Eylül University)

Cimen Gunay
(Ozyegin University)

Seref Uluocak
(Onsekiz Mart University)

Mehmet Bozok
( Maltepe University)

Selin Akyüz
(Zirve University)

Assistant Editors

Senol Topcu

Tebessum Yılmaz

Advisory Board

Raewyn Connell
University of Sydney

Michael Kimmel
SUNY

Serpil Sancar
Ankara University
Introduction and Welcome

Mehmet Bozok

Article

Understanding Male Shame
Aneta Stepien

Proustian Desire and the Queering of Masculinity in Gay Cinematic Romance
Anna Fahraeus

Active Changes in Monolithic Manliness: The Case of the 2004 NHL Lockout
Jessica L. Tinklenberg and Jeremy L. Schnieder

Some Disputes Surrounding Masculinity as a Legitimate Category of Historical Inquiry in the Study of Late Antiquity
Michael Edward Stewart

Fur Traders, Voyageurs, and Coureurs des Bois: Economic Masculinities in French Canadian Fur Trade Society, 1635-1754
Sandra Slater

Reviews
Swaralipi Nandi and Esha Chatterjee (eds.) Spectacles of Blood: A Study of Masculinity and Violence in Postcolonial Films.
Saayan Chattopadhyay

Media, Masculinities and Other Interpretive Frameworks: Reflecting on Audience, Representation, Bodies and Mark Moss’ The Media and Models of Masculinity.
Clifton Evers
INTRODUCTION and WELCOME

Critical studies on men and masculinities, the interdisciplinary field that investigates men and masculinities in alliance with feminist and/or LGBTQ schools of critical studies, is a relatively young and growing field of study in social sciences and humanities. Since its academic debut in late 1970’s, it demonstrated quite a promising development. In the powerful wave of the opposing movements of the period, feminist and LGBTQ theories, ideas, activisms, talks and consciousness raising activities unsettled and awakened the men in academia as well as in activist groups. The pioneers of masculinity studies realized that it was almost always the men who were the main actors, the major beneficiaries, and initiators of the heteronormative gender order. They also envisioned that patriarchal power networks severely abuse men as well as women and LGBTQ individuals. They also stressed that the roles attributed to men in patriarchal order were often regarded as unethical, which, consequently, initiated a critical investigation of heteronormative and patriarchal gender order and eventually paved the way for critical studies of men and masculinities in late 1970’s in academia in the Western countries.

Initially, criticism of men’s roles, and raising gender awareness towards masculinity grew in light of feminist debates at that time. The forerunners of critical studies on men and masculinities largely supported feminist and LGBTQ debates and struggles, and remained indebted to already established realms of gender studies to a great extent. Only after 1980’s, did an original theoretical framework and critical researches originate in the field.
of men and masculinities thanks to the pioneering studies of authors such as Raewyn Connell, Michael Kimmel, Jeff Hearn, David Morgan, Harry Brod, Victor Seidler, and John Stoltenberg among many others, which definitely empowered the development of critical studies of men and masculinities.

From the very onset of its establishment, critical studies of men and masculinities aimed to investigate “men” and “masculinities” as primary agents and beneficiaries of patriarchy, criticise the role of men and masculinities in creating socially and culturally disadvantaged positions for women and LGBTQs, and focus on a vast array of issues, including (but not limited to) identities, experiences, subjectivities, discourses, representations, sexualities, bodies, power, emotions, politics, cultures, social relations, intimacies, socializations, childhood, youth, fatherhood, elderliness, families, violences, literature, films, media, and so on and so forth.

The critical inquiry of men and masculinities was widely welcomed worldwide and quickly inspired valuable contributions, detailed studies and attentive discussions, which affirmed the vital need for a criticism of patriarchal masculinities. The first examples of such critical investigations started in Turkey as early as 1990s where the debates on men and masculinities achieved an increasing popularity for the last two decades both in academic circles and among activist groups. With a long standing patriarchal cultural and historical background of the Middle East as well as being situated within the conflict-creating tensions of the West and the East, Turkey has had a long and controversial history in which women and LGBTQs (and also men) have been severely oppressed by a male dominated gender order, which still today shouldn’t be considered as a bolt out of the blue.

Global capitalism and patriarchy have recently strengthened their positions while new forms of resistance have
emerged to counterbalance the rampant invasion of everyday lives of ordinary people by global monopolies. Conservatism among such forms of resistance is becoming more widespread than ever around the world and in Turkey. Women are seemingly imprisoned to domestic spheres as mothers and housewives. A woman outside her house, unveiled, single, free, living individual lives without the company of a male relative has remained to be a spectre haunting the streets and houses of Turkey. The Prime Minister of Turkey has repeatedly expressed his desire that women should give birth to at least three children. Abortion as well as caesarean delivery is still legal but made practically difficult. Women in Turkey are widely kept away from waged labour and when they do have a career opportunity, they are far from achieving equal pay for equal work. Women are traditionally forced to marry in earlier ages and child brides still pose a problem in contemporary Turkey. Violence against women is very common: women are murdered, beaten, raped, abused and they experience sexual and verbal harassment ever so often. Similarly, LGBTQs are extensively marginalized and they are excommunicated from social and cultural life, being treated as people stricken with plague that need medical attention. They are rarely able to make a living except sex trade. The parliamentary representation of the LGBTQs is literally none even while that of the women is quite limited. Despite all these drawbacks and obstacles, the feminist movement and the LGBTQ movements in Turkey have gained widespread acceptance and strength. The contemporary feminist struggle deals with every aspect of women’s position in the country, with the support of the increasing number of women’s studies departments and NGO’s as well as the consciousness-raising groups and street activism. The LGBTQ movements contributed a lot to the increasing visibility of lesbians, gays, trans and queer people. The LGBTQs and the feminists were in the front lines of the Gezi Resistance in summer 2013 and gained public visibility as one of the strongest actors of
the resistance. Profeminist men’s groups started to question
themselves and their roles in patriarchy, leading to the formation
of profeminist and proqueer groups of men in fin de siècle Turkey.

_Masculinities Journal_ was born in such an attempt to
develop a critical reading of men and masculinities. The common
incentive to bring everyone with a critical perspective towards
men and masculinities together, to compile publications, studies
and researches, to collaborate with organizations, scholars,
activists, NGO members resulted in incorporating a study group,
the _Initiative for Critical Studies of Masculinities (Eleştirel Erkeklik
İncelemeleri İnisiyatifi)_ in 2013. The group is composed of scholars
and activists from different disciplines and different parts of the
country and they are organizing workshops around Turkey¹. We
also organize an international symposium in Izmir to in
September 2014 on men and masculinities and publish
_Masculinities Journal_, the first journal on men and masculinities in
Turkey with a hope to contribute to flourish and broaden the
critical debates in this field.

Welcome to the first issue of _Masculinities Journal_, the very
first offspring of our humble efforts. _Masculinities Journal_ is a
peer-reviewed academic journal and it aims to become an
essential source for scholars, researchers, activists and anyone
who wish to follow the contemporary debates in critical studies
on men and masculinities. We are planning to provide a critical
platform to bring together critical discussions on men and
masculinities from a wide range of disciplines in social sciences
and humanities. We hope that the journal will establish and

---

¹ In November 2, 2013 they organized a workshop “Politics and Masculinity” in
Trabzon; in February 1, 2014 another workshop in Istanbul on “Visual Culture and
Masculinity” in Istanbul; and in April 26, 2014 a final workshop for this year is
planned to take place in Ankara.
maintain an academic standard and it will be recognized as one of
the leading journals on men and masculinities in the shortest time
possible. It is going to be published biannually, in January and July
and, from our second issue onwards, we will encourage
contributions, i.e. original articles, essays and book reviews, news
on activities and NGO operations on men and masculinities, in
both languages, in English and in Turkish.

***

In this issue, you are going to find many valuable
contributions.

Aneta Stepien wrote about cultural functioning of male
shame. Her article, “Understanding Male Shame”, concentrates on
Steve McQueen’s film “Shame”, and she argues that as an emotion,
shame has the potential of emasculating the men, stripping them
of male power, leaving them effeminate and vulnerable. In
“Proustian Desire and the Queering of Masculinity in Gay
Cinematic Romance”, Anna Fahraeus investigates twenty five gay
romantic dramas from the United States, Europe, Israel and
Argentina. She emphasizes that the common motif in gay
romances is that the straight men eventually realize their in fact
being homosexuals, or intrinsically embody homosexual desire,
within a neo-traditional romantic framework. Jessica L.
Tinklenberg and Jeremy L. Schneider discuss the relation between
sports and masculinities. Their article entitled “Active Changes in
Monolithic Manliness: The Case of the 2004 NHL Lockout”
presents a discussion of the consequences of the surging
patriarchal qualities and expressions of masculinities after 2004-
2005 National Hockey League Lockout. Tinklenberg and
Schneider argue the inadequacy of hegemonic masculinity
perspective and propose using activity theory in the research on
male roles, codes of masculinity and homosocial relations. In
“Some Disputes Surrounding Masculinity as a Legitimate Category
of Historical Inquiry in the Study of Late Antiquity”, Michael Edward Stewart investigates the considerations of “masculinity” in the late antiquity. Criticising the poverty of the mainstream use of the concept, the author argues that the ideologies encompassing different representations of masculinities can be a tool for understanding some of the disputes surrounding the ancient Roman and early Byzantium. Sandra Slater deals with problems around various forms of masculinities in Canadian fur trade in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Slater discusses in “Fur Traders, Voyageurs, and Coureurs des Bois: Economic Masculinities in French Canadian Fur Trade Society, 1635-1754” that different actors of fur trading produced different types of masculinities that competed with others. There are two book reviews in this issue both of which focus on media and movies. Saayan Chattopadhyay reviews Spectacles of Blood: A Study of Masculinity and Violence in Postcolonial Films edited by Swaralipi Nandi and Esha Chatterjee while Clifton Evers reviews The Media and Models of Masculinity of Mark Moss.

***

We hope you enjoy Masculinities Journal. We are looking forward to having your contributions in our forthcoming issues.

Mehmet Bozok, PhD

On behalf of the editorial board of the Masculinities Journal.
Understanding Male Shame

Aneta Stepień

Abstract:

In pursuit of a better understanding of the cultural functioning of male gender, this paper aims to explain the paradoxes of shame in men, which, as distinguished from female shame, appears to be an emotion considered shameful in men. Drawing upon interdisciplinary research on shame, and on masculinity in cultural representations, this analysis begins with an overview of the status of shame in patriarchal contexts, where male shame has been interpreted in terms of honour. Furthermore, the paper traces the disturbance to the masculine hegemony brought by feminist discourses, looking at the ways in which the redefinition of male roles by feminism repositions male shame, as now applying directly to the male body. Finally, based on the film by Steven McQueen Shame (2011), the paper discusses shame in the contemporary, urban context to reveal that shame in application to postmodern man becomes an abject. As an emotion that has the ability to undermine and emasculate men, shame, in particular when applied to the idea of masculinity based on performance, has to be masked and suppressed to protect male identity.

Keywords: masculinity, shame, honour, patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, feminism, male body, nakedness, penis.

Shame as honour

When Omar, a character of Salman Rushdie's novel, Shame (1983), asks his mother what does shame feel like, Chhunni-ma replies: “it makes women feel like to cry and die... but men, it makes them go wild”. Further, Omar’s mother provides a
description of the physical characteristics of shame: “your face gets hot”, that indicates blushing, “but your heart is shivering” points to the feeling of coldness (Rushdie 39). Shame makes one ‘burn’ from shame before others and, equally, it paralyses on the inside. These somatic reactions to shame are embodied in SufiyaZinobia, one of the main protagonists of the novel described as “too easily shamed”, and therefore blushing constantly (90). Although *Shame* deals primarily with the religious and political situation during the late twentieth century in Pakistan, Rushdie dedicates a great deal of his tale to gendered implications of shame as well. The introduced comment of Chhunni-ma's refers to differences in the manifestation of shame in men and women, a subject of this paper, which centres on male shame specifically. The paper provides a theoretical discussion of shame carried out with a reference to, in particular, Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame*, and Steven McQueen’s 2011 film with the same title.

Most definitions of shame link the emotion to a kind of exposure. Helen Merrell Lynd notes that the experience of shame appears to embody the root meaning of the word “to uncover, to expose, to wound”. These are experiences of exposure “of peculiarly sensitive, intimate, vulnerable aspects of the self” adds Lynd (27). As apparent from Lynd’s definition, shame is an intense emotion that takes over the whole self, ‘I am the shame I feel’, hence, most likely it incites a wish to hide or disappear. Although for both genders, the same problem can be the source of shame, e.g., failing in a professional career, appearance or health, men may tend to hide their shame rather than admit it. The parabolic story by philosopher LeszekKołakowski illustrates how admitting shame triggers even greater shame in men. “The Tale of a Great Shame” from the collection *Tales from the Kingdom of Lailonia* (1989), describes the story of a soldier Rio who, while doing his military service, began to feel ashamed when he could not remember the colour of the eyes of his beloved Muria. Neither could he recall the colour of her hair. Rio was about to write to Muria asking her for help but he felt that admitting his failure would cause even greater shame. His shame was so
great that the soldier began to shrink, in the end reaching the size of a man’s finger. Rio was jailed and, because of his diminished size, placed in a food can. The judge sentenced him to “fading away from shame” explaining that he broke the army code, which states that a soldier “may not be ashamed, because he might shrink and thereby diminish his fighting ability” (Kolakowski 88). As it emerges from Kolakowski’s story, feeling shame, expressed metaphorically as the sensation of shrinking, makes men vulnerable. Shame in men thus can be viewed as a certain paradox for, although it is felt, it has to be denied or masked.

Shame operates differently in men and women which relates to distinct approaches to masculinity and femininity, and following on from that, the different social roles ascribed to each sex. The manifestation of the affect in men and women, therefore may be considered the product of learnt gendered gestures, or as Judith Butler proposes, gender performance that enhance the ideals of either manliness or womanliness in the given culture. It is not that shame is informed by the politics of gender alone; it is also formed by religious, national and cultural ideologies. Rushdie’s interpretation of shame links it directly to Pakistan and its predominantly patriarchal culture; however, the novel’s invocation of Pakistan could be seen as representing patriarchal culture more generally since Rushdie remarks: “[t]he country in this story is not Pakistan or not quite” (29). In Rushdie’s Pakistan, shame stands for a synonym of a woman embodied in SufiyaZinobia herself, who was born a girl whereas her father expected a boy: “[b]eing born as a girl in a society which values boys is a shame” argues Roshin. George in his notes on Rushdie’s novel recalling words of Sufiya’s own mother who refers to her daughter as “my shame” (George 133). As evident in the remark made by one of the male protagonists of the novel, woman is a disgraced word: “Woman (...) what a term! Is there no end to the burdens this word is capable of bearing? Was there ever such a broad-backed and also such a dirty word?” (Rushdie 62). Why woman is a ‘dirty’ word becomes apparent when looking at the structure of male shame, which, in cultures such as Pakistan has been defined in
terms of honour. Significantly, another of *Shame*'s protagonists observes that a “man’s honour is in his woman”, emphasizing woman’s appropriate conduct as essential for a man to maintain his respect in the eyes of others (Rushdie 103). In order to regain his honour, a man has to fight and, if necessary, to kill. When shamed, men quite literally ‘go wild’, using the expression of Rushdie’s character, where ‘wildness’ indicates the feeling of shame in men. In other words, in the patriarchal reality, such as that portrayed in *Shame*, the loss of honour in men results in violence known as ‘honour killing’, that is a killing of a family member, in this case, a woman, who is believed to have brought dishonour upon the entire family. The explanation of male honour as strongly relying on women’s behavior proves very helpful in discovering the real reason behind women being punished. In *Shame and Sexuality* (2008), Clare Pajaczkowska and Ivan Ward state the real reason of the killing is not the women’s misconduct but men’s shame felt before others:

One might speculate that, whatever the role of cultural obligations and tradition, it is the shame of other men seeing the perpetrator unable to control ‘his’ women which motivates such action. The shame, in other words, of being seen as impotent and emasculated ("Introduction” 9).

From the above, it becomes clear the purpose of the killing is not aimed at punishing the shameless woman but at averting the shame felt by men.

Since in patriarchal cultures male shame relates directly to female shame, it is crucial to shed some light on the symbolism of distinct cultural representations of male and female shame. In his investigation of manhood in many traditional cultures, *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (1987), David Gilmore observes that since a great part of male honour depends on woman’s conduct, patriarchal cultures invest great efforts in control of the female body and behaviour. Shaming practices are one of the ways to discipline women and appoint what behaviours are appropriate for them (Gilmore 1987, 4). Shame in
women, in the patriarchal context, has at least two dimensions: on the one hand, shame understood as purity and chastity is considered a virtue. According to Gilmore, for a woman, being modest and bashful translates as hiding her sexual needs in the pursuit of good reputation and taking good care of her body, achieved primarily by hiding it from others and keeping it pure; the most extreme form of that practice is the hijab used by women to cover their body. On the other hand, the behaviour suggesting woman’s promiscuity indicates another kind of shame; namely, a disgrace that she brings onto others related to her, while her body becomes a synecdoche of that shame. In “The Shame of Being a Man”, Steven Connor observes that female shame has mostly been disciplinary:

(...) in the shame attaching to menstruation and pregnancy and illegitimate birth and excessive or unfeminine behaviour (drunkenness, ribaldry, lewdness, loose talk), shaming has worked to keep females in bounds, docile, infant, obedient (Connor 219).

While women disgrace themselves and others through what is perceived as shameless behaviour, men’s sexual conquests secure their image as powerful and dominating. In her sharp comment Carol Delaney concludes that female genitalia, as opposed to male “are not the source of pride but the token of her shame” (42). Aforementioned social practices of appointing certain female behaviours and features as shameful reinforce patriarchal dominance and support women’s exclusion from many domains of public life. ‘Shameless’ women are being viewed as a threat to the patriarchal order for they are beyond the concept of moral conduct and men or other women, such as mothers who follow the same order, can no longer maintain control over them; hence, shame and shaming politics in patriarchal societies should be seen primarily as a method of maintaining power over women.
Although, in many world cultures, nakedness, sexual desires and sexuality in general, are considered shameful subjects and taboo, shame around sexuality and the body has traditionally been attached to the female body, with religion playing a major part in this process. A reading of the painting by an Italian artist Masaccio, *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden* (1425), provides an ideal artistic example of the traditional representation of female and male shame for Western
cultures as well as the embodiment of Christian politics of shame (see pic.1). The painting shows the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the biblical Eden and the expression of shame felt at their deed. Adam manifests the emotion in a gesture of hiding his face in hands whereas Eve covers her breasts and her genitalia. Until the 17th century, when the fig leaves had been successively composed by the church authorities to conceal the couples’ intimate parts, Adam’s genitalia depicted with anatomical precision were shown on the painting. In his reading of Masaccio’s work, James Cliffton explains that Adam’s shame depicted as the covered face evokes association with the mind and rationality; it is a spiritual shame of which head and face are symbols and which are superior to the other parts of his body. Eve’s position draws attention to the intimate parts of her body, pointing to physicality and sexuality, which became the symbolic representation of shame in women (Clifton 642). By depicting the couple in a way that ascribes reason and spirituality to the man, leaving the woman to the realm of the body, which in Western imagination symbolises shamelessness, temptation and the source of sin, Masaccio underlines traditional gender differentiation in Christian cultures. On the picture, Adam ‘loses his face’, or fears ‘losing his face’, meaning God’s respect, which points at the association of his shame with honour. Yet, Adam’s hiding of the face could also be read as his avoidance in acknowledging his wrongdoing and thus his failure with God. It can be concluded, that Masaccio’s work depicts, but also immortalizes for centuries, certain codes of expressing female and male shame imposed by the Catholic Church’s politics of gender and morality, which then impacted on other, non-religious forms of cultural representation.

Looking at the European works of literature, it becomes apparent that the patterns of representing male and female shame, described above, still prevail at the beginning of the 20th century. In Issues of Shame and Guilt in the Modern Novel (2009), David Tenenbaum discusses the works of writers such as Conrad, Kafka, Camus, Wilde and Proust, tracing the changes in literary descriptions of remorse fostered by modernist
literature’s response to normative ethical standards. The characters’ sense of having obligations to serve for society’s good and being moral clashes with their inappropriate desires and impulses, such as for instance anti-heroic behaviour in *Lord Jim*, homosexual desires expressed in *Ulysses* and *Dorian Grey* or existential guilt in Kafka and Camus. Tenenbaum’s descriptions of shame and guilt are closely related to the cultural and religious morals of the time, with eighteen century philosophy, especially that of Hume’s theory of the innate sense of social responsibility, evidently influencing the cultural politics of identity in many European societies. Tenenbaum’s analysis shows that, at the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe, the notion of honour appoints what is considered appropriate, i.e. moral, behaviour in men. In *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, Hallward directs such words to Dorian: “Every gentleman is interested in his good name ... One has a right to judge of a man by the effects he has over his friends. Yours seem to lose all sense of honour” (Wild 174). Before Dorian’s transformation into a cynical, “mad for pleasure” and “shameless” man, he values the young actress, Sibyl Vane, an object of his passion, by measures of a middle-class English gentleman, emphasizing her innocence and shyness. He describes his first offstage encounter with Sibyl in the words, “Sibyl? Oh, she was so shy, so gentle” (Wild 65). These and other literary examples suggest that in patriarchal cultures having shame indicates an appropriate behaviour in women for the qualities such as shyness, modesty and bashfulness are a required norm of a ‘respectful’ woman. The quality mostly associated with men, with regard to respectability, is honour.

**Shamed by feminism**

In modern societies which have been implementing ideas of gender equality, and where the notion of honour appears to have lost its traditional value, shame in relation to masculinity gains a new dimension that is worth a closer analysis. During the last decades,
cultures and societies underwent huge transformations with regard to politics of gender and sexuality, following the economic and political changes of the 1960s in the United States and the 1980s in the United Kingdom, in particular. These resulted in the emergence of consumerist societies, transforming the role and expectations of what does it mean to be ‘a man’. In *Masculinities and Culture* (2002), John Beynon explains how economic and social changes destroyed the patterns of employment replacing the work place and class-based hierarchy of masculinities with the ones based on style and fashion: “what emerged was a hierarchy of masculinities based on appearance and which abolished more traditional masculine divisions” (106). In addition, the 1950s US pop culture contributed to the gradual commercialisation of the male body with the surfacing of men “dressed to be looked at and admired”, the ideals which slowly soaked into other European cultures (Beynon 102). Media, style magazines for men and advertisements with its emphasis on promotion, transformed the politics of looking at the male body as well as men’s attitude toward their own corporeality. In this new “culture of appearances”, the notion of honour was substituted by the category of achievement. In addition to this new idea of male gender, the feminist movements, especially those of the 1980s and 1990s, brought a change to male roles in society. As a result of the emergence of a ‘New Man’, today men are expected to actively participate in domestic life as fathers, husbands or partners, sharing the responsibility of raising kids and running the household. Nevertheless, the traditional, or more precisely, patriarchal patterns of gender are deeply rooted in culture and are still actively influencing male behaviour and the idea of what it means to be a ‘real’ man, in men and in women alike.

In *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (1991), David Gilmore observes that today real manhood is “a precarious or artificial state that boys must win against powerful odds” and that true manhood needs “a dramatic proof” (11). It is an ideal to which men and boys aspire and that “their culture demands of them as a measure of belonging” (Gilmore 1991,17). Although this quality is highly marked in
Morocco, Egypt, and some other Mediterranean-area cultures, true manhood in other cultures frequently shows an inner insecurity and has to be confirmed by various performances and rites. According to Gilmore, those who do not accomplish the ideal are made to believe that they failed, which undermines their social esteem. These new demands of manhood put a constant pressure on men to perform ‘manly’, in other words, to exaggerate the qualities traditionally associated with masculine domination, such as power, strength and authority. The author of *Manhood in the Making* demonstrates the presence of such practices in American culture which enhance the heroic image of achieved manhood apparent in Italian-American gangster culture, strongly influenced by the Mediterranean models of masculinity, Hollywood Western films, Rambo-like imagery and computer games featuring strong and forceful types of male characters. The emergence of various forms of hard masculinity can be viewed as a response to feminism, which makes men anxious about their weakening position within the gender order. A literary critic, James Penner, writes in *Pinks, Pansies, and Punks* (2011) that ‘hardness’ is seen as representing phallic dominance:

> Hardness is not merely a phallic fantasy. Culturally and psychologically, hardness functions as a powerful structuring mechanism that shapes and influences male behavior and masculine gender norms. Hardness is tacitly encouraged and understood as a social ideal while softness is overtly stigmatized (Penner 15).

These ideas translate further into images of the male and female body in the cultural psyche. While traditionally, in Western societies, the female body symbolizes maternity, eroticism and weakness thus softness, the male body represents power, authority and strength, an embodiment of hardness. Although these patterns of masculinity and femininity may be constantly modulated, permitting ‘hardness’ and physical fitness as feminine qualities in women, the physical strength in men still seems to constitute an essence of manliness: “hardness in women, but never
softness in men” (Bordo 292). With regard to this, Susan Bordo stresses that shame indeed is an undesirable quality in men for it is considered a softening emotion and “[T]o be exposed as “soft” at the core is one of the worst things a man can suffer in this [American]culture” (Bordo 55).

After the emergence of feminist discourses in the second half of the 20th century, being a man appears a constant negotiation between masculinity associated with patriarchy and its pursuit of dominance, thus hard masculinity and masculinity which is characterized by abandonment of the tendencies to dominate over others and hence, associated with softness in the cultural psyche. In Posting the Male, Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene, investigate the new conditions of, specifically, British masculinity in relation to the notion of ‘masculinity crisis’. The authors observe:

(...) the ‘crisis’ of contemporary masculinity could be said to derive from men’s exposure to two antagonistic sets of imperatives and ideals – one patriarchal, the other feminist or post-patriarchal – resulting in a behavioural and self-constitutive quandary that is experienced as stressful because it appears so utterly irresolvable (Lea and Schoene 12).

In social practice this translates to men balancing their behavior between that considered too emotional and sissy, and on the other hand, not wanting to be a violent brute or a sexist. It has to be stressed, that the idea that masculinity is in crisis, appears a reaction to the interrogation of a hegemonic conception of masculinity in particular. In Masculinities, a 1995 study of issues surrounding European and American masculinity, Raewyn Connell explains that hegemonic masculinity is one form of masculinity which is culturally exalted:

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant
position of men and the subordination of women (Connell 77).

As evident from this passage, hegemony of certain models of masculinity relates to the structures of power in the society, where hegemonic masculinity is granted the position of leadership. It has to be stressed however, that the phrase ‘masculinity crisis’ in itself reinforces the hegemonic model of masculinity precisely by suggesting the existence of some right kind of masculinity. Hence, for greater clarity of the term it is worth adding the adjective ‘hegemonic’ or ‘dominant’ masculinity, i.e. white and heterosexual, to indicate what specific pattern of masculinity has been interrogated. The term ‘masculinity crisis’ excludes the variety of counter-hegemonic masculinities, such as gay or trans, as potentially threatening the dominating model of the male ideal.

These new conditions of masculinity may result in perception of feminism as undermining male position in society. In the past, merely the fact of being born male secured certain social authority and power, especially over women. One could lose honour but one still would be a man; a man without honour, to be precise. The traditional masculine subject while confronted with its general postmodern destabilization finds itself, in the words of Thomas Byers, “beset by a profound existential panic or ... despair”. As Byers observes the seeming manifestations of the New Man, whether in film or literature, are a mere “fantasy” and the new man appears as a slightly reconstructed hegemonic man, which combines “a certain apparent accommodation of feminism with a deep-seated misogyny” (qtd.in Lea and Schoene 15).

Elspeth Probyn takes this argument even further, stating that feminism itself can be a source of shame in men. Probyn explains that although “feminism has put forward ideals that often inspire the best in people” at the same time, it is also easy to fall short (76). Based on her analysis of the backlash website (www.backlash.com), Probyn argues that the occurrence of the backlash movement is a response to the “excess of feminism” and the reason for male trouble (Probyn 80). To support her
argument, she introduces a post by Wade Balder, who, on the backlash website, touches upon the shaming quality of feminism:

While most of us shame to some degree, my guess is that women use it more than men...Men have used their larger size to intimidate and control power. Women have had to resort to more subtle devices, such as shame. ...Women will probably continue to shame men. ...To a large degree feminism has shamed men into silence in the political sphere (qtd.in Probyn 80).

How can one understand Blader’s words that feminism “shamed men into silence”?

Whereas female shame has been recognised and interpreted from numerous and varied perspectives, masculinity itself only recently became a subject of critical analysis. Arguably, the reason for the omission of the analysis of male shame, in particular with regard to white, heterosexual masculinity (hegemonic masculinity), is the status of men within feminist critique. Thanks to feminist studies, the issues of women’s shame and humiliation, shame of the body as well as different forms of abuse emotional, verbal, physical and sexual, which have traditionally shaped the experience of women under patriarchy, were brought to attention. One of such examples worth mentioning is Brooks Bouson’s study of female shame Embodied Shame (2009), where she discusses how various forms of abuse as well as sexual, racial, and cultural denigration affect women’s perceptions of their bodies and shape their identities. Yet, to a certain degree feminism has created and promoted an image of men as perpetrators of oppression and violence against women. Because women are perceived as victims of patriarchy (men), and shame is an emotion considered mainly in such categories, namely, as victim (shamed) and perpetrator (shamer), it is understandable how for feminists in particular considering men as victims of any kind would deprive their critique of patriarchy of sharpness. Another reason for the lack of attention to male shame may
be the status of shame itself since shame points to the minority, to the inferior, whereas men under patriarchy assume the position of domination. In *Queer Attachments* (2008), a study of cultural politics on shame, Sally Munt observes that shame ‘performs’ on the social level to mark and marginalise certain groups. Many of these groups are common targets whose victimisation remains historically long-lasting, such as the underclass, the urban poor, peasants, ‘gypsies’, Travellers or homosexuals (Munt 3). The development of postcolonial and queer studies indeed contributed to the emergence of many works about shame, in relation to those persecuted and humiliated in the process of colonialisation and because of their ethnicity or sexuality (*gay shame*). That explains why male shame that does not relate to ethnicity or homosexuality appears to stay on the peripheries of academic research. Finally, there is reluctance on the part of men to study shame since the emotion is considered emasculating.

**Male shame today**

Shame, nevertheless, appears a suitable perspective to approach the subject of masculinity for it can indeed reveal something about the experience of being a man; on the one hand, reading male strategies of acknowledging, experiencing and dealing with the emotion enables us to see in what ways male gender is constructed primarily as a symbol of power and, on the other hand, how admitting shame by men is viewed as a symptom of weakness. A better understating of the nature of shame may be useful to explain a reluctance to expose men in the way women have been exposed within cultural representations. Hollywood film productions appear particularly protective of the male ego, rarely allowing the viewer to enjoy the male body, in contrast to the female body, which has been highly sexualized and exploited in various cinematic productions. Katherine Sheets-Johnson provides an excellent summary of this phenomenon:
Within Western cultural practice generally... a male's body is not anatomized nor is it ever made an object of study in the same way as female bodies. The net result is that the penis is never made public, never put on the measuring line in the same way that female sexual body parts are put on the measuring line. On the contrary, a penis remains shrouded in mystery. It is protected, hidden from sight. What is normally no more than a swag of flesh in this way gains unassailable stature and power... (Sheets-Johnstone 69)

In “Reading of the Male Body”, Susan Bordo discusses the reasons why male nudity, an uncovered penis in particular, can be viewed as a source of shame for men. Bordo points out that the penis is not the phallus. While the latter has “a unified social identity” and a “constancy of form”, the first is “far from maintaining a steady will and purpose, it is mercurial, temperamental, unpredictable”. The penis, the most powerful symbol of manliness, has, in Bordo’s description, the qualities traditionally considered female characteristics. The penis appears to be impulsive, “the most visibly mutable of bodily parts”, hence the least controllable of the male body parts (Bordo 266). The penis as described by Bordo provides constant opportunity for shame because it can expose a man’s lack of control over it such as in failure to have an erection, a potentially humiliating and emasculating experience. Due to perceptions of sexual potency purely in terms of phallic potency and strength, the penis has been reduced to merely ‘a tool’ detached from its owner and his feelings. In his notes on femininity, Sigmund Freud writes that shame, considered to be “a feminine characteristic par excellence” has as its purpose, “we believe, concealment of genital deficiency” (Freud 132). In other words, a woman’s greatest shame is her lack of a penis. If, according to Freud, the lack of penis signifies shame, the contrary, its possession, should be a source of pride in men and increase their willingness to expose it. Yet, the fact that the male body has been rather concealed from public discourse, as noted by Sheets-Johnstone’s
comment, proves something quite opposite: a great concern of men to not expose their penis. In *The Abject Objects: Avatars of the Phallus* (2006), Keith Reader, who uses Lacanian psychoanalysis to explore the relationship between symbolism of the phallus and its biological embodiment, the penis, arrives at a similar conclusion stating that ‘phallus’ at once “speaks to masculinity and undermines its claims to supremacy”. Furthermore, Reader sums up that masculinity, which is the ostensible domain of the phallus “inexorably dwells under the sign of its own abjection” (“Introduction” 2). The penis provides a constant threat to masculinity for although it can reassure manliness it can equally undermine it, which may be one of the reasons why frequently the penis remains hidden from public view.

Considering what has been said about shame so far, the 2011 film *Shame* by Steve McQueen should be viewed as a unique and honest account of male shame that takes into account many issues discussed in this paper. McQueen’s representation of shame differs from that found in Rushdie’s novel, mainly because the film tells the story of a (post)modern man living in an urban jungle. For many, the most scandalous thing about *Shame*, is its shamelessness: or more precisely shamelessness of the main protagonist Brandon, played by Michael Fassbender. A number of reviews refer to McQueen’s film as the story of sex addiction since the plot focuses on the main protagonist’s obsessive masturbation, countless visits to porn websites and sexual encounters with strangers: women, men and prostitutes. However, what truly surprises about McQueen’s story are not the sexually explicit scenes, nor even the full-frontal male nudity in the opening scene of the film, which, as it was mentioned, happens rarely if at all in films, but the directors attempt to show weakness and vulnerability hidden behind the mask of an adulterer. As a consequence of the perception of shame as weakness, male shame tends to develop into other defensive reactions, active, occasionally aggressive, or shameless which mask shame, making it difficult or impossible to see behind these disguises. Yet, in *Shame*, the camera accompanies the character in his most intimate activities, such as
masturbation in the toilet or casual sex in the back street, at the same time registering Brandon’s emotions on his face. Thanks to the invasive close-ups scanning Brandon’s face, which is usually expressionless to the extent it evokes suspicion, he quite literally is unable to hide his emotions from the exposure, which leaves him not physically but emotionally naked.

In the opening scene, Brandon is lying in bed, staring unblinkingly into the camera. His stillness may suggest he is dead. Or rather, he is paralysed by the shame of what he has become, of his addiction to sex, which he does not, or cannot, enjoy, yet he feels constantly drawn to it, or perhaps something more profound. Brandon has a preference for quick and rough sex, however, when he tries to make love to a co-worker (Nicole Beharie), whom he appears to like, and who turns out to be a tender and gentle lover, he cannot get an erection. The ‘performance’ of sex has more weight and there is a greater pressure not to fail in front of a person he actually cares about. Sex quite literally disturbs Brandon from himself and what he may feel, and hence Brandon’s promiscuity and shamelessness can be interpreted as intentional rather than compulsive or involuntary. The attitudes perceived as shameless are only apparently so, for shamelessness cannot be simply defined as lack of shame. In fact, as Leon Wurmser argues in *The Mask of Shame* (1981), shamelessness is a reaction against shame, or it is a displayed shame. Brandon’s efforts to suppress or control his emotions are supported by the film aesthetics; the mentioned close-ups of stillness, long silences and muting the sounds of the outside world. Even when Brandon goes running the spectator remains very intimate with him by being simultaneously submerged in Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, Brandon’s running soundtrack.

Brandon’s case illustrates what Helen Block Lewis defines as unacknowledged shame, the shame which has been denied and as such appears very destructive to the self, causing pathological reactions. Brandon’s excessive sexual activity can be viewed as a strategy of masking some deeper shame of being a failure as a person. Shame, in its
nature, induces secretiveness and concealment of one’s shameful deeds, thoughts, or of felt inappropriateness, from the gaze of others but shame in men strips them of male power, leaving them ‘naked’, effeminate and vulnerable, as was illustrated in Kolakowski’s parable. Brandon’s avoidance to acknowledge his emotions justify why the protagonist finds it difficult to build an affectionate relationship with his sister, Sissy (Carrey Mulligan), who manifests her feelings towards the brother. Yet, by moving into his house she disturbs his stasis and gets closer to his shame. The spectators are left to wonder why Brandon does not manifest any emotions, given only hints such as Sissy’s remark to her brother “we are not bad people, we just come from a bad place”. Perhaps Brandon has lived through some traumatic experience. Finally, Shame is a study of what happens to a man, who denies shame, becoming an abject to himself. After all, shame is the emotion, which provokes self-assessment. Thus, through reflecting on the judgment of the self or others that provoked the feeling of shame, we can arrive at its source; namely, by whose values is something shameful. This enables revisiting of judgments and necessary alterations of our relationship with others. However, avoidance to revisit or share the shame, protects it, which results in the self being cut off from others in a prison, which is the self paralyzed by shame, such as it is in the case of Brandon. After many attempts by Sissy to build some kind of closeness with Brandon, her only family member left, and after being constantly neglected by her brother, who finds her presence “a burden”, Sissy attempts to commit suicide. Brandon finds her with slit wrists, covered in blood and unconscious. In the final scene, he is leaving the hospital, walking slowly towards the camera, stopping just before it. He drops to the ground on his knees, sobbing and shouting. Finally, when faced with tragedy, Brandon’s emotions are surfacing, visible only on his face for the sound is mute. As Chhunni-ma observes, shame does make women to feel like cry and die, but, it is equally true, as apparent in the final scene of McQueen’s Shame, that indeed, as Chhunni-ma’s sister remarks, “sometimes it happens the other way around” (Rushdie 39).
Works Cited


McQueen, Steve. Shame, 2011.


Proustian Desire and the Queering of Masculinity in Gay Cinematic Romance

Anna Fahraeus

Abstract:

Twenty-five gay films produced from 1987 to 2011 in Europe, the US, Argentina and Israel form the basis for this study on masculinity in gay romantic drama. The shared plot motif is a self-assumed straight man realizing that he is homosexual or fluid in his sexuality. The narrative trope of awakening from the folk tale “Sleeping Beauty” (1657) by Charles Perrault, and its revision in late 19th century feminist literature, is the common dramatic component of these gay films. There are similarities with early feminist literature in the representation of the repressive nature of social structures and the fracturing of hetero-normative gender expectations. The article argues that even as some of the hetero-normative conventions of the romance as a genre are upheld, because two straight-looking men perform both roles, masculinity is problematized and a queering takes place at the level of temperament.

Keywords:
The boy who has been reading erotic poetry or looking at indecent pictures, if he then presses his body against a schoolfellow's, imagines himself only to be communing with him in an identical desire for a woman. How should he suppose that he is not like everybody else when he recognises the substance of what he feels on reading Mme. de Lafayette, Racine, Baudelaire, Walter Scott, at a time when he is still too little capable of observing himself to take into account what he has added from his own store to the picture, and that if the sentiment be the same the object differs, that what he desires is Rob Roy, and not Diana Vernon?

– Marcel Proust

I was determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love, and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows...

– E.M. Forster

Proustian homosexual desire is hidden desire; from others certainly but sometimes even from the self. The fourth volume of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, Sodom and Gomorrah or

---


4 I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for the referees at *Masculinities*, and the participants in the GLQ panels at the PCA conference in Washington, DC in March 2013. In particular, I would like to thank Bruce Drushel for organizing the panels and bringing in so many interesting scholars and students, and Pamela Demory and Scott Stoddart who shared a panel with me. Other participants also provided valuable insights for this article, sometimes unknowingly, namely Thomas Piontek, Alex Malanych, and Traci Abbott.
Cities of the Plain, is fascinating for its story of closeted male homosexuality and the usefulness of female friends. In *Deceit, Desire and The Novel*, René Girard develops this element of Proustian homosexual desire as a generalized human desire and suggests that desire itself is mimetic, or imitative, and is therefore only accessible indirectly through the desire of others. This interpretation can, in Proust, be directly linked to the vicarious pleasure achieved by “the first sort” of homosexual men by watching straight women with their implied straight lovers (26). Proust, however, also refers to a “second sort” of homosexual man who “seeks out women who love other women; who can procure for them a young man.” Here neither the women nor the young men they bring into the homosexual man’s orbit are straight. The stated pleasure is not vicarious even if it is to some extent shared, and the stated danger is jealousy rather than envy – and envy is Girard’s focus so again, his work fails to apply because it lifts to the abstract what begins in Proust as a corporeal desire. In this article, my point of departure in Proust is specifically the expression of homosexual desire as an embodied craving for the male (and masculine) other as an achievable if socially complicated emotional and physical appetite. This article explores how there exists a genre of modern gay-themed films that represent the acknowledgement of homosexual desire in men as a gradual process. Full awareness is portrayed in these films as impeded in their consciousness by the social dominance of heterosexuality. These cinematic narratives can, and should be called, gay awakening films.

Within gay and lesbian studies and gay fiction living under the predominance and oppressive naturalization of heterosexuality is identified as a source of shame, and as potentially constrictive to developing a gay/lesbian identity. My narrative point of reference in Proust is the elaboration of the young man’s emergent consciousness of

---

5 See e.g. Downs 1-6. While Downs accepts the existence of the homosexual-heterosexual binary, other scholars are suspicious of the dichotomy itself as inevitable and of single identities as desirable, see e.g. Bersani 34-35; Butler 1-5, 27-31; Reeser 77-81.
his desire in the first forty pages of Sodom and Gomorrah. This part is set apart from the rest of the narrative as Part One and was published separately in 1921. It is easy to elide this initial stage in Proust’s story of the young “Galatea, awakened to life, in the unconscious mass of this male body” (24). The reference to the Galatea myth is to the sculptor Pygmalion and how his statue, Galatea, is brought to life and he marries her. The emphasis in Proust is on a woman-like (this is his descriptor) desire for another male and how its awakening within a man is like going from being in a state similar to a statue, a pretend or disconnected person, to being alive. Though the narrator vacillates in stating that the young man is both aware and unaware of his sexual inclinations to other men, there are several illustrations of obliviousness. In the reference to the boy who reads “erotic poetry” and misidentifies his own object of desire (27), there is, for example, room to interpret the “unconscious” state as ongoing and also as a product of socially ingrained heteronormative expectations. The narrator continues a little further on by suggesting that the young man will seek out and find male companionship and connection, but his sexual and romantic desire will be misdirected towards women (25). I would argue that the state of obliviousness or self-delusion described in this section in Proust can be linked to the first stage of a recurring pattern in gay-themed cinematic romances and that this pattern has strong cultural roots in the awakening plot. The homosexual variation of this narrative structure can be traced to the fairy tale “Sleeping Beauty” but also to Kate Chopin’s feminist novel The Awakening.

The connection to “Sleeping Beauty” and The Awakening, in the films in this study, is the nature of romance as a catalyst to a different state of consciousness. Traditionally romance films are chick flicks. Men are presumed to prefer action over romance; thriller over drama. David Halpern argues that gay romance as a genre is inimical to gay eroticism (Halpern 97), while Vito Russo presents the claim that, “It is an old stereotype, that homosexuality has to do only with sex while heterosexuality is multifaceted and embraces love and romance” (Russo
Halpern focuses his ire on Ang Lee’s *Brokeback Mountain* but the statement is contradicted by the over-representation of romance films about men and for men being produced by independent and usually male filmmakers that do not focus on sex or eroticism liberated from love or romance. Literally hundreds of these new gay romantic dramas have been produced in the last thirteen years, and several of these newer films have been voted as audience favorites without reference to their genre categorization at LBGTQ festivals and other film festivals. A multitude of questions are raised by these films, where gay sex is set within the frame of the well-established romance which, as a genre, is entrenched with hetero-normative conventions. What role do these gay romantic films play in reproducing gay culture? In particular, what types of masculinities are portrayed and what is their relationship to traditional masculinity which is still such an integral part of straight romance? And what happens to the conventions of the romance as a genre when there are two male leads?

The first affirmative gay romance was Arthur Hiller’s *Making Love*. It was produced for American television in 1982. This film portrays a self-assumed straight (and married) man, Zach (Michael Ontkean), who comes to accept that he is homosexual. He is awakened through meeting a man, Bart (Harry Hamlin), who is out and arguably comfortable with his sexuality. They share a strong mutual attraction. Thomas Piontek joins Vito Russo’s in the attitude shared by gay critics at the release of this film in judging it as “timid and formulaic” (*Queering Gay and Lesbian Studies* 128). I would argue that this judgment disqualifies the film’s established genre, the romance. Piontek’s objection can be qualified in part by a specific opposing cultural frame; one that celebrates eroticism and sexual exploration rather than commitment and domesticity as the goal of romantic love. There is a character in the film that represents a more liberated homosexuality. Bart represents gay men who simply

---

6 The reference in Piontek is to Vito Russo.
refuse to accept a heteronormative regulatory framework for relationships. Even though, he is narratively rejected as immature and ultimately as losing out on the value of a committed relationship, it can be argued that this negative portrait is still an early attempt to show that this choice, this alternate homosexual lifestyle exists. Bart character deserves a second look if assimilation is to be problematized.

Roberta Flack’s title track, “Making Love” also raises an important issue for modern queer studies in questioning the necessity of identifying as solely homo- or heterosexual as the lyrics claim that emotional attachment knows no sex limitations. At the end of the film, Zach retains a strong companionate affection for his ex-wife and is portrayed as missing her even as his new relationship is portrayed as stable and happy. Thus to claim that this film is “timid” does not hold water. It still has provocative ideas to offer. The romance genre is traditionally conservative in terms of its end goal, the HEA (happy ever after) ending, but it leaves loose ends that raise important questions. Directors and screenwriters are not only adopting the basic heterosexual plot but from an early stage adapted it to queer issues of sexuality and gender.

It is perhaps advisable at the outset to stress that I am not attempting to talk about actual gay men or gay identity in the individual sense but rather about gay culture and more particularly of cinematic narrative representations as a discursive form of cultural identity formation. ‘Gay culture’ is defined in this article in the same way that Halpern defines it, as a collection of conventionally attributed practices, not as a group of individuals, and that “most any statement one can make about a culture will turn out to be false as soon as it is applied to individuals” (129). In a similar move, Piontek differentiates between thinking about himself as homosexual and as gay (2006:52). Halpern usefully states that heterosexuals can and do “participate” in gay culture (135). I would add that in participating in gay culture, heterosexuals also reproduce it. This highlights the need for a critical attitude towards gay film. This is a valid consideration in this study as the sexuality of all the
screenplay writers and directors, is not public knowledge – even where there is public conjecture.

This article is based on a segment of the gay romance market. Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin identify three: “Weekend in the Hamptons” or group cast films, comedies and films representing “‘straight’ characters that turn out to ‘actually’ be gay” (270). This article centers on the latter though their characterization of the plot seems unfair and even demeaning. In this article, I will be dealing with a few of the twenty-five films that I have found that deal with man who assumes he is straight coming to terms with homosexuality in himself or in others. The films were produced in Europe, the US, Argentina and Israel from 1982 to 2011, though the majority were made after 2005. The plot can be neutrally rephrased as the self-assumed straight man, who has accepted an imposed heterosexual schema (and tried to make it fit) but falls in love with another man. Due to the strength of this unexpected attraction, he must deal with doubts about his sexuality. The character may turn out to realize that he is gay, fluid or straight. Bisexuality is rare as a conclusion in these films, though it features as a stage in adjusting to homosexuality (explicitly in e.g. Back Soon (2007), and Four More Years (2010)).

The films are all post-Stonewall and the initiation of the public debate on civil rights and sexuality, but not completely past the Proustian idea that gay men suffer from the social inculcation of heteronormativity so that in their hearts they desire straight men.8

---


8Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village in New York City was a meeting place for homosexual men in the late 1960s. In 1969, the openly and actively protested police raids. The resulting riots would lead to the formation of two gay rights activist organizations (Gay Liberation
Stated differently, this anxious desire reflects the overwhelming influence and fetishization of hetero-normative masculinity. It is a reflection of gay cultural (not individual) anxiety about being homosexual that is alleviated by the revelation of homosexuality as also present in the overtly masculine Other.⁹

A Closer Look at the Awakening Trope

The basic plot motif in the films in this study uses one of the oldest tropes in Western narrative, the awakening trope. Zach in Jonah Markowitz’s Shelter (2007) literally wakes up after a night spent at Shaun’s and remembers that he let a man kiss him and fell asleep with him. He now has to deal with what that means. Logan (Windham Beacham) in Rob Williams’s Back Soon (2007) wakes up naked in bed with a new male friend, Gil (Matthew Montgomery), and remembers that they had sex the night before. He has to come to terms with that. The same pattern repeats itself in Damion Dietz’s Dog Tags (2008), Tova Magnusson-Norling’s Four More Years (2010) and, of course, Ang Lee’s Brokeback Mountain (2005). In other films the trope is less literal but its presence is still sub-textually there as realization dawns and is often linked to pondering on a bed even if there is no literal moment of awakening as the main protagonist begins to face his desire for another man.

In terms of romance, the awakening trope is directly linked to Charles Perrault’s classic story “Sleeping Beauty” written in 1657. The

Front and Gay Activists Alliance) and the birth of three newspapers (Gay, Come Out! and Gay Power) that would promote sexual rights. See Stephen Engel’s “Making a Minority” (Richardson and Seidman 395).

⁹ Anxiety about being homosexual is still a relevant topic in American gay film but is rarely so harshly expressed in terms of self-hatred as in Howard’s annihilation of Michael at the end of The Boys in the Band (1971) though it can be said to form a strong underlying motif in gay suicide films such as Prayers for Bobby (2009).
most basic feature of this folk tale and thus of the awakening trope is that someone is awakened by someone else, whether metaphorically or literally. In the folk tale, the sleep state is literal, and the sex roles are determined: the prince rescues and kisses the princess, she awakens and they are married. His role is active. Hers is passive. Because of its direct links to marriage, the kiss has been read allegorically as the awakening of sexual desire, and the trope is now a cultural commonplace for the experience of sexually becoming aware of one’s own desire for others.

Importantly from a gender and masculinity point of view, in the classic narrative, the protagonist needs someone else to wake them up. This traditional action motif recurs in the gay awakening films and is what makes them different from Tennyson Bardwell’s *Dorian Blues* (2004). Dorian (Michael McMillan) reflects back on the moment of realization that he is gay but it comes to him when he is alone and even though the visual triggers the metaphor of awakening as he literally wakes up in the middle of the night, he is still not the passive protagonist of a story that alludes to “Sleeping Beauty”. Rather, the narrative trope that is activated by what happens next is the discovery trope. He actively seeks out ways to come to terms with and explore his sexuality. The story is traditionally masculine in its plot thrust even as the masculinity in the film is full of self-irony and gay cultural self-reflection. Romance is secondary and the story closes with a sense that even as Dorian has accepted his homosexuality and difference, he still has things to learn about himself before he will have the gay romance that he is looking for.

As a historical narrative, the romantic folk tale is heterosexual but Vladimir Propp’s analysis of the component parts of folk tales points to a limited number of roles and functions (actions) that form the basic structure for all the tales. Both the roles and the actions are now referred to as motifs when they are found in later stories that can be read as alluding to elements in these earlier narratives. It does not take much to see that the stories can be pared down further and that the narrative roles can be stripped of their sex attribution. Biological sex is not significant for the deep structural pattern of any given tale. What is more
basic is the roles or functions that the characters fill, and the relationship between that narrative function (hero, victim, lover, beloved) and the actions performed. What is revealed is the naturalization of gendered roles within the folk tales. Certain roles are associated with certain character traits. Men and older women are associated with planning, pursuit and proactivity. Younger women are associated with passivity, needing protection and rescue. This is significant because the stories are part of the backbone of Western culture and recur in the deep structure of many of the narratives written today – the awakening genre in gay romance is the current case in point.

Homosexual Masculinities

In his groundbreaking book, *Masculinities*, R.W. Connell proposed that recognizing "diversity in masculinities is not enough. We must also recognize the relations between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance and subordination" (37). Gay romances explore these relations and when "Sleeping Beauty" is used as the master plot, the casting of the main roles matters from a masculinity perspective – specifically whether the actors physically conform to subconscious gender expectation in relation to their narrative roles or not. Physically, visually, Walt Disney’s “Sleeping Beauty” (1959) is the concretization of the folk tale. The prince is tall, dark, and handsome in the sense of having strong angular facial features. The princess is small, blond and delicate. This matters from a gender perspective because the characteristics are prototypical to some extent of the masculine and the feminine regardless of their lack of validity as representative.

In this important respect, all of the gay awakening plots differ from Proust’s story. Though most writers talk about homosexuality in relation to Proust and Sodom and Gomorrah, the narrator uses the 19th century terms “inverted man” and “male invert.” The implied theory of
sexuality that he expounds is one of original hermaphroditism or bisexuality rather than absolute inversion or homosexuality (34). For the narrator, and perhaps even Proust, hermaphroditism is there in the repeated image of a female consciousness in the male invert:

The young man whom we have been attempting to portray was so evidently a woman that the women who looked upon him with desire were doomed (failing a special taste on their part) to the same disappointment as those who in Shakespeare’s comedies are taken in by a girl disguised as a youth. ... it is in vain that he keeps back the admission ‘I am a woman’ even from his demanding mistress... (25)

Significantly, from a theory of sexuality point of view, Sigmund Freud, who was a contemporary of Proust, dismissed the feminine consciousness explanation for male inversion in 1905. For Freud the idea that an inverted male possessed “a female brain in a male body” was “as frivolous as it is unjustified” (Freud 18). He was unwilling to believe that the majority of inverted men have not “retained the psychic character of virility, that proportionately they show but little secondary characters of the other sex” or in other words they feel and think like heterosexual men even though their desired sexual object is male (18). In this, he also differed from the narrator that Proust creates, who in contrast, opines that “inversion itself springs from the fact that the invert is too closely akin to woman to be capable of having any effective relations with her” (34).

A cinematic expression of a Proustian inverted male is Howard (Kevin Kline) in Frank Oz’s In and Out (1997). Oz’s film makes a point of Howard’s homosexuality being linked to his effeminate behavior and his interests. His repression of his sexual identity is made a source of _______________________

10 Historically the same terms were used to allude to homosexuals (“absolutely inverted”), bisexuals (“psychosexually hermaphroditic”), and those who “are occasionally inverted” due to the “inaccessibility of the normal sexual object” (Freud 14).
comedy because it is apparent to others even if he is unaware of it himself. The same correlation between outward demeanor and homosexuality is made in James Burrows Partners (1982). Kerwin (John Hurt) is indignant that “it shows,” that is, that his way of presenting himself lets others know that he is gay. He is asked to come out of the closet because it won’t make him “any unhappier than you already are.” Undercover he assumes the responsibilities for the house work and the cooking. He is good at both. He takes care of Benson, who works out, and pays lip service but does nothing around the house. They both worry about the case and Kerwin turns out to be more helpful than either he or Benson expect. Neither film is a romance. They are both comedies, but from the perspective of fem gays in 2013, the humor is abject and non-progressive in terms of liberation.

As a representation of gay masculinity, the general disavowal of hyper-masculinity is complicated by the equal rejection of the Queen, the twink, the Nellie and anything overtly feminine in gesture or appearance unless the character has a limited or specific social function. This absence of the more effeminate gay man as a romantic lead can be interpreted as an indicator of gay and straight male anxiety of emasculation. This may explain why gay characters with overtly feminine behaviors are never the romantic lead. In Rolf Silber’s Regular Guys (1996) and Stewart Wade’s Coffee Date (2006), the function of Edgar (Tim Bergmann) and Kelly (Wilson Cruz) respectively is the same as that of Kerwin, to help the straight protagonist and perhaps straight audiences confront their own anxiety about homosexuality. The focus of the plot is on the straight character and the social need for tolerance, not on fulfillment of the fem gay.

11 For an interesting argument regarding this troublesome anxiety regarding atypical masculine behavior and dress, see chapter 3 “How Gay Theory and the Gay Movement Betrayed the Sissy Boy” in Piontek.
The male leads in the romance films are average men who can easily pass for straight in conventional terms even if a few of them sometimes choose not to at times in the films, i.e. act in ways that can be considered non-representative in relation to dominant masculinity. With the ironic exception – considering its popularity – of *Brokeback Mountain* where a macho masculinity is foregrounded, the films in this study, for the most part, seem to consciously reject the butching up of the male characters. This suggests a repudiation of the fetishization of the overtly displayed hetero-normative masculine version of the gay Self – the one exception to this is the character of Bart in *Making Love*. He dresses in what Allen Young calls “Butch drag” and comes with the jeans, leather jacket and cigarettes (27); all markers of the Castro clone of the 1970s (Vito 83). He even has the sideburns if not the mustache.

There are always traditional markers of masculinity. To take a particularly explicit case, Bruno (Manuel Vignau) and Pablo (Lucas Ferraro) in Marco Berger’s *Plan B* (2009) both give the impression of being typical young men in their twenties. The film has very little dialogue and the male characters start out as straight. They are handsome, scruffy-looking in a traditional working class sense, but there is little serious posturing. They wear sports jerseys and jeans. They spend most of the film with a shadow of facial hair. They hang out at the gym and enjoy lazing in front of the TV. However, if they have jobs or professional goals of any kind, they never talk about them. Though these two male leads are not characterized as being overtly effeminate in a striking way, there are cracks in their masculinity that suggest less typical traits, such as their addiction to a daytime soap. This is represented as culturally questionable. The film opens with Bruno literally scoping out Pablo through a camera lens. Pablo is caressing a kitten, rubbing it over his face. It is image of sensual enjoyment and feminine care.

In terms of the romance genre, they are both dark and handsome. They are visually two prince charmings, yet when Pablo wakes up one morning, Bruno asks him who is taller, only to determine that he himself
is taller. Nothing more is said. Pablo shrugs and laughs but he acts as if he is self-conscious. Bruno looks satisfied. Their reactions draw attention to the gendered nature of the verbal repartee. The fact that Pablo is barely awake during Bruno’s demonstration of power is symbolic of the film as a whole as he is unaware of Bruno’s meditated pursuit of him and thus Bruno’s attempts to lure Pablo into homoerotic desire. This film is Argentinian so it would be interesting to look at the masculinity within this particular context more closely. For the purposes of this study, it is the repression of homosexual desire, and it awakening as well as the relative passivity of Pablo that is in focus.

Zach (Trevor Wright) in Jonah Markowitz’s Shelter (2007) is a skateboarder and surfer. His attire is unremarkable in that it is typically masculine but it is significant that the clothes are socially unassuming. They are appropriate to his sex and his urban environment and present no challenge to other males. He is shorter than the man who will break through his repression, Shaun (Brad Rowe). Though Zach has a slighter build, he is not presented as a short man or as physically weak. His skilled surfing and skateboarding preclude the latter. In his interaction with Shaun, his relative physical attributes are, however, signs that given the heterosexual structural context are culturally decoded as relationally determinative in terms of who has more power. It is gender normative and thus anticipated that being taller and bigger will lead to a power advantage.

Unsurprisingly from this traditional perspective, Shaun is represented as having taught Zach to surf. John G. Avildsen’s The Karate Kid (1984) with its mentor-student relationship is alluded to and forms a backdrop to their relationship. In a homosexual context, the older man initiating the younger man carries additional weight and alludes to the erastes-eromenos relationship in Classical Greece, which is usually referred to in positive terms.\(^{12}\) In keeping with this ideal, Shaun is older,

\(^{12}\) Stephen O. Murray, for instance, talks about this in neutral terms as “age-graded male homosexuality” and rehearses the generally accepted statement that it “was the most-
has had some professional success, and is a well-adjusted gay man. He is also the one who eventually leans over and kisses Zach. At the end of the film Shaun’s arm is around Zach and around Cody in a typical display of traditional masculinity. It could be fraternal support, but given the romantic context, the specter of patriarchal normativity is there.

David Holst (Bjorn Kjellman) in *Four More Years* (2010) is the leader of a politically party and almost becomes Prime Minister. He is basically the same height as Martin (Eric Ericson) but has a slighter build. He is pale while Martin is ruddy. Again, the conformity to expectation is there, and while Martin is comfortable in casual wear and with his body, David is always shown in a suit and as physically less secure. In accordance with the visual coding of their bodies, Martin is the one who kisses David and takes the lead in their first sexual encounter. At the end of the film, Martin seeks David out to make their reunion possible, figuratively leading David to where they need to go. Physically then, there is a sense then that Zach and David conform to the sex role that they are playing, that is they can on one level be decoded as more traditionally feminine than Shaun or Martin. They accept attention and respond to it rather than leading in the relationship. This reading is supported by the general arc of the narratives.

It is also reinforced at the level of affect and general social behavior. In terms of temperament, passivity in both Zach and David is not limited to the sexual arena. While the princess in the classic tale is valued and only respected form across ancient Greece” (Richardson and Seiman 87). He avoids talking about its more specific nature. The Greek term for this relationship was *pederasty* or *paederasty*. Younger adolescent boys were “introduced into society” by older men in their late twenties (see the entry for ‘erastes’). The institution appears to have been naturalized through convention. It is generally accepted that this introduction was sexual. It does not appear that the sexual inclination of the boys was a factor which makes it reminiscent of the feudal *droit de seigneur*. At some point, historians will need to deal with the power differential and the potential and probability of abuse within this social structure. They will also need to deal with the accepted view that histories are written by those in power rather than by those resistant to the social structures. Hopefully this examination will occur within the gay studies community.
passive in the literal sense of being asleep, both of these male characters are metaphorically asleep in terms of their sexuality but also characterized by acquiescence and unassertiveness in general. This is an anomalous characteristic from the point of view of masculinity. However, it is a recurring feature of these films.

Richard A. Isay links passivity and submissiveness – implicitly through his discussion of gendered characteristics and the devaluation of the feminine – to straight men with Oedipal issues (94), and to homosexual boys who “have artistic sensibilities and interests, who may not be competitive or aggressive, who are sensitive and solicitous of the needs of others, who like pretty clothes and objects, are likely to be perceived as being more feminine than other boys” (129). The latter – “the pretty clothes and objects” – and the correlated interest in domestic chores and home décor are in practice not necessarily linked with the psychological traits and interpersonal styles. These gendered attributes should be considered separately. In the awakening films, at least one of the homosexual male leads is characterized by passivity and solicitude as well as a degree of submissiveness rather than proactivity and pursuit, but this is not correlated with effeminate gestures or domestic interests.

Zach is both acquiescent and nurturing. He is in his early twenties and living with his sister and her son. He takes care of his nephew as often as not and his sister anticipates that he will help her and be there to take care of Cody when she wants to go out for a night of fun. He is the responsible one who ensures that Jeanne does not drink and drive, and that Cody has shoes. He is artistic and does street art. He sacrifices his own future to be there for his family. When Jeanne starts to suspect and distrust his friendship with Shaun, he defends his behavior within a hetero-normative framework and does not want to assert his own desires or wants outside the implicit social heterosexual norms. Narratively, her negative interpretation of his behavior disturbs him and is influential in his vacillation of his own acceptance of his same sex desire.
In *Four More Years*, David is married but it quickly becomes apparent that the marriage is not conventional. His wife, Fia (Tova Magnusson-Norling), is more driven and more of a leader than he is, and she and his counselor, Jorgen (André Wickstrom), strategize and direct David’s political life. He follows along and does what he is told. Figuratively, Fia wears the pants and David does not mind. He is, on the contrary, indecisive and prone to stress when he is left to his own devices in the realm of decision-making. His rebellion occurs when he meets Martin and after he has suffered a severe political backlash. Unlike David, Martin is ambitious and comfortable with his double life. He represents a relatively new figure in gay-themed film; the men who are at peace with living their lives partially in the closet. He has actively compartmentalized his life. Ultimately, however, the compartmentalization fails in this film.

From one perspective, Zach and David fulfill a traditional female role and exhibit characteristics that are culturally marked as feminine. From a queer perspective, they represent a masculinity that is not bound by cultural expectation or normative behaviors. They are both masculine in their dress and pursuits. Zach has a modicum of aggressiveness that prevents him from being overtly cowardly. Yet, he is feminine in terms of a bent towards nurturing and passivity in relationships. Similarly, David has a powerful political position, but is unmotivated to demonstrate or develop that political power on his own. He enjoys the position but prefers to be directed. One does not cancel out the other. He is perhaps outwardly more successful in performing the hetero-normative masculine role publicly, but behind the façade, he releases control to someone else more or less entirely and is also marked by an insecurity regarding social normative behavior.

---

13 For a discussion of the possibility that coming out is not always the best or only answer, see Stephen Pugh’s work on older gay men and lesbians, “The Forgotten” (Richardson and Seidman 172).
Compared to “Sleeping Beauty”, there is an important difference in modern romance generally that applies to the awakening plot in gay cinematic narrative: romance since the second half of the 18th century romance has been character-oriented rather than action-oriented. Pamela Regis has provided the model that is commonly used for talking about the romance as a modern genre. The romance script proceeds through eight steps, each one is about character and develops reader – or in this case – viewer understanding of character. In the exposition stage, society is defined and the couple meets. What is alternately called the “barrier” by Regis (32) and what in Roland Barthes’s system of narrative codes would be the core enigma, is set up. This is the question that will drive viewer engagement and in the case of the awakening plot, this is the mistaken idea that at least one of the male leads has that he is straight. In the rising action the attraction is explored until a declaration occurs. Regis calls the next step dramatically, “the point of ritual death” (35). In the awakening plot in gay romance, it is the rejection of the idea of being homosexual, and it is always present. This is followed by the “recognition” and in gay romance it is the scene or scenes where the reluctant male lead overcomes his own hesitation in admitting his desire and wanting the relationship. The last step in heterosexual romance is “the betrothal” (37), which in gay romance is the renewed and accepted declaration of love and desire for commitment.

Though the gay awakening script has the steps set out in the traditional structure, it also has its own pattern that adds steps to it. Between the recognition and the final declaration, the point of ritual death recurs in magnified form. Initially, the acceptance of attraction to another man is accepted within the confines of the given relationship, but eventually the outside world intrudes in some fashion, and the reluctant male lead withdraws. He does not want to be identified as homosexual or accept the effects it will have on his original heterosexual...
plan for his life. This second rejection or denial will eventually lead to a second recognition and the final declaration of love.

In both these differences – in the focus on character and in the additional steps added by the awakening script – the films in this study take after the use of the awakening script in 19th century feminist literature. This can be illustrated by looking at the convergence in plot development, that is, the stages or narratives steps, in Kate Chopin’s iconic novel, *The Awakening* (1899), and James Ivory’s celebrated film adaptation of E.M. Forster’s novel, *Maurice* (1987). Both Chopin and Forster were contemporaries of Proust. Forster was also a personal friend. Both novels and Ivory’s film spend more time than any other awakening narrative on the expositions stage which sets out the conditions that cause the repression of the unacceptable desire, and the difficulties the character has in dealing with it.

The repression can be linked theoretically to Stage 1 in Down’s *The Velvet Rage* which looks at the difficulties for gay men in overcoming heteronormative expectations. This stage, Down suggests is characterized by shame and can lead to the rejection of the authentic self. It is externally rather than internally motivated, but must be overcome in order to achieve a healthy sense of self. Its discursive relevance to the gay awakening plot is that it can lead to “a pseudo-self, which wasn’t a natural growth of our abilities, desires and intelligence. It was a self that would earn us validation by others, but our true selves remained hidden from everyone” (25). A key turning point in the genre is that the protagonists confronts the desire for external validation and overcomes it – or fails too in a few rare cases.

The female protagonist in *The Awakening*, Edna Pontellier, has been seeking validation through marriage to Léoncé and motherhood. The novel is set in 19th century New Orleans. Edna’s marriage is neither
happy nor spectacularly unhappy, but follows convention.\(^{14}\) Appearances matter greatly to Léoncé and Edna has done what has been expected of her. Robert LeBrun follows the local French custom of flirting even with married women without any expectation that the women will respond. Edna takes him seriously, and he awakens in her a sense of loss and possibility, as well as a slumbering sexual appetite. She gradually realizes that she is in love and wants to pursue a life with Robert.

It is possible to argue that *The Awakening* does not theoretically qualify for a romance. Lesley Gelbman has stated that the romantic relationship must be at the narrative center of the story.\(^ {15}\) Chopin’s novel arguably focuses on other things aside from the romance, as much of the story narrates her gradual separation from Leonce, and her evolving desire for social as well as financial independence. From a feminist perspective it can be argued that her relationship with Robert is not the core of the novel. Yet, in itself the contextualization of Edna’s life does not disqualify the novel as a romance.\(^ {16}\) What makes *The Awakening* provocative and significant from a feminist perspective is that Edna does not want a second marriage that follows social norms in terms of her role or in terms of children. Yet, Edna’s desire for independence is set in motion by her meeting with Robert and her love for him remains a key element throughout the novel. It is thus possible to argue that her relationship with him remains at the core of the story even in his absence. Living alone as a strong woman is not something she wants. She wants the right to pursue the man and the lifestyle she desires.

---


\(^{15}\) See the staff article “What’s in a Name?” It is web-based so there is no pagination.

\(^{16}\) The first novel to focus on the female protagonist was a romantic novel: Samuel Richardson's *Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded* (1740).
Secondly, the novel does not end happily. Jennifer Crusie reports on the consensus reached by the Romance Writers of America in 2000 that, “A romance is a love story that has an emotionally satisfying, optimistic ending.”\textsuperscript{17} In terms of romantic narratives, this requirement is a modern feature and shows up a weakness in the modern definition of romance. In terms of its ending, \textit{The Awakening} has links to the older tragic romantic legend or a Shakespearean romantic tragedy, where the couple is pit against society and its expectations. Edna’s love for Robert is thwarted by convention. Initially, he rejects her by leaving to avoid social censure for them both. Eventually, he returns and they are reunited and declarations are made. However, it is a fragile happiness that is possible only in isolation from the rest of society – in a metaphorical closet as it were. Edna is quickly drawn away and back into what is expected of her as a woman and a mother. She does not overcome this second death to coin a generic term for a feature of awakening narratives, and it will become literal as she walks into the ocean. The reader is left to assume that she drowns as she swims out further and further beyond the point of return.\textsuperscript{18}

Forster’s novel is the touchstone for the modern gay novel. Like Proust’s novel it was written in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, in 1913-14, though not published until 1971. Just as \textit{The Awakening} sets out how women could assume they wanted marriage and children when they did not, Forster enumerates both the causes and the potential consequences for homosexuals in a hetero-normative environment. In the exposition stage, Forster defines the society of his characters, and in doing so unveils the heterosexual foundations of several social institutions: the

\textsuperscript{17} Web-based essay reprint, no pagination.

\textsuperscript{18} Bucking the general interpretation of the novel, Robert Treu argues that Edna survives in “Surviving Edna: A Reading of the Ending of the Awakening,” \textit{College Literature}. March 1, 2000: 21-36. Though it would be interesting to pursue this interpretation further in relation to Haim Tabakman’s film “Eyes Wide Open,” that lies outside the scope of this article.
education system, the Christian Church, and the social and familial expectation to marry. He connects these social structures to his main character, Maurice, who is confronted in each stage of his childhood and at university with the dominant social norms that give visual prominence to heterosexuality, a legal system that prohibits it and publicly shames the individual with same-sex desires, sex education that makes homosexuality invisible and religion that makes it a sin triggering shame.

Forster’s story thus unpacks the poisonous apple in “Sleeping Beauty” and links it to the heterosexual matrix of society, and its negative effects on individuals who do not conform. The matrix sets both women and men up to anticipate heterosexual marriage and children as expected and normal. The story of Maurice, and indeed Clive, thus narrates the socialization of heterosexual identity, and how individuals can be heavily influenced and molded in their perceptions of themselves and their personal relationship goals by social institutions. The parallel to this in The Awakening, is the socialization of gender roles and their intimate connection with romance and relationships. While Edna rejects the traditional feminine ideals, Maurice will eventually reject heteronormative relationship ideals. His relationship with Clive will eventually lead him to confront both his sexuality and his lack of interest in an academic education. He will reject dominant masculine ideals of intellectual superiority and socioeconomic power and align his allegiance with the working class even before his relationship with the Durham gardener, Alec Scudder (Rupert Graves).

Critics have argued that, “most readers have been struck by Forster’s evident ambivalence towards the ‘Love of Comrades’” (Quince 108). Rohan Quince continues “Forster’s confused attitude towards his own, and therefore Maurice’s, sexual orientation sends mixed signals to the reader.” The argument is that Forster vacillates between blaming “Maurice’s trauma” on his homosexuality and on a homophobic society. I would argue with David Leavitt that this is a misreading. Leavitt rejects Lytton Strachey’s claims that Forster “goes too far” in representing
Maurice’s own “disapproval” of homosexuality (xxvi). Leavitt emphasizes that part of Forster’s narrative argument is the insidious effects of internalized homophobia (xxvii). He claims in referring to the novel as a whole, correctly I think, that “defiance is its touchstone.”

Where I differ from Leavitt is that I would argue that the internalized homophobia is further complicated by Maurice’s temperament. He is unwittingly complicit in the repression of his homosexuality. He has a passive personality – like the later characters Zach in Shelter and David in Four More Years – and his mental constitution, his general approach to life, is narrated in such a way that it is implicated in his own situation. He avoids self-honesty by letting feelings remain unarticulated. He avoids introspection because he generally avoids conflict. The social structures that support heterosexuality and make homosexuality invisible at best and deviant when articulated stunt his sexual and emotional growth and he misidentifies as straight by default – just as Edna has misidentified her desire for marriage as a desire for a conventional marriage with children. This is the barrier or complication. As a result, he lives in a symbolic sleep state that the narrator in Forster’s novel calls living in “the Valley of the Shadow of Life” (Forster 15), until he meets Clive (Hugh Grant).

I would thus agree that in the film adaptation of Forster’s novel, Ivory creates a visual representation of Maurice (James Wilby) as a man trapped in the tower of social expectation and heteronormativity. I would also agree with critics like Quince that the internal focalization of the novel is lost in the film, but not the conclusions reached about Forster or even the novel. I would instead argue that Forster has created a novel that explores links between temperament and personal agency, and thus the relative place of agency in consciousness. A significant difference between the novel and the film is that the novel is written in retrospect so that the character Maurice is narrated as simultaneously both aware and unaware of the extent and nature of his attraction to Clive. The reader experiences Maurice’s own awareness of his past ambivalent acceptance of his affective and sexual inclination towards
men and his struggle to overcome his own socialization which rejects homosexuality. Maurice’s thought processes are rendered in their complexity and the character achieves a greater three dimensionality. This complexity in Maurice is lost in translation to the film, where Maurice appears as emotionally aware, but cognitively repressed. One way of reading this is that society is blamed and Maurice is exculpated, but this misses an equally important point in the novel I think: that individuals with certain temperaments can be more severely affected than others by seemingly non-phobic but exclusionary social institutions.

Both romance and desire are driving forces in the narrative arc of the modern awakening story in general, whether 19th century feminist or gay. Social transgression is an integral part of the script as hetero-normative standards are pushed back and rejected as the ultimate goal in the character arc. Like Edna in Chopin’s novel, Maurice is initially introduced as unaware of his passive acceptance of external norms as the source of his general dissatisfaction and his repression of his sexual self-expression. Edna is living in upper class domesticity where the major claims on her time are her duties as wife, mother and the social obligation to entertain. None of her duties appeal to her. It takes meeting the flirtatious young Robert for her to admit how dissatisfied she is with her life. Like Edna, Zach in Shelter is artistic but his art does not flourish until he becomes friends and accepts his attraction to Shaun. He must accept his own desire for independence from his family, and what he wants as a man and that includes his homosexually.

In the films where the passive character has pursued relationships, that action has been with the social flow and not against it. Edna has married a socially ambitious man that her father approves of, and in gay-themed narratives the men have pursued heterosexual unions. This is often the pattern in films where there is a prolonged closet theme. Zach in Making Love, Nathan in Chip Hale’s Mulligans (2008) and Daniel in Caytha Jentis’s The One (2011) live in a marriage to a woman for a number of years before they accept their attraction to men. It can be argued, however, that their lives are built on reactive
choices rather than independent thinking. This is explicit in The One where Daniel (Jon Prescott) is clearly awakened before he walks down the aisle but feels he must conform in order to be accepted by his family and to achieve the validation he is seeking as socially successful (he wants entry to a specific conservative country club). Zach and Nathan both express elements of prior awareness, but also that these desires were purposely left unexamined.

In Haim Tabakman’s Israeli film Eyes Wide Open (2010), Aaron (Zohar Strauss) is also married when he falls in love with another man. What makes the film unique is that Aaron belongs to a Hasidic community so the narrative is rich with rituals of faith and of belonging, from the touching of the mezuzah, implied frequent immersion, to the regularized male bonding of the chavrut. The film represents the fragility of inclusion and its basis in conformity. The masculine ideal is markedly different from the Western films in the study, but a heteronormative ideal of coupledom and the family is firmly in place. It gradually becomes apparent that homosexual acts are regarded as unholy and that the known perpetrator is subject to shunning as unclean and a vehicle of contagion.

Aaron is a conformist and a man of faith. He avoids thinking about his attraction to men, to Ezri (Ran Danker). His homosexuality is a source of anxiety but he implicitly questions what it is that makes his sexual desire unholy and eventually explicitly refuses to deny that his feelings for Ezri are life-affirming for him. However, he avoids confrontation until the moral guard makes it impossible. Forced by his torn allegiance to his wife and children to watch as Ezri is run out of the community, Aaron retreats. The ending is ambiguous as he is seen dipping himself the ritual three times in a body of water. The pond appears man-made, but in any case, it is the same water that he initially visited with Ezri. The act can be seen as a moral cleansing, but as the film closes he dips himself a fourth time and fails to surface. This open ending suggests a possibility of drowning that is very reminiscent of the ending of The Awakening where
Edna walks out into the sea at the end of the novel also because of what her refusal to conform would do to her children.

Changes in the Narrative Pattern

I stated that in gay awakening films, the main character does not himself set out discover his sexuality or what he wants from relationships; that he is instead the object of desire of another main character who is the active agent. I observed that as a passive conformist, he requires someone who directly or indirectly pushes him to deal with what he wants. There are exceptions to this pattern. Each one raises its own issues for masculinity in relation to homosexuality.

Frank Oz’s In and Out from 1997 is an awakening film but not a romantic drama. Howard (Kevin Kline) is pulled out of the closet by Cameron (Matt Dillon), a former student, before he has even admitted to himself that he is in the closet. The film is a comedy, and like Todd (Jonathan Bray) in Stewart Wade’s Coffee Date (2006), Howard is atypical in his behavior: he is fastidious about his clothes, into decorating and loves musicals. The motives of the student are not explored. A gay journalist, Peter (Tom Selleck), pushes Howard towards public acceptance. From the perspective of the awakening trope, Peter’s function is to take up where Cameron leaves off and continue to prod Howard’s sexual consciousness. However, from the perspective of gay rights advocacy there is something unsettling about Howard being an object of public rather than private desire. There is a subtext that the rights of advocacy trump the rights of the individual.

Another exception is in Maurice. Maurice and Clive are the human equivalent of two allegorical porcupines: they both back into the relationship and share their love very cautiously. They are each other’s object of desire but neither accepts the ultimate responsibility of pursuit for the desire’s realization. They push each other only tentatively. Forster created an enduring story of two gay men seeking to express
their mutual desire and affection, and Ivory recreated it on the screen. The adaptation is fundamentally similar to the novel’s characterization of both Maurice and Clive as reactive and responding to external influence in the shaping of their lives. Realizing the limits this type of characterization places on the story, it is thus not surprising that the ending of their relationship cannot be happy. It is in many respects a story that is primarily about Down’s Stage 1,¹⁹ shame and discomfort with one’s discovered longings, and two opposing reactions to this. Significantly, Clive’s consciousness struggle and closetedness predates his meeting with Maurice. The narrator states that Clive “had no doubt as to what he was” (59). Thematically, Clive represents the tragedy of the homophobic homosexual as he retreats mentally from embracing his desires and physically into a conventional marriage and a heteronormative lifestyle that is very public.

In Plan B Bruno is an active subject in relation to Pablo, but he is also a passive object being moved without fully realizing it until his friend, Victor (Damián Canduci), confronts him about his obsession with Pablo: “So, you like guys now?” The directness of the question is the last push he needs for his eyes to open that he is in fact attracted to and in love with another man. Bruno rushes out of his seat and throws up in the bathroom with visible vomit as if there is toxic he needs to disgorge. Berger does not shy away from graphically portraying the extreme level of the character’s anxiety. When he comes back to sit with his friend, he tries to answer the question, “I have no clue, Victor. I don’t know. I can’t explain this.” He is mentally not ready to go there, to think the words ‘I am homosexual’. Victor, however, is not confused. He tells Bruno that he (Bruno) is crazy about Pablo. Bruno does not deny it.

Bruno is planning to actively pursue Pablo as part of a heterosexual revenge scheme. However, the object of his pretended desire becomes the catalyst for Bruno’s own sexual awakening. Even as

¹⁹ See chapter 1-3 in Allen Down’s The Velvet Rage.
he pushes Pablo to cross the lines of heterosexual friendship, Bruno himself is also becoming emotionally and physically invested in a homosexual albeit unconsummated relationship. Pablo does not awaken, that is begin to consciously process his same-sex desires, until Bruno tells him openly, “I want you only for myself” and kisses his cheek. Pablo’s reaction is stunned silence and immobility. The lack of a reaction is an outward sign of a mental block in processing. It is neither denial nor affirmation. It is mental fence-sitting. The inertia of his thoughts is visualized by how even when he moves, it is in ultra-slow motion. To illustrate an internal drive, however, the camera shows him looking over the wall at Bruno leaving.

Because lack of verbal skills is commonly associated with masculinity in heterosexual romantic relationship narratives, Plan B is significant because the male characters communicate so much with so few words. It undermines the idea that volubility or eloquence are necessary skills for intimacy and that lacking either is a gender deficit in masculinity or, phrased differently, that clear communication is a feminine skill. It does this without changing the basic nature of either character; the film depicts how just as they need time to verbalize for themselves what it is they feel, they also use symbolic gestures rather than sudden verbosity to explain themselves to each other.

**Conclusion**

The films in this study are not bound by national borders. They are readily available over the internet. Many are distributed through a variety of international and national companies and shown at different LGBT festivals. Only a few, however, reach mainstream audiences. This is unfortunate as they showcase masculinity within an atypical framework and by this I do not refer to the sexuality of the films but rather the sex of the participants. Because men play both roles with the films, they present a unique opportunity to look at masculinity in intimate relationships in a male context.
The films participate in the sociocultural debates on the nature of sexuality and masculinity. Much, but not all, of what Halpern calls “the official post-Stonewall creed” applies (57). The first of the three features is supported, that is “that gay men are no different from anybody else” – at least in appearance and the desire for monogamous relationships – and the concomitant idea “that homosexuality is a sexual orientation” and not a “culture or a subculture” (57). The films embrace a heteronormative mainstream idea of couple- hood, and few of them reflect gay culture or gay communities within the narrative. The latter is problematic.

The second feature that Halpern opines is, “that sexual object-choice has nothing to do with gender style.” This is a mark of current gay activism, and is supported in the films, but I have suggested that it is done in a way that is highly problematic. There is a flattening of gender styles in these gay-themed films through selectivity; that is, the male romantic leads are generally no different than straight male leads in heterosexual films in appearance, demeanor or interests. There is thus an absence of fem-gay romantic leads. It would be interesting to examine the roles of fem gays more closely. In particular, it strikes me that it would be productive to investigate the relationship between fem-male characters in gay-themed films to the “feminized, antiheroic male hero” in comedian comedy (Karlyn 159), since this genre focuses on the individual and lampoons heroic masculinity. Two contextual similarities are that comedian comedy does not have marriage as its objective, and the story worlds created are male-oriented.

Halpern’s third feature in the gay activist assimilation creed is that, “gay sexuality has no relation to femininity.” This is a gross overstatement in relation to the awakening films. Even as the male leads can pass for straight this superficial conformity with dominant masculinity is complicated by the presence of two male romantic leads, who perform both gender roles in relationships that mirror heterosexual relationships in many ways. The creation of passive personality types in
gay-themed films is congruent with many of the ideals for femininity in heterosexual romance films. This needs to be further investigated.

As a group, the gay awakening films discussed in this study subvert dominant masculinity by rejecting the easy identification of the homosexual with outward behavior or interests, while simultaneously operating within a neo-traditional romantic framework that supports exclusivity, domesticity, and conservative masculine demeanor. The films do not reach for the Walt Whitman utopia of a gay camaraderie that is sexually inclusive and free of roles but they do problematize gender in terms of temperament attributes such as passivity, acquiescence, nurture and the prioritizing of intimate relationships.

Works Cited


*Coffee Date*. Dir. Stewart Wade. Film and Music Entertainment, 2006. Film.


The One. Dir. Caytha Jentis. TLA Releasing, 2011. Film.


Active Changes in Monolithic Manliness
The Case of the 2004 NHL Lockout

Jessica L. Tinklenberg and Jeremy L. Schnieder

Abstract:

Many theorists in the study of masculinity and sport assume that gender stably reproduces hegemony over time in a given system by valorizing certain traits or behaviors among athletes. This type of analysis, however, cannot easily account for rapid changes in homosociality within a system, nor for systems in which no dominant form of masculinity is evident, as has been the case in the post 2004 lockout National Hockey League. This paper argues that activity theory better accounts for both the rapid changes in male-male relationships, particularly in terms of fighting and team cohesion, as well as in models of proper manliness, such as the roles of “enforcers” and “agitators,” that occurred in post-lockout hockey.

Keywords: activity theory, masculinity, NHL Hockey
Social codes are a key part of human interactions. Codes of masculinity, one type of social code, are constructions with concrete implications that define and inform the ways men behave. This social contract is one which seems entrenched and beyond reproach. However, social values, roles, rules, and regulations can and do change, sometimes in dramatic fashions. “The Code” in hockey provides an illustration of just how quickly ingrained beliefs in masculinity can change when there is a disruption to a system, which contradicts the prevailing idea in masculinity studies that gender is stably reproduced over time. This shift was particularly evident in the days prior to and following the 2004 National Hockey League lockout in North America. The significance of this type of shift is further illustrated in that the most recent NHL lockout, which resulted in no rule changes and brought no apparent alterations to the subcultural understanding of masculinity in terms of systemic interactions. Unfortunately, traditional approaches to understanding masculinity in such situations may focus too intently on the role of time to create, reinforce, and reinscribe a particular brand of maleness as a dominant feature. Other approaches, though, may provide insight into the sometimes volatile nature of long held beliefs. Specifically, activity theory is an approach that values the historicity of systems, but activity theory also acknowledges the possibility of systemic interruption that can create rapid change to seemingly concrete value sets.

Hegemony and Masculinity Studies

Until recently, masculinity studies has operated under certain assumptions about gender. Namely, the field has presumed that systems of masculinity are slow to change (though changeable), are organized in terms of hierarchical relations of power, and are

---

20 Systemic interactions are the ways that participants within a particular activity system relate.
dominated by a generally unattainable but universally held hegemonic standard. The 1980s and 1990s saw an explosion in the use of “hegemonic masculinity” as a conceptual framework for evaluating male-female and male-male relationships, as well as public presentations of men in sport and media (Connell and Messerschmidt 831). Donaldson describes hegemonic masculinity, as it came to be understood by many scholars of masculinity studies, as “a culturally idealized form ... a personal and collective project, and ... the common sense about breadwinning and manhood. It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated. ... It is constructed by difficult negotiation over a lifetime” (645).

Discussions of hegemonic masculinity among these scholars often enforced a trait-based understanding of manliness, in which certain attributes (usually whiteness, high socio-economic status, physical and sexual dominance over women, homophobia and brawniness) are held as the dominant cultural standard for which all men ought to strive; in such discussions, males who actively resisted or failed to meet the hegemonic standard were described as “subordinate” males. According to these theories, singular definitions of ultimate manliness are constantly reinforced, lauded, and reinscribed, and this “exaltation stabilizes a structure of dominance and oppression in the gender order as a whole... [employing] exemplars who are celebrated as heroes” (Connell 94).

In such discussions of masculinity, changes to the hegemony were slow, but possible. As Connell and Messerschmidt note: “[these theories] assumed that gender relations were historical, and so gender hierarchies were subject to change [over time]. ... There could be a struggle for hegemony, and older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones. This was the element of optimism in an otherwise bleak theory” (833). However, most masculinities scholars assumed that such change was slow, over long historical periods and governed by massive, systemic change. Small derivations from the hegemonic standard might exist in smaller systems, but it was unlikely that such derivations would
compete for dominance over all. It was even less likely that multiple, equally valid forms of masculinity could appear in a given system. Instead, one dominant, normative masculinity modeled on unattainable exemplars would be stably reproduced.

In many academic studies of masculinity in sport, this hierarchical, externally enforced, trait-based, slow change, singular exemplar model became the standard way of discussing homosocial relationships\(^\text{21}\). Laurel Davis evaluates *Sports Illustrated*’s swimsuit issue, and the portrayal of sport in the magazine as a whole, in relation to a hegemonic standard which she believes includes the eroticization of women and an emphasis on virile heterosexuality. Her study follows the magazine over thirty years, during which time she contends the swimsuit issue consistently performed and reinforced a hegemonic masculinity, changing very little in its portrayal of race, dominance, and heterosexism. Eric Anderson also exemplifies this tendency to see sport in terms of hegemony in his article on homosexuality in men’s sports. Anderson identifies homosexuality as a derivative form of maleness which contests but doesn’t necessarily replace or truly compete with the heterosexist norm in male sport. A subsequent Anderson article notes that homosocialization and segregation in sport reproduces misogyny and reinforces an “orthodox masculinity” ( “I Used to Think”). Similarly, Pappas, McKenry and Catlett argue that hockey’s emphasis on physical aggression socializes male players to objectify women and reinforce a general culture of aggression, which stably reproduces over the long term.

Thus we see that many theorists on masculinity -- and especially sport and masculinity -- assume that any given system has a singular, trait-based, hierarchical conception of gender that stably reproduces over time. However, perhaps by employing a different method of

\(^{21}\) Homosocial relationships are generally understood as male-male friendships or affiliations with close emotional and social bonds, but lacking overt sexual expression.
analysis, we might discover that there are multiple spheres and/or layers of meaning that both inform and reinforce homosocial relationships. Indeed, we find that a multiplicity of masculinities are particularly evident following the 2004 NHL lockout, none of which is entirely dominant nor fixed. In the context of the lockout, we suggest that while gender may be considered to be external, hierarchical, or monolithic, it is actually a carefully constructed dance of apposition and opposition. In the end, masculinity, like many things, is constructed from an inner and outer relationship of rules, roles, and hierarchies. This intricate relationship of the internal and external is what destabilizes conceptions of gender when the rules of the game are suddenly changed, whereas following the most recent lockout conceptions of gender remained relatively static. We illustrate how male-male relationships in sport can undergo rapid change and produce multiple non-hierarchical concepts of masculinity. We do so by using an activity theory framework for analysis, rather than the more widespread emphasis on hegemony.

**Activity Theory and Conceptions of Masculinity**

Within an activity theory framework, acts and activity are carried out in activity systems. The acts themselves are directed by a social human need. The human needs “do not mean the biological drives which underlie the activity of all animals, but rather the range of sensitivities which are cultivated in social life, and the artifacts in which they are objectified” (Blunden 177). The significance of this idea lies in the interaction of people and ideas in a social manner. Fulfilling the social need then becomes an important driving factor in the interaction.

Systems are often designated around groups of people interacting with a common set of raw materials or contexts. The people within the system interact with an artifact or ideological tool, which then influences the possible outcomes. Susanne Bødker shows that “artifacts crystallize knowledge” (150). The ideological becomes concrete as it becomes part
of the tool or artifact, which in turn constrains the possible future outcomes. A key factor then becomes the process of mediation. Through mediation, the artifact shapes the action -- and even the psychological perspectives of the people in the system -- through the values that are embedded within the artifact or ideological premise. The manner in which the beliefs and values of people are mediated is often subtle in nature, to the extent that the participants won’t realize mediation has occurred. Thus, the historic nature of the ongoing system creates a set of rules or values that are seemingly always present.

Participants do have an effect on the values of the system as they externalize personal values and create change. The manner in which this occurs, expansive cycles, is described by Yrjö Engeström who notes the balance of internalization and externalization are part of systemic development. Paul Prior also illustrates this give and take in academic settings. However, the extent to which the individual act can change the systemic values is complicated, at least, and at times rather inconsequential. In this way the people are influenced by and influence the ideology as they move toward a possible outcome. This interaction does not happen within a vacuum, rather it is connected to a greater social context of rules, community, and division of labor. Thus, the system will act within a greater set of interactions and boundaries which will at times affect the trajectory of the system itself. The system will continue its trajectory unless a contradiction or some form of resistance ceases that fluid interaction.

While four types of contradictions have been discussed among activity theorists, a secondary contradiction (a shift in the interaction of components of the system due to outside influence) is perhaps most relevant to our discussion. In the days following the 2004 NHL lockout, there was a dramatic external shift -- specifically in the form of rule changes that inhibited the role of fighting and placed a greater emphasis on speed and scoring ability. This change in the rules then displaced the normal function of the ideological code, which previously informed notions of masculinity and proper behavior in this particular system.
Thus, the shift in ideology played out in very real ways on the ice. This shift, as with all systemic contradictions, affected the other components in the system, but resulted in a quick and meaningful change to important aspects of what it meant to live by that code. Historic systemic shifts are often seen to be a slow process thus allowing monolithic conceptions of guiding values, but through the secondary contradiction a much quicker change has taken place. The change to the monolithic has taken on a nearly instantaneous pace.

“The Code,” Activity Theory, and Masculinity

Ross Bernstein discusses “the code” in the National Hockey League as “a living, breathing entity” (xvii). Moreover, “it was hockey’s sacred covenant, its unwritten rules of engagement that had been handed down from generation to generation...a mysterious chain of accountability that dealt with issues of violence and fighting” (xvii). Bernstein continues, writing:

The code is so much more than just fighting. It is about players sacrificing their bodies to block shots; about getting stitched up between shifts, not periods; about standing up for one another no matter what—even if that means having to square off against a former teammate or best friend. . . . [Players see] every little act of disrespect, every little insult, every subtle cheap shot, every excessive celebration after a goal, and every bit of obstruction out in the slot. They see it all, and when the time is right, they will react to each act with varying degrees of intensity and passion. That is the code (xx).

The code in hockey played an important, and often unacknowledged, role on the ice. Passed on from player to player through the values espoused on the ice, the code provided an important means of enculturation as it
created a meaningful set of rules that governed acceptable behavior and, in the end, helped define what it meant to be a man.

Men, by the code, would use violence in a prescribed manner and would also maintain a low profile off the ice. Players, particularly enforcers, weren’t to turn down a fight when it was warranted; however, enforcers also showed a great amount of respect for one another. Doug Smith, retired NHL enforcer, noted two kind of fights in an interview with Davy Rothbart, those in defense of a teammate or self, and those meant to spark the team. His discussion of how the fights are initiated illustrates the degree to which the code and respect affected the situation:

We’ve got a code of conduct, so to speak. That guy might say, “yeah, no problem. Let’s go, Smitty,” and we drop our gloves and have a good, fair fight. But he might say to me, “You know what, I can’t fight tonight, I got a bad hand.” I’ve had guys that say to me, “I can’t fight you. My coach said he doesn’t want me to fight tonight.” At that point our code says that you don’t jump the guy, you don’t sucker-punch him, you don’t do anything dirty. You just catch him the next time around.

The code dictated who fought and how fights were to occur. There were times when a player couldn’t turn down a fight and the code made clear that you never hit a man that was down on the ice. Behaviors like this illustrated the beliefs and values of the NHL, pre-2004 lockout, as the code mediated the behavior.

The code also enabled hockey players to “police themselves.” When an act took place on the ice (such as delivering an illegal hit to a star player) the team’s enforcer, or a player on the designated level as the offender, would challenge that player to a fight. In this way acceptable behaviors and relationships between men were maintained. The NHL’s unofficial code of conduct governed the roles of masculinity in
the system. The system remained governed by these rules of homosociality until there was a disruption -- the lockout of 2004.

The lockout and its resolution were not explicitly about male relationships on the ice, of course. The lockout originated in a labor dispute, in which the league and its commissioner (Gary Bettman) demanded a salary cap and entered negotiations with the players’ union. No agreement on the cap could be reached in a timely fashion, and so the 2004-2005 season was first postponed, then canceled in full. The two sides finally agreed to a cap, and other rule changes, on July 13, 2005.

As conditions to end the lockout, the following rules were changed, which directly impacted the non-official “code” discussed above. The so-called “Instigator Rule” decreed that: “A player who instigates a fight in the final five minutes of a game will receive a game misconduct and an automatic one-game suspension.” Another significant change was the new “Increased Flow” rule, stating that “[p]asses from behind the defensive blue line to the attacking blue line will be considered legal. The center red line will be ignored for purposes of the ‘two line pass’.” A third rule demanded “[z]ero tolerance on Interference, Hooking and Holding/Obstruction,” a common tactic of slower, more physical teams to hold up opposing players in the neutral zone. In their summary of these changes, the NHL commented that “[o]ne primary objective of the new rules will be to reduce the scope of defensive ‘tools’ a team may effectively employ, and to create a corresponding benefit to the offensive part of the game -- thus allowing skill players to use their skills and increasing the number and quality of scoring chances in the game” (“NHL Enacts”). It is widely believed that the term “defensive tools” refers to the role of the “enforcer” particularly.

Thus we see that following the lockout rules were changed that emphasized speed and skill, and lessened the role of the enforcer and increasing the profile of star players. This shift in the system via a secondary contradiction resulted in a change in what is acceptable on the ice. Whereas players were not to take liberties with others on the ice, the
disruption to the mediating ideological artifact, the code, led to a change in what was deemed acceptable behavior as seen in the rise of the agitator, acts of violence on the ice, and players no longer answering the call to fight or defend the team. Each of these is directly related to the changing of the rules associated with homosocial interaction post-lockout, that made enforcers (enforcers of code) less viable members of the team. Since that time, a lack of stability in what is perceived to be acceptable masculine behavior has defined the league. When there is a shift in the way masculinity is performed there is a shift in what it means to be masculine.

Several established voices in hockey have discussed the decreased role of fighting, and how this shift has enabled previously forbidden acts to become prevalent. In the Rothbart interview, Doug Smith speaks to this shift in regard to the 2012 injuries of the NHL star Sidney Crosby that resulted in a long absence from the game.

Look at Sidney Crosby. He got body-checked and he’s out of hockey. Sidney Crosby should not be out of the game because someone took a run at him. If there’s a guy on Crosby’s team who’s there to kick your ass if you take liberties against him, you might have second thoughts before running him into the boards.

Other signs that the code has shifted appear in discussions of the game. In the November 12, 2011, game between the Buffalo Sabres and Boston Bruins, the open ice-hit on goalie Ryan Miller that in the past would have brought swift retribution under the code did not lead to immediate retaliation. Sabres defenseman, Tyler Myers, was a healthy scratch in the following game for his lack of action and Sabres coach, Lindy Ruff, decried the lack of a physical response. Reaction to the lack of retribution was varied, but the change was noted by Jeff Klein and Stu Hackel, the New York Times sport reporters, who wrote “Throughout most of the sport’s history, bad hits have brought fisticuffs. In recent seasons that practice has become muted to a degree. The on-ice officials
used to allow fights to proceed, but they now step in more often to break them up” (para. 9). John Buccigross, noted ESPN anchor and avid hockey fan, wrote in his hockey column:

The possibility of fighting gives NHL games an edge, especially in person, and a possibility of machismo and justice served. Some hockey people also view fighting as an ethic and value of either protection or support of a teammate. It is practically a political view. This "protection" could be for the star of the team or those who can't physically protect themselves, whether it's their size or because they were injured. Some feel this is very important, that it actually makes us more human. I think they have a point. How many people in your life do you think would actually put themselves in harm's way to fight for you or with you? And not just to fight for you or with you, BUT DO IT WELL. No offense, but if you got my back I prefer you are very good at distributing "justice." [. . .] The curtailing of fighting has been slowly legislated and it will continue. Even if fighting eventually results in ejection and/or suspension, there will always be a fight now and then like there is in baseball, basketball and football. But the standout characters like Shawn Thornton and Colton Orr will vanish. And that's kind of like eliminating one of your favorite characters from one of your favorite television shows. You might still watch the show, but it will never be the same.

While the role of the enforcer has waned, players have now become valued as agitators -- players that operate on the edge of what is legal to disrupt the scoring of stars. As Cory Twibell notes in “NHL's New Breed,” “the post-lockout NHL spawned a new, distinct breed of NHL player: the agitator. Sean Avery, Steve Ott, Daniel Carcillo, Patrick Kaleta, Steve Downie, Alex Burrows come to mind, and all are either loved or loathed depending on the given venue. Some can score, some can't and few argue
their effectiveness.” Note that here male roles are not clearly defined by a trait or exemplary standard that stably reproduces. Instead, multiple competing forms of homosociality are mutually existent and previously reviled roles are tolerated in a generally unsettled atmosphere.

Hockey’s previous code had also praised the quiet player that meant business on and off the ice. Players and media alike noted athletes like Joe Sakic as outstanding yet humble figures. They were unassuming stars that attributed success to the team and not the individual. The post-lockout NHL’s desire to increase visibility left some calling for players to be more accessible. This change has been embraced by some, as has been seen in players like Alexander Ovechkin who is renowned for his goal celebrations (“Ovechkin Wants”). Olaf Kolzig was quoted as attributing this to Ovechkin’s 2011-2012 struggles stating, “He just has to get back to being the way he was in his younger days and maybe not get wrapped up too much in the rock star status that comes with being Alex Ovechkin” (“Ex-Cap”). The code once prohibited players from taking too much individual credit or celebrating too long. However, the changes facilitated by the NHL lockout have encouraged players to take a more pronounced role.

Once again, acts that would have been mediated out of the system several seasons ago are becoming more commonplace. There are certainly players that still play by the code and fights are still part of the game, but there has been a sudden and dramatic shift where what was once an act of cowardice is now just part of the game. Furthermore, players once lauded for their lack of accessibility in order to increase team ethos and cohesion have been marginalized in favor of players willing to step into the individual spotlight via media and goal celebrations. The significance lies not only in the change itself, but in the swiftness of the change. The resistance did not come from within the system, but through the removal of the ideological tool/artifact by which the definitions of the participants were influenced. Even in a system with a history of unwavering devotion to the ideological artifact, a “culturally idealized form,” change came swiftly to the underlying definitions of
masculine behavior. This shift becomes not only evident but explainable through the construct of activity theory.

**Accounting for Systemic Change in the Post-Lockout NHL**

Hegemonic ideas of masculinity, while accounting for tradition, do not address the fluid and sometimes quickly changing nature of rules and roles that can come from a shift in ideological positions. Basically, social interaction and societal roles are based on often unstated but highly regarded “common knowledge.” Common knowledge, though, is not nearly as static as some might like to believe. Stephen Toulmin writes, “We acquire (and handle) knowledge of people and things in everyday life in ways that are in part culturally universal and spontaneous, in part the result of the individual’s internalizing of his or her own native culture” (60; Toulmin’s emphasis). While there is a culturally universal aspect of common knowledge, there are also spontaneous aspects that allow the individual to influence the systemic values. Thus, when there is a shift in the ideological artifact, as has taken place in the NHL, common knowledge becomes fluid and changeable. This means that the roles and relationships also become fluid, as they must adapt to the systemic change. Whereas a hegemonic perspective assumes a static nature of values, activity theory assumes that any change to the system will affect all other aspects of the system. Thus, any contradiction, or disruption, will in the end allow for meaningful change to occur. Activity theory openly acknowledges that there are social roles and contexts that explicitly affect what people do; however, activity theory also has a means of acknowledging resistance and expecting systemic change in some form. This will not always be quick, but when the opportunity arises for a major contradiction, it stands to reason that even notions of what is “right” or what is “manly” can and often will change dramatically.

The masculinities climate pre- and post-2004 NHL lockout provides a dramatic illustration of such shifts. Pre-lockout, the NHL relied heavily on the code. Respect, manliness, and the prevailing set of
ethical behaviors were dictated by tradition. Though often not openly discussed, players knew the rules and roles they were expected to fulfill, whether it was fighting for a teammate, blocking a shot, playing through extreme pain, or never taking on a high profile. With that code absent, there has been a continual renegotiation of those roles. Enforcers, such as Doug Smith, note the changing roles and vulnerability of the stars. This vulnerability, though, suggests a greater change in values. The rise of the agitator suggests a shift in values as well. What once was not manly or acceptable became acceptable -- or at least tolerable -- until another shift occurs. As activity theory illuminates, the once accepted and static values suddenly shifted with a disruption in the system.

While the previous lockout brought about specific rule changes that altered male-male relationships, the 2012 lockout brought no such rule changes. What this illustrates, then, is how external contradictions can dramatically and quickly transform conceptions of gender. The 2012 lockout did not overtly change systemic interaction; it was merely a change for economic benefit. Thus, the lack of contradictions -- seen through the lack of rule changes -- allowed conceptions of gender to remain stable. Activity theory provides a lens that not only allows us to account for rapid changes in masculinities, but to differentiate conditions in seemingly similar situations.

Conclusion

Applying activity theory to masculinities studies allows us to account for changing structures of male roles, homosocial relationships, and codes of male conduct in ways a more rigid hegemonic approach does not. For many masculinities scholars, committed to the idea that singular, hierarchical, and stably reproduced ideals of manliness prevail, an event like the 2004-2005 lockout is difficult to explain. How did male-male interaction change so drastically, in such a relatively short period of time? How did one form of manly behavior, the enforcer, become devalued so quickly, while another, the
agitator, rose in the span of a few seasons to such prominence? How did a few rule changes so completely reorient (or disorient) homosocial relations such as team cohesion? A hegemonic understanding of masculinities can not account easily for such radical and unfinished shifts. However, activity theory -- with an emphasis on constantly negotiated relationships as determined by artifacts, participants, and human need -- can better account for these rapid changes and seemingly non-structured relationships. It makes it possible to analyze these changes and also to account for fluidity in definitions of manliness more broadly. We conclude that this theory better accounts for the values changes after the 2004-2005 NHL lockout, but also that it might be valuable to use this approach to better understand the relationships, roles and values of men in other sports.

Works Cited


Connell, Robert W. "An Iron Man: The Body and Some Contradictions of


Some Disputes Surrounding Masculinity as a Legitimate Category of Historical Inquiry in the Study of Late Antiquity

Michael Edward Stewart

Abstract:
This paper examines the growth and some of the disputes surrounding “masculinity” as a legitimate category for both social and more traditional scholars seeking to understand Late Antiquity. It shows how investigations of masculinity often serve a political purpose. Some researchers delve into a topic such as “homosexuality” as a way of revealing how particular societies such as ancient Greece and Rome had greater tolerance towards same-partner sex than their modern counterparts. This agenda helps to explain why many studies on Late Antique masculinity focus on men as sexual beings. It might also account for the reluctance by some academics to accept social history as a legitimate historical tool.
If critics of social history have been correct in pointing out the dangers of letting our modern obsession with sexuality “cloud” our view of the past, it is just as vital to point out the androcentric nature of many ancient cultures in comparison to many modern western cultures. Indeed, living in a world of increasing gender equality can hinder our understanding of the ancient Romans. Indeed, one cannot understand the Roman past without understanding the central role that ideologies of masculinity played in this society.

Keywords:

Sometimes, when I mention that I study “masculinity,” or use the term in an abstract or paper, certain scholars can become somewhat defensive, or in the worst instances, downright dismissive. Such reactions should not surprise. Certainly, there continues to be a sharp divide in the study of Late Antiquity between those considered “traditionalists” and those labelled “social historians.” Despite one’s own views on the topic, one tends to be categorised as belonging to either one group or the other. Attacks launched from both sides frequently utilise harsh rhetoric. For example, in his recent work on the sixth-century Byzantine historian Procopius, Anthony Kaldellis scolds social and cultural historians for their supposed lack of understanding of the ancient Roman world and its literature (13-15). Some of this criticism is warranted. Indeed, much of my recent work has been devoted to balancing what I believe has been an overemphasis on sexuality in much of the recent scholarship on Late Roman and Early Byzantine masculinity. This paper takes a narrower look at both the growth of masculinity as a tool of historical inquiry and some of the disputes surrounding this methodology as a legitimate category for studying ancient Rome and early Byzantium.
The Study of Men as a Gender

In the historiographical tradition, one’s gender was perceived as firmly rooted in biology; “one was born man or woman” (Pohl 23). Scholars long regarded the borders between man and woman as firm and impassable. In the past thirty years, this paradigm has changed. Scholars have shown convincingly that notions like gender are susceptible to various interpretations and instability (Searle 41-45). Therefore, the cultural environment that one grows up in plays a fundamental role in shaping one’s perception of the world around one.

The study of men as a gender developed in the wake of advances made in women’s studies in the past forty years. Linked indelibly with the social upheaval of this time, few topics in contemporary academia have gained as much focus or generated as much enmity. Gender studies emerged from the women’s movement of the 1960s-80s. Reacting to the dominance of men in historical writing, these works originally aimed to give women a place in the evaluation of the past (Smith 1-5). Scholarship in this area suggested that the degraded social role that women played in much of history remained closely connected with the idealisation of the “universalised masculine.” While many cultures considered the masculine as essential and perfect, they saw the feminine as insignificant and flawed (Kuefler 2-3).

Somewhat ironically, building on the methods of these feminist scholars, researchers began to explore the construction of masculinity throughout history. Several of these studies noted that women represent only one of many groups that have been marginalised in the historical record. Many cultures—ancient and modern—have treated ethnic minorities, slaves, and members of the lower classes as the “equivalent to women because they were subordinated men” (Williams 135). While scholars like the philosopher Judith Butler recognise that men and
women seldom make up homogeneous social groups, she suggests, “the feminine is always the outside and the outside is always feminine” (48).

Despite critiques of his work by some feminist scholars and classicists, the innovative research of the French philosopher Michel Foucault remains fundamental for modern works considering masculinity in the ancient Greek, Roman, and early Byzantine worlds. Foucault’s proposal that concepts like sexuality both change over time and remain intimately connected with the symbiotic power relationships amongst all members of a society has influenced a generation of scholars (Behr 4-15). Additionally, his work showed that the old contrast of the sexually promiscuous “fun loving” pagan versus the chaste and “repressed” Christian was deeply flawed (Use of Pleasure 32). He pointed out as well, that ancient Greek and Roman forms of sexuality differed from modern concepts; Foucault argued that sexual orientation was an invention of nineteenth-century Western Europeans (History of Sexuality 43). In a viewpoint particularly embraced by gender scholars, for Foucault, masculine ideology remained at the core of ancient Greek and Roman morality. These systems, he explained, represented “an elaboration of masculine conduct carried out from the viewpoint of men in order to give form to their behaviour” (Use of Pleasure 22-23).

Feminist scholars who continue to criticise the methodology of Foucault and/or the study of masculinity in general seem uncomfortable embracing a field that places men at the forefront of historical inquiry once more (Conway 9). Accounts of aristocratic men certainly dominate the historical record. So then how, and perhaps more importantly, why study men as a gender? Unlike the obstacles that stand in the way of scholars trying to find a “historical voice” for marginalised groups like women or the lower classes, the sources for the analysis of masculine ideologies are readily available. Nevertheless, this very abundance makes finding “real” men in history somewhat problematic. When one looks at the portraits of men found in the Roman and the early Byzantine periods, for example, quite often only stylised images emerge. This point is particularly relevant when examining the classicising and the
ecclesiastical historians of the Late Roman and the early Byzantine eras. Similar to contemporary celluloid action-heroes and villains, the men depicted in these accounts frequently display rhetorical notions of ideal and non-ideal masculine conduct, producing men who often seem more like cartoon-characters than genuine human beings. Nonetheless, heroism itself serves as a sort of hyper-masculinity. What one finds in many modern gender studies of the ancient world is primarily a “public” view of codes of ideal manly conduct. Yet, just as the 1980s action-hero Rambo tells one about American notions of masculinity, foreigners, and the political environment of the Reagan era itself, the heroes, villains, and barbarians found in the ancient literature divulge significant aspects of the Roman and the Byzantine value systems. This popularity does not mean that everyone in these cultures adhered to the models of manliness and unmanliness found in these works. I would argue, however, that like the themes of hyper-masculinity and unmanliness seen in modern movies, these writings appealed to a diverse audience, and therefore reflect the values—of not only the hierarchy of these Empires, but also of large segments of their populations.

Of course, dissonances remained between men’s expected social roles and the actual personalities of Roman and early Byzantine men. In the real world men consistently failed to live up to the stringent masculine ideal articulated in the literary sources of the day. The nature of the source material means that the private world of these men remains mostly hidden. Just like their female counterparts, the cultural construction of “man” was often insufficient to contain individual “men” (Cooper; Kuefler 2). I would suggest, however, that at times we may get a glimpse beneath the cracks and see the different ways these men “proved” their manliness.

Several other challenges confront the researcher attempting to separate the “real man” from the “constructed” one. Perhaps the most critical question is how does one define or study a topic as seemingly ambiguous as masculinity? By masculinity, scholars do not refer generally to the anatomical or biological features of the male body,
remain relatively constant among a range of societies and over time, but to the variety of meanings that these cultures place or have placed on persons with a male body. Therefore, a man may display “feminine” traits, yet remain biologically male. The “feminine” trait itself, however, may be transient and open to a wide range of interpretations. Behaviours that one culture, group or era labels as “masculine” might be called “womanly,” “unmanly,” or effeminate” (all three of these expressions mean essentially the same thing) in another society, group or period (Montserrat 153-58). For instance, excessive sexual encounters with women, which may be seen as a sign of manliness in contemporary western culture, commonly indicated “unmanliness” in the Roman world (Williams 143-44).

Scholars call this concept the social construction of gender. Simply defined, social construction means that one’s knowledge of objects or ideas develops by interacting with the surrounding social order. Therefore, the cultural environment that one grows up in plays a fundamental role in shaping one’s perception of a flexible notion such as masculinity. As John Searle argues, a twenty-dollar note is by its nature a worthless piece of paper; it holds no intrinsic value except the worth a culture places upon it. It gains value (cultural meaning) because people communally experience money as having worth, and so come to attach value to it (41-45). Scholars apply this same argument to subjective constructions like masculinity and ethnicity. This is not to say that all human characteristics are socially constructed. This point is particularly true of sexual orientation, which may be non-voluntary and biologically orientated; nonetheless, how a culture understands and defines sexual orientation is socially constructed (Partner). It is more challenging to ascertain the value systems of individuals who act outside the established boundaries of conventional society. Masculine ideology is not always defined by a dominant paradigm, but can also be shaped by an individual’s will and choice, which may be created through the effect of subcultures or other social groupings. Modern academics label these
competing ideologies as subordinate masculinities (Connell; Karras 17-22).

Disputes

Investigations of masculinity often serve a political purpose. Some researchers delve into a topic such as “homosexuality” as a way of revealing how particular societies such as ancient Greece and Rome had greater tolerance towards same-partner sex than their modern counterparts. By showing that cultural views on masculinity are constantly evolving, these scholars seek to reveal how and why Christianity established a “hostile” ideology that condemned homosexuality, banned women in the clergy, and in the West prohibited the marriage of priests (e.g. Boswell; Jordan). By using historical texts against the Catholic Church, these activists hope to influence the Church’s future platform towards these issues. They contend that the Church instituted these policies in reaction to the social concerns of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and for that reason, its stance on these matters should be adapted to reflect a more inclusive and more progressive modern world (Smith 3-4). For these academics, the study of history provides the opportunity to not only see the way things were, but also a chance for glimpsing the way things might be (Kuefler 297).

This agenda helps to explain why many studies on Late Antique masculinity focus on men as sexual beings. It might also account for the reluctance by some academics to accept social history as a legitimate historical tool. As we saw in the introduction, some of the criticism is scathing. The respected Byzantine scholar, Warren Treadgold, is another sceptic. He writes, “Byzantine thinking had little in common with today’s Postmodernism, which looks for truth in panegyrics and saints’ lives, for bias in historiography, everywhere for sexuality, and nowhere for religious faith” (preface 14). Even Peter Brown’s masterful Body and Society has been accused of portraying bodies as predominantly sexual vessels (Louth). As John Behr warns, our modern preoccupation with
sexuality has caused researchers like Brown to overstate the importance of this issue for our Late Antique writers (11-15).

Other critics of social history have accused many of its practitioners of using anachronistic methods in their research. In the field of ancient sexualities and masculinity, the debate between those labelled as Essentialists and Social Constructionists has been particularly visceral. The sceptics claim that many investigations on sexual difference in the Greco-Roman world are flawed because they project modern perceptions of sexuality and gender onto Greek and Roman societies where these concepts held greatly different meanings. Moreover, many classicists have frowned on the “gendered” approach to understanding ancient Rome and Greece. These critics suggest that much of the work by social historians has misunderstood, mistranslated, or stretched the meanings of important Greek and Latin terminology to support their theories. They maintain, as well, that many of these studies by social historians have focused too heavily on rhetorical sources and too narrowly on private aspects of masculinity, particularly sexuality (Behr; Kuefler, “Boswell Thesis,” 1-25). In response, some social historians have reversed the charges by accusing their detractors of misinterpreting their work, and of using out-dated and anachronistic methods themselves. We find an example of this counter-attack in Bruce O’Brian’s contention that historians have always looked to the past to both illuminate contemporary concerns and to find “themselves.” He suggests that no historian can achieve complete detachment. He and other social historians submit that at least they are aware of the dangers of interpreting the past through modern eyes (172-74).

Despite the acrimony at times between the two schools, scholars in the past fifteen years have attempted to reconcile the disparate methods preferred by classicists and social historians. Political events in the first decade of the twenty-first century led to an increased awareness that concepts like heroism and manliness mean different things in different societies and change over time. The aftermath of the attacks on the twin towers in New York city on September 11, 2001, in particular,
saw an increased interest by academics on how ancient thinkers formulated the abstract concepts of manliness and courage (Rabieh 2-4; Sluiter and Rosen 1-2). These investigations have combined traditional historical, philological, and archaeological analysis with gender and socio-linguistics studies to explore Roman masculinity by examining the semantic range and gendered meanings of terms and concepts like *virtus* ("virtue," "manliness," "courage") and ἀρετή ("goodness," "excellence," "virtue"). Most importantly, they have shown the fluidity of these concepts by revealing how "gendered" vocabulary like *virtus*, ἀνδρεία ("manliness," "manly spirit," "courage") and ἀρετή have shifted meanings over time and, at times, meant different things to different people according to the context they were used (Sluiter and Rosen 1-4). Other researchers based in classics have borrowed some of the techniques developed in gender history to investigate how masculine ideologies governed the public speech and behaviour of Roman and early Byzantine men (e.g. Edwards; Gleason; Williams; Foxhall and Salmon; Hobbs; Burrus; Kuefler).

The disputes concerning the validity of social history and the limitations of classical studies for understanding historical shifts represent just one front in the larger debates circulating in the field of Late Roman and early Byzantine history. At the heart of many of these arguments lie long-established controversies concerning the end of the classical world, the advent of Christianity, and "the fall of the Roman Empire." In the historiographical tradition, these upheavals brought about both a decline in civilisation and the triumph of superstition over rationality (Goffart 230). The past forty years, however, has witnessed a surge of interest in seeing Late Antiquity as its own unique historical epoch. At the vanguard of this movement, Peter Brown's, *The World of Late Antiquity* (1971), presented a more optimistic vision of the breakup of the Roman Empire. Instead of seeing this period as an era of decay, leading to the "backward" Greek Byzantine Empire and the barbarised kingdoms of Western Europe, Brown and his followers present Late Antiquity as a complex period of cultural germination. These researchers
have argued that developments in this era—particularly the intellectual growth and spread of Christianity—have helped to shape the modern as well as the medieval world.

Because of the increased focus on this era, in the past forty years, the period known formerly as the “Dark Ages,” has become somewhat ‘brighter.” Scholars have reworked the model of Western Europe gradually crumbling into ignorance as the Empire retreated to the East and “barbarian” peoples flooded into the West. As we have seen above, this paradigm shift brought about a fecund period for Late Antique social historians, and in particular, those interested in uncovering ancient masculinities. In the past few years, however, several studies have questioned this more optimistic vision of the end of the Ancient World and the advent of the Early Middle Ages. So too have these works criticised what they see as an over-reliance on the newer historical methods preferred by social historians (e.g. Heather; Ward-Perkins). As the historian James O’Donnell remarks, there continues to be a division among those scholars who embrace innovative historical techniques, and those who largely reject them. He writes:

Followers of Peter Brown and Averil Cameron tend to focus on the eastern half of the Empire and see late antiquity not as merely the end of the classical world, but as the first period of the middle ages. They tend to show more interest in religious and cultural history, and are open to methods used in other humanistic disciplines. Their debunkers prefer military and political history to the religious, and overall tend to distrust theory (O’Donnell).

My own research strives to use methodologies from both schools (Stewart). It integrates disparate secondary and primary sources to create a greater sense of how early Byzantine secular and ecclesiastical writers linked representations of military valour to their notions of the qualities that made up “true” manliness. Like many historians, my environment has influenced me. Indeed, the events surrounding 9/11/ and the ensuing wars in
Afghanistan and Iraq provided me with the original impetus for trying to understand how a demilitarised segment of a population could embrace militarism and men’s martial virtues as a type of hyper-manliness. Living in the United States in this period, I found myself bombarded on a nearly daily basis by a myriad of visual and literary images promoting the soldier’s life as the epitome of the manly life. Even more interesting, were the various ways non-soldiers both publically admired and sought to connect themselves with the martial legacy of the state and the manly identity of its soldiers. The image of a President, who had avoided fighting in Vietnam as a youth, draping himself in manly martial imagery made me ponder the ways similarly non-martial emperors from the Later Roman and early Byzantine Empire, may have promoted their own martial and masculine ideology. In the highly patriotic world of post 9/11 America, the field of battle seemed to provide a realm where soldiers—who hailed largely from the less privileged classes—could establish a raw manliness superior to that of powerful executives, politicians, famous actors, and professional athletes. While appreciating the dangers of making anachronistic comparisons between a modern state like the United States and an ancient one like the early Byzantine, it made me consider the ways and some of the reasons why civilian members of a population could, not just admire, but seem to share in a “group” masculinity shaped by the exploits of a relatively small percentage of men.

I will close this paper by returning to the debate introduced in the introduction. If critics of scholarship examining ancient masculinities have been correct in pointing out the dangers of letting our modern obsession with sexuality “cloud” our view of the past, it is just as vital to point out the androcentric nature of Rome and Byzantium in comparison to many modern western cultures. I would argue that living in a world of increasing gender equality can hinder our understanding of the ancient Romans and
the early Byzantines. Unquestionably many ancient Roman and Byzantine men from the ruling classes valued “true” manliness as a cultural ideal. Indeed, hegemonic masculine ideologies disseminated the views of a political elite intent on justifying and protecting the existing political order. While the past must always remain a “foreign country,” familiarising ourselves with these ancient masculinities can provide us not only with a better understanding of ancient Rome and Byzantium, but also offer us essential insights into our own era.

Works Cited


Fur Traders, Voyageurs, and Coureurs des Bois:
Economic Masculinities in French Canadian Fur Trade Society, 1635-1754

Sandra Slater

Abstract:

Over the course of the seventeenth century, explorers who traversed the wilderness of New France embodied such masculine characteristics as courage, strength and military prowess. These figures such as Samuel de Champlain engaged native men as allies in warfare and the burgeoning fur trade. As the fur trade increasing defined relationships between the French and Native Americans over the subsequent decades, new masculinities emerged. Three distinct masculinities developed all associated with various aspects of the fur trade, but vastly different from one another. This article argues that the advent and potential wealth of the fur trade displaced rugged, explorer masculinity in favor of these three new masculinities: fur trader, voyageur, and coureurs des bois. Fur traders made vast fortunes as the elite businessmen who transported and profited from the sale of furs in the Atlantic. Voyageurs relied heavily upon native constructions of masculinity,
but retained a partial identity in French civilization. *Coureurs des bois* lived wholly in native society, eschewing French society in favor of indigenous habits and customs and often taking native wives. Though the *coureurs des bois* and voyageurs retained a respect and understanding of native culture, the elite fur trade increasingly distanced himself from native tribes and instead reflected a paternalistic attitude toward Native American men, infantilizing them while exploiting them for economic gain. Collaboration and mutual camaraderie disappeared from interactions between elites of New France and their indigenous brethren.

**Keywords:**

The death of the aptly named Father of New France, Samuel de Champlain, in 1635 marked a milestone in the history of the burgeoning French colony in North America. Champlain and his contemporaries witnessed a vast expanse of territory ripe for exploration. They, as explorers, considered themselves a special type of man endowed with the virtues of manly courage, bravery, love of country, and an evangelical spirit toward their native friends. These men such as Samuel de Champlain, Jacques Cartier, and Marc Lescarbot gave way to different French-Canadian masculinities during the boom of fur trading in New France in the early to mid-seventeenth century. Economic wealth and accessibility to the profitable fur trade determined status as men. Three noted types emerged from this new economically competitive wilderness: *fur trader*, *voyageur*, and *coureur de bois*. Each is distinguished by a variety of characteristics that individualized their experiences, yet they all hinge on the significance of the fur trade. These were all types of manhood, forged by economics, fur, and wilderness, but they manifested identity differently.

Three dominant types of French fur culture masculinities appeared in the New World and among them, the *fur traders* were the most politically legitimate, as the French government authorized them to conduct French fur trading activities in the New World. They owned monopolies, the right to grant licenses, and corresponded directly with
governing officials, but were often far removed from day-to-day activities (Vandiveer 43). The voyageur was a man who traversed the wilderness and acted as a guide for the highest bidder. Fur trading activities varied from voyageur to voyageur, but most distinguished themselves as apt woodsmen very familiar with the wilderness, travel routes, and native cultures. Flamboyant in dress and song, the voyageur has passed into folklore. The last, and in some ways the most elusive, category is that of the coureur de bois. The coureur de bois, long shrouded in mystery due to fragmentary sources, is by far the most transgressive category to established French culture in the New World. Distinguished by an unparalleled intimacy with native cultures, the coureur de bois often married native women and lived life immersed in indigenous culture, but with one finger in French culture. These men who “went native” rarely left records, due in part to the illegal status of their fur trading activities. They evaded monopolies and sought to profit from their native knowledge without dealing with the government sanctioned fur traders.

This project, with the central focus on these three types of masculinities, demonstrates how masculinities associated with the fur trade diverged from the masculine performance embraced by their explorer predecessors but more importantly, how they deviated from one another. With its emphasis on masculinity, certain exclusions may seem obvious. Much has been written about Native American women’s role in the fur trade, particularly in regard to families in which the husband was French. While such research is enlightening, it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this project. Furthermore, the impact these relationships had on native male masculinity must wait for another paper. Natives and Europeans alike were affected by these cultural and economic exchanges. Close interaction forced reinterpretations of masculinities in the new terrain of an economic wilderness. In terms of early Canadian men, clearly economics influenced behaviors, but familiarity with native culture also played a significant role. Because of the diversity of experiences and factors, masculinities vary. Masculine
identity is a composite of personal convictions, societal influences, and environment. With this in mind, masculinity and identity underwent a change in 1763 following the end of the Seven Year’s War and the victory and conquest of the English. The activities of fur trading in present day Canada did not cease following the English victory, but economic developments forced fur traders of all types to adapt to the new Englishness of the fur trade business.

**Fur Trade**

The nature of the fur trade business deserves some attention. In essence, the beaver-rich wilderness of Canada provided the commodity for the pelt-hungry Europeans who needed beaver for their hats and furs. While the French government attempted to organize fur trading through monopolies for legal edicts requiring individual fur traders to bring their furs to the communal storehouse, these measures were largely ineffective. The abundance of beaver and the influx to Europe glutted the market (Eccles 341). The economy rebounded throughout the decades of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the initial effects greatly impacted the course of civilization in New France.

The obvious repercussions of fur trading were that it required intimacy and alliance with natives who knew best how to capture and skin beaver. This dependence on native alliance brought the French into relationships with the Hurons, Montagnais, and the Ottawas who controlled much of the “fur routes through the Saguenay and the Ottawa rivers” (Rich 36). These native alliances also inspired hostility from the Iroquois to the south and provided the impetus for the Iroquois wars of the seventeenth century (Rich 36). Good relationships with allied nations were crucial to the success of any fur trading venture; hence the need for Frenchmen who spoke the language and knew the landscape of indigenous tribal cultures.
Although natives could in fact trade their furs with the English or the Dutch, a journal entry from 1754 by Anthony Hendry, an officer of the Hudson Bay Company, offers some insight into why trade with the French was preferable. He wrote, “The French talk Several Languages to perfection: they have the advantage of us in every shape; and if they had Brazile tobacco, which they have not, would entirely cut off our trade” (qtd. in Gaultier 39). Pierre Gaultier de la Vérendrye et de Varennes, an elite eighteenth-century fur trader, offered a French perspective and attributed French success to the natives, observing that the “French...are very different [from the English] as they fear nothing and are kindly” (98). Furthermore, Gaultier thought, “the savages will not go to the English, whom they do not like and even despise, saying that they are not men like the French and that they are afraid of them” (98). Gaultier’s statements reveal his own projection of French masculine superiority compared to both the natives and the English.

The French employed the fur trade itself, aside from its economic contributions, to stabilize native relationships for settlement and peace objectives. In this light, economics and friendship worked together to benefit the French settlements. The imperial objectives of France took precedence in the seventeenth century. Fur trading served as a funding mechanism for larger issues of discovery and territorial exploration. These designations of importance underscore the fact that Samuel de Champlain, a great explorer, received a fur trade monopoly to help fund his exploits in North America (Vandiveer 20-25, Butterfield 18). This little known fact received few comments even in Champlain’s own voluminous writings, as fur was far less important in the early seventeenth century than exploration.
The adventures and legacy of French explorers in the New World greatly influenced the masculinities that followed the grand age of exploration. Characteristics that explorers prized translated into fur culture differently. While the masculinities forged by explorers are not the subject at hand, it is important to recognize those outstanding characteristics in order to better understand and compare them to their disparate brethren that appeared in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Most important was the characteristic of *manly courage* identified by Champlain and others who strove to exemplify and illustrate, through warfare and adventure, their courage and tenacity of strength. The practice of allied warfare brought native and Frenchmen into a brotherhood that often fostered a begrudging respect and mutual admiration for bravery and military strength. These tentative friendships were continually negotiated, but always present. French explorers encountered and respected native masculinity, though they considered such types as subservient to their own masculine traits. Explorers frequently remarked on the sexuality of native women and saw their roles as simultaneous evangelicals seeking to reform native women and as the ones to condemn women’s lifestyles while protecting their virtues. This Christian ethic toward women disappeared from the writings of those involved in fur.

Jean Nicolet embodied the transition from explorer to woodsman. Nicolet was a man somewhere between explorer, *voyageur*, and *coureur de bois*. He certainly engaged in native and French alliances, but rejected native culture as his permanent mode of life (Nicolet 28). Sent by Champlain to live among the natives after his arrival in New France in 1618, Nicolet resided with the Ottawas for two years in complete isolation from French society (29). From there he moved to live among the Nipissings for the next nine years where he “was recognized as one of the nation [and] had his own cabin and establishment, doing his own
fishing and trading. He became, indeed, a naturalized Nipissing” (29). Despite Jean Nicolet’s intimacy with native cultures and his apparent acceptance into their tribes, he still mingled freely among the French in Québec. He returned permanently to Québec in 1633 where he volunteered to lead French expeditions into the wilderness. According to the Jesuit Priest, Brébeuf, “Jean Nicolet, en son voyage qu’il fit avec nous iusques à l’Iisle souffrit ausse tous les travaux d’un des plus robustes Sauvauges” (Jean Nicolet on his journey with all of us to the Island suffered them to perform he labors of the more robust savages.) (Nicolet 30, 46). Champlain rewarded his courage, strength, and adeptness in the wilderness with a position at the trading Post at Three Rivers where he served in the Office of Commissary and was an interpreter (Nicolet 77). Nicolet perished in the rapids of the frontier attempting to save some captive natives.

What makes Nicolet unique is the heroic legacy he left behind. His skills and adventures opened up important trade relations with Northwestern tribes and his knowledge of geography and culture pushed the French further inland. In this sense, the adulation given him is not surprising. He fits neatly in the tradition of the great explorers. However, he lived comfortably among the Ottawa, Nipissing, and other tribes who fully accepted into their society. This practice would be discouraged when those who lived with natives chose to adopt native culture to the exclusion of their own. Nicolet retained his French masculinity and even excelled at its physical attributes by managing to impart the admirable characteristics possessed by the natives and admired by the French. He, at the same time, balanced his French culture and Christian masculinity in Quebec. Contemporary historian and Jesuit, Father Du Creux, recorded that while “[Nicolet] was popular with both the French and the Indians....he was anxious to use his popularity with the savages to the advantage, whenever possible, of the Fathers of the Society and to draw all whom he could to the Church” (359). Father Barthélemy Vimont recounted the story of Nicolet in 1634. He recalled that Nicolet was known to the Huron as Manitousirniou, translated as “the
wonderful man” (Du Creux 359). According to Vimont, Nicolet lived happily in New France “to the great satisfaction of both the French and the savages, by whom he was equally and singularly loved” (Vimont 16). Du Creux echoed this sentiment when he wrote that Nicolet’s death caused unspeakable grief to several native tribes for whom he many times “risked his life” and they “with a great wail of lamentation...mourned the truly tragic fate of their benefactor” (Du Creux 360). This cultural limbo made it historically acceptable to praise his valor. Worthy of note was Franklin Roosevelt’s mention of Nicolet at a speech in Wisconsin where he discussed the theme of “opportunity for the average man” (a clever positioning of his New Deal philosophies) (Roosevelt 370-375). This combination of exploration and economics persisted, but transformed itself in importance, particularly to fur traders. No longer was exploration necessarily dominant.

Fur Traders and Economic Masculinity

Pierre Gaultier de la Vérendrye et de Varennes combined his lust for discovery with the lure of fur. A Three Rivers native, Gaultier served in the French King’s navy from 1708 to 1712, but returned to New France to trade in furs (Burpee 1). He expected to accumulate enough funds for his supposed larger objective of finding the westward route to the Pacific by generating enough profits through possessing a “monopoly” of the fur trading in New France. He and his sons oversaw one of the largest monopolies in the history of New France and their legacy is embroiled with controversies that shed light on the shifting importance of economics in Canadian society and what those alterations invoked about the men involved.

Pierre Gaultier de la Vérendrye et de Varennes was the son of René Gaultier, Sieur de Varennes, Governor of Montréal, and subsequently experienced a fairly privileged upbringing in the Canadian trade post of Three Rivers. There, he encountered the wilderness explorers and fur trappers (Burpee 2). This contact with voyageurs and the adventurous tales they wove deeply affected young Pierre, who
dreamed of becoming one of those virile men who subdued the wild. After his release from the army in 1712, Gaultier married and requested the rights to a small trading post near Three Rivers. It would be from this spot, strategically placed at the center of commercial development in New France, that Gaultier would carve out a legacy for himself (Gaultier 71).

Gaultier, like Champlain, intended to use the profits from trade to fund exploration. His goal of finding the Western sea proved elusive, due in part to the demands of the fur trade. Important for the construction of masculinity is the useful contrast between Champlain and Gaultier. For Champlain, fur truly was secondary to exploration and glorification to the realm of France through conquest of territories and native souls. While Champlain financed his expeditions through the business of fur, he was primarily an explorer. Gaultier became controversial for his dedication to the fur business and provoked suspicions of the French court that exploration was an excuse to gain a license and to profit from fur. In this new environment of economics, exploration somehow became a secondary concern to all those involved. Initial explorers found little to advance them financially, but once fur became a monetary opportunity, priorities changed. Men found the attainment of respected and superior masculinity through commercial enterprises, not conquest and exploration. Defining one’s success as a man had changed.

The predominance of commercial interests permeates the writings of La Vérendrye. In a letter to Comte de Maurepas in 1731, Gaultier declared his ambition to “carry the name and arms of His Majesty into a vast stretch of countries hitherto unknown, to enlarge the colony and increase its commerce” (Gaultier 71). The significance of this comment is best appreciated in comparison with his predecessors. Jacques Cartier, the first French explorer to New France, described his undertaking of exploration as “not being so afraid...to run the risk of those perils and dangers...and being desirous...of doing [the King] some humble service to the increase of the most holy Christian faith” (Cartier 87-88). Along the same vein, Champlain, in the Preface to his Voyages of
1619, declared his interest in the New World to be “not to gain wealth so much as honour and the glory of God, on behalf of my king and country” (Champlain 71-72). Whereas Champlain and his contemporaries shared Gaultier’s devotion to King and Country, they did not employ the language of trade. Over the course of the eighteenth century trade began to rival king and country for importance and, very noticeably, replaces evangelicalism as a goal. In seeking fur and Western water routes, Gaultier found no time for concerning himself with Christianizing indigenous peoples.

A transition from viewing native men as a competitive masculinity to perceiving them only as producers of a commodity (i.e. fur and peltry) drastically altered European/native interactions. Patterns of mutual admiration and exchanges of genuine friendship exemplified these tenuous relationships in the early seventeenth century. While Frenchmen clearly assumed themselves as the superior to the native in civilization, religiosity, and ambition, they did not seek to dominate, patronize, or belittle. French explorers, particularly Champlain, eagerly participated in battle with their native brethren as an exposition of their masculine prowess, but also as a competitive exchange for masculine authority with their allies. It is important to recognize that early Frenchmen viewed native masculinity as worthy of competition. This disappeared from fur trader masculinity as worthy of competition. This disappeared from fur trader masculinity as worthy of competition. This disappeared from fur trader masculinity as worthy of competition. Instead, a paternalistic construction wherein fur traders served as “father” figures to their native children, replaced the earlier construction.

The native perspective is crucial to understanding the impact of the new gendered order. Though limited, sources underscore the importance of middle-men and middle-women in Indian society that trade influenced their own perceptions of competitive masculinities (Schleisier 129-145). Trade had always been important in facilitating native friendships and settlement, but after the beaver demand in Europe boomed, the call for fur in New France drastically altered French perceptions of native men. No longer were they worthy adversaries, but economic producers. The fur trade produced the native middle-man, a
hitherto unknown masculinity that brokered the trade of fur from his native allies and traveled to the trading posts to exchange them for European goods. He, of course, took a profit. Mercantilism had found the indigenous peoples. These Indian middle-men usually adopted some aspects of French culture and used their knowledge of the potential rewards in fur to exploit their tribes and allies. This is a drastic change from traditional virtues of native culture that emphasized tribal alliance and devotion to allies over all else.

Gaultier’s relationship with his economic producers diverges from that of Champlain’s. More importantly, the language itself changed. In 1733, Gaultier began to refer to Indians as children. In a letter that underscores the desire of the Cree nation to “submit entirely to become obedient” to the French nation, the fur trader informs Governor Beauhornois, the recipient, that the Cree and their Assiniboin allies “beg you to admit them to the number of your children” (136). The father figure changes throughout the course of Gaultier’s letters and journals. At times he himself appears to be the father, but more often the French king or a French governing official such as Beauhornois is the father figure. The King is sometimes referred to as “our father” (136). Gaultier embodies the parental figure to admonish the Cree and prevent them from making war on the Saulteurs who were French allies. Gaultier gathered all the chiefs together and “gave them a collar in the name of our Father who forbade them to make war on his children the Saulteurs; and I said to them that, if they were obedient to his word, I would give them everything they asked” (147). This exchange utilizes the language of paternalism, most often used in reference to nineteenth century slave/master relationships. It relied heavily on a system of authority and subservience that subjugated Native American men and forced them into an infantile state. Rejecting the possibility that such men posed a potential threat, particularly an economic threat, male fur traders reinforced their dominance all the while emasculating their native producers. It is appropriate here because of the imbalanced nature of agreement of roles and reciprocity of obligation. Gaultier offered the
Cree French protection, friendship, and trade if they produced beaver pelts. While mutual obligation was understood, clearly the chiefs occupied the subservient role as the children who must be obedient to “our Father, the great chief” (147-148). As a sign of ownership, these French named the tribes the “French Sioux” or the “French Cree,” no longer allies, but possessions.

In this context, paternal language appeared in religious discourse. Cartier, Champlain, and others employed the terminology of “Father” to represent God. Those who visited Gaultier at Fort St. Charles were received in language and deed similar to that of the Christian baptism. Gaultier wrote:

in his name [our Father] I received them into the number of his children; I recommended them never to listen to any other word than his, which would be announced to them by me or by someone in my place; and not to forget the words I was speaking to them but to bring them to the knowledge of those who were absent; the French were numerous, there was no land unknown to them, and there was only one great chief among them, whose mouthpiece I was, and whom all the others obeyed. If they obeyed him also as his children, every year he would send Frenchmen to them to bring them such things as they required to satisfy their needs. And finally, if they were clever, that is to say, if they brought plenty of skins, they would benefit by what I was saying to them (147-148).

In the previous passage Gaultier serves as a priest figure trading salvation for obedience and furs. He, the mouthpiece of the great chief, offered an opportunity they could then share with other Indians (162). True religious conversion is absent from these works and instead, importance by trade, occupies French concerns. Later in his narratives, Gaultier offers comfort to warring Assiniboins by charging them, “My children, take courage, keep well in mind the word of our father, the
great chief” (292). From Gaultier’s own account we know that the natives were not always so passive about their subservient role as children. In the summer of 1738 he writes after chastising Kaministikwia for making war, the Chief defiantly retorted “we are not children, what we say we mean” (292). Gaultier’s noted, but refused to engage resistance.

Warfare, traditionally a masculine enterprise, gave way to economic prudence in the early eighteenth century. Unlike Champlain who eagerly engaged in warfare with natives to illustrate his own masculine superiority and military prowess, Gaultier refused to participate in war with the Cree (Gaultier 136). By the age of Gaultier, the French could not risk becoming involved in Indian wars because of the potential dangers each tribe might pose to trade and the collection and shipments of beaver. Traditionally, men engaged in warfare to demonstrate physical aptitude, bravery, and courage in the face of a formidable enemy. These demonstrations were no longer necessary in light of economics. The Cree chief planned to wage war against the Saulteur and Sioux “without consulting” La Vérendrye, much to the outrage and anger of the fur trader (Gaultier 168). The Cree chief then invited Gaultier to join them, but he refused and instead allowed them to take his son, Jean-Baptiste. He did not need to display his physical prowess because it had little to do with trading furs. His justification for this sacrifice of “entrust[ing his] eldest son to barbarians” was that if he were “to refuse him to them, there was much reason to fear that they would attribute it to fear and take the French for cowards, with the result of their shaking off the French yoke (176). The Sioux killed his son, but the French yoke lived on unabated. The surrender of his son for the good of Indian relations with the French is reminiscent of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the good of all mankind. This connection surely did not escape Vérendrye, positioned himself as mouthpiece for “our father” and countless examples of employing Christian discourse to extract obedience.

Natives responded to the dismantling of traditional enactments of masculinity with occasional violence. The “massacre of the twenty-one,”
or what later became known as the Lake of the Woods Tragedy, exemplified recognition by the Sioux of French manipulation. The victims were an amalgamation of native French allies, Jean-Baptiste de la Vérendrye, and Father Aulneau, as well as other Frenchmen camped on an island in the Lake of the Woods. The Sioux, French allies, killed them all, decapitated their bodies, and wrapped their heads in beaver skins (Gaultier 219-223). Symbolically, the killing of the French allies and the wrapping of death in beaver profoundly stated Sioux recognition of the altered dynamics of masculinity, as well as their hostility to the French valuation on fur. The Sioux, aware of the aims of the fur-starved French, delivered the goods, but cloaked them in death. Several small parties of Indians offered to make war on the Sioux to avenge this loss, particularly the death of Jean-Baptiste, but Gaultier refused (Gaultier 228). According to his writings, avenging his honor and the death of his son was secondary in priority to bringing in the oat harvest.

The legacy of Gaultier is further complicated by the controversy surrounding him in the latter years of his residence in New France. He professed to be an explorer in search of the Western Sea, but locals and officials in France repeatedly accused him of manipulating the guise of exploration to reap profit from the fur trade. Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, Comte de Maurepas wrote in a letter to Governor Beauharnois that Gaultier’s problems in New France, of which there were many, stemmed from the fact “that the beaver trade had more to do than anything else with the Sieur de Gaultier’s Western Sea expedition” (Phélypeaux 270). Gaultier repeatedly denied this accusation and wrote to Phélypeaux in 1737 claiming that “far from making any profit in the business, I am using up a considerable portion of my own means and am heavy burdened” (Gaultier 268). An investigation revealed that Gaultier was not making any revenue and was indeed using his own funds to finance parts of his expedition. However, these allegations reappeared throughout the course of his service (Gaultier 392). His intentions as regards the beaver trade cannot be ascertained, but to the end he insisted on the purity of his motives (Gaultier 432-434). Nevertheless,
the accusations of fraud, greed, and failure taint the legacy of Gaultier. These allegations further underscore the importance of economics in the minds of governmental authorities and their subjects in New France. In the decades before, exploration, courage, and creating alliances with the natives for the purposes of settlement, dominated the writings between important figures in New France and those sent to France. These letters reveal the changing dynamics and the recognition by all those involved that stabilizing and perpetuating the fur trade was now more important than settlement or evangelical concerns.

Gaultier, mostly due to his explorations, employed dozens of voyageurs to transport him across the expanse of New France in search of the Western Sea (Gaultier 67). The voyageur was employed by governing officials, fur traders, and ambitious explorers who by themselves were not familiar with the geography or temperament of the North American expanse and its native inhabitants. Voyageurs, usually because of significant time spent living with Native Americans in the wilderness, knew and utilized their skills and knowledge for profit. Aside from this business as guide, interpreter, and traveler, many voyageurs received legitimate licenses (congés) from the French government to hunt fur and bring peltry to the storehouse for payment. Initially, the term voyageur was used loosely as it means “traveler” in French, but in the seventeenth century it designated operators of canoes, interpreters, and guides (Nute 3). This specification of meanings of language placed the voyageur in the position beneath the fur traders, proprietors, or government clerks (bourgeois) who frequently employed them. Within this category of voyageur, the mangeur de lard or “pork eaters” were the novices who were unable to endure the challenges of winter hunts and hivernants or “winterers” who achieved the highest rank based on experience and skill (Nute 5).
Voyageurs and Coureurs des Bois

Voyageurs inhabited a world between France and native. They created a flamboyant culture of dress and style that culturally distinguished them from any other group in New France. Historian Grace Lee Nute writes that they “had a further unifying characteristic of speaking a language which was not the native tongue either of their employers or of the people with whom they did business (7). The work of Luc Lacourceire has found this third language, known as a metis, to continue among modern lumbermen, whose forefathers had married Indian women (374). This allowed them verbal freedoms, but also became a marker of inferior social status.

Visually, voyageurs further designated their profession with red woolen caps to accent a costume of clothing that combined native and European elements. They forged a unique visual identity that marked their professional skill, European heritage, and embrace of native elements. There was a great amount of pride within the voyageur community and these men eagerly sought the ink tattoos that designated their skills and superiority (Nute 17). A “gaudy sash” and pipe completed the ensemble (Nute13). This uniform of the voyageur rested on a small figure (little because he needed to fit easily in canoes) with an overdeveloped upper body because of the continual paddling over the years.

The voyageurs’ relationship to the native inhabitants was markedly different from that of the fur trader that Gaultier exemplified. Whereas Gaultier consciously separated himself from the “barbarians” who, while an economic necessity, were unworthy of polite society, voyageurs moved freely among various tribes. As Mon Canot D’Ecorce would suggest, they took great pride in knowing the “savage races and the tongues that them divide” (Barbeau 40). This friendly and somewhat trusting relationship with native peoples, combined with their extensive knowledge of the terrain, allowed voyageurs to become adept fur
collectors and hunters. They frequently dealt with Indians one on one, spoke their language, and facilitated profitable trade for themselves.

According to La Potherie, a contemporary of Perrot, Perrot’s “acquaintance with the savage tongues, his experience, and his mental ability...enabled him to make discoveries which gave opportunity to Monsieur de la Salle to push forward all those explorations in which he achieved so great success” in the Mississippi valley (La Potherie 74). This passage suggests that while explorers such as La Salle, Marquette, and Joliet received the glory that came with discovery, it was built on the efforts of less visible voyageurs like Perrot. It is commonly acknowledged among social historians that frequently the most active and contributing members of society are lost in favor of the glorious individuals who claim the spotlight. With this in mind, La Potherie’s perception calls into question the grandeur of all explorers and revives the histories of the voyageurs who made their work possible.

Perrot, by all accounts, was a devout Christian who rejected displays of reverence from natives who “often took the Frenchmen for spirits and gods” (La Potherie 74). Unlike Gaultier, Perrot held no illusions of personal deification. Many times during the course of his exploits in the Northwest Territory, natives would attempt to express adoration, but he only accepted these “honors so far as the interests of religion were not concerned” (La Potherie 75). This predisposition towards religion affected his relationship with natives, particularly the Algonquian. He desired to offer Christian salvation, much in the same way as the early explorers whose evangelical zeal was among their primary motivations. Unlike Gaultier, he did not hesitate to clarify God as the “true spirit” and himself as a mere mortal (La Potherie 76, 87).

Despite the obvious religious motives, Perrot was also a tradesman whose job was to facilitate favorable relations with the natives. However, the records left of these encounters suggest that the natives were negotiating their own positions in the frontier economics of New France. Aware that beaver was the tie that bound, the
Pouteouatemis tribe told the French that the Miami and Maskoutech had no beaver in order to prevent them from becoming allies with these peoples and diverting profitable trade opportunities from themselves (La Potherie 84, 88). Negotiation of status was also more pronounced in terms of mutual appreciation for physical prowess. Like the earlier explorers, Perrot expressed great admiration for the youth who were "as courageous as they [were] well built" (La Potherie 86-87). Such a willingness to see native men in terms of their own culture allowed Perrot to understand their motivations for entering into trade relations with Frenchmen. Perrot understood that they "preferred the needs of life to those of the [French] state" (La Potherie 90). Any furs that were brought to the French were sacrificed in order to provide better lives for their families.

Daniel Greysolon, Sieur Duluth, a peer of Perrot and La Salle, in many ways, followed the course of Perrot. Duluth's family alliances gave him opportunities at the French court where he served in the King's Guard and participated quite nobly in the Battle of Seneff in 1674 (Duluth 332). Unsatisfied in France he moved to Montréal where opportunities for exploration and frontier experiences abounded. In 1678 he pushed himself further by resolving to explore the Sioux country. Over the next twenty years he lived primarily with the Sioux, whose impressive territories and allies produced great wealth in beaver and other peltry for New France (330). His friendship with the Assiniboin also allowed him to divert their profitable beaver trade from the English Hudson Bay Company to the French posts on the Great Lakes.

Duluth's character was that of a peaceful mind who valued honor and kindness. He, like Perrot, acknowledged allegiance to King and Country, but emphasized religion. This particular predisposition made him more eager to establish friendships with native peoples in hopes of Christianizing them. However, when native relations competed with religious integrity, the latter won out. In 1680, Duluth rescued Father Louis Hennepin from a group of Indians who were holding him captive. According to Duluth, "the want of respect that was being shown to the
said Reverend Father provoked me, and I let them know it, tell them [the Indians] that he was my brother” (332). Duluth brokered the release of two Frenchmen that day in addition to Father Hennepin.

In 1678, the French courts forced Duluth to answer to charges that he was a *coureur de bois*. The distinction between a *voyageur* and a *coureur de bois* had serious legal repercussions as the latter was a serious offense. The danger of being a *coureur de bois*, or illegal “runner of the woods,” was underscored by the multitude of negative edicts written by the King in the colonial period. In a Letter to the Marquis de Seignelay, Minister of Marine and the French official in charge of trade in New France, Duluth made the case for his innocence. In reference to his exploration of the Nadouecioux and the Assenipoualaks (Assiniboin) countries, Duluth wrote:

I do not believe that such an expedition can give anyone ground to accuse me of having disobeyed the King’s orders of the year 1676, since he merely forbade all his subjects to go into the depths of the woods to trade there with the savages. This I have never done, nor even been willing to take any presents from them, though they have several times thrown them to me, which I have always refused and left, in order that no one might be able to accuse me of having carried on any indirect traffic (330).

His adamant disassociation with *coureurs des bois* simultaneously emphasized his own noble conduct, and also pointed to the marginalization of *coureurs des bois* and the contempt in which they were held by *voyageurs* whose professional pride made them elitist. Frenchmen who made their living in the wilderness had their own hierarchies of power that placed *coureur de bois* a mere step above Native American men.

The *coureur de bois* is the most elusive of the masculinities affiliated with the fur trade. The desire by these runners of the woods to remain obscure and evade French authorities, who forbade internal
trade with the natives, has rendered them equally invisible to historians. What is known about these shadowy men is that they lived freely and contently among native peoples and had little to no affinity for the laws of France or New France. The first generation of these peoples was French, but as they mingled, married, and reproduced with native women, the latter generations would be métis. It is important to note that early in the history of New France, intermarriage with the natives was not only accepted, but was encouraged through reward as French officials hoped to populate their colonial ventures. However, these social mores were premised on the notion that native women would become “civilized” or, more accurately, “Frenchified.” Coureurs des bois, however, rejected French society in favor of native communities which prompted people of New France to regard them with scorn and distaste.

The character of the coureur de bois first appeared with Etienne Brule, an associate of Champlain who left New France to abide with the natives. It could be argued that explorer Pierre Radisson followed in this trend because of his treasonous defection to the British that resulted in illegal trade. By 1672, Jean-Baptiste Patoulet, an associate of Jean Talon, guessed that there were roughly 300 to 400 illegal traders operating in New France. Jacques Duchesneau estimates at least 800 existed by 1680 (Tanner 182). Principal among the characteristics of the coureur de bois was a lack of political allegiance. Jean Couture, a former member of the La Salle expeditions, allied himself with the British in 1693, which allowed him to go down the Mississippi valley well into the Cherokee towns of Tennessee and there make trade alliances (Tanner182). There is further record of two coureurs des bois, Bellefeuille and Sauton, making an appearance in Carolina to negotiate trade with Governor James Moore (182).

Despite the extent to which coureurs des bois traveled, most successfully avoided running into French authorities. The only first hand account by a coureur de bois comes from an interview taken after his capture by the British on the Hudson Bay in June 1742. Joseph La France was transported to London where Arthur Dobbs, a prominent Irishman
and literary figure, conducted an interview. What remains of Dobbs’ account reveals a rare insight into the life of *coureurs des bois*.

La France, a product of a French fur trader father and a woman of the Ojibwa tribe (also known as the Saulters), lived in the Michilimackinac (Tanner 172). He learned the art of trade from his father and the skill of hunting from his mother’s people, with whom he chose to reside after reaching adulthood. La France’s relationship with traders and his knowledge of native culture, combined with his own blood ties, prompted him to begin trading fur. Expecting a *congé*, or license, he was refused on the charge that he had sold brandy to Indians, a common, but still illegal, practice. He began trading illegally and evaded the law on more than one occasion. Estimates place the overall extent of his travels before his capture at 17,000 miles by canoe and 500 additional miles overland, a staggering amount by the standards of 1742 (Tanner 177).

La France’s status as a *métis* singularly would not have outcast him from society. It was his choice to ostracize himself. He chose between two worlds and utilized his connections in both to attempt a profitable trade. La France’s allegiance to any entity was limited. His account reveals that he owned two Indian slaves (*Panis*) who were most likely Pawnees, a frequently targeted tribe for slavery. Indian slaves were not uncommon, particularly among warring tribes, but La France’s story suggests that he had little affinity for any nation. In 1737, he was charged with selling brandy to Indians. Brandy was frequently offered by French traders at the beginning of an exchange with natives in order to negotiate better prices from their inebriated producers. Given La France’s ambition and knowledge of the systems and customs of trade, it is quite likely that he followed in this tradition of using brandy as an economic tactic. Clearly, La France was not sacrificing himself for the good of his native brethren. Interestingly, La France claimed that the “avarice and injustice” of the governor of Canada had “disgusted the Natives,” who had diverted some of their trade to the English (Tanner 179).
What are we to make of these divergent sentiments? I argue that economic interests overrode affections for either culture. As with fur traders such as Gaultier, economics changed construction and discourse of masculinity in New France. No longer was nobility of character, allegiance to God and country, Christian fervor, or the interests of the majority what commanded power and respect. Profitable trade, successful fur barter, and money were the new markers of masculine status in New France. Men defined themselves through finance rather than displays of Christian allegiance, physical courage in war, or civilized virtues that actively engaged native culture for supremacy of masculine identity.

Alexander Ross, an early nineteenth-century fur trader and writer, recalled an incident with a man who saw himself as a voyageur, but whom everyone else would designate as a coureur de bois. This nameless woodsman boasted that “no water, no weather ever stopped the paddle or the song. I have had twenty wives in the country; and was once possessed of fifty horses and six running dogs trimmed in the first style. I was then like a bourgeois, rich and happy” (Ross1). This successful adventurer also estimated his wealth in relation to native standards. “No bourgeois had better-dressed wives than I; no Indian chief finer horses,” he bragged (1). Physically he compared himself to both cultures, claiming that “I beat all the Indians at the race, and no white man ever passed me in the chase” (1). This unidentified man, well in advanced years, became excited recalling his youth and extravagance as he “spent all [his] earnings in the enjoyment of pleasure” (1). In the Indian country, man was free to “enjoy so much variety and freedom.

The interview conducted by Ross in 1700 is of particular interest because of the conflicting representations of masculinity embodied in the woodsman. On one hand, he sang the songs and paddled the canoes like a voyageur; but he also embraced the freedom and amenities of native life. His legal status is unclear, but socially it is apparent that he was a coureur de bois by eighteenth-century standards. His wealth earned from trade afforded him the pleasures and luxury enjoyed by the
wealthiest Frenchmen. Yet according to his own account he spent “five hundred pounds twice told,” a small fortune and at the time of his interview had “not a spare shirt…not a penny to buy one”; but he was happy (Ross 1). Money was important, but to the coureur de bois, who rejected French impositions of propriety, lifestyle was the motivating factor. Freedom, fun, adventure, and nature were the defining characteristics of these unique men who found their opportunities in native culture.

The Hymne au Coureur de Bois written by Father Henri-Raymond Casgrain, a contemporary of nineteenth-century fur trappers, echoes these sentiments so personal to Ross’s interview. In his poem Casgrain underscores the importance of a carefree lifestyle and the “amour de liberté” found in the hearts of the coureur de bois (Casgrain 1). In nature, a coureur was a king, holding a rifle for his scepter and the sky serving as his palace, the moss as a rug, and as a throne, the mountains and forests (“J’ai pour scepter ma carabine/ Le dome des cieux pour palais/ Pour tapis, j’ai l mousse fine/ Pour tone, les monts, les forets). This was a far cry from the French inspired homes of government fur traders in Québec.

Mythology and Folklore of Voyageurs and Coureurs des Bois

The legacy of the coureur de bois has not always been romantic or appreciated. Contemporaries, particularly Jesuits, despised their embrace of native culture, which often included rejection of religious tenets. Referring to an unnamed coureur de bois, Father François de Crepieul described “a certain Canadian who was worse and more importunate for liquor than a Savage” (Crepieul 257). Furthermore, Father Crepieul warned that coureurs should not be allowed to go to the cabins of “Young Women or marriageable Girls,” who, it was thought, would be sexually corrupted (257). Etienne de Carheil wrote to Governor Callières in 1702 that the “fugitive voyageurs [also known as coureur de bois]...go from one mission to another, making
the savages drunk and seducing the women in all the Cabins,” echoing Crepieul’s sentiments (Carheil 207).

The *coureurs des bois*, despite the hatred they found among the French Jesuits, have not passed into history as the enemy of the Christian faith. The *coureur* enjoys a renewed fame among folklorists and social historians who praise their rugged individualism and strength. *Voyageurs*, the modern umbrella term that includes *voyageurs* as well as *coureurs des bois*, became synonymous with adventure and freedom, while all vestiges of the illegal activities and rabble rousing culture has been sentimentalized. Novels, such as those by Elphinstone and Yates, romantically recall the glorious history of these brave souls. For the right price, you too can retrace the routes of the *voyageurs*, as Ian and Sally Wilson attest. The popular figure of the *voyageur*, as he has come to us historically, was a jocular character worthy of the highest echelons of folklore. However, we choose to forget the salacious and corrupt behavior of the shifty *coureur de bois* who slipped through the woods, undetected by contemporaries, and who glided quite as deftly into the history of Canada.

Interestingly, middle-women carved out an economic space for themselves, using their command of tribal language and customs to facilitate trade for their French husbands. Investigations by historians Brown, Peterson-del Mar, Sleeper-Smith, White, and Van Kirk attest to the vitality of this process. According to new historical studies, this empowered native women with economic viability in areas of trade that had been denied them in their native cultures. Feminists have seen this negotiation of culture as empowerment. Although feminist scholars would contend that native middle-women economically and socially progressed through advantageous marriages, it could be argued differently. For the purpose of looking at masculinity, we must question the *coureurs des bois*’ motivations in marrying native women. Certain affections and admiration of native culture must not be discounted, but it was certainly a clever move to ally with someone who had command of
culture and language of the necessary producers of the commodities in demand. This perspective would place native middle-women in a not very flattering light, as more victims than heroines. Regardless, we see that the prevalence of economics in New France embraced women as well. Indeed, it was all encompassing.

**Conclusion**

When taken together, these three types of New France masculinities (fur trader, *voyageur*, *coureur de bois*) defined themselves very differently from their predecessors and each other. They complicate the narrative of the influence of fur trading and early Canadian economics on the construction and performance of masculine identities. Certainly, these men recognized themselves as belonging to a particular designation of masculine characteristics that were sometimes comparable to other men, but more often than not, they diverged from their contemporaries. French men saw and established themselves in relation to each other and the native men they encountered. These men of the wilderness and of the fur trade focused their energies on economic advancement instead of a rugged construction embodied by the first explorers. They created new and interesting constructions of manhood that affected not only themselves, but the native masculinities they encountered. New formations of native and French masculinities altered the social order in New France and introduced economics as the most opportune way to status and masculine success.
Works Cited


REVIEWS
Swaralipi Nandi and Esha Chatterjee (eds.)

Spectacles of Blood: A Study of Masculinity and Violence in Postcolonial Films.


Price: $30.00 (Hardback)

Spectacles of Blood: A Study of Masculinity and Violence in Postcolonial Films is a collection of essays that is aimed at expanding the moderately new area of theoretical scholarship involving critical men studies and film studies. The academic study of men and masculinities has come a long way since its emergence in the 1980s as a productive response to feminism and women's studies. This fairly recent discipline has already produced a substantial scholarly corpus including thematic studies as well as edited works and Spectacles of Blood, edited by Swaralipi Nandi and Esha Chatterjee is one such notable collection of essays that shows how, notions of masculinity is shaped, as different postcolonial cultures negotiate with violence in its own unique way.

The editors begin with a brief discussion on the study of violence in film and its relationship with masculinities within the theoretical ambit of post-feminist scholarship, and sociological studies. The essays in this volume, as the editors clarify at the onset, can be read following two broad interrelated tropes of postcolonial conditions. The first trope is how violence erupts, when the notions of memory, altered public space and the postcolonial gendered subject come to terms with
conflicting social identities; and the other trope markedly underlines the political violence involving the postcolonial nation-state.

One of the key concerns of the book is to explore the “dominant gendering of violence” as Jigna Desai, mentions in her preface to the book that men’s bloody bodies, both as perpetrators and targets of violence, frequently signify the cruelty of and the damage wrought by both ‘political’ and ‘structural’ violence in the postcolonial public space. While it may seem that the *Spectacles of Blood* has a particular preference for the postcolonial film genre of third cinema, but true to the editors’ claim in the introductory chapter, the volume does include discussions on films that are not limited only to the category of third cinema and yet represent alternative cinematic traditions that relate to the postcolonial conditions.

In exploring the critical scope of cinematic violence, *Spectacles of Blood* engages with the constitution of postcolonial identities, especially of masculinities. The volume specifically concentrates on how postcolonial cinema, as a subversive genre, intervenes in this gendering of space, beyond a man-woman power relation, in traditional patriarchal spaces. Since the 1990s, the theorizations on screen masculinities predominantly focus on the American cinema, with relatively fewer works on masculinities in European or Asian films. This volume seeks to resolve this imbalance; eight out of the ten essays thus address the national cinemas of India, Ghana, Haiti, Australia, Algeria, and Vietnam. Besides, despite the diversity of themes and perspectives it presents, *Spectacles of Blood* has a simple, reasonable intent which is to confront the genuine plurality of lived postcolonial masculinities from different national contexts by inquiring into the contradictory ideas of exceedingly plural male identities that are reconciled in the formation of a postcolonial ‘masculine’.

In the very first chapter, Brian Cogan takes up the film *Bloody Sunday* (2002) directed by British director Paul Greengrass, which depicts the historical events in which several unarmed civil-rights
protesters were shot by soldiers of the British Army in Northern Ireland, in 1972. Cogan argues that the film narrates the formation of a reconfigured Irish masculinity in the face of British suppression. He analyses the film to explain in what way the British occupation of Ireland and the continuing violence became a formative influence in the construction of roles and definitions of masculinity. In the next chapter, Jacob Mudy attempts to connect five different films—Merzak Allouache’s Bab El-Oued City (1994), Yamina Bachir’s Rachida (2002), Nadir Mokneche’s Viva Laldjerie (2004), Rabah Ameur-Zaimeche’s Bled Number One (2006) and Djamila Sahraoui’s Barakat! (2006)—based on Algeria’s traumatic conflict in the 1990s and argues how these films through a representation of masculinity and violence, and especially by identifying the links between those acts of violence and the notions of male domination, both reinforce and contest various receptions of the armed conflict in Algeria. In the following chapter, Peter Mathews, in his reading of Peter Weir’s Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975) and Greg McLean’s Horror film Wolf Creek (2005), explores the trope of the Australian landscape as a site of conflict both for the Australian colonial past as well as the chaotic postcolonial present. Although his essay does not probe deep into the issue of masculinity but, by tracing the symbolic space of the landscape, it explores the uneven relation between the colonizer and the colonized in the Australian context.

The performance of masculinity lies at the heart of Lee Bessette’s essay that takes a closer look at the two distinct and yet complementary Haitian cultural motifs of the gwo neg or the ‘big man’ and the zombie. Bessette studies the central character, Fanfan in Dany Laferriere’s film, Le gout des jeunes filles (2004) that shows how Fanfan negotiates between becoming a zombie and a brutally aggressive gwo neg and in the process a subversive form of his masculinity if produced. Similarly, the frailty and ludicrousness of violent masculinity is explored in Wisdom Agorde’s essay on, Time (2000), a videofilm on occultism in Ghana, directed by Ifean Onyeabor. Referring to Michael Kaufman’s theory of the triad of men’s violence, Agorde examines the subject of the
performative aspect of masculinity, and men's involvement of violence against women, children, and other men.

In the following three chapters, the figure of the gangster, in different cultural contexts, provides an interesting site to explore the relation between violence and the construction of masculinity. Hanh Ngyuen and R.C. Lutz's essay revolves around the gangster protagonist in Tran Anh Hung's film, Cyclo (1995) as they examine in what way, the gangster figure reconfigures and invests new and conflicting meanings to his masculinity, exposing the deep chasms in the postcolonial Vietnam. In the subsequent chapter, Sayantani Satpathi and Samiparna Samanta provide a fairly wide-ranging overview of the gangster films of popular Hindi cinema to identify the shifting notion of masculinity in mainstream Indian society. With specific discussions on Parinda (1989), Satya (1998), and Sarkar (2005), their essay attempt to explain how cinematic violence materializes as a result of the mutually constitutive forces of nationalism and masculinity in India and how contests over masculinity, within national imaginaries, have historically rendered Muslims and women as imperceptible and marginalized. 1970s BBC television drama Gangsters set in Brimingham's underworld forms the focus of Mark Duguid and Eleni Liarou's essay that underscores, how the use of language affect the representation of masculinity and violence in the narrative, and how it operates as the locus of postcolonial domination and defiance.

The two concluding essays engage with the aesthetics of representation, as Laurent Mellet analyses Academy Award winning film Slumdog Millionaire (2008) in terms of aesthetic and emotional ambiguities of masculinity, and, Joya Uraizee discusses the cinematic techniques of the popular Hindi film Bombay (1995) to explain the ways in which the film both discloses and conceals certain unnerving concerns relating to religious violence in present-day India. Unlike, Mellet's essay—which compellingly argues that Slumdog Millionaire, in comparison to the original novel, assumes an undeniable discreetness in visually depicting the violent masculinity on screen and strives to
identify with the aesthetics of western masculine models— Uraizee’s essay does not delve deep into the issue of masculinity, instead, focuses on the ‘unreal’ and ‘melodramatic’ representation of the violence in the film.

The essays are well written and lucid; however, the intense theoretical focus and repeated use of jargon in a few of the essays might make the text somewhat esoteric to those lacking a secure grounding in film or cultural studies. While each of the essays stands well on its own, the edited collection could be more cohesive. In particular, *Spectacles of Blood* perhaps would benefit from a more persuasive focus on masculinity and manhood in postcolonial cinema to balance the evident emphasis on violence. In this respect, a couple of aspects that might have been worth adding are the debates involving queer masculinity and the construction of race and class in relation to masculinity and violence in films. Of course it is always possible to ask for more, but *Spectacles of Blood* does more than satisfy its assurance of providing an extensive contextual analysis of postcolonial films that explore the ways violence as a cinematic trope shape postcolonial identities, especially of masculinities? The scholarly rigor and unambiguous commitment to the gendered understanding of violence undeniably make the book a valuable contribution to the emerging field of men’s studies.

Saayan Chattopadhyay
Masculinity is not fixed, natural, or immutable. Frank Mort explains that masculinity is always in process (196). Raewyn Connell argues that there are multiple masculinities functioning at any given time. These masculinities are not types but patterns of practice and meaning structured by social, historical, and cultural conditions. David Buchbinder instructs that masculinities are relational and derive from each other (as well as femininities) their meanings, practices, values and significance. And Lynne Segal asserts that they are subject to change. It has been argued by Raewyn Connell that there is a hegemonic masculinity, an ideal rather than a reality, specific to particular cultural, social and historical settings. Given this, some masculinities are subordinated, marginalized, and work to protest the hegemony and others. These masculinities overlap and are not mutually exclusive. Mark Moss concludes that there are now more variations than ever before.

Mark Moss’ (2011) book The Media and the Models of Masculinity begins from the social-constructionist perspective of gender to provide a historical account of how various models of masculinity are “conditioned, defined, or illustrated by different media” (179). He provides examples of how hegemonic masculinity is repeatedly verified through particular models of masculinity in the media. The focus in this book is on the U.S. and Canadian social, cultural and historical context. It is also on Anglophone heteronormative models of masculinity in the media. The examples and case studies are drawn from this milieu. By “media” Moss means television, film, literature, magazines, radio, and marketing. There is little engagement with digital media, besides a brief consideration of violence in video games (124-127).
Moss argues that the models of masculinity the media circulate have an “enormous influence” on men and boys who “mimic the dress, behavior, and mannerisms of key archetypes” (4). The media is understood as pedagogic. It teaches men and boys how to compete, how to prove themselves, what is acceptable or not, what masculinity is or is not, and the like. Moss’ position is that the media is the “single most authoritative” force in “conveying opinion” (21). Further, the media “offer a barometer of what is going on” and “define the varieties of masculine experience” (23).

Moss argues that there has been increasing variation of masculine models, even though certain historically-driven models – warrior/soldier, heroes, explorer/adventurer, rebel, athletic doer, husband/provider, among others – remain influential and continue to have ongoing appeal. Moss discusses Do-It-Yourself and adventure/outdoor television programs, cooking shows, fashion, books, hunting, militarization, advertising, James Bond, celebrities, sport radio, novels, gangster and corporate raider films, hobbies, *Fight Club* (film and novel), workplaces, desks, toys, cars, “lad” and style magazines, among many others. There is an impressive diversity to the examples. This diversity is a bit overwhelming. Perhaps less diversity and more in-depth analysis of the various discourses present in each example would have helped to generate deeper understanding of them, as would more space given over to engaging with the scholarly literature that critically investigates the same or similar examples –of which a lot is by-passed.

Moss explains how various historical periods and events have affected the models of masculinity in the media. This involves reifying some models, challenging others, and introducing new ones. War, feminism, economics, employment conditions, and commodification are some of the key influences. Moss argues that what have come to be known as “traditional” models of masculinity in the media emerged from social and cultural conditions during the period from “1870 until just before the outbreak of World War 1” (84). This was a period when mass media such as magazines, radio, film, and literature became established
as dominant sites for circulating models of masculinity. The post-World War II and post-Great Depression period saw models of masculinity significantly re-evaluated, re-worked, re-entrenched, and diversified. In addition to the previous social and cultural influences television, commodification, identity politics, urbanization, marketing, and leisure produced newer models such as the “rebel”, “slacker (dude)”, “metrosexual”, etc. Post-1950 there has been an “unleashing of possibilities” (11).

However, while there is increased diversity of the models of masculinity in the media Moss identifies that “since September 11, 2011, it has been suggested that ‘manhood’ is once again being held in ‘high esteem’. With the return of male heroes – firemen, policemen, soldiers – a renewed emphasis on ‘going back’ has been in vogue” (17). Moss explains that there tends to be a reinvigoration of traditional and “proven” macho, brawny, dominant, tough, stoic, vigorous, assertive, strong, and independent tropes when there are “real or imagined” threats (7). One particular contemporary example Moss discusses is the perceived “threat” of feminisation and commodification that has led to cries of a “crisis of masculinity”, as in Chuck Palahniuk’s novel Fight Club when the main character says, “We have gone soft – physically, mentally, spiritually soft. We are in danger of losing our will to fight, to sacrifice, to endure” (7). Moss writes that despite this the “boundaries of being a man have expanded … Swaggering masculinity, infantile masculinity, and preening masculinity are all possible to exist and can all be combined at the same time” (17).

While this book demonstrates that masculinity is socially, culturally, and historically constructed the engagement with gender theory throughout the book is fleeting. The focus is on the concepts and theory of Raewyn Connell and they are taken as a given. There is no critical evaluation of the theory Moss aligns himself with. Connell’s theory and concepts enable Moss to identify and describe a diversity of Anglophone heteronormative models of masculinity in the media, as well as the social and cultural conditions that have helped produce them.
Politically, I believe we need to do more. There is a need for more theoretical discussion to produce new strategies to challenge and change inequitable, unethical, and socially unjust models of gender in regards to the media. Such moves are essential if we want to shift what Lynne Segal has explained as “men’s sense of entitlement (or resentment at a personal lack of it) ... along with the symbolic framings” that “continue to position women, the world over, as less powerful than men (xxxvi). Moss’ own point about the ongoing appeal and returns to traditional hegemonic tropes of masculinity when there is a “threat” (real or imagined) despite more variations and an “leashing of possibilities” (11) is evidence to support the need for additional strategies, and even new interpretive frameworks, theories, and concepts.

It has become increasingly apparent that we need more critical evaluation of the theory and concepts currently dominating scholarship in the field of masculinity studies. According to Victor Seidler, in this way we can begin to open up “new kinds of questions” (xxvi). Like Stephen Whitehead, I am getting the feeling that the current dominant Connell-inspired theory and concepts, while having been incredibly helpful, may now have “little more to tell us about men” (61). For example, can the Connell-inspired theoretical approach and concepts take us any further in breaking down the current gendered interpretive framework that produces particular models of masculinity in the media at the expense of others? Or are we left with repeated descriptions of the diversity of masculinities while the hegemony remains in place, with no possibilities for actual “deterritorialization” of masculinity through our analyses? I am referring here to philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his collaborator psychotherapist Felix Guattari’s concept of “deterritorialization”. By this they mean the decontextualization of something, to be liberated from a particular function, and then resituated to enunciate new functions, meanings, values, relationships, forms, capacities, and potentials.

Moss’ work, and other research concomitant with his, is successful at identifying and making visible variation thus undermining essentialist discourses of gender and the ability of masculinity to disappear from the
lens of scrutiny. Yet, maybe new strategic and theoretical steps now need to also be added to our analyses. Jennifer Germon’s important book *Gender: A Genealogy of an Idea* maps how “over the last 50 years gender has become the interpretive framework for making sense of human bodies and subjectivities” (10)[original italics]. Germon’s book inspires me to consider how it is necessary to consider in any particular study the gendered interpretive framework alongside alternative interpretive frameworks that diminish gender and its power as a symbolic and structuring device (for example, see the work of feminists Rosi Braidotti, Claire Colebrook, Elspeth Probyn, Genevieve Lloyd, Moira Gatens, Elizabeth Grosz, and Donna Haraway). What this may enable is a dilution of the power of hegemonic gendered discourses and the models they produce and keep in place. It will also allow us the opportunity to contrast the findings of analyses of media and representations of subjectivities, space, and bodies that rely on a gendered interpretive framework with the findings of analyses that deterritorialize such. The impetus to think differently about selfhood and to produce new (or even revolutionary) interpretations will come from analyses that are what Deleuze and Guattari call “lines of flight” – lines of transformation – that “blow apart strata, cut roots, and make new connections” (15).

Further, to escape gendered repression and containment of identity, space, and subjectivities it may be necessary as researchers to also explore how we feel and what we do at the intersection of media and gender (and not just others). Moss’s own subjectivity is largely absent from the book and this got me thinking about the possibilities self-reflexivity brings to analyses, as Elspeth Probyn and Gayatri Spivak have argued for. Positivist tendencies still abound in research on masculinity and media. This continues to keep in place a binary epistemological system that privilege “neutrality”, “objectivity”, and “reason” – traditional masculine tropes – while excluding bodies, sensuousness, subjectivity, the personal, etc. – traditional feminine tropes. Our very own research that appears in books, in journals, on radio, on television, in magazines, etc. is part of the reproduction of hegemonic masculine
tropes in the media. It strikes me as crucial for male researchers like Moss (and myself) to work hard not to do this. One way may be to not reproduce the privileging of the cognitive (including the representational) at the expense of the corporeal. Mediated existence is as much corporeal and cognitive. As Elizabeth Grosz has explained, the mind and body are not separate but entwined. Michele Barrett urges us to involve bodies in our research so that our insights as, imaginative, sensual even, in that they speak to experience, which includes the senses rather than simply cognition” (19).

While I am on the topic of bodies, in this book they do tend to come across as blank slates to be written on, directed, and influenced – tabula rasa. As Moss writes, the media influence men and boys behavior, comportment, body image, and practices. Yet, following Susan Bordo, Elizabeth Grosz, Mopira Gatens, Raewyn Connell, and Susan Hekman close attention needs to be paid to how bodies are active, resistant, and productive – lived. Given this, it’s worth chasing up how the intersection of media, spaces, and bodies literally “matter”. Materialities also provide the protocols for reading, that is, they also guide and control the way the meaning emerges, including those connoted by models of masculinity in the media.

Moss’ emphasis on the influence of the media on boys and men is consistent throughout the book. However, more supporting evidence for the extent of the pedagogic role of the media would have been helpful. Moss appears to be working with assumptions drawn from a media effect paradigm. By “media effect paradigm” I follow David Gauntlett in understanding this as an paradigm which assumes a predominantly unidirectional effect which is the result of exposure to a particular type of media or representation. In particular, chapter seven in Moss’ book, entitled “Masculinity, Media, and Aggression”, privileges of this paradigm. In this chapter, Moss considers examples of UFC bouts, aggressive music lyrics, violence in video games, war films and military imagery, sport, as well as movies such as Gladiator and Fight Club. His considerations give the impression that media instruct and influence
boys to be destructive, aggressive, hyper-masculine, and violent (123). However, as Gauntlett points out, there is a considerable body of research that contests such an interpretation and shows that media does not simply cause violence and aggression among boys and men but rather the causes of violence and aggression are primarily rooted in socio-economic and cultural inequities.

While Moss’ focus is on the production of the models of masculinity in the media it’s worth pausing and deliberating on consumption, especially when claims are made in regards to the influence of models of masculinity in the media on men’s comportment, fashion, tastes, values, practices, spaces, etc. Production and consumption are entwined. They work together. Understanding and practices emerge from the “inbetween” of production and consumption. Young people who have grown up in a heavily mediated environment are particularly aware of this. Studies by David Buckingham and Sara Bragg show that from a very early age they have a healthy skepticism about media and critical reading skills. Boys and men are not only influenced or directed by the media but re-articulate, reproduce, re-interpret, contest, accept, discard, rework, and re-imagine media representations and the mediums. And especially in regards to digital media they are what Axel Bruns calls, “produsers” – a hybrid of production and consumption. While this is particularly the case in regards to digital media – the internet, social network services, podcasting, video hosting sites, software, video games, blogging, mobile phones have changed the mediated ecology – it also takes place in regards to traditional mass media e.g. niche magazines, self-published books, independent film production, community television production and radio, etc. This is not to say that the models of masculinity Moss identifies in the media don’t have influence or the media don’t try to define masculinity. He is correct. We do live in a mediated culture. However, there are also the processes of the consumption of media to consider as part of that mediated culture when making any claims about influence.
This book primarily provides me with an array of examples of models of Anglophone heteronormative models of masculinities in the U.S. and Canadian mass media. The book left me with an appreciation for how historical, social, and cultural factors produce particular models. The social-construction of masculinities was confirmed, as was the argument that the mass media is a key site where some men carve out homosocial spaces to perpetuate and verify certain models e.g. sport radio. An important point that stayed with me throughout the reading was the resilience of some traditional tropes of masculinity despite them being “long past their veracity” (4). I found the examples hold the promise of further analyses, both theoretically and politically. Also, I found that the emphasis the book places on the Anglophone heteronormative U.S. and Canadian masculine milieu and the examples drawn from it could push us to consider alternative interpretations being brought to bear on them. If you are positioned differently in terms of sexuality, race, (trans)nationality, (dis)ability, class, gender, ethnicity, etc. you will be in tension, challenge, and contradict readings in this book. I am sure Moss would agree there is more work to be done at exploring such intersections.

To conclude, after reading this book I was left with the impression that it may be time to begin asking new kinds of questions when exploring the intersection of media, space, bodies, gender, boys, and men. For example, questions exploring materialities and not just the representational, more consideration on how men and boys consume and produce media and in what spaces, increased attention to self-reflexivity in our studies of masculinity and media, and the mobilisation of new theoretical concepts and interpretive frameworks that may enable us to identify and produce through our analyses moments of deterritorialization and lines of flight.

Clifton Evers
Works Cited


Contributors to this Issue

Aneta Stepien

After graduating from University of Warsaw in 2003 (MA in Polish Studies) I worked as a lector of Polish at UW Institute “Polonicum”. Between 2007 and 2010, I taught Polish language and translation in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at Glasgow University. In 2010 I began my PhD in the School of English and Languages at University of Surrey. I also teach an undergraduate module ‘National Identity, Memory and Trauma in Eastern European Literature’, which examines different aspects of Eastern European identity, national, ethnic and gendered, as represented in texts and films from the late 19th century to the present.

Anna Fahraeus

Anna Fahraeus is a lecturer at Halmstad University on the west coast of Sweden. She received her PhD in English literature from Gothenburg University in 2008. She has published various articles on masculinity, ethnicity and ethics. She is currently working on a comparative study of approaches to representing gay masculinity in gay fiction and film. The main film corpus of the project consists of 100 films produced from 1987 to 2011 in the US, Europe, Argentina and Israel. The novels range from Edward Prime-Stevenson’s Imre: A Memorandum (1906) to Kate Bornstein’s A Queer and Pleasant Danger (2012).

Jessica L. Tinklenberg

Dr. Jessica L. Tinklenberg is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Morningside College in Sioux City, IA. Her research interests include masculinities studies and performances of gender in both ancient and modern popular contexts of Western culture.
Jeremy L. Schnieder

Dr. Jeremy L. Schnieder is Assistant Professor of Writing and Rhetoric at Morningside College in Sioux City, IA. His research interests include activity theory, formations of communal values, and writing assessment.

Michael Edward Stewart

Michael Edward Stewart holds a PhD in history from the University of Queensland with a dissertation entitled “The Soldier’s Life: Martial Virtues and Hegemonic Masculinity in the Early Byzantine Empire”. His work takes both a macro and micro view of masculine constructions in Late Antiquity. His research focuses primarily on late antique history, literature, historiography, and masculine ideologies, with an emphasis on the early Byzantine classicising and ecclesiastical historians. On-going projects include completing a lexicon of “gendered” and “martial” vocabulary in the writings of Procopius. He is also researching the ways “Western” and “Eastern” writers in the twin regimes of the fifth-century Roman Empire utilised gendered pejorative to describe both their Roman counter-parts and non-Romans. Lastly, he is looking at the vexing question of whether the sixthcentury experienced an increased or a decreased interest in military matters and the manliness of war He has lectured on the end of the ancient world, early Christianity, and the early Middle Ages.

Sandra Slater

Dr. Sandra Slater is an Assistant Professor of History at the College of Charleston in Charleston, SC. She teaches courses on the early modern Atlantic world, gender and sexuality in American history, and colonization of North America. She has authored several articles and along with Fay Yarbrough, edited a collection of essays Gender and Sexuality in Native North American Societies, 1400, 1840 in which an article, “Emasculation and Manliness in North America, 1450-1640” appeared. Dr. Slater’s manuscript, “The Pompe and Pride of Man”:
*Personal and Public Humility in Early New England* is currently under review with a variety of academic presses. She continues to work on a manuscript *“My God was Called Conqueror of Men” Constructions of Masculinities in the New World, 1450-1640* that compares masculine identities in New France, New Spain and New England.

**Saayan Chattopadhyay**

Saayan Chattopadhyay is Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Baruipur College, affiliated to Calcutta University, India. After a stint as a journalist, he is currently engaged in research in postcolonial media and masculinity. He has published articles and book chapters in *Studies in South Asian Film and Media, Journal of Boyhood Studies, Journalism Practice, South Asia Research, Journal of Contemporary Literature, Sarai Reader, Proteus: A Journal of Ideas, Sussex Academic Press*, among others. His research interests include masculinity studies, postcolonial journalism, sexuality and the body in popular culture, performative theory.

**Clifton Evers**

Clifton Evers is an Assistant Professor in Cultural and Media Studies at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China. He researches cultures of masculinity. Clifton has conducted research for government departments, elite sporting organisations (e.g. Australian Sports Commission and the National Rugby League), community groups, media outlets and private industry. His work has been published as publicly available government reports and as academic articles in international peer-reviewed journals such as the *International Journal of Communication, South Atlantic Quarterly, Journal of Sport and Social Issues, Social & Cultural Geography*, and *Cultural Studies Review*. 
Masculinities is an online biannual journal of interdisciplinary and critical studies of gender and masculinity. It aims to enable researchers and academicians to discuss issues in an independent and inspiring forum related to the representations of gender, particularly masculinity, formations of gendered identities, cultural, social, and aesthetic reflections of masculinity in culture and literature.

Masculinities primarily offers interdisciplinary and pioneering research in the field of gender and masculinity, necessarily outreaching into arts, literature, history, sociology, philosophy, communications, linguistics, and medicine. The editor(s) welcome scholarly and critical contributions, including articles, book and film reviews, reviews of the published articles as well as Announcements of forthcoming events, conference reports, and information on other matters of interest to gender studies and/or masculinity studies. The submissions are accepted after a double blind peer review process of evaluation and main criteria of admission are originality, theoretical and methodological sophistication, scholarly significance, and clarity. The editors reserve the right to accept or reject submissions for publication. Any changes to the text submitted will be clarified with the author before publication.

The submission of articles accepted for publication indicates a clear understanding of the following rules.
1. The opinions expressed in Masculinities by the editors and contributors are their own responsibility.
2. The language of the journal is English and access to the published articles is free of charge.
3. The contributor grants Masculinities exclusive rights to publish his/her contribution in electronic form (as freely downloadable PDF file from the website). The contribution is understood to include all material submitted for publication and all supplementary material accompanying the contribution.
4. The author may share copies of the manuscript with colleagues in personal compilations or other publications of his/her own work for educational or research purposes.

5. Any request to reproduce the original material first published in Masculinities will be forwarded to the original author and Masculinities will raise no objection as long as the author agrees to reproduction and the original publication is properly acknowledged.

6. With each submission, the author assures that the text is an original work and has not been published or not being considered for publication elsewhere. It must be carefully noted that in the case of a multi-authored contribution, the person who submits the paper is authorized to answer on behalf of all the co-authors.

7. Manuscripts should be in accordance with the parenthetical format in the current MLA Style Manual.

8. Manuscripts should not exceed 7,000 words. You are kindly advised to provide a short bionote, an abstract of 150-200 words, keywords and a postal address for further contact on a separate sheet of paper.

9. The authors will be informed about the decision of reviewers within 60 days at the latest. The texts will be published in the closest issue once approved for publication.

10. You can also submit reviews of books, articles, conferences and academic meetings, films, performances, MA thesis and dissertations to be published in the journal. Reviews of any kind must generally conform to the guidelines above mentioned. They must include such information in the heading like author, title, place of publication/organization, publisher/organizers, date of publication/organization. number of pages, length, language, price, etc. where possible. The review itself is expected to provide accurate information about the content of the publication/event as well as a very brief introduction of the authors/organizers. The review should also emphasize the significance and the impact of the work/event in its field besides sometimes a critical assessment of its weaknesses and potential failures in addressing certain topics. The finished paper should be limited with 1200-1500 words at most.
11. You must submit your papers and reviews to both editors@masculinitiesjournal.org and masculinitiesjournal@gmail.com. You will get a confirmation mail in return once the editors have received your e-mails.

**STYLESHEET**

All submissions to be considered for publication should be sent by email to the editors as a .doc file and a pdf version. Please make sure that
- Your text includes a title page on which the title of article, name and affiliation of the author(s), and contact information are provided. Page numbers should start on the first page of the text consecutively in the heading outer corner. In line with the policy of blind submission, the author’s name and institution should appear only on the title page to ensure strict anonymity for both authors and referees.
- The paragraphs should be properly indented (1.5 cm)
- Notes and explanations must be inserted as endnotes (if any).
- The text must be justified, except titles and headings which should be ranged left.
- Word-breaks should be certainly avoided.
- The text should be double-spaced including endnotes and references.
- Any images or graphs should be supplied as separate .jpg files.
- The recommended font is Times New Roman (11 pt; endnotes 9 pt).
- For quotations longer than 2-3 lines, you should leave an empty line before and after the quotation and increase the left margin by 1 cm.
- Highlighted words or words in languages other than English should be written in italics.
- For in-text referencing and bibliography, all essays should conform to the current MLA Style Manual. For further information, please visit [http://www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org).
- Please avoid using abbreviations unless very necessary, except conventionally used 'etc.', ‘i.e.’, ‘e.g.’, ‘et al’.

Please do not hesitate to contact the editors should you have any further queries via provided contact information.