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CONTACT

e-mail

masculinitiesjournal@gmail.com

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

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In loving memory of all victims of state violence

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INTRODUCTION

Please welcome the second issue of the *Masculinities Journal* published by ICSM, Initiative for Critical Studies on Masculinities (Eleştirel Erkeklik İncelemeleri İnisiyatifi). We are delighted to have received many excellent contributions from readers after the debut of our journal and we hope you enjoy reading some of them in this issue.

2014 has been a productive and challenging year for our initiative. In addition to workshops in İzmir, Trabzon, İstanbul and Ankara in the period 2013-2014, ICSM also organizes the first international symposium to be held in Turkey on Men and Masculinities, during 11-13 September 2014 at Tepekule Convention Center, in İzmir. We hope the international symposium to serve as a major step to increase the popularity of critical study of masculinities and awareness about gender inequalities in Turkey and worldwide, and to provide support for pro-feminist activism of men, in addition to feminist and LGBTQ activism.

The symposium and the second issue of the journal would not have been possible without the voluntary work of ICSM members. I would like to thank them all. In this issue, we have eleven contributions from researchers worldwide: eight articles covering masculinity in relation to topics as varied as dandyism, geekdom, motorcycle clubs and being a Morrissey fan, a book review and two reports on workshops organized by ICSM. The increase in the number of articles and the variety of topics indicate that *Masculinities Journal* is gradually evolving into a popular platform for scholars of masculinity worldwide.

This issue includes a diverse assembly of scholarship. In his article "Missing from Masculinity Studies: Aesthetics, Erotics, Existence," Henning Bech focuses on the history of hierarchical and dichotomous relations between masculinity and femininity. Bech discusses the collapse of gender as a hierarchical and dichotomous relation, taking his lead from several thinkers and critical theorists as well his own work in

the field, and gives a detailed discussion on the transformation of gender into a matter of taste.

Antoine Defeyt contributes with a discussion on the famous 19th century figure “the dandy” as a sexual being. In his article entitled “Masculine Plural and Singularly Masculine. Oscar Wilde, Charles Baudelaire and Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly: Three Dandies Seen through the Prism of the Masculinity of the Nineteenth Century,” Defeyt charts the markers of masculinity and femininity that prevailed in the nineteenth century and examines iconic figures of dandyism taking the attitudes to masculinity at his explicit focus.

Ashley Morgan’s paper “The Rise of the Geek: Exploring Masculine Identity in *The Big Bang Theory* (2007)” provides an interesting discussion on the representation of geeks as a form of masculinity in popular culture. Focusing on the worldwide famous US TV sitcom, *The Big Bang Theory*, which derives much of its comedy from the encounter of the scientists with the non-scientists, Morgan discusses different types of masculinities as represented in the show and elaborates on how the geek becomes a central character in popular culture, in parallel to the decline in support of corporate capitalism and the increase of interest in science, which alludes to a transformation of masculinities in popular culture.

Kathryn King, in her contribution “But I Do Clean Up Real Fuckin’ Pretty: True Detective and Motorcycle Subculture Representation as Spectacle and Diversion,” discusses how the subculture of outlaw motorcycle clubs (O.M.C.’s) is represented in the TV series *True Detective*. King argues that the show’s representation of subcultures reinforces misconceptions and occludes a larger discussion about race, gender, and class in the United States.

José G. Anguiano in his contribution “No, It’s Not Like Any Other Love: Latino Morrissey Fans, Masculinity, and Class” focuses on Latino fans of British musician Morrissey. Anguiano discusses the projection of the image of Morrissey on Latino masculinity and, in comparison with icons such as James Dean and Elvis Presley, examines how the love and

desire felt for Morrissey transforms Latino masculinities beyond hyper masculine American or Latino ideals.

Melinda Mills, in her piece “The Pleasures and Perils of the Performance of Music, Masculinity, and Cool” examines performances of masculinity in two songs from 1977 and 2013, which are linked by allegations of copyright infringement. Mills conducts a comparative analysis of Robin Thicke’s “Blurred Lines” (2013) and Marvin Gaye’s “Got To Give It Up” (1977) and argues that some performances or forms of masculinities remain the same despite several cultural transformations, pointing out at the lyrical commonalities that normalize violence against women and rape culture.

Hediye Özkan in “Does Patriarchy only Oppress Female: The Role of Masculinity and Fatherhood in Our Social Realm” discusses how patriarchy plays a crucial role defining the roles of men and the concept of masculinity, taking her lead from male characters of the popular movie *Babam ve Oğlum* (My Father and My Son, 2005). Özkan underlines the dominance of the father figure in the traditional Turkish family as suggested in the film, and examines how men are shaped under it.

Terrance H. McDonald in his paper “Towards an Interrogation of Masculinity’s Commodification: Deleuze’s Control Society & The Big Lebowski” examines the commodification of gender in Coen brothers’ cult movie *The Big Lebowski* in the light of Gilles Deleuze’s theoretical concept of control society. McDonald discusses the potential resistance of creative and revolutionary subjectivities to the confines of late capitalism.

In our book review section, Ronald Saladin from University of Trier, Germany, reviews *Manga Girl Seeks Herbivore Boy: Studying Japanese Gender at Cambridge* edited by Brigitte Steger and Angelika Koch. This issue also includes two reports in Turkish on the workshop organized by ICSM in collaboration with KASAUM, Center for Women’s Studies at Ankara University, on 26 April 2014. Beyhan Yeni from Ankara University and Eda Acara from Queen’s University provide accounts of the talks and elaborate on the discussions that followed.

We encourage you to take a look at the second issue, keeping in mind that Masculinities Journal is still in development. We consider the journal as an important tool in communicating with activists and members of NGO's who work on men and masculinities in addition to its role as a milieu of academic exchange between researchers worldwide who have an interest in the study of men and masculinities. We welcome any feedback, ideas and suggestions.

We cordially invite submissions for our next issue which will be online in February 2015. We encourage contributions both in English and in Turkish. Contributions in any form are greatly appreciated as we seek to reach out a wider community and strengthen the expertise in this field. We would like to thank also for the positive feedback and encouragement that was given following the release of our first issue.

Çimen Günay-Erkol,

On Behalf of the Editorial Board of the *Masculinities Journal*

ARTICLES

Missing from Masculinity Studies: Aesthetics, Erotics, Existence

Henning Bech
University of Copenhagen

Abstract:

During recent years, the intersectionalist paradigm has become prominent in gender studies. No doubt this has led to new and important insights on hierarchical and dichotomous relations between masculinity and femininity; as well as on the connections between gender hierarchies/dichotomies and racial, ethnical, religious, sexual and other hierarchies/dichotomies. However, the time has come to ask whether analysing masculinity in terms of hierarchies and dichotomies is turning into a bit of an automatic machinery, repeating itself without due respect for the diversities and nuances of the phenomena it wants to study. It must further be asked if the intersectionalist paradigm should be complemented by introducing other analytic frameworks that may help sharpen attention to other relevant aspects. In particular, I want to discuss the possible inspirations that might be taken from existential and aesthetic thinking, as represented for instance in the work of Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault (after 1971), Roland Barthes (after 1971) and Michel Maffesoli, as well as including some aspects of my own work in the field over 30 years.

Key words: Gender, intersectionalism, aesthetics, erotics, existence

Erkeklik Çalışmalarının Eksik Boyutu: Estetik, Erotik ve Varoluş

Henning Bech
University of Copenhagen

Özet:

Son yıllarda kesişimsel paradigma toplumsal cinsiyet çalışmaları alanında öne çıkmaya başladı. Şüphesiz bu durum hem kadınlık ve erkeklik arasındaki hiyerarşik ve ikili ilişkileri hem de bu ilişkilerin ırksal, etnik, dini, cinsel ve diğer hiyerarşi ve ikiliklerle olan bağı kavramaya yönelik önemli açılımlara sebep oldu. Buna rağmen, erkekliği hiyerarşiler ve ikilikler üzerinden analiz etmenin durumu kendini tekrar eden, otomatikleşmiş ve asıl sorunsalı olan farklılıklara ve nuanslara gerekli hassasiyeti gösteremeyen bir makineye dönüşüp dönüşmediğini sorgulamanın vakti gelmiştir. Bu doğrultuda, kesişimsel paradigmanın diğer analitik çerçevelerin de dahil edilmesiyle bütüncül bir hal alacak olması diğer ilgili boyutlara da dikkatin yönelebileceği olasılığıyla mutlaka sorgulanmalıdır. Özellikle, bu çalışmada Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault (1971 sonrası), Roland Barthes (1971 sonrası) ve Michel Maffesoli'nin çalışmalarında da temsiline görüldüğü, varoluşçu ve estetik düşünceden alınabilecek ilhamları/esinlenmeleri tartışmak istemekteyim. Tartışma, bu alanda 30 yıldan fazladır süren çalışmalarımın da boyutları içerecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplumsal cinsiyet, kesişimsellik, estetik, erotik, varoluş

During recent years, the intersectionalist paradigm has become prominent in gender studies. According to this, the world has been - and still is - organised around the constructed hierarchies and binaries of masculinity over and in contrast to femininity, the white race over and in contrast to other races, western ethnicities over and in contrast to other ethnicities, heterosexuality over and in contrast to other sexualities, straight and normal over and in contrast to queer, etc. These hierarchised dichotomies are generally criticised in terms of oppression, marginalising and exclusion; there are also special terms of critique associated with each of the hierarchised dichotomies, such as misogyny, racism, xenophobia and heteronormativity. Moreover, not only do the hierarchised dichotomies co-exist; they penetrate each other and constitute each other so that nationalism is co-constituted by misogyny, etc; and this interpenetration is what the term intersectionalism refers to. (See e.g. Collins, *Intersections*; Crenshaw, *Intersectionality*; Lykke, "Intersektionalitet").

No doubt this analytical paradigm has led to new and important insights on hierarchical and dichotomic relations between masculinity and femininity, as well as on the connections between the hierarchised dichotomies of gender and those of race, ethnicity, sexuality etc. However, the time has also come to ask whether analysing masculinity terms of hierarchy and dichotomy is turning into a bit of an automatic machinery, repeating itself without due respect for the diversities and nuances of the phenomena it wants to study. It must further be asked if the intersectionalist paradigm should be supplemented by introducing other analytic frameworks that may help sharpen attention to other relevant aspects. In particular, I want to discuss the possible inspirations that might be taken from existential and aesthetic thinking. I shall refer here to works by Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault (after 1971), Roland Barthes (after 1971) and Michel Maffesoli, as well as some of my own work.

The main part of the paper will deal with some developmental trends in 'modern' and 'late modern' societies that run counter to what would be expected by the hierarchy-dichotomy paradigm. Indeed they

concern the disappearance of gender hierarchies and dichotomies, as well as the development of rather different social formations. My empirical work has been on recent developments in Denmark; yet I believe that we are dealing here with general trends in Western societies (and to some extent elsewhere as well), although they take different shapes and speeds in different countries.¹ I shall further take a look at some other aspects that generally are not – perhaps cannot be – paid attention to by the hierarchy-dichotomy model (and indeed have often been absent from gender studies).

The explorations presented constitute what might be termed ‘scholarly qualified stories’. I intend them to be in accordance with existing relevant material from empirical investigations (others’ as well as my own), and I have aimed at exposing them to a reasonable degree of critical theoretical reflection. But the stories – like all scholarship and science, whether they realise their storied nature or not – have dimensions transcending this, and to that extent they might well be assessed in the light of their ability to lend some measure of perspective, their capacity to make one see things in a different light, opening up new possibilities.

The Construction of Modern Masculinity

I start with a brief overview of some main characteristics of ‘modern’ gender developments, as they can be found in the West since the beginning of the eighteenth century. In many respects, my version of this is in line with much other, feminist work, yet there are also some significant points of difference and changes of emphasis. In particular, I want to point out the specific ways in which binary opposition in relation to sexuality and aesthetics became central to modern gender constructions (cf. Bech, “Mandslængsel”; Bech, “(Tele)Urban”; Bech, *When Men Meet* 131-6; Bech, “Gendertopia”; Bech, “Gender Game”).

From the latter half of the nineteenth century, women gained entry into the domains hitherto considered to belong by nature to men. This

was a revolutionizing development indeed, as gender differences had largely been constituted through the performance of certain tasks and the occupation of certain spaces. Thus, what might be termed 'social' gender difference was problematized - perhaps there weren't really, in the end, any social tasks that women could not handle equally well as or better than men.

Gender problematizing had been a developing trend in the West since the eighteenth century (in some countries - France and England - earlier than others). Its scope, speed and rhythm varied from one country to another; generally, however, the second half of the nineteenth century appears to be the period in which the advance of women had reached such a level and had accrued such potential for increase that it was seen - by many men, but also by many women - as a societal gender problem.

This is also the context in which a particular *reaction* of masculinity takes place. A new kind of masculinity was constituted, having its centre and base in the only thing that, indubitably as it might seem, women did not possess. In short, masculinity was based on the penis and its capacities (as well as, to some extent, the strength and speed of the male body - as cultivated in modern sports). In the last instance, these appeared to be the guarantee of the difference to women, and - from this point of view - of male superiority over women. Thus, masculinity was perceived as something to be actively demarcated as a *binary opposition* to and *hierarchical superiority* over women - that is, precisely, the 'opposite' and 'weak' sex; and in this way gender relations took the shape of gender struggle. Obviously, the constitution of this masculinity - as based upon the possession of male sexual organs and the exclusive performance of sexual acts with women - went in tandem with the social construction of the modern 'homosexual man' and the modern 'homosexual woman' (more on this below).

In the process, there was also a change in the traditionally different cultural wardrobes of each gender, i.e. in clothes, accessories, gestures, postures and so on. The cultural wardrobe was transformed into a superstructure regulated by and expressive of precisely that which was

now taken to be the base of sex: the sexual organs and their capacities. Psychoanalysis – that believed to have discovered the basic truth of gender as such – was instead rather an agent in the production of modern gender, and often purveying the ideological putty needed to make the cultural wardrobe fit this new base (ties, stilettos, cigars, fur, etc.).

Now, some qualifications to this storyline. What I have summarized so briefly is of course only one of the logics at work in the construction of modern genders. It is however an important one, which generally has not been given sufficient attention. Grasping it helps explain the severity of the stress on oppositional dichotomy in relation to femininity in the constitution of modern masculinity. It also helps explain how and why masculinity became centred around (or indeed, ‘based upon’) sexuality – an issue that has been obscure in the literature, although there has been some talk of ‘compulsory’ or ‘obligatory’ heterosexuality also in relation to men.ⁱⁱ Moreover, recognizing this logic has far-reaching implications also for writing the history of pre-modern and non-modern masculinities. Thus, before the modern West, there was strictly speaking no homosexuality and no heterosexuality; nor was there any male ‘fear’ of women in the modern sense (women were perhaps feared to ‘contaminate’ men, but not to displace them); ‘sport’ did not exist; and perceived ‘deficiencies’ in masculinity were not automatically considered expressions of femininity (as manifested by the difference between, on the one hand, eighteenth and nineteenth century discourses on masturbation, and on the other hand, late nineteenth century discourses on ‘homosexuality’ and ‘inversion’). Obviously, I cannot go into detail with all of this in a brief paper.ⁱⁱⁱ

One should always be wary when confronted with statements on general social entities (such as ‘modernity’, ‘the West’, ‘masculinity’ or ‘women’), or on historical ‘developments’, ‘trends’ and ‘logics’. The history of masculinity, as Connell notes, is not linear; there is “no master line of development to which all else is subordinated, no simple shift from ‘traditional’ to ‘modern’” (198). Yet one should also be careful not to dissolve history into limitless motions of infinitesimal differences, thus

from the outset disregarding conditions of life and social changes that, at particular times and places, are common to large numbers of human beings and that they, at least initially, will have to take as the peremptory base on which to shape their lives. From this point of view it makes sense to speak of 'modern' conditions of life. More specifically, there is a sociocultural conglomeration of factors and phenomena - urbanization, visual media, industrial capital, state bureaucracy, parliamentarism, gender problematizing, fashion, psycho-medical apparatuses of self-analysis, etc. - which developed in the societies of the (north)western world from the latter half of the nineteenth century, although with varying dimensions and influence in different regions at different times. Gender problematizing, then, is not something that gender is affected by when put into an omnivorous container called modernity; rather, it is one of the essential constituents of a sociocultural conglomeration that turned out to be highly vigorous and influential.

Stating that gender problematizing is a constituent of modernity in this sense does not mean that, in other or earlier social contexts, women's and men's spaces and tasks may not have overlapped at certain points or occasions, or that the divisions have remained unchanged through time. Nor does it mean that there were no transgressions of dominant gender allocation in relation to spaces and tasks. Yet, before modernity, transgressions (socially accepted or not) were limited to rather few people or occasions.

It may appear surprising that intense social concern (indeed: moral panic) over gender problematizing would occur in such a large area during the same few decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet, as pointed out by a number of social historians, during these years similar kinds of concern about 'femininity' and 'masculinity' became major public issues in the US, Britain, and the societies of north-western continental Europe. The spread of discourses from one region to another was an influential element in this, but no doubt it was also related to some amount of synchronism in the developmental rhythm of the modern conditions alluded to above.

It makes sense here, I think, to speak of men and masculinity in more general terms, since these developments are not hegemonic in the strict Gramscian sense, as referring to one group or 'class' of men dominating other groups of men by ideological means, i.e. by managing to present their own particular interests as if they were identical to others'. Explicit and elaborate ideas on this masculinity were no doubt first ventilated among certain strata of men, yet other groups did not have to await their spread. Experiences and interests in reaction to the 'threat' from women would already be there among other men wherever women's advance made itself felt, and were able to gain expression without much ideological support from the outside. Accordingly, in this case we would not need to distinguish between, in Connell's terms, 'dominant' and 'complicit' masculinities, but simply between those men who reacted with an emphasizedly oppositional, sexuality based and heterosexually centred masculinity construction, and those who did not.^{iv}

Despite the importance of the development sparked off by women's advancing into 'male' spaces and tasks, it should not be forgotten that this is only one aspect among others in the making of modern masculinity. Each of the two genders would still to a considerable extent be influenced (and internally differentiated) by the spaces and tasks it predominately occupied, and the related power differential. Accordingly, the construction of modern masculinity has also been influenced by changes in the spaces and tasks related to developments in working conditions, international politics, consumption patterns, etc. Finally, it is of course important to stress that the sociocultural logic of modern masculinity depicted above is not directly congruent with the actual being and doings of all individual men since the second half of the nineteenth century. In real life it is only a trend, modified by myriads of class, ethnic, regional, etc., as well as individual, circumstances. Notwithstanding, it is undoubtedly an essential constituent of an epoch.

The Gender Game

To repeat: During the latter half of the nineteenth century, modern heterosexual masculinity (a pleonasm indeed) was established. The main propeller was women's entry into 'male' tasks and spaces; *and* men's reaction to this. Yet with time, changes have come about. The alarming novelty of women's advance has worn off, and their presence in social and public life has spread greatly, at least in some parts of the West. Thus in Denmark there has been a steadily developing trend towards the disappearance of social gender, in the sense that social spheres and social tasks are increasingly less gender-segregated. (Bech, "Gender Game"; Bech, *Kvinder og mænd* 91-207, 248-92). For decades, the vast majority of women have had salaried work outside the home; and their presence in the worlds of politics, research and higher education is steadily growing (although not always with the speed that some might wish). Moreover, the Danish welfare state guarantees a comparatively (i.e. when compared to other countries) high level of financial and social security for each individual; as well as offering to take over some of women's traditional tasks of caring for children, the sick and the old. (One may find this a good or a bad thing; I am simply trying to describe the development). Furthermore, and importantly, although spheres are still not generally populated or tasks generally performed by men and women to an equal extent, it is by now widely acknowledged that they *might as well be*. In consequence, increasingly few people really believe in essentialist notions of gender anymore.

Yet although *social* gender differences are thus disappearing, *cultural* gender differences are not (Bech, "Gender Game"; Bech, *Kvinder og mænd* 248-92). Rather, gendered difference is being celebrated in relation to cultural wardrobes - clothing, hairstyles, jewellery, etc. To some extent, no doubt, this is an expression of the fact that the old conditions have still not fully disappeared. Thus there is a *lag*; parts of earlier historical and earlier modern forms of masculinity are continually being reproduced as quasi-natural male identities, by way of costume, boys' games, all kinds of traditions. There is also a *reaction*, in which well-

worn gender attributes are re-arming in the face of the threat of annihilation. And there is a *reflection*, of the fact that the 'sexes' are still not socially equal (in terms of access to economic and political power and status). Yet such lag, reaction and reflection are now in the process of continuously retreating in step with the development towards women's matter-of-course presence in social and public life and the de-essentialising of gender notions. Why then is cultural gender (in the sense specified above) not disappearing as well? My answer is that the cultural gender differences - although increasingly 'unfounded' and accordingly threatened by collapse as their base progressively disappeared - were taken over by the logics of the city and the tele-city, and thus, by becoming entangled in these, are preserved and reproduced though in a fundamentally different key. I shall develop this in some detail.

As a lifespace, the city is essentially a world of strangers (Lofland, *World of Strangers*; Sennet, *Fall of Public Man*). In this kind of social world, certain 'logics' - operative trends in the shaping of experience and conduct - develop. Thus, in the crowds of the city, people become surfaces to one another - for the simple reason that this is all one has the chance to notice in the urban space filled with strangers. The others turn into surfaces for one's gaze, just as one becomes oneself a surface for theirs, and awareness of this is inescapable. Thus, the surface becomes the object of the form of evaluation which can be performed by the gaze - that is, an *aesthetic* evaluation, according to criteria such as beautiful or disgusting, boring or fascinating. And it becomes something that must be styled according to such criteria. These processes, then, constitute what can be called *aestheticisation*. A further logic inherent in the urban world of strangers may be termed *sexualisation*. The gaze which sees the surfaces of others, and which is active in the design of one's own, typically sees and evaluates on sexual criteria as well (Bech, "(Tele)Urban"; Bech, "Citysex"). Thus, surfaces are styled with a view to their potential signification of sexuality, and gazes are attracted to them for that very reason or because they are actively scanning the surfaces in search of sexual attractions. Moreover, the world of strangers appeals at the same time to closeness and distance, to exposure and hiding, and to relentlessness in the consumption of the

other and in being consumed by her or him. Thus, it is a sphere of never-ending cruising and stimulation. Aestheticizing and sexualising recur (although partially in other forms) in the other urban life-spaces that have developed over the last fifty years or so: the 'telecity' and the 'intertelecity', i.e. the worlds of strangers of multi-channelled television and the internet.

Inherent in the spaces of the city and the telecity, then, are logics - operative tendencies of considerable force - of aestheticisation and sexualisation. These, precisely, are the logics important for the fate of cultural gender. As explained above, in the modern gender developments related to women's advance, cultural gender wardrobes became sexualised. Indeed, as we have seen, they were transformed into 'superstructures' of gender constructions which, precisely, had *sex* - sexual organs, sexual acts - as an essential 'base'. Thus, desire was intimately bound up with this opposition-demarcating gender construction - from the start, so to speak. However, as I have also explicated above, this base of gender construction erodes. It was constituted in the process of the problematizing of social gender, and derived its strength from a reaction to this; yet, in a second phase, social gender is more than problematized, it is in process of disappearing, and consequently, so is the reaction that constituted sexuality as a major base for a sexually related cultural wardrobe. The aesthetics and sexuality of this formation of cultural gender, however, had already become entangled in the sexualising and aestheticising logics of the ever more influential urban and teleurban worlds, and in this way they were reproduced, though also transformed to suit the play of these logics. Cultural gender is thus set free not only from its pre-modern interweavement with social gender, but also from its modern connection to reactive, sexuality-based gender.

The overall result of these developments is the constitution of what can be called *gender game* (Bech, "Gender Game"; Bech, *Kvinder og mænd* 248-292). This is a historically new formation; it differs decisively from the formation of gender struggle and its actively opposition-demarcating constructions of hierarchized and antagonistic gender relations. An

essential feature of the gender game is a certain distance to one's gender. The cultural gender wardrobe is now experienced *as* a cultural wardrobe, not as a natural part of one's essential being. Put differently, the participants no longer have an unambiguously essentialising relation to the wardrobe; rather, they take up a 'constructing' attitude in relation to it. To this extent, the cultural gender wardrobe is considered as a set of pieces that can be manipulated for the purposes of playing the game. Moreover, the cultural wardrobe is extended to comprise also the aestheticized and sexualised parts and performances of the 'naked' body. Obviously, the accentuation of these in the times of gender struggle was already a cultural construction; now, they are experienced as such and included among the pieces to be manipulated in the game.

The gender game is moreover characterised by a particular merging between gaming piece and player. This is not to say that there is no distance - rather the opposite, as appears from what I have just mentioned. However, the player always appears in the guise of her or his gaming piece (or, in other words, dressed in a gendered cultural wardrobe). From the above a certain number of gaming rules follow. On the one hand, both women and men play as active subjects (both are in the position of an active player). Correspondingly, they respect each other as 'equal players'. At the same time, however, there is a difference in object position (metaphorically: in the gendering of the gaming pieces) since women, as active players, are referred to the sexualised and aestheticized utilization of - or 'playing with' - a traditionally feminine (and thus 'passive') cultural wardrobe whereas men, as active players, must play with a traditionally masculine (and thus activity-connoting) cultural wardrobe. This fundamental restraint, however, allows for a broad spectrum of gaming possibilities; a 'man' (or a 'woman') must so to speak choose how much of a 'man' (or of a 'woman') he (or she) wants to be. It should be noted that gender game is not equivalent to gender play, i.e. a situation where women and men may play 'freely' with cultural gender wardrobes and positions. No doubt, such gender play occurs to some extent and in some instances; however gender games are

comparatively rule-bound and to some extent compulsory (though it is also possible to take exception).

I trust the reader to remember that, in the above, my aim has not been one of evaluating these developments, indeed of praising them (although one might ask whether they are not, from some points of view, better than what was before). I have tried to develop a theoretical framework for adequately analysing certain developments. Without such a framework one would not be able to catch sight of and analyse socially important phenomena and changes that go on in contemporary everyday life in many parts of the world, including such sites as streets, discos, television and internet interactions.

The primary field of the gender game is the world of strangers of the city and the telemedia, where aestheticizing and sexualizing are practically unavoidable. But the game is also carried from the city into other spheres such as the workplace (shops, image production, and tourism) and the home; moreover, within the latter, television and the internet are already constituting tele-urban space. The gender game is perhaps particularly developed in some societal contexts, such as the Danish one, where both women and men are accustomed to women moving about in the streets and elsewhere outside the home; and where there are widely accepted norms of equality and equal worth between women and men.

Again, I would like to stress that my storytelling on the gender game concerns a *trend* - moreover, a trend that co-exists and mixes with the older trend of gender struggle and hierarchical, antagonistic gender constructions. No doubt, many people would stress the aspects that preserve and continue the old. My point, though, is that developments have now reached a level where, to use the metaphor of dialectics, quantitative changes turn into qualitative ones: Phenomena cannot be studied adequately in terms of what they primarily are *not* anymore; they should also be conceptualized and theorized in terms of what they substantially are now or are in the process of becoming.

A Homosexual Form of Existence, Absent Homosexuality, and Taste

In the section on modern gender constructions, it appeared that modern masculinity developed into an actively demarcating hierarchical opposition to femininity, centred on the sexual organs and their performance in relation to women. This would leave out a number of men who did not live in accordance with this sexual imperative or preferred to have sex with other men. This distinction has often been theorised as a matter of a 'homosexual identity' on the one hand, and a homophobic homosociality on the other. I have not found this conceptualization to be fully adequate in relation to the empirical material, and I have suggested some terms that I believe are more in line with the phenomena and in this sense 'phenomenologically' more adequate (Bech, *Når mænd mødes*; Bech, "A Dung Beetle in Distress"; Bech, *When Men Meet*). In the context of this paper I shall concentrate on men and their relations.

The modern 'male homosexual' is - or was - not primarily an 'identity' constructed by 'dominant discourses' in a hierarchic-dichotomic relation to heterosexuality. 'Being homosexual' is a *form of existence* comprising a number of particular characteristics: certain basic tunes and recognitions - e.g. of existential uneasiness and freedom, of injury and feeling watched, as well as of a certain distance from one's own masculinity and potential femininity. There are also particular ways of experiencing - such as aestheticizing, sexualising, camp and (hyper)sensitivity; particular dreams and longings - e.g. of another country; and particular forms of conduct and expression - such as stylings and stagings, travels and breaks, signals and the gaze. Further, there are specific forms of social relation - including brief encounters, changing relationships with partners, couples with institutionalized infidelity, as well as organizations and friendship networks. And as a historically and socially specific form of existence, the homosexual is not merely the product of the forces of preference, oppression or discourse and the powers underlying these. He is first and foremost a gateway for the

problematic of modern life. The modern conditions of life – the city, the collapse of norms, the absence of safe and secure communities and identities, the struggle of the sexes, the images and the stagings, the institutions of art, the theory and practice of liberal democracy, the external surveillance of the police and the internal analysing of science – form the background to his life-world, presenting themselves at the same time to the individual homosexual as a problem area in which he is always already placed and in relation to which he cannot escape placing himself. The homosexual form of existence is what it is because it concurrently bears the immediate imprint of these conditions and problems, is an answer to them, and to a certain extent follows the answer guidelines contained in them. His particular erotic preference, the oppression and the discourse act primarily as reinforcing factors in this context; they help to push him closer to these conditions of life (though he is not just pushed towards them, they also pull him). Further, the oppression and the discourse (and perhaps indeed the preference) are themselves to a large extent expressions of these conditions.

This does not, of course, imply that all men who cultivate sex with other men are identical and have been so since the end of the nineteenth century. However, in realizing certain erotic interests – wherever they come from – very many men could not avoid becoming involved in this form of existence to some extent, irrespective of their background and affiliations in terms of class, race, etc. This is partly because such a realization brought one into close contact with the very same conditions of which the homosexual form of existence is a result and to which it is an answer. Further, this form of existence would be encountered as something which was already there since, as a matter of fact, it did become established and materially sedimentated as the dominant pattern for living – the dominant world – under such circumstances. Accordingly, the modern homosexual world – when and where it became established – exerted a gravitational pull on individuals.

As to the relations between those men who did not participate in the homosexual form of existence, I have coined the term ‘absent

homosexuality' as a phenomenologically adequate term to capture a range of these relations during modernity (Bech, *Når mænd mødes* 135-225; Bech, *When Men Meet* 17-84). The term refers to the compulsory and simultaneous conjuring up *and* denial of the spectre of the homosexual whenever men come close to each other – a phenomenon that can be studied in ways of seeing and the structure of social spaces; in the working of institutions such as science and the police, in the male milieux of sports and torture; in the symbolic worlds of scholarship and journalism, film and comics; in the eradication of certain forms of male relations and the ambiguity of the inclusion of women; in violence against homosexuals. There is a propelling dynamic of reciprocal reinforcement and amplification. The more homosexuality is present and emphasized, as a reality or a possibility, the more energetically and expressly it must be denied. Conversely, denial has the unfortunate – or fortunate – consequence that it conjures up precisely what was to be rejected. It is important to point out that, in absent homosexuality, the emphasis may well lie on the positive and affirmative pole and not simply the negative one, and that male resistance to physical orgasmic homosexuality is not always in opposition to inter-male erotics, but may be a way of protecting or intensifying it or indeed produce this.

Again, I should stress that the 'modern' homosexual form of existence as well as 'modern' absent homosexuality only constitute two of no doubt several other phenomena in the construction of modern masculinity – although they are no doubt important ones. With developments towards late modernity, radical changes are going on in relation to both phenomena (Bech, *When Men Meet* 194-217).^v Thus, there is a trend towards the disappearance of the modern homosexual. The homosexual form of existence was above all a special response to certain conditions of modern life, to which he came especially close – before and more so than others. However, the conditions of modern life now affect an ever-growing number of people, as the former 'buffers' – above all, marriage and the family – are in the process of loosening their former obligatory and strict character. Concomitantly, there is a tendency that the particular cultural and social traits of the homosexual – his special ways of

living, experiences and expressions – spread and become universal. More and more people establish new kinds of intimate living together; they experience changing partners and serial monogamy, and establish friendship networks as a supplement to or an alternative to family networks; they enjoy the pleasures of oral or anal sex (at least on video or the internet); they experience gender – that is, ‘being a man’ or ‘being a woman’ – as a problem and an opportunity, rather than as something self-evident or natural. In short: every feature that used to be thought of as being specifically homosexual is in the process of becoming increasingly common.

From this it also appears in which way this disappearance of the homosexual is taking place. It is not primarily a matter of the homosexual becoming like the others (as the latter were before 1965), and thus becoming ‘integrated’, ‘disciplined’, ‘normalised’, ‘bourgeoisified’ and ‘heteronormative’. Rather the opposite. What was specifically homosexual, or might be imagined to be so, disappears in the way that the general becomes like it. In this sense one might speak of a *homo*-geneising of ways of living. Accordingly, in many respects it is more adequate to speak of the disappearance of the heterosexual as a specific socio-cultural phenomenon.

Thus, the modern socio-cultural constructions of the homosexual and the heterosexual are in the process of disappearing. This does not necessarily imply that differences in sexual preferences disappear (wherever they come from...). What does seem to come about is a high degree of de-dramatizing, which may also imply more experimenting. In any case, what used to be thought of as ‘homosexual drives’ or ‘desires’, constituting the inner essence of the homosexual, are now in the process of becoming a matter of *taste*, comparable to the taste for hip-hop, classical music or jazz (Bech, “Mellem mænd”; Bech, *When Men Meet* 208-217). Taste is a category of the aesthetic; as such it transposes whatever debate there might be into aesthetic terms. You may like or dislike some tastes, and you may try to convince others by praising the wonders of one kind of taste; but there is not really much point in trying to prove that classical

European music is better than jazz or than Zeki Müren or Umm Khalsoum. The aesthetic realm also changes the logic of understanding: 'He does this because that is what he prefers; because it is his taste'. Explanations that go beyond the field of aesthetics become irrelevant; one is not supposed to answer questions on the (imagined) scientific cause of one's tastes or when one 'found out' that one 'is' like that. Similarly, just as fans of jazz or Zeki Müren like to meet to cultivate their tastes and the kinds of socialites that have evolved around these, so do cultivators of same-sex tastes. To borrow a term from the French sociologist Michel Maffesoli, they form *tribes of taste* (Maffesoli, *Temps des tribus*).

With late modern developments, 'absent homosexuality' is in the process of disappearing as well (Bech, *When Men Meet* 208-217). The life spaces of most people are increasingly those of urban or telemediated worlds of strangers. This involves an emphasis on distance, gaze and surfaces which in itself implies aestheticising as well as sexualising, all the while the contrast of cultural masculinity and femininity is accentuated – precisely, as an aestheticised and sexualised contrast. Consequently, the male body and its cultural attire become sexualised for men. For instance, the picture surface in a number of today's most popular advertisements for masculinity products are already nearly indistinguishable from the gay soft porn of the 1950s. Along with a growing public debate on sexual matters, this may imply a greater general acknowledgement of the aesthetics and erotics of the attractions between men, the more so as no shadow can fall any more from the homosexual – who has already vanished. The result amounts to a form of sexualised relation between men which is *post* homosexualisation, absent of absent homosexuality. Conceivable, then, is a continuum between a comparatively small group of aficionados of same-sex tastes and a large group of part-time tele-media enjoyers. The difference, however, is not as great as it might seem, since even the impassioned cultivators of same-sex taste increasingly live in a tele-mediated world of sexualised, non-orgasmic relations to strangers.

Gendered Existence

What happens if we take in yet another perspective, for instance from the existential analytic developed by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger? He never wrote much about gender (and the little he did usher on this theme seems very outdated). Yet one might seek to develop inspiration for gender studies from his general analysis of existence (Bech, *Kvinder og mænd* 293-354).

As an existing being you find yourself, at any given point in time, always already having become something specific – a student, for instance, living in Copenhagen or Antalya, etc. In Heidegger's terms, the existing human being is always already thrown as something specific (Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*). We may add that, generally, this involves gender as well: one finds oneself as having been thrown as a man or a woman. There he is, thrown as a man – though he shall never know for certain precisely what it is to be a man or why he became so. Moreover, from the standpoint of any given moment it is, retrospectively considered, irrelevant how it came about that he is a man. The relevance of the question of biology or society, construction or essence, determination or free will, is always already in the process of fading away from the point of view of someone existing: All might have been different, of course, and he may like it or not – in any case, it became this way. Thrown-ness is not simply to find oneself as having become something specific, but also to find oneself as having become so without ground, reason and guarantee.

Having been thrown as a man is his point of departure from which he is always already in the process of throwing himself further on in life. But gendered throwing is peculiar. On the one hand, it is never totally free: Having been thrown as a man posits a certain binding, suggests a certain direction and implies an interest in what it means to be a man, and what he may get out of it and of being together with other men. (Here, we are already in the process of moving further than Heidegger's general analysis of existence would suggest). Yet at the same time – and especially so under late modern conditions - there is no compelling reason that he

should continue to throw himself as a particular kind of man or indeed as a man, and not instead become an embroiderer or have a sex change operation. Just as thrown-ness is without ground and guarantee, so is throwing.

Gender interest – the interest in what one may get out of having been thrown and throwing oneself as a particular kind of gender – is thus pre-given as well as groundless and without secure reason. At the same time there is no compelling reason *not* to want to be ‘one’s’ gender – although one may want to be so in a specific way. If the interest is taken up and pursued, it may turn into ‘pure interest’. It cannot justify itself by reference to biology, childhood or history, but merely by its own inner qualities and its consequences. To this extent, gender interest is ‘set free’ (whether, more specifically, it is about soccer or outfit). For instance, male interest – the interest among men in what one can get out of having been thrown as and throwing oneself as a man, and of being together with other men - cannot be defended by reference to its being male interest, but nor can it be rejected on these grounds. Nor is there any particular reason to believe that ‘pure male interest’ would develop into a hierarchical and dichotomous relation to women or to men with inter-male sexual tastes. The idea that genders must always be analysed in relation to each other is in part a modernity-centred idea. Besides, it is possible that inter-male interest and inter-female interest, as well as their manifold and diverse forms, may develop a particular ethics, holding that other gendered or non-gendered interests shall have the same possibility of unfolding as they themselves have, as long as no-one is really hurt by them. Thus, there would be inter-male interest and inter-female interest (as well as many common or combined interests), but they would not be hierarchically and dichotomously posited (although frictions may always arise). Indeed, this development is well underway in some societal contexts.

With this approach we gain access to aspects of gender that often remain un-thematised. The traditional conceptual binaries – nature or culture, biology or society, essence or construction – lose relevance. Other

dimensions appear: existence, thrown-ness, throwing, and interest. The idea that, above all, gender research should be about investigating hierarchies and dichotomies reveals itself as a prejudice. 'Pure gender interest' does not orientate itself according to these distinctions. At the same time a good deal of that which was condemned by many (not all) versions of feminism, appears as 'legitimate pursuits'. There is no reason to criticise them for their genderedness, unless you have the prejudice that there must always be women where there are men, and vice versa. It becomes possible to approach something that gender research was perhaps never really able to explain without reducing it to the effects of biological, childhood, societal or historical determinants. That is, to approach what it is to *be* gender, and what it is to be a man who wants to be a man, or a woman who wants to have a child. Again, this analysis may be relevant in relation to some developments in late modern societies in which social gender has largely disappeared, but not to other contexts.

In Conclusion

In the above, I have argued that the hierarchy-dichotomy paradigm does not in itself open attention to a sufficiently nuanced analysis of some important changes in contemporary societies. I have pointed to the trend towards aestheticized and sexualised gender games between (socially constructed) men and women, as well as a general aestheticisation and sexualisation of men for men, and the experiencing of sexual preference as a taste. Moreover, I have pointed to the importance of paying attention to the specific ways in which hierarchized dichotomies are constructed, and suggested that the concomitant concepts of power, hegemony, homophobia etc. are not always adequate, even in relation to 'modern' societies. For instance, homophobia is not always the most adequate term even there; notions of 'absent homosexuality' may be more adequate, among other things because they open up to noticing those aspects of preserving inter-male erotics that may be connected with the denial of physical-orgasmic sex. And the homosexual is not primarily a construction brought about by homophobic 'dominant discourses', but

rather a form of existence with specific basic tunings related to social life-worlds. Finally, I have suggested that conceiving gender in terms of human existence (in the specific sense of this term) may clear the way to bringing some generally overlooked aspects of gender into gender studies, especially in connection with late modern societies.

All of this has been conceived in relation to what I have termed modern and late modern societies of the West (and the reader will remember that I have taken some care to specify what I mean by these terms and why they may be reasonable to use as a story line in some contexts). But I think that this analytic framework is useful also in relation to the study of trends that appear wherever similar conditions develop. For instance, Necef ("Islamisk chik") makes reference to a study by Sandikci and Ger on the aestheticizing of women's headscarves in the big cities of Turkey ("Turkish Headscarf"); and one may wonder what happens to masculinity styles here. In any case, the dynamics of fashion, urbanization and the telemedia are at work all around the globe. I also wonder if taste may not be in the process of becoming – or indeed may have remained – a socio-phenomenologically appropriate term in relation to same-sex-preferences in many parts of the world. Moreover, in many societies (perhaps all), there were and are forms of flirting and philandering, styles of masculinity, kinds of attraction, love and mutual esteem that cannot be reduced to the working of male power and the suppression of women.

Much of all this, obviously, has to do with aesthetics, erotics and existence. In the above, I have made reference to inspirations from the German philosopher Martin Heidegger and the French sociologist Michel Maffesoli. There are many other scholars from whom inspiration can be sought when it comes to bringing aesthetics, erotics and existence into gender studies. For instance, Michel Foucault's ideas (in volume 2 and 3 of *L'histoire de la sexualité*) on changing forms of what he termed 'aesthetics of existence' are relevant not merely to masculinities in classical Greece or Rome; and Walter Benjamin's or Roland Barthes' ideas of an aesthetic and erotic science might invite kinds of scholarly writing.

ⁱ I have presented parts of my work on this in Bech, "Mandslængsel"; "(Tele)Urban Eroticisms"; *When Men Meet* 131-6; "Gendertopia"; "The Gender Game"; "Après l'identité"; and *Kvinder og mænd*). A detailed presentation of the empirical work I have made, and the scholarly literature I have discussed, would exceed the limits of this brief paper. On the whole I will have to make do with references to the works where I have given such expositions and references. Parts of the text of the present paper have appeared in some of these works, though not in the context outlined by this paper.

ⁱⁱ For instance Rubin, "Traffic in Women"; Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality"; Sedgwick, *Between Men*; Connell, *Masculinities* 103-6; Katz, *Invention of Heterosexuality*.

ⁱⁱⁱ I have discussed a number of these issues in more detail in Bech, *When Men Meet* 239-42 (= endnote 4) and 252-7 (= endnotes 72 & 74). A good advice: In order to diagnose the specific character of different constructions of masculinity in different social contexts it is important to pay close attention to the invectives directed against those 'men' who do not conform to what a 'real man' is supposed to be. Perhaps it was only in 'modern' societies that masculinity became cramped in a binary, exclusive gender logic of the kind that 'deficiencies' in masculinity were above all considered to be synonymous with feminization.

^{iv} On hegemonic masculinity, see Connell 76-81.

^v In the terminology I use here, 'late modern' refers to a societal context in which the life conditions of 'modernity' have become close and real to large numbers of people (cf. below). Historically, this situation appears in some societies from the 1960s on.

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The Rise of the Geek: Exploring Masculine Identity in *The Big Bang Theory* (2007).

Ashley Morgan
Cardiff Metropolitan University

Abstract:

This paper will analyse the growth in representation of geeks as a form of masculine identity in popular culture using examples from US TV sitcom, *The Big Bang Theory* (2007) Previously represented as marginalised, male geeks, and the characteristics of geek identity, rationality and incompetence at social behaviours are now drivers of narratives. A number of reasons are given as to why the geek is currently a central character in popular culture, which are related to wider social, cultural and economic matters: the decline in support of corporate capitalism and a wider interest in science. This paper seeks to offer a workable definition of what constitutes a geek, which differentiates it from broader parlance, and distinguishes it further from more traditional representations of masculine hegemony by focussing on the way in which sexuality is represented. Other representations of men portray sexuality and sexual prowess as popular indicators of masculine hegemony, yet the geek is distinguishable in the denial of sexuality and an increased focus on asceticism.

Keywords: Masculine identity, The Big Bang Theory, Geeks

‘Geek’¹ lerin Yükselişi: “The Big Bang Theory”deki (2007) Eril Kimlikleri Keşfetmek

Ashley Morgan
Cardiff Metropolitan University

Özet

Bu makale “The Big Bang Theory” (2007) isimli ABD televizyon komedi dizisinden örnekler kullanarak ‘geek’lerin eril kimlik olarak popüler kültürdeki temsiliyetlerini analiz edecektir. Daha önceleri rasyonalite ve asosyalleşme ile marjinalleştirilen erkek ‘geek’ kimliği şimdi öykünün itici gücü olmuştur. Popüler kültürde bir *geek*’in neden ana karakter olarak kullanıldığı ise daha geniş sosyal, kültürel ve ekonomik sebeplerle açıklanmıştır: kurumsal kapitalizme olan destekteki düşüş ve bilime duyulan geniş ilgi. Bu çalışma *geek*’i daha geniş tanımlamalarından ayırarak onu neyin oluşturduğuna dair çalışır bir tanımlama önermek ve cinselliğin nasıl simgelendiğine odaklanarak eril hegemonyanın daha geleneksel temsillerinden ayrıştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Erkeğin diğer temsilleri olan cinsellik ve cinsel yeterlilik eril hegemonyanın popüler belirtileri olmasına rağmen ‘geek’ cinselliğin reddi ve münzeviliğe odaklanmasıyla bu noktada ayırt edilebilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eril kimlik, The Big Bang Theory, Geeks

¹ *Geek* özellikle fen bilimleri alanında çalışan, zeki ancak anti-sosyal karakterleri niteleyen bir terimdir. Türkçede tam karşılığı bulunmadığı için *geek* kullanımı uygun bulunmuştur.

Introduction

This paper explores the rise in representation of the geek as a form of masculine identity in popular culture through an analysis of male characters in the popular US TV sitcom, *The Big Bang Theory* (2007). Increasingly prevalent in the media, male geeks can be recognised through heavily framed glasses, their lack of grooming and disinterest in contemporary clothing. They are commonly depicted as having a higher than average intelligence, but poor social skills, and are especially bad at sexual relationships. This paper explores the refiguring of masculine identity, from highly recognisable, physically heroic characters, who are framed through success and conventionally attractive appearances, to identities which are based much more on a celebration of scientific expertise and varying degrees of domestic success. What is at stake here is a shift in the way that masculine hegemony might be conceptualised, and a move away from domination in both public and private spheres (Connell 21). I argue that this shift has arisen as a consequence of wider cultural concerns about the decline in the economic market. As a consequence of the recent global financial crisis, equating masculinity with economic success is problematic, as the issues in the financial sector indicate failure rather than achievement. As mastery over financial expertise has waned, representations of masculinity and the constitution of hegemony, which has been portrayed through financial expertise, glorifying personal wealth and heteronormative sexual prowess, for instance, are in decline. The rise of the geek suggests a shift away from equating masculine hegemony with economic success and prowess, towards a reclaiming of male scientific expertise (Kelly 135) and rationality (Beynon 200) coupled with failure in domestic relationships, and an indifference to financial wealth. Representations of male failures and breakdowns are not uncommon in popular culture, but might be represented as leading to catastrophic or comedic consequences, such as in the films, *Falling Down* (1993) and *The Full Monty* (1997), for example.

As characters in the media, geeks are familiar as being less attractive, in order to differentiate them from more conventionally attractive main characters. Occupying a supportive role as sidekick, as a foil to the main character, they often demonstrate some essential element that the main character does not possess or needs, such as technical knowledge, Benji from *Mission Impossible III* (2006) for example. They also demonstrate signs of subordinate and marginalised masculinity, in relation to active, hegemonic males (Connell 25), especially in terms of sexual relationships. Recent television representations of male geeks locate them as main characters and drivers of narrative, rather than being in supporting roles, evidenced in *The Big Bang Theory* (2007). The storylines to this sitcom are based around the geek characters encounters with the outside world, which they approach literally, and which demonstrate their obsession with knowledge and expertise, and the comedic effect of applying scientific rationality to domestic situations.

A proliferation of geek characters in representation suggests more acceptance and approval of the geek as a legitimate form of masculine identity. Contemporary interpretation of adult male geeks has shifted from formerly negative to positive (Hoppestand 809; Feineman 4; Kendall 261), and they have become more 'popular' as a consequence.

While the geek becomes an acceptable form of masculinity, the marginalisation of geeks comes from being portrayed as sexually incompetent. Sexual incompetence is a conventional code in the representation of geeks. This can be explained with reference to normative, heterosexual masculinity as domination of women (Connell 25), which is represented through 'getting the girl', yet when 'getting the girl' is portrayed as being too difficult, is unsuccessful, or, for some characters, is of little interest at all, then the relationship between sexual prowess and hegemonic masculinity might be considered to have changed.

In concert with the rise of geeks in popular culture, there has been an increase in academic research on geeks. In their study of

mathematicians in popular culture, *Constructions of Mathematical Masculinities in Popular Culture* (2007) Moreau, et al. explore the representation of mathematicians as principally male identities and the gendered effects that these have on audiences. They argue that mathematics is still considered to be a highly male, white domain, conjuring up images of older men or geeks, amongst audiences (141). Mendick and Francis in *Boffin and Geek Identities: Abject or Privileged?* (2011) examine the geek as part of youth identity in secondary education in the UK, and find that the term 'geek' is used perjoratively to denote academic diligence (22). Other research explores sexual and racial identity of geeks, with a focus on the diluting of white geek identity (Eglash 50), the shift from marginalised to more mainstream hegemonic masculinity, through expertise at computing (Kendall 261), and racial identity and stereotypes (Kendall 505). Bell (43) also explores geek identity in terms of the changes in the creative urban landscape. This paper contributes to these existing analyses by suggesting that social interaction and a range of sexual behaviours displayed through the rise of the geek in popular culture are competing with values of heterosexuality and more traditional forms of hegemonic masculine identity that have been represented in the past.

The following section identifies the characteristics of male geeks, makes a clear differentiation between geeks and nerds, and explores the ways in which geeks adhere to hegemonic values of masculinity. The paper then outlines Connell's highly debated theory of hegemonic masculinity, with a particular focus on the representation of hegemonic masculinity as 'the businessman' (58). It examines a shift away from the time specific definition of business masculinity towards an understanding of masculine hegemony that reclaims mastery over scientific discourse, and considers the issue of competence in sexual relationships. The paper then moves on to a close analysis of the popular TV sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* (2007). It will explore the male identities and the range of sexual behaviours within the show in order to highlight changes in the way that masculinity is being portrayed, and the ways in

which these depictions might contribute to a more diverse form of masculine hegemony.

The Rise of the Geek

As popular culture is believed to be a vehicle which conveys ideologies to the masses (Storey 4), especially hegemonic narratives (Peele 7), the ways in which masculinity is depicted is an important issue, and Gauntlett (12) emphasises the educational value of representing gender identities through the media and popular culture. Television series play a key role in representations of gender identities as they 'simultaneously teach us and reinforce the division between acceptable and unacceptable' (Peele 2). As they tend to be broadcast regularly, Television series allow for identities to build and grow at a much slower pace than in film for example. While representations of masculinities of the past have been criticized for their one dimensional nature (Gauntlett 50), Peele (7) suggests that, in television series in particular, there are now greater opportunities for more nuanced, and presumably, more 'accurate' representations of a range of gender identities, of which the male geek is only one.

There has been a steady rise in representations of male geeks in popular culture since the 1980s, and the terms 'geek' and 'nerd' are much more widely used in popular discourse. Kendall (506) associates this increase with an alliance between geeks and the concomitant growth in the popularity of the computer industry and the Internet. I also suggest there is a resurgence of scientific discourse and greater public interest in investigative procedures, such as detection and pathology, through TV shows such as *NCIS* (Bellisario and McGill, 2003) and *Silent Witness* (BBC, 1996) which populate popular culture, and which further raises the profile of the geek.

The terms geek and nerd are used interchangeably, (in US parlance, they appear to mean the same thing, and are used interchangeably in the quotes in this paper) and there have been various attempts to explain the etymology of both terms. For example, the British

actor, Simon Pegg claims that the word, nerd, derives from the phrase, 'ne'er do well', a good for nothing or loser (Pegg in Crocker). Conversely, Kendall (*Geeks May Be Chic...*) argues that the term nerd has no etymology and is nonsensical. Traditionally understood as being part of the 'less masculine' end of the male spectrum (Connell 19) along with 'wimps', geeks and nerds are now more likely to be represented as an accessible form of male identity, and are represented as 'cool' in popular culture (Feineman 5; Hoppenstand 809). Geek symbolises a specific set of characteristics that individuals might identify with, which will be developed further below.

Kendall asserts "'Geek' is something you can do and then leave behind, but 'nerd' is what you are" (*Geeks May Be Chic...*), suggesting that nerdiness is embodied, easily read and played out through everyday social interaction, whereas geek is more about a knowledge base. However, there is a noticeable representational difference between nerds and geeks in popular culture. Nerds are represented as subordinate males (Connell 21), socially and economically incompetent, often failing to demonstrate the usual accoutrements of hegemonic masculinity where skills, knowledge, expertise and sexual prowess are highly prized characteristics (Kimmel *Global Masculinities: Restoration and Resistance*; Connell and Messerschmidt 830). Nerds are represented as being accident-prone, they struggle with everyday tasks from which comedy emerges, live with a parent rather than being independent, and they might only find friendships with social outcasts with whom they identify, for example, the eponymous Napoleon and his ally, Pedro, from *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004). Moreover, they often exhibit a highly organised, parallel fantasy world, to which they aspire, and which elevates their status as heroic main protagonists. This is a common theme found in the TV comedy, *Flight of the Conchords* (2007) where the characters of Brett and Jemaine imagine themselves to be successful musicians rather than struggling ones, or having lasting and meaningful sexual relationships with women, rather than being consistently rejected and sexually unsuccessful. They are presented to audiences as

marginalised, subordinate men, and audiences read and identify them as such.

In contrast with the way that nerds are represented, geeks are portrayed through demonstrating vast intelligence and expertise, coupled with an inability to engage with normative values of social expectation and interaction. They are intelligent, often expertly so, but the level of intelligence contributes to social ineptitude; the focus on science means that the social is ignored (Trawick in Eglash 54). The personal and social lives of the geeks in *The Big Bang Theory* (2007) demonstrate a disjuncture between success at work and their personal and social accomplishments. The characters demonstrate consistent characteristics of expertise, above and beyond the everyday: working for NASA, for example, which signify hegemonic masculinity. Yet, they frequently demonstrate social awkwardness and a range of successes in personal relationships from unsuccessful, to an increasing preference for seldom seen asceticism: a complete abstinence of sexual behaviour, as a form of sexual identity.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Connell suggests that hegemonic masculinity is a desirable state for men as it represents the pinnacle of power and achievement (21). This conception has been widely criticised for being too vague, broad and relying too heavily on stereotypes (Beasley 88; Demetriou 337; Hearn 50). Yet, hegemonic masculinity provides a useful framework when considering visual representation that focuses on stereotypes and an accepted system of codes (Hall 25). Hegemonic masculinity is also portrayed in such a way that is comprehensible to a variety of audiences, who tend to be able to identify the hegemonic male through his heroic tendencies and conspicuous success, via the male gaze (Mulvey 11). Moreover, the range of masculinities identified by Connell from hegemonic to subordinate are commonly portrayed through stereotypes in popular culture and frequently occupy binary positions (55).

In the latter half of the 20th century, the most identifiable form of hegemonic masculinity was the businessman, easily perceived as such through demonstrations of authority, enacting power, sexual prowess and financial wealth. According to Connell, the dominant form of masculinity in the early 80s was associated with driving capitalism, globalisation and financial expansion. The men who created global markets and worked within them were embodied though 'transnational business masculinity' (51-52), evoking the time in which it was conceived. The 80s was a time of free market economy, and the 90s saw an increased global economic expansion with developing countries started to embrace capitalism. Within this world economic setting, transnational business masculinity was characterized by thrusting neo-liberal individualistic capitalism, was heterosexualised and trans-global.

Connell envisaged him to be a businessman, driving the capitalist machine (82), which is also reflected more recently in Toynbee and Walker's study of some of the highest earners in London (*Meet the Rich*). In his study on the relationship between masculinity and consumerism, Edwards identifies this form of identity as the 'yuppie', demonstrating wealth through ostentatious consumer accessories, evidenced by the physical trappings and baubles of masculine business such as cufflinks, expensive male grooming products and filofaxes (38). This form of masculinity resonated in representations in popular culture by characters such as Gordon Gecko in the film, *Wall Street* (1987), and Patrick Bateman from the book by Brett Easton Ellis, and later, the film, *American Psycho* (2000). This novel is a highly colourful indictment of 1980s hyper consumerism brought about through utilitarian business techniques and relentless competition. When adapted into a film in 2000, the character of Patrick Bateman is: 'exceedingly handsome, possesses a muscular body, attracts beautiful sexual partners, his career requires very little effort or work but makes him wealthy and powerful' (Cunningham 42). Bateman embodies the stereotype of the Wall Street Trader as the 'Big Swinging Dick' (Lewis 200) from the 80s, 'resonant with virility, sexual prowess and masculine sensuality' (Lewis 206).

Thirty years later, the global economic crisis of 2008 seems to have been a product of the performances of exemplary transnational businessmen, which have been highly questioned (Toynbee and Walker *Meet the Rich*). This is evident in the backlash against international banking practices (Flannery *Respect for the Banks Drops in US*) and the call for the bonuses of exceptionally high earners to be moderated (Hillman *Why we've interviewed RBS but not Lloyds*). As pleas for moderation and greater control over capitalism gather momentum, a number of high profile wealthy men appear to be indifferent to wealth as a signifier of masculinity. Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, George Lucas and Mark Zuckerberg, amongst others, have pledged to give away most of their money to philanthropic works and charitable organisations (givingpledge.org: 2012). While Eikenberry points to the issues of philanthropic donations and their influence on governance (588), these drives towards charitable donations, rather than ostentatious displays of wealth suggests that accumulated wealth, once a signifier of masculine hegemony described by Connell (89) and Kimmel (*Global Masculinities: Restoration and Resistance*) might now be considered an undesirable characteristic.

As representations of hegemonic masculinity as the 'businessman' stereotype have declined, coupled with a wider cultural downturn in financial mastery, once more, masculinity might be considered to be in crisis (Clare *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis*). Yet, rather than any obvious catastrophic effect on hegemonic power, male success might now be represented differently.

The relationship that sexual behaviours have to hegemonic masculinity might be questionable. Donaldson (645) summarises the sexual aspect of masculine hegemony, which is that 'women exist as potential sexual objects for men while men are negated as sexual objects for men'. Kimmel (*Global Masculinities: Restoration and Resistance*) suggests that the businessmen's tastes in sexuality have become 'liberal' which indicates a possible shift in sexual behaviours without undermining masculine hegemony. In popular culture, in concert with hegemonic values of monogamy, liberal approaches to sexuality are rare:

men still desire women, and the 'getting the girl' storyline is a common one. Geeks are usually portrayed as being unsuccessful in sexual encounters with women, which marginalises them, yet they appear to be successful in other areas. This might suggest an acceptance of failed normative heterosexuality or a refiguring of hegemonic masculinity as the geek.

Representations of masculinity through scientific discourse, rationality and technical investigation, in concert with a diverse range of sexual prowess, and homosocial (Sedgwick 25), rather than sexual kinship ties have increased in representation in popular culture. This is also a reflection of wider social patterns: Roseneil (415) refers to a number of studies which suggest that in the late 20th century, close kinship ties between groups of friends were often stronger than familial relationships as a consequence of greater geographical mobility and decline in 'traditional' family structures.

Geeks as 'Men of Science'

Representations of men as single, engaged more fully in homosocial relationships than familial ones, with varying degrees of success in both work and relationships are increasingly apparent in a range of popular culture texts from the 1990's to the present day, most notably, *Friends* (1994), *Two And a Half Men* (2003) and *How I Met Your Mother* (2005). This suggests that there is an appetite in representation of masculine identities for men who are less obviously successful and heroic and more ordinary in terms of success and failure, and a growing fascination with extreme rationality and scientific endeavour.

Arguably, geek as a form of identity has become synonymous with science, which has experienced a renaissance in television representation, especially in the UK. Scientific discoveries are commonly reported in the news and funding science is publicly debated, and representations of science in the media vary. The economy is volatile

and has long lasting and often detrimental consequences on individuals, whereas science appears to be the epitome of rationality, objectivity and abstract application. Representations of science carries its own controversies, especially when portraying female scientists as 'sexy' (Chimba and Kitzinger 5), but interestingly, science, especially cosmology appears to have a greater media presence in times of economic depression.

In the 1980's, when it is claimed that the recession was worse than that of the 1930's (Auxier *Reagan's Recession*), the astronomer and cosmologist, Carl Sagan, popularized science and astronomy through his television series: *Cosmos* (1980). In 2010, in the UK, the British particle physicist, Brian Cox presented *Wonders of the Universe* (2010) with viewing figures of 3.6M (Rosser *BBC2's Universe Starts with a Big Bang*). Despite the thirty-year difference in these TV shows, they were screened and became extremely popular in times of acute western economic depression. They were also presented in such a way that the subject matter is accessible, through the personal enthusiasm for the subject by the presenters, yet is given greater gravitas by the fact that the men presenting are real scientists, and therefore their knowledge and expertise is applied. This contributes to their status as hegemonic males: while their knowledge is watered down for the public, behind the scenes, they are able to apply their knowledge to advance science.

The decline in economic mastery has elevated the position of the geek from the sidekick to centre stage in science as well as in representations of science. The hegemonic male of the past was identified by his suit, his bonus and the trappings of economic capital, but now is increasingly reinscribed through knowledge and technical expertise, rather than through physical embodiment, signaling a shift in the power of the material, to the abstract. Drawing on the representation of the male characters in the *Big Bang Theory* (2007) television show, this paper examines the ways in which masculine success is represented through knowledge and expertise, but conflicts with unsuccessful social interaction and lack of sexual prowess.

The Big Bang Theory

The American sitcom, *The Big Bang Theory* (2007) is a popular television comedy show occupying a top ten position in American viewing figures and regularly drawing in an average of 14 million viewers (Digital Spy). The show features an ensemble cast of actors and primarily centers on the fictional lives of a group of four male scientists, working at the fictional California Institute of Technology and their relationship with the outside world. This relationship is often mitigated through their female, non-scientist friend, Penny, who lives in the apartment opposite two of the characters, Sheldon and Leonard. All four scientists embody geekiness in their clothing, which is often unfashionable, roll-necks and sleeveless jumpers for example. They also talk regularly about their knowledge and expertise, their parallel knowledge of science fiction and their social inadequacies. Much of the humour and comedy derives from the characters applying extreme rationality to everyday situations, the lack of social awareness and skills in sexual and everyday relationships, set against the more common, normative values of their stereotypically blonde neighbour, Penny.

The Geek mise-en-scene

In Sheldon and Leonard's apartment, where much of the narrative takes place, the geek mise-en-scene is carefully and lovingly constructed. There are prominent white boards displayed in the apartment, covered with formulae and algorithms' to demonstrate science as always being 'in process', and is a key signifier of the protagonists scientific identity. That they have white boards in their home suggests that being a scientist is more of a personal vocation than nine to five role. This distinction contributes greatly to their scientific identities, and implies that scientists are not subject to normative work-life values, thus elevating their status. There are a number of clues throughout the apartment signifying their interest in science and a further parallel interest in science fiction, from the Batman lunchbox in

the kitchen, to the Periodic Table shower curtain in the bathroom. The apartment is neat and prim, and significantly tidier than a normal person's apartment, or indeed an apartment shared by male roommates, and while the tidiness reflects the sitcom style, it also suggests meticulousness and an obsessive desire for a rational and orderly life, espoused by Leonard and Sheldon. As Gorman-Murray suggests, 'The home is ...an increasingly important marker of personal identity' (229). The desire for orderliness is further reflected in Sheldon's daily habits, which are recorded: 'everyone at the university knows that I eat my breakfast at 8 and move my bowels at 8:20'. What appears to be important in the way the geeks are dressed and how they live, is that audiences can easily read their geek credentials, and that the audience is in no doubt as to what the content of the show will be about i.e. geeks negotiating everyday life and the emergent comedy from that.

Notably, in his summary of male representations, Beyon (74) refers to the commercialisation of masculinity, where masculine identities were embodied through clothing and actions of men. Geek is now a type of fashion, suggesting that while some people put it on as part of the bricolage of fashion, for others, it is a constant reflection of identity (Feineman 5). That the characters dress casually reinforces their expert status: they are already scientists in a University, which does not often require them to interface with the public and there are few people they need to impress. Through action and discourse, there is also the suggestion that they are at the top of the scientific game, for example, Sheldon regularly speaks of winning the Nobel Prize for Science as the next stage in his career.

There is a great deal of reflexivity around the geek identity, and the characters frequently refer to themselves as 'nerds', which is worn as a badge of honour and signifier of membership of their group.

Sheldon: Excuse me Penny, but we're playing Klingon Boggle.

Leonard: Aw, don't tell her.

Howard: What do you mean, 'aw', like she didn't know we're nerds?

Howard's point is a useful one, the characters are all styled in such a way that makes their geek status easy to 'read' and is embodied, from their hairstyles and old-fashioned clothing to their average or under average body size. Howard and Leonard are noticeably short for men, and rather than going to the gym to make their bodies bigger, they make up for their weedy physiques through demonstrating their technical expertise and knowledge. For example, Howard tries to impress women by driving the Mars Rover. As scientists, they are comfortable in their scientific identities because their vocation already positions them as experts, and they enjoy the marginality their expertise brings them, which is present in the 'scientific banter' they share with other colleagues, yet their social and sexual identities remains more indefinite, which will be explored in more greater depth below.

Personal Relationships

Most of the geek characters in the show, especially Sheldon, struggle with the conventions of common social interaction, from ordering food to understanding jokes.

Leonard: For God's sake, Sheldon, do I have to hold up a sarcasm sign every time I open my mouth?

Sheldon (intrigued): You have a sarcasm sign?

That the geeks often lack proficiency in social interaction is an implied consequence of the nature of their work. The need to demonstrate proficiency and adroitness, as science is in itself, a job of work, there is little time and energy to engage with others. But most notably, they all lack proficiency with women. For example, the character of Raj becomes mute in the presence of women and can only carry out a conversation with one after he has been drinking alcohol. All of the characters except for Sheldon fervently desire relationships with women, which reinforce

heteronormative relationships, which in turn, are supported by masculine hegemony.

Sheldon often shows a blatant disregard for social conventions and etiquette, not because he fails to understand them, but because he does not consider them to be important, and his ability to 'read' a social situation is often very limited. Key components of hegemonic masculinity are authority and rationality (Connell 25) and Sheldon evokes a sense of hyper-rationality that takes him beyond usual representations of masculinity. As the quote below suggests, rationality frequently obstructs usual social conventions.

Penny: So how've you been?

Sheldon: Well, my existence is a continuum, so I have been what I am at each point in the implied time period.

Yet rather than making him seem authoritative, the hyper-rationality renders Sheldon child-like in social interactions and he struggles with relationships daily; the characters of Leonard and Penny often act as protective parental figures to Sheldon's child.

Penny: Oh, honey, did your mom not have the talk with you? You know, when your private parts started growing?

As he appears to be in need of protection, it is difficult to equate Sheldon with an identifiable model of hegemonic masculinity; therefore, the rationality that often elevates men, in this instance at least, seems to undermine the masculinity of this character.

Sexual Relationships

The struggle that Sheldon experiences with daily social interactions is also present in the other geek's relationships with women. One of the main factors that make *The Big Bang Theory* (2007) stand out from other representations of masculine identity in popular culture is the way in which male sexual relationships are portrayed. Rather than presenting a straightforward portrayal of

heteronormativity, *The Big Bang Theory* (2007) portrays a range of sexual relationships within heteronormativity. The relationships range between successful, non-successful, ambiguous and ascetic.

Other than Sheldon, all the male characters seek sexual relations with women, including those on the periphery of the homosocial group: Stuart who owns the Comic Book Store, and Barry Kripke, another scientist colleague, which reinforces the ideal of heteronormativity of the geek identity; gay geeks, or any gay characters are not represented at all. Characters representing something other than the binary between heteronormative and (often implied) homosexual sexualities are rare in popular culture. While Bell (48) suggests that there is a distinct relationship between gay and geek identities in urban environments in that both groups have been marginalised, in the landscape of popular culture, themes of homoerotic desire emerge, but are never dealt with seriously, nor, as Peele suggests, are they represented as a 'desirable state' (2). That men desire women remains a constant in representations of geeks, and the lack of sexual prowess threatens the masculine hegemony of the characters.

In *The Big Bang Theory* (2007) all of the geek characters refer to sexual relationships as 'coitus'. Referring to sex as 'coitus' does a number of things: it describes male and female sexual interaction, which reinforces heteronormativity; it is a 'proper' scientific term signifying heterosexual relations only, and which creates formal distance between the act of sex and emotion, and finally, as it is a scientific term, it elevates its status, making it the zenith of relationships and therefore, more exotic and unattainable. Freud referred to coitus as being distinguishable from everyday sexual intercourse due to its 'ceremonial' nature (268), and for many of the characters, sex is elevated to a higher, unattainable, plane. Most of the characters fantasize about acting out sexual ceremonies at which they will be masters, in which women occupy fantasy roles where they will do what ever the men desire, even though the geeks do not fully understand or fail to comprehend what that might be. Sexual relations become a game to be played with specific rules, attainable only to the winner, or part of science fiction fantasy to be acted out.

While the protagonists mainly desire sexual relations with women, it is unattainable to the geeks due to their lack of prowess that in turn, appears to be a consequence of their focus on expertise surrounding their work. When past relationships are recalled, they only occurred singly or as a fantasy, therefore, there is little experience to be called upon. In the early series, Leonard has an intermittent sexual relationship with Penny, and Howard hits unsuccessfully on a number of women, before finding a lasting relationship with biologist, Bernadette. In this respect, Howard's status becomes elevated above others in the homosocial group, his identity shifts from a 'man in waiting', successful in only one area of his life, to the more traditional characteristics of masculine hegemony, and part of the patriarchal norm of the successful married man.

While identifiable heterosexuality seems to be a signifier of hegemonic masculinity, which is based on the idea proposed by Connell (25) that heterosexuality dominates and oppresses homosexuality, what constitutes 'success' in heterosexual relationships seems to be a more fluid concept, and one that is seldom addressed as Connell (25) herself notes – moreover, the contribution that success in sexual relationships makes to hegemony is debatable.

In the show, the characters of Raj and Sheldon remain the most anomalous. The character of Raj reminds us of the gendered and global dominance of western scientific thought and the reach of the American Dream. He embodies the cultural stereotype of an alien trying to assimilate, sometimes unsure of the ways of the west, yet embracing the positive aspects afforded by consumerism and distance from cultural constraints. In another context, the character of Raj would demonstrate 'compulsory nerdiness for orientalized others' (Eglash *Race Sex and Nerds*), but in the *Big Bang Theory* (2007), he is just another science geek, yet his sexual orientation is more undefined than the others. Occasionally, there are homoerotic overtones between Raj and Howard, each sometimes taking on the feminine role that is missing from their lives in the early episodes which suggests a queering of Raj's identity. As he is so unsuccessful with women, and seemingly terrified of them (yet,

sometimes sleeps with them, notably, Penny) he occasionally wonders if he is gay. But his muteness around women reinforces his sexual fears, which might be related to fear of being weakened both sexually and professionally by women (Freud 269). Rather than troubling the norms of heterosexuality present in the text, Raj's ambiguous sexuality reinforces his otherness and outsider status as being culturally different. It is Raj who benefits the most from the homosociality of the group's dynamic and his sexual identity is the most threatened when Howard gets engaged to Bernadette, which upsets the order of the group and the friendship. Not only does Raj lose his best friend, his singleness and awkwardness amongst a group of people who are monogamous and heterosexual defines him as other, and also serves to situate him as a marginalised male, despite his high status as a scientist.

It is to the most sexually anomalous character of the group that I now turn. In *The Big Bang Theory* (2007), the character of Sheldon Cooper is differentiated from the other characters by his hyper-geekiness and ascetic sexuality, which is a thread running throughout the whole series. In the first episode, play is made around the sexuality of the Sheldon and Leonard living together as roommates, and other characters refer to their possible latent homosexuality. Sheldon's lack of sexuality is a highly explored subject throughout the sitcom. Sometimes, it is attributed to ignorance about the act of sex, and his childlike approach to social situations. Yet we discover that Sheldon is aware of sex in its most rational form, but that he simply chooses not to engage with it, and moreover, considers it a base act.

Sheldon: I'm quite aware of the way humans usually reproduce, which is messy, unsanitary, and based on living next to you for three years, involves loud and unnecessary appeals to a deity.

Disengaging with sexuality reinforces Sheldon's highly rational nature. Whereas his childlike approach to social interaction appears to undermine his masculine identity, his logical understanding of sexuality is admirable and demonstrates profound self-mastery. Sheldon's actions

suggest that in the rational world of science, sexuality appears as an irrational spectre on the horizon: sex is risky and uncertain, as well as being 'messy and unsanitary', and Sheldon is highly risk-averse.

Moreover, to some extent, as science is based on fact and rationality, the scope for risks is limited; something can either be proven now, in the future, or not at all. Sex and sexuality challenges rationality, the boundaries are more fluid as they are entwined with the uncertainties of emotion, which Sheldon is keen to distance himself from. Sheldon does not engage in sexual activities of any sort, either alone or with others. Such self-discipline in modern culture is rare, and usually directed toward honing the surface of the body through food and dietary regimens, rather than controlling the 'urges' of the body (Twigg 208).

Control and orderliness might be a reaction to postmodern hedonism that we have traditionally absorbed. While Sheldon's self-discipline appears to be in line with modern values of a socially integrated citizen, that he chooses to avoid sex has a substantial impact on his identity as a man. He is no longer defined by his sexuality, but by his position as a scientist. Sheldon has sacrificed himself to the higher power of science, which elevates the status of science as something that is worthy of such a tribute. Rather than engaging with sex and its symbiotic relationship with consumerism, the character of Sheldon as an ascetic, promotes the importance of science. Arguably, giving up, or avoiding sex, and leading the life of an ascetic requires far greater self-mastery (Peeters 25) than engaging in what might be termed as normative sexual relations. Whilst portraying men who do not engage in sexual relationships is not entirely absent from popular culture, as evidenced in the film, *The 40 Year Old Virgin* (Apatow and Carrell, 2005), that a man who is disengaged from sexual behaviour as a lifestyle choice, rather than as a consequence of a medical issue, and is a popular character in a very successful TV sitcom suggests an interesting shift in the representation of masculine identities.

Yet despite his adherence to asceticism, in the fourth series, Sheldon is set up on a date with a woman as a joke by Raj and Howard,

and embarks on a platonic relationship with her. Partly aware of some social conventions, Sheldon is keen to remind everyone that 'she is a girl who is my friend' and Amy becomes another member of the gang. What creeps into this relationship, is the way in which Sheldon is then able to display his authority as a man over a woman, by taking the unusual step of refusing to have sex with Amy, despite her desire. By refusing sex, Sheldon is as much in charge of the relationship as a man who demands sex of his partner.

Amy Farrah Fowler: Proposal: one wild night of torrid lovemaking that soothes my soul and inflames my loins.

Sheldon Cooper: Counter-proposal: I will gently stroke your head and repeat "Aww, who's a good Amy?"

Amy Farrah Fowler: How about this? French kissing. Seven minutes in heaven, culminating in second base.

Sheldon Cooper: Neck massage, then you get me that beverage.

Amy Farrah Fowler: We cuddle. Final offer.

Sheldon Cooper: Very well.

Despite the rationality that appears to render him child-like, it is through his asceticism that we understand and appreciate that Sheldon is, after all, a man, capable of displaying masculinity and his link to patriarchal values of power and control over others. Withholding sexual relations appears to be as powerful a form of control as enacting sexual relations over others, in this instance. Furthermore, what emerges here is that the character of Sheldon sees little difference between men and women. Rather than adhering to traditional binaries of male vs. female, Sheldon views men and women as basically the same, the way in which they differ is through degrees of intellectualism rather than through gender or sexuality. In this way, he is a 'sapiosexual' (Peckham *Urban Dictionary*). As he is not driven by his own sexuality, and he sees no hierarchical difference between genders, it is no longer a lens by which to read and assess others. This raises an important point around the way in which genders are represented. Gender is portrayed in a way that audiences can understand, but for the character of Sheldon, at least,

gender differences might be less of a power struggle than we understand it to be.

Conclusion

The landscape of popular culture has shifted, allowing for more nuanced representations of masculinity (Peele 2) and geeks are now more available as acceptable masculine identities. In the past they might have appeared as marginalised identities, but waning transnational business masculinity (Connell 25; Kimmel *Global Masculinities: Restoration and Resistance*) linked to the decline of economic prowess has meant that male success has been refigured. While male success in business is still very much present, in representations of men in popular culture, the geek is now no longer marginalised, but appears regularly as a popular form of identity (Feineman 5; Hoppenstand 209). The relationship between geeks and science appears to be paramount in representations of geeks and demonstrations of knowledge and expertise differentiates them from the more 'loser' characteristics of Nerds. Geeks represent a reclaiming of male scientific endeavour and a shift away from representations of hegemony through consumption and beauty, and more towards abstract knowledge, rationality and authority over others. In *The Big Bang Theory* (2007) tropes of heteronormative male/female sexual relationships appear highly familiar, but the way they are portrayed through the geek characters of Raj and Sheldon specifically, represents a new approach to the way that sexual relationships might be portrayed.

While varying degrees of male success is a prevalent theme in popular culture, abstinence from sexual relationships, disinterest in emotions of any degree and lack of differentiation between genders appear as new themes, and while hegemonic masculinities are still highly available in representations of popular culture, they are refigured in the characters of *The Big Bang Theory* (2007).

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“But I Do Clean Up Real Fuckin’ Pretty”: *True Detective* and Motorcycle Subculture Representation as Spectacle and Diversion

Kathryn King
Loyola Marymount University

Abstract

Drawing on the extensive scholarship on subcultures, this paper shall discuss the ways in which the television series *True Detective*’s renderings of outlaw motorcycle clubs (O.M.C.’s), and its suggestion that such representations are authentic actively undermines these groups’ “alternative hegemony” (*Marxism and Literature* 111). Instead of challenging normative assumptions held by our society and media outlets to which they cater, the series’ directors engage in a method of incorporation that employs both caricature and inaccurate representation of bikers to reinforce preconceptions and/or misconceptions about this subculture. Whereas the directors would like us to focus on individual identities that are hidden behind presumed subcultural facades, or “masks” (Pizzolato), we should instead consider what Williams calls our willing “distraction from distraction by distraction” (O’Connor 5), and understand the class struggle that is occurring beyond these representations. By studying the meaningful tenets and practices of this diverse “alternative and oppositional formation” (119) and how the values and practices of these groups are distorted by the show’s creators, my paper will interrogate the ways in which *True Detective* offers its audience an “authentic” image of subversion and, through its portrayal of O.M.C.’s, reinforces dominant ideological beliefs about such groups. Finally, I will consider how the show’s representation of subcultures occludes a larger discussion about race, gender, and class in America.

Keywords: True Detective, Motorcycle Subculture

“Ama Ben Gerçekten Kahrolası Güzel Temizlerim”: ‘True Detective’ ve Motosiklet Alt Kültürünün Gösteri ve Yanıltmaca Olarak Temsili

Kathryn King

Loyola Marymount Üniversitesi

Özet:

Bu makale alt kültürlerle ait derin literatürden yararlanarak ‘True Detective’ isimli televizyon serisinde kanunsuz motosiklet kulüplerinin nasıl sahnelendiğini ve bu tip önerilen temsiliyetlerin gerçekten etkin bir şekilde bu grupların ‘alternatif hegemonyalarını’ (Marksizm ve Edebiyat 111) nasıl zayıflatıldığını tartışacaktır. Bu serinin yönetmenleri, toplumumuza ve medya kuruluşlarımıza hitap eden ve bunların destekledikleri normatif varsayımlara karşı çıkmak yerine, bu alt kültür ile ilgili önyargıları ve/veya yanlış kanıları motosiklet sürücülerini hem karikatüre ederek hem de doğru olmayan simgelemeyle güçlendirecek birleştirici bir metodoloji ile uğraşmaktadırlar. Madem ki yönetmenler bizim farz edilen alt kültürel yanılsamaların, veya ‘maskelerin’ (Pizzolato) arkasına gizlenmiş bireysel kimliklerine yoğunlaşmamızı istiyor, bizim bunun yerine Williams’ın adlandırdığı gönüllü “oyalama tarafından oyalanmadan oyalandım” (O’Connor 5) durumunu değerlendirmeli, ve bu temsillerin arka planında meydana gelen sınıf çatışmasını anlamalıyız. Bu muhtelif ‘alternatif ve muhalif oluşumun’ manidar ilkeleri ve uygulamalarını çalışarak, ve bu grupların değer ve pratiklerinin nasıl çarpıtıldığını inceleyerek bu makale motosiklet kulüplerini tasvirinden yola çıkarak ‘True Detective’in izleyicilere sunduğu ‘özgün’ bir yıkım imgesi olarak ortaya çıkarmasını ve bu gruplarla ilgili baskın ideolojik fikirleri güçlendirmesini sorgulayacaktır. Son olarak, bu programın alt kültür temsillerinin Amerika’da ırk, toplumsal cinsiyet ve sınıf ile ilgili daha geniş bir tartışmayı nasıl engellediğini de göz önünde bulunduracağım.

Anahtar Kelimeler: True Detective, Motosiklet Altkültürü

True Detective, Biker Subculture, O.M.C., Ideology, Incorporation, Representation, Raymond Williams, Cultural Studies, Television Studies, NicPizzolatto, Cary Fukunaga

It is perhaps the full development of what Wordsworth saw at an early stage, when the crowd in the street...had lost any common and settled idea of man and so needed representations...to simulate if not affirm a human identity. (6)

-Raymond Williams, *Selected Writings*

When in Rome, brother.

-Rust Cohle, from *True Detective*

Considering the ways in which television operates as both mythmaker and constructor of reality for a broad American audience is integral when confronted with fictional, televised subculture representations. This is especially true when the television series in question carries such extensive cultural cachet that critics hail it a “dark masterpiece,” it breaks viewership records, entire cultural news media sites devote pages to it, and even the president claims to be a devoted fan (Nussbaum; Paskin; Day). Keeping in mind the works of Raymond Williams and other prominent cultural theorists, I shall discuss the ways in which the series *True Detective* acts as a text that serves—through its surface renderings of outlaw motorcycle clubs (O.M.C.’s), and its implicit assumption that such representation is authentic—to actually undermine the group’s “alternative hegemony” (*Marxism and Literature* 111). Instead of challenging normative assumptions held by our society and media outlets to which they cater, the series’ directors engage in a method of incorporation that adheres to exhausted cultural stereotypes, and employs caricature and an inaccurate, overly simplistic representation of bikers—which, in turn, support preconceptions and misconceptions about that group.

Whereas the series’ creators, NicPizzolatto and Cary Fukunaga, would like us to focus on individual identities that are hidden behind

presumed subcultural facades, or “masks,” (Pizzolato) we should instead consider what Williams calls our willing “distraction from distraction by distraction” (O’Connor 5), and understand the class struggle that is occurring beyond our blind acceptance of such misrepresentation—misrepresentation that serves to alienate citizens within the same ideological framework. This holds especially true, since, as Graeme Turner notes, “for cultural studies, ideology is the very site of struggle” (197). Instead of highlighting the struggle between so-called normative society and O.M.C.’s—a trope in which the series’ creators thoroughly engage—I will emphasize the actual struggle between that particular subcultural group and the ideological apparatuses and practices that enhance its status as a cultural scapegoat. Finally, I will illuminate the ways in which *True Detective* conforms to such practices and acts as such an apparatus.

Motorcycle club subculture emerged proceeding the end of World War II, during a time of enhanced American prosperity—and thus consumerism—in which phenomena such as the increased alienation of returning veterans and the advents of the civil rights and women’s rights movements caused many working class white men to search out arenas of belonging in which to articulate desire for power through dress and activity (Hebdige 17; Quinn 384, 388; Librett 263). Utilizing many aspects of military culture, such as hierarchal structure, misogynistic tendencies, “mental toughness” and “solidarity” (Schouten and McAlexander 48; Librett 259), traditional biker culture since then has appeared, like many subcultures, to appropriate aspects of the dominant culture for its own use. This is particularly true of outlaw bikers, whom Barbara Joans characterizes as a group that “may or may not be criminals,” that has not necessarily “broken any laws” but has forsaken society’s rules and chosen to “reject common authority” in order to “follow [its] own rules” (8). In other words, outlaw bikers are not literally outlaws, but maintain a mindset of rebelliousness that differentiates itself from middle-class American values. However, their occupation of the liminal space between and within subculture and dominant culture has achieved a relationship between the two groups of

simultaneous hostility and indispensability. Without law enforcement to brand them as criminals, outlaw bikers would lose that integral feature of their identity. Without major corporations like Harley-Davidson from which to purchase the necessary artifacts of their subculture, they lose not only the aesthetic aspect of style that Dick Hebdige sees as a necessary component of all subcultures, but also what Whang, et. al., refer to as that “romantic relationship” they share with their motorcycles (324). Without the rules and common practices to stretch, parody, and break from—while still existing as American citizens—these groups would not pose any danger, since their very identity is interwoven within the society that creates such rules. That identity is a reaction against certain mores (conformity, complacency, tolerance), and yet it adheres to others (consumerism, patriarchy, white supremacy). Mid-20th Century biker films such as *The Wild One* and *Easy Rider*—and even films where bikes are not a thematic focus, but contribute to a diegetic structure of feeling within the text, such as *Rebel Without A Cause*—reflect such an identity both explicitly and implicitly, with their overwhelmingly white male casts who exude toughness, encourage female objectification, and engage in lawlessness.

As in many upturns of a nation’s overall socioeconomic status, those at the bottom rungs of the earnings ladder remain marginalized, even when their capacity to consume increases. As Hebdige, in his study of English subculture, notes, “the advent of the mass media, changes in the constitution of the family, in the organization of school and work, shifts in the relative status of work and leisure, all served to fragment and polarize the working-class community, producing a series of marginal discourses within the broad confines of class experience” (74). Analysts of American biker subculture, such as Joans, Mitch Librett, and Hunter S. Thompson agree that a similar shift was occurring in the United States. When their financial situations seemed dire or precarious in opposition to the burgeoning incomes of the seeming majority of their generation, such working-class groups tended to externalize their frustrations, since they lacked “[t]he possession of wage itself” which, it can be argued, aids in establishing a man’s sense of masculinity (Willis,

“Social Reproduction as Social History” 92). Fears of “becoming apparently useless” and the increasing numbers of female heads of household from the middle of the last century into today have also encouraged their “aggressive assertion of masculinity and masculine style for its own sake” (93-97). Joans discusses exactly how the influence of economic stagnation and the subsequent growing number of women in the workforce affected these men’s thoughts and actions, noting how, even into the present day “[i]t is difficult, if not impossible... to make a middle-class living on one paycheck. It is just as difficult to achieve a working-class lifestyle.” She goes on to acknowledge that, “[s]ince economic support, paychecks, and male status no longer symbolize manhood in America, men look toward other expressions of masculinity” (85). Thus, bikerdom is not simply an outgrowth of criminality-as-personal-choice, but is also a reaction to growing economic disparity, the diminishment of the middle class in America, and the unstable autonomy of the white male.

Hebdige, in summarizing Stuart Hall, notes how “appropriated objects reflect values, beliefs, concerns, and self-image of the subculture” (114). The most obvious appropriated item, in this case, is the motorcycle. This tangible object sums up for biker subculture more than simply a means of transportation or a status symbol. Rather, it serves as an extension of the self—as a metaphor of otherness and liberated autonomy as well as a visible attribute that sets the rider apart from the rest of society. It also can be seen as an empowering phallic symbol, enhancing the bikers’ manhood abstractly in ways they feel incapable of doing so financially. As Marhsall McLuhan points out, “the main feature of” such “machines...is the immediate expression of any physical pressure which impels us to outer or to extend ourselves, whether in words or wheels” (247). The bike facilitates symbolic expression and the need to communicate with others in a way that is pertinent and meaningful for the individual, and in a way that he is perhaps disallowed by the dominant culture in which he lives. McLuhan goes on to write that, “[t]o have such power by extension of their own bodies, men must explode the inner unity of their beings into explicit fragments.” (252)

This implies that possessing the same tangible source of power that biker culture necessitates also limits the expresser, in the sense that, by compartmentalizing the self, and by enhancing one of many attributes to the diminishment of others—in this case, riding a motorcycle—the individual is often perceived as wholly possessive of that single, prominent characteristic. The biker, then, appears just that and that alone—a motorcyclist, and nothing more, to the outsider.

However, these individual caricatures of seemingly singular characteristic need group dynamic structure in order to solidify their identity and purpose. As Paul Willis states, groups such as biker “proto-communities produce, or have the capacity to produce from within themselves...moral and ethical feelings and capacities to fill the moral vacuum left by the market and to place against the unacceptable elitism and authoritarianism of party and institution.” (146). Within them, any given member can create a space for himself that provides what the dominant ideology lacks, excludes, or finds deviant—becoming what Hebdige, in borrowing from Roland Barthes, sees as “the ‘mythologist’ who can no longer be one with the ‘myth-consumers,’” for whom “‘the bric-a-brac of life’ summon up...the very fears which they alleviate for others.” (139). As Joans also notes, biker culture engages in “separatism” because of its very wariness of the practices of the dominant culture. This, she notes, is ultimately interpreted by members of that dominant culture as “racist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, and misogynistic” (242). While such descriptions are true of some bikers, it is also helpful to note that those traits did not grow simply from the clubs themselves—that, in fact, they mirror the very racism, homophobia, and misogyny that has existed as part of American ideological practices since well before the presence of motorcycle clubs.

Phil Cohen states that “subculture is also a compromise solution to two contradictory needs: the need to create and express autonomy and difference...and the need to maintain the security of existing ego defenses” (84). Such an interaction between expressed power and internalized vulnerability reflects the anxieties of masculinity that are characteristic of outlaw motorcycle clubs. There are several overt and

contradictory forces that exist simultaneously within biker identity— on the one hand, aggressive masculinity, a sense of personal autonomy, power, authority and freedom, and acts of outrageousness and lawlessness, and on the other hand, group dynamics, strict obedience to the tenets of the subculture, and acts of consumer loyalty (Schouten and McAlexander 51-55). These traits further complicate one-dimensional renderings of people from such groups as *True Detective* delivers because they illuminate the multi-dimensionality of those groups while still reconciling their members' need to assert a tough and manly image, even when that very image seems to be fading from their grasp. What Thompson noted in the 1950's, and what still holds true today, is that "[i]n a world increasingly geared to specialists, technicians and fantastically complicated machinery [today we could substitute the term, "technology"], the outlaws are obvious losers and it bugs them. But instead of submitting quietly to their collective fate, they have made it the basis of a full-time social vendetta. They don't expect to win anything, but on the other hand, they have nothing to lose" (54). However, where difficulty arises is in normative society's interpretation of bikers. As Hebdige points out, the subculture's "objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed...at the profoundly superficial level of appearances: at the level of signs" (17). Where the communication between bikers and outsiders breaks down, then, is at this level, especially when a meaningful context is not provided to non-bikers and other members of the dominant culture that explains the causes or reasons for their seemingly deviant behavior. When the bikers, indeed, feel they have "nothing to lose," they oftentimes find nothing to gain, either, because society misinterprets their actions as criminal only, and not as indicative of larger issues within the dominant culture.

True Detective utilizes these relationships not in the complex and contradictory ways in which they are often found in society, but as a means to create an overly simplistic, stereotypical, and utterly alienating representation of them. The effect is that a negation of the subculture's rich history, beliefs and practices leads to a dangerous re-branding of what biker subculture is truly about, and this reinterpretation becomes

inevitably limiting and misleading. Instead of noticing the complex interplay between subculture and dominant culture, the viewer is only given a terrifying and stereotyped caricature from which to assess O.M.C.'s. As Suzanne McDonald-Walker points out, "[i]n the complex social circumstances of contemporary society, wherein people rely increasingly on information from external sources for knowledge rather than relying on the rooted, face-to-face experience of daily life, it thus becomes easier to demonize people" (34-35). Rather than view bikers as part of our society, then, we distance ourselves from them in order to judge them based on inaccurate information.

Instead of critiquing the perceived singularity of bikers, the series offers up something similar to what McLuhan assumes, where the aesthetic elements of biker culture—not to mention our traditionally held preconceptions about it—come to the forefront and are, in fact, all that the directors require the audience to understand about that group. As Cohen points out, actual bikers' very criminality serves as a symbolic commentary on the ways in which they feel limited by society. To Cohen, "[d]elinquency can be seen as a form of communication about a situation of contradiction in which the 'delinquent' is trapped but whose complexity is excommunicated from his perceptions by virtue of the restricted linguistic code which working-class culture makes available to him" (86). However, more often than not—and definitely in the case of *True Detective*—such criminality appears only as spectacle, and the biker, who "embrace[s] the outlaw life" (Pizzolatto) seems entirely responsible for it, while the society that has facilitated his place at its margins escapes culpability. Hebdige writes, "a credible image of social cohesion can only be maintained through the appropriation and redefinition of cultures of resistance...in terms of that image" (85)—by "mak[ing] them both more and less exotic than they actually are" (97), and by presenting them to "be trivialized" or "transformed into meaningless exotica" until "the difference" between them and outsiders "is simply denied." (97). *True Detective's* Iron Crusaders are more exotic because they appear dangerous, devil-may-care, even violently racist, and less exotic or trivialized because, ultimately, they fail in acquiring

the money they set out to steal—and this, it is implied, is due to their bumbling inefficiency and hair-trigger responses. The fact that they are placed into a violent struggle over this money with an equally poor and marginalized group of African Americans—if done effectively, could have highlighted their struggle within a society of class inequality in an effective and nuanced way, but in execution does quite the opposite—only makes caricatures of everyone involved. The scene devolves into an image of the exhausted trope of Southern good ol’ boys versus poverty-stricken, hip hop-loving, black drug dealers. These groups are in no way affected by the conspiracy instituted by the religio-political, hegemonic Tuttle dynasty that plagues other marginalized groups throughout the series; they are merely puppets Rust uses in order to ultimately gather information about his case. Worst of all, they conform to and reinforce stereotypical assumptions held by normative society: that all bikers and poor African Americans are violent criminals to be feared. Because of that, we don’t understand their violence. We only witness it as spectacle, to dismiss or enjoy as we please.

Finally, the fact that a drug deal would occur within the public biker milieu is also unlikely, since, as Librett points out, “[o]utlaw club officers...maintain that any illegal activity that involve[s]...individuals or even groups...d[oes] not involve the...organization” (259). In other words, it would be a cardinal sin for a member of an outlaw motorcycle club to conduct illegal business in view of, or as representative of, the rest of the club. J.F. Quinn echoes such sentiments, stating, “Most bikers have learned through personal or vicarious experience to conduct their business in a way that helps protect the club from direct prosecution” (386). So, an instance in which both a drug deal and robbery are concocted—the latter crime being immediately executed upon discussion of it—with such an outsider as the long-lost biker persona whom Rust Cohle performs, reflects a case of mostly fiction. For an organization that is built upon regular participation, obedience, and trust-building of its members—who must remain utterly familiar with one another throughout their subculture experience—such nefarious activity with someone who simply pops out of the blue and essentially

claims to have risen from the dead is antithetical to that organization's essential core values. The scene also paints this group as imbeciles who lack impulse control and proper planning. Such character diminishment to caricature-like status reeks of what Hebdige refers to as the "re-definition of deviant behavior by dominant groups" (94). Their criminality, then, becomes not a performance relating the struggle of people from their socioeconomic class, or of white male anxiety losing its dominance in an ever-increasingly pluralistic America. Rather, it merely serves to reinforce preconceptions about outlaw bikers—that they are backwards and inherently violent individuals whom we should either mock or fear accordingly. Thus, their very language—the way they communicate their frustrations to the rest of society by use of their bodies and practices as text—is appropriated, manipulated, and undermined by the show's creators, and their agency is therefore diminished. What once previously existed as a direct communication concerning identity and alternative lifestyle from bikers themselves to normative culture becomes, when intercepted by outsiders within that normative culture, an interpretation—a poor translation that effectively loses the significance and meaning of the original. Bikers no longer possess the autonomy of representing themselves; people from the very group that didn't understand them in the first place appoint themselves mediators and interpreters through such representation.

Devoid of meaning—as they are often understood by those who do not exist within the subculture—the groups' expressions turn into nothing more than spectacles for their own sake. During what Schouten and McAlexander refer to as "performing for an audience" in which "Harley riders seek, monitor, and respond to audience response" (46), the intercourse between subculture and larger culture provides for the former an expression of identity through difference—bikers let outsiders know through their very acts that they stand apart, that they belong to a community of alternative shared beliefs and values. Unfortunately, that is not always how the audience perceives such actions. The media's pervasive rendering of bikers as criminals, wayward youth, or tattooed hedonists generally offers little more than a cursory, negative illustration

of who they really are. As Librett notes, not only is the mass public's perception of biker culture influenced by the largely negative stereotypes of outlaw bikers presented in the media, bikers' images of themselves are affected by such media representation. Thus, they often unwittingly conform to it—because of a need to appear tough, different, or liberated from the confines of society—the consequence remaining that the bikers are only understood on the most surface of levels (258). Quinn, building upon Thompson's earlier work, states that, "bikers deliberately present themselves as dangerous outlaws with nothing to lose. However, this image is more commodity than reality" (384), since the display itself downplays the complex lives such individuals lead and only alludes to their existence as bikers. Furthermore, as several sources point out, the majority of biker culture is not criminal, hence the demarcation of "1%"—the traditional proportion of subculture members who consider themselves active criminals—versus the other "99%" of bikers who are average, primarily law-abiding citizens like the rest of society (Librett; Quinn; Schoten&McAlexander). Through the limited expression of these groups' style, a breakdown occurs at the level of meaning in that only style aspects and not belief systems or the meanings behind rituals are addressed. Such superficial interpretation is akin to Williams's discussion of television in general, in which we as viewers allow ourselves to watch "the shadows of shadows and find them substance" (O'Connor 5). Since we lack an understanding of their motives and of their internality, we find them objects of fascination, and nothing more. Or worse, we rely on misleading representations of them to formulate our knowledge and opinions of them.

While it would be a little too on-the-nose to say that because this racist, not highly educated batch of peripheral characters is the only type of motorcycle culture represented—and thus skews the audience's perceptions of all subcultures—it is still relevant to discuss this particular series' weak ability to translate motorcycle culture effectively to a mass audience. The fact that Pizzolatto and Fukunaga chose to represent the criminal aspect of outlaw biker culture is another indicator of the show's bias in favor of misrepresentation. If society's image and

bikers' images of themselves are influenced by media representation, then several possibilities emerge. First, non-bikers see bikers as more criminal, tough, or rowdy than the majority of them actually are. Second, bikers themselves, or at very least peripheral and neophyte members of the subculture, enter into it with the notion that they will achieve such toughness, individuality, outsider status, or sense of liberty, when in fact they are engaging largely in consumerism, and not much more. This is especially true if we consider that the constructed media "reality" only represents those surface aspects of the subculture already mentioned. Such representation implies that anyone—even a cop—can infiltrate the subculture as long as he walks the walk and talks the talk. However, he does not have to believe the beliefs. This is apparent with Rust, who literally becomes a biker by fishing around for a costume within a kit. Even Marty's inability to blend in at the biker gathering is a result of not of his middle class anxieties, his desire to assert his masculinity, or his misogynistic tendencies (all things that he would share in common with members of biker subculture). Instead, it is his inability to fully adopt the style alone of bikers that makes him an outlier—his Pink Floyd shirt, his mid-priced sedan, and his baseball cap are what let us know that he doesn't belong. What Pizzolatto and Fukunaga are implying, then, is that it is only the superficial and not the consistent practice of beliefs and meaningful rituals that make a biker. This is best symbolized in Marty's not knowing the password for entry that allows Rust into the gang's elusive fold. Because he doesn't know the stylistic code, the "talk" as it were, we understand that he is not a biker. We also understand, then, that shared frustrations about the dominant ideology—those qualities Marty shares with the bikers—don't matter, either, and only surface aspects do.

Such a limited representation is complicated by the idea that—as Hebdige, in borrowing from Barthes, notes—the "principal defining characteristic" of "mainstream culture" is "a tendency to masquerade as nature" (102). We are expected to take this representation as a natural and realistic rendering, when actually our notion of what it means to belong to biker culture is based on artifice and misreading. The truth of

the matter is that “[o]ften the grounded aesthetics of the young are suppressed or even criminalized rather than developed” by our mainstream culture (Willis, *Common Culture* 146). Therefore, the belief in a false reality where criminality is entirely voluntary and inherent within the individual—and nothing more—denies the actual extenuating forces of class, of otherness, and of the oppressive hegemony of the dominant culture. When we hear a character, such as bike gang leader Ginger, saying that he “embrace[s] the outlaw life,” (*True Detective*) we conclude that his situation exists within a vacuum—that the circumstances of socioeconomic status, crisis of masculinity, and racial tension engendered by a Southern, isolationist culture should be overlooked primarily in favor of his voluntary lawlessness.

It would surprise no one that, from the directors’ perspectives, the impetus for coherently and thoroughly articulating their specific, artistic aims would trump the desire for accurately representing a group that receives less than an entire episode’s worth of screen time. However, it is important to note that when such a group is, in fact, misleadingly portrayed, and that portrayal exists within an “episode [whose] theme is identity and the masks people can wear,” (Pizzolatto *True Detective: Inside*) then the audience ultimately presumes that simply by belonging to such a subculture, one engages in the act of concealment and pretense. This is further made problematic by the very single-dimensionality in which the group is illustrated. If motorcycle subculture reflects style without substance, the masquerading of a façade persona that hides the true individual beneath it—as *True Detective* would have us mistakenly believe—then, of course, we come to the misconception that every object or ritual associated with it is nothing more than an act of pretense. However, as Willis points out, the very purpose of subcultures is to apply meaning for those who otherwise find its lack in contemporary society (*Common Culture* 146). If we take this meaning away from them, they become caricatures with no existence or purpose beyond their surface. While the idea put forth by Rust Cohle, that “we are things that labor under the illusion of having a self,” (*True Detective*) can be perceived as provocative and even transcendental, in this context it is entirely

dangerous, because it attempts to reduce the significance and purpose of subculture to a pointless exercise in asserting an identity that is not really there. Pizzolatto's answer to Lawrence Grossberg's question, then, regarding "the conditions through which people can belong to a common collective without becoming representative of a single definition" (88) seems to imply that such conditions do not exist—that, in fact, we are all the same and that it is the collective itself that is at fault for promoting diverse and alternative ways of existing, and not the outsider from within the larger, normative culture who interprets it in an overly simplified manner.

If, as Hebdige points out, "it is this alienation from the deceptive 'innocence' of appearances...[that gives subculture members] impetus to move from man's second 'false nature' to a genuinely expressive artifice," (19), then what happens when those appearances are presented as false, or as masquerade? What if the "genuinely expressive artifice" is ultimately intended to appear disingenuous? While Pizzolatto and Fukunaga would like to think of the abandonment of subcultural ties as a positive experience, in which men ultimately come together in shared vulnerability to shed the artifices of projected self and be "true" with one another (as they do at the series' end), they also fail to understand that individuals do not abscond the self within their proto-communities, but rather find a more valid sense of reality and identity within them. The directors' antidote for alienation, then, becomes problematic because it assumes the fictitiousness of subculture—or, at very least, the superficiality of it—and favors a more normative "truth." As Hebdige notes, "If we emphasize integration and coherence at the expense of dissonance and discontinuity, we are in danger of denying the very manner in which the subcultural form is made to crystallize, objectify, and communicate group experience" (79). Bikers are no less true to themselves than anyone else because they engage in struggle, in contradiction, and in tension. When truth becomes predicated on whether or not men can get along, then conformity becomes a requisite reality.

Every aspect of the exchange between Rust and The Iron Crusaders is superficial, misleading, and not what it is made to appear: from Rust acting undercover, to his occupation as law enforcement officer while engaging in more lawless activity than virtually anyone on the show, to the bikers' need to set themselves apart as outlaws. Because they are ready and willing to do business with someone who is clearly inauthentic, we begin to question the authenticity of their subculture. The protagonist's smarmy, ultimate revelation at the season's closing—that of his (and thus, all our) inclusion in some transcendental, community of pan-humanity that exists beyond the space-time continuum—reinforces the idea that all personae and affiliations, subcultural or otherwise, are only facades, and that the only true self is the one that exists as part of the whole. If this idea existed on its own, it would still be quaint, but at least acceptable. However, the presence of material ideological forces that Louis Althusser discusses and the pervasive, oppressive, normative, and homogenous cultural atmosphere that they serve to reproduce—studied by the likes of Hebdige, Willis, Hall, and many others—should remind the audience that any talk of difference-as-illusion dangerously flirts with a championing of submission and obedience to the dominant, the oppressive, and the normative.

We must keep in mind the milieu within which the directors are operating—first and foremost, as part of television “broadcasting,” what Williams calls a “powerful form of social integration and control” whose development is facilitated by “corporations which express the contemporary interlock of military, political, and commercial practices” (*Television* 23, 134). According to Murdock and Golding, “to focus simply on the media’s representations of the real...is to ignore the structure that determines their very existence” such as the controllers and owners of cultural production, the dominant capitalist class, and the media (Turner 191). It is not in the directors’ financial interests, then, to provide a program that thoroughly, honestly, and objectively explores the ways in which a fringe culture such as an outlaw motorcycle club creates alternative ways of being for its members who cannot conform wholly to

mainstream ideology. Nor is it feasible for the directors to actively critique the ways in which society is responsible for its own deviant outgrowths and its subsequent repression of them. Rather, by relying on stale interpretations of such a group (and many other margin groups), Pizzolatto and Fukunaga not only secure their status within the ideological framework, they become its purveyors. Because of this, they accomplish one of the primary aims of mass media—the creation of visual mythology “in which class is alternately overlooked and overstated, denied and reduced to caricature” (Hebdige 87).

We must also keep in mind the larger American culture within which the milieu of television broadcasting operates—a culture that, as Williams points out, implicitly reminds us all that while the bikers’ “unauthorized violence is impermissible,” (*Television* 123) our government’s institutionalized and systematic violence perpetrated in a myriad ways, as well as our implicit agreement via our role as taxpaying citizens who fund such violence—should be considered normative. In the same way that Joans discusses how we cannot extricate bikers’ racism and sexism from the larger American culture from which those concepts were adopted, neither can we assume their violent criminality is entirely of their own making, and not an outgrowth of ingrained cultural ideas and practices. Our fixation with these brutal archetypes, then, is a result of our own brute culture. Whether we understand them as cathartic elements of whose lack of inhibition we can only fantasize, or as receptacles for our ire and judgment (which, in turn, affirm our own constructed sense of righteousness), does not matter. What matters is that, in either case, our ability to distance ourselves from such a community becomes apparent, and shows that we are unable to consider our own involvement with its genesis. We find a scapegoat for our transgressions, and move on with our feigned redemption.

When surface aspects of the subculture being portrayed are realistic, but its tenets, history, and rituals are either ignored or undermined, then a very plausible consequence arises. There grows an understanding, on the part of outsiders, that such a limited and one-dimensional representation is entirely truthful, and that, at its core, the

subculture is hollow. When we, the audience, understand this to be reality, a dangerous outcome follows—that “the right of the subordinate class...to make something of what is made of (them)” never occurs, and that same class never finds the opportunity to “rise above a subordinate position which was never of [its] choosing” (Hebdige 138-39). This is the unfortunate end result of Williams’s notion of “incorporation” (*Marxism and Literature* 115)—that normative ways of life succeed over marginalized voices, that our disagreement with the dominant ideology is silenced, and that otherness is regarded as undesirable, criminal, or worst of all—becomes incorporated. When this happens, something that once seemed to challenge cultural practices becomes unthreatening, ubiquitous, and mainstream. In other words, it is swallowed up by the very dominant culture from which it has tried to rebel and whose practices it put into question. American culture reflects this tenuous sense of sameness in that “[t]he highest income cannot liberate a North American from his ‘middle-class’ life...[t]he lowest income gives everybody a considerable piece of the same middle-class existence,” and where “we really have homogenized our schools and factories and cities and entertainment to a great extent” (McLuhan 299). Biker subculture’s actual dangerousness as an expression of class, gender, and racial inequality becomes diluted into an exaggerated dangerousness of each member’s presumed violent criminality. We cease to understand the group as reacting to the dominant’s restrictiveness and oppression, and instead we react against bikers themselves.

Ultimately, it is biker subculture’s desire to escape the sobering reality of class inequality that lies beneath the caricature we are presented. Since such a desire is never fully articulated onscreen, the audience never engages in the larger discussion it seeks to promote. Thus, no matter how different we are socioeconomically, intellectually, culturally, and otherwise, we cling desperately to the archaic notion that we are all, and should all be, exactly the same. Any deviance from this norm of homogeneity and any questioning of its validity, unless thoroughly understood as meaningful, will be undermined through the process of incorporation and assimilation. Cohen echoes these

sentiments even more cynically, writing that “[i]f the whole process [of emergent subcultures] seems to be circular, forming a closed system, then this is because subculture, by definition, cannot break out of the contradiction derived from the parent culture” (Cohen 84). If, as Cohen suggests, nothing has been transformed from one generation to the next, then change is not likely to occur, and subcultures never become capable of completely achieving the alternative hegemony they desire. Instead, they remain mired in the inability to articulate their frustration with the dominant culture and are only seen as others to be feared, mocked, or otherwise judged.

With *True Detective*’s biker gang, we are provided with a stereotype that likely would not corroborate with our real-life encounters with members of that same subculture. Its construction of such a group as a hollow and shallow, but also as tough and dangerous, conforms to our normative ideology’s tendency to mark it as deviant while simultaneously allowing its incorporation into a culture that increasingly masks homogeneity as pluralism and consumerism as otherness. Willis refers to this phenomenon as “contradictory empowerment,” and while he considers the market as a limit to cultural emancipation, he also sees it as a means to “open the way to a better way” against such restriction (*Common Culture* 159). Sure, *True Detective* appears subversive in its portrayal of anti-hero Rust Cohle spouting such nihilistic gems as, “You got to get together to tell yourselves stories that violate every law of the universe just to get through the goddamn day? What does that say about your reality?” However, it does little to engage in such contradictory empowerment because, ultimately, the show rejects such nihilism while maintaining the falsity of identity. Willis also believes that individuals should become cultural producers rather than remain in their current state of cultural consumers (145-46). It seems, though, that most of us, like Pizzolatto and Fukunaga, when given the opportunity to do so, merely reiterate and reproduce the existing ideology through the material practice of art-making.

In order to substantially impact the current practices of ideology, we need to encourage a movement, as Grossberg states, that will “move beyond models of oppression,” and “move towards a model of articulation as ‘transformative practice’” (8). Put another way by Williams, “renewable social action and struggle” are what we need to revolutionize the “[c]urrent orthodox theory and practice” in which television production and viewership engages (*Television* 134). Presenting subculture isn’t enough—we need to do so in a manner that brings under scrutiny the institutionalized practices that create such social schism. For, unlike McLuhan believes, it is not “uniqueness and diversity that “electric conditions” engender “as never before” (422). Rather, a television program like *True Detective* solidifies the ruse of diversity within an ideology that privileges homogeneity—that is “not irresistibly imposed...only ‘preferred’” (Turner 91)—by only allowing the viewers to understand members of biker subcultures as effigies.

By studying the meaningful tenets, history, beliefs, practices, and cultural significance of biker subculture as a diverse “alternative and oppositional formation” (119) that acts as a response to dominant American ideology, and how a representation of that formation is distorted by the show’s creators, we understand ways in which *True Detective* misleadingly presents an image of subversion and, through its portrayal of O.M.C.’s, actually conforms to and enhances dominant ideological beliefs about such groups. Such a practice diverts of the audience’s focus on and understanding of biker subculture, serving to avoid larger discussions about race, gender, and class in America.

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“No, It’s Not Like Any Other Love”: Latino Morrissey Fans, Masculinity, and Class

José G. Anguiano
California State University

Abstract:

This essay interrogates the rise of Latino fandom for British musician Morrissey within the contexts of masculinity and post-industrial working-class communities. The links between stardom, class and masculinity are examined across icons such as James Dean and Elvis Presley. Heterosexual male fans were interviewed about their admiration for Morrissey and his influence on their gender expression and ideas about masculinity. The Latino men reported that listening to Morrissey’s music broadened their understanding of masculine expression and inspired many of the men to advocate for gender queer individuals. Overall, the men felt the music opened them up to expressing emotions and allowed them to imagine other modes of masculinity besides hyper masculine American or Latino ideals.

Keywords: Latino Masculinity, Fandom, Morrissey

“Hayır, bu herhangi başka bir aşk gibi değil”: Morrissey’in Latin Fanları, Erkeklik ve Sınıf

José G. Anguiano
California State University

Özet:

Bu çalışma, İngiliz müzisyen Morrissey’in Latin fanlarının sayısındaki artışı erkeklik ve endüstri sonrası işçi sınıfı toplulukları çerçevelerinde analiz edecektir. Yıldızlık, sınıf ve erkeklik arasındaki ilişki James Dean ve Elvis Presley gibi ikonlar üzerinden incelenmiştir. Heteroseksüel erkek fanlar ile Morrissey’e duydukları hayranlık, Morrissey’in onların cinsel kimliklerini ifadeleri ve erkeklik hakkındaki fikirleri hakkında görüşülmüştür. Latin erkekler, Morrissey’in müziğini dinlemenin onların farklı erkeklik ifadelerini anlamalarını genişlettiğini ve onları kuir kimlikleri savunma konusunda cesaretlendirdiğini belirttiler. Genel olarak, erkekler, müziğin onları farklı duyguları ifade etmede özgürleştirdiğini ve aşırı maskülen Amerikan veya Latin modellerden farklı diğer erkeklik suretlerini tasarımlama imkanı sunduğunu belirttiler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Latin erkeklığı, fanlık, Morrissey

In 1982, in Manchester, England Steven Patrick Morrissey, a bookish loner, joined forces with local guitarist Johnny Marr to form the Smiths. Marr's catchy guitar based melodies coupled with Morrissey's angst driven lyrics, unconventional subject matter and enigmatic persona quickly catapulted the Smiths into chart success and pop idol status in the U.K. By the time the group disbanded in 1987 they had recorded five critically and commercially successful albums with several top ten singles, and perhaps just as important, a cultish fan base. After the partnership dissolved Morrissey went on to a successful solo career that to date includes ten albums, several hit singles and numerous recognitions. In fact, *Spin* magazine (1989) rated the Smith's *The Queen Is Dead* album as the greatest album ever made, among other accolades from the music press. Although short lived compared to other celebrated British bands many music critics consider the Smiths the most important band to come from England during the 1980s (Hawkins *Settling the Pop Score* 72).

By the 1990s Morrissey and the Smiths became common household names for millions of teenagers and young adults in Southern California as well, a large percentage of which were Latino. This is partly explained by Los Angeles based radio station KROQ that frequently played the Smiths/Morrissey and other new wave English bands such as Depeche Mode and New Order during the 1980s and continued to play this music during "flashback" programming. Yet, of all the music of the era why does the forlorn music of the Smiths and Morrissey produce such ardent Chicano/Latino followers? As KROQ transmitted Morrissey's melancholic lines, set to Marr's "jangly" guitar across Southern California, the music resonated in a Latina/o audience KROQ overlooked. For despite notable Chicano/Latino contributions to rock 'n' roll—from Ritchie Valens to Question Mark and the Mysterians through Carlos Santana, Los Lobos and Ozomatli, to name a few—Chicanos, and Latinos in general, have never been taken seriously as an audience for rock music (Reyes and Waldman; Loza; Avant-Mier). This disregard of U.S. Latinos as consumers and listeners of rock music operates on many levels and through various discourses that legitimize the invisibility of the Latino rock fan. Prevalent among them, and informing many others, are: (1) rock's long standing

black/white dichotomy, (2) the music industry's erroneous belief that there is no market or Latino rock audience, and (3) "sonic stereotypes" about what type of music Chicanos/Latinos listen to and consume.

Gustavo Arellano of the *Orange County Weekly* has argued that media coverage of Latino Smiths and Morrissey fans is "universally condescending, if not outright racist" (3). Nor is the first time that Chicanos have been attacked on the basis of their fandom. One example being the unfortunate comments Howard Stern made in reference to Latino adoration of Tejana diva Selena and the media's general bewilderment at the outpouring of grief in the Latino community (Paredes 71). Both Morrissey fans and Selena fans are examples of what José Esteban Muñoz calls an "affective excess" that marks Latinos as non-normative and therefore un-American, in this case for caring too much, for the wrong stars (70). Historically, fandom has been characterized as a pathological disorder or susceptibility to violence, but race and ethnicity adds a further layer of stigma and marginality (Jensen).

It is within this context that inexplicably and unintentionally, Morrissey's passionate themes of disappointment, rejection, isolation, and contradiction reach a young Latino audience coming of age in a racialized, marginalized, and impoverished environment of Los Angeles. British "Dark Wave" music—which includes bands like the Smiths, the Cure, and Depeche Mode—featured industrial sounding beats and drums often coupled with dark lyrics coincided with changing demographics and the implementation of devastating neoliberal economic policies in Southern California. The destitute sounds of Thatcher era Manchester, England resonated with Chicano/Latino youth in the barrios and the suburbs of Los Angeles. The majority of Morrissey's Latino fans come from the working-class neighborhoods of South L.A., Orange County and the vast eastern corridor that runs from East Los Angeles into the Inland Empire. Depictions of Southern California as Hollywood glamour and affluent Westside suburbs veil these communities; Sandra Tsing-Loh playfully calls this other L.A. "lesser Los Angeles." While Morrissey's Latino fan base is a remarkably diverse group it can be argued that Morrissey's most

fervent and active followers come from the most segregated, underprivileged and disenfranchised sectors. Over a century of racist policies segregated Chicanos and Latinos into marginalized communities, but sound waves and popular culture penetrated the social and physical barriers of the barrio. Tuning into the radio, buying bootlegged CDs, sharing music, and singing their lives at club nights Chicanos built a dynamic fan culture that appropriated Morrissey and the Smiths as their own music. Consequently, in the early 1990s Chicano/Latino youth across the varied Latino communities of metropolitan L.A. built a rabid fan culture complete with its own aesthetic, events, and social groups—a largely independent and corporate free scene.

Utilizing in-depth interviews with Latino fans, field note observations from concerts and music events, and cultural productions by fans this essay investigates how Morrissey's popularity among the Latino community is linked to cultural and economic transformations that produce aesthetic resonances. I argue that Morrissey's popularity in part stems from how his music and persona enable Latino fans to re-fashion and re-mix masculinity in a way that then opens up new perspectives on gender, sexuality and social justice. Interviewing young Latino men about their fandom I seek to understand: What does it mean that Latinas/os—especially men—often display an intense and emotionally vulnerable admiration of a fey Englishman? What does this say about supposedly rigid notions of Latino masculinity? How do pop stars embody archetypes of masculinity for listeners? And how do we begin to unpack the racialized discourses around Latino masculinities.

In this essay I will briefly outline the historical relationship between male idols, masculinity, race and class. With this context I explore the rise of Latino Morrissey fandom in Los Angeles in particular and analyze how fans confronted ideas of masculinity through Morrissey's music. Finally, I conclude by considering the wider social and economic context that structures Latino fandom.

Pop Stars, Masculinity and Class

While Latino Morrissey fandom has been portrayed in the press as a bizarre and singular popular culture phenomenon, the appeal of mass media idols must be examined historically from the intersecting influences of class, gender, sexuality, and race and ethnicity. Using an intersectionality framework I analyze three iconic male stars that redefined masculinity in their respective eras (Crenshaw). Examining why particular celebrities are revered in particular times, places and among specific demographics highlights how fans negotiate different forms of masculinity present in any given time and place.

Popular culture stars like James Dean, Elvis Presley and Morrissey not only become media icons but also archetypes of competing masculinities available to the audience. The relationship between the audience and their idol's is most clear during eras of transformation and crisis. The intersection of pop stars, masculinity and class reveals important historical evidence of transformation and crisis in ideas about gender, race, class and sexuality.

One excellent example is James Dean's iconic role of Jim Stark in *Rebel Without a Cause* which has been read as indicative of Cold War era suburbia's malaise and general feeling of emasculation (Mitchell). John Mitchell writes that despite the prosperity and togetherness that suburban living was meant to usher in a spike in rates of alcoholism and abuse of tranquilizers suggests a lingering dissatisfaction in the rapidly expanding 1950s suburbs (132). Despite securing the latest home appliances and conveniences there was a sense that something was lost along the way. One source of unhappiness written about in 1950s magazine's like *Look* and *Playboy* was the belief that white American males had become emasculated and therefore dominated by women and feminine qualities.

The film *Rebel Without a Cause* represents this idea in Jim's father Frank who is portrayed as weak man dominated by his wife, who wears an apron to do domestic chores and has lost any semblance of being "a

red-blooded American man.” All of the characters in the film are presented as lacking fathers in an allusion to a lack of rugged masculinity in white middle-class families (Lewis). For the character Plato the lack of a father has led to effeminacy and hinted at homosexuality. Out of frustration with his father Jim Stark attempts to provoke a tough masculine reaction by fighting him. Jim’s rebellion without a cause against his middle-class standing, then, can be read as a revolt against a supposed feminized culture. The film solves the masculinity crisis in the denouement when after Plato’s death Frank realizes he has failed Jim as a father and finally asserts his patriarchal control over his family (Lewis 94).

Moviegoers idolized James Dean’s handsome brooding and his ability to represent a white middle-class male angst in a suburbanized world. John Mitchell notes that notions of American male ruggedness came into direct conflict in the 1950s with a white collar suburbia that saw aggressive masculinity as a threat to the new social order (133). The teenage conflicts that James Dean portrayed of not having your parent’s understand you, struggling to fit in at school, falling into delinquency and searching for an “authentic” masculinity echoed many of the sentiments of the audience. With the establishment of teenagers as a consumer group and demographic we also see the rise of teenage laziness, ennui and delinquency as a social concern; James Dean became the face of the anxiety for both teens and parents.

If the middle-class had James Dean to speak to their crises the working-class had Elvis Presley. Much has been written about how Elvis Presley embodied a transgressive sexuality, an androgynous masculinity and liberally borrowed from African-American culture, yet less is written about why this appealed to fans growing up in a post-world war II context. Elvis’ music proved to be a powerful layering of sexuality, gender, race and class dynamics in the south. While the success of Elvis is often credited to white audiences Michael Bertrand reminds us that rock’s success was actually “a popular biracial working-class phenomenon” (60). Bertrand argues Elvis’ ability to tap into southern working-class sensibilities around masculinity, the previously unacknowledged

admiration of black culture and a rapidly changing post-war context made Elvis a star. With the 1950s urbanization of many rural whites, along with changing racial and gender norms, many young listeners turned to music to cope and groove to the transformation and dislocation.

Of particular note is how Elvis, and the rockabilly music explosion he ushered in, adopts black male urban style as way to assert their own masculinity and dignity in rapidly changing postwar context (Bertrand 62). As a truck driver and son of sharecroppers from Mississippi, Elvis and white working-class males in general were largely invisible to southern elites. Although never suffering the same racist scorn aimed at blacks, poor white southerners nonetheless were often excluded from economic opportunities and treated as culturally inferior “hillbillies” that proved the elites’ claim to privilege. With little other resources, marginalized and denigrated men like Elvis often turned to popular culture and flashy style to assert their dignity and masculinity. Bertrand notes that the histories of both white and black working-class communities in the south are replete with loud and violent displays of masculinity, what W. E. B. Du Bois called the “the transgression of the poor” (qtd. in Bertrand 67).

What was different about Elvis and his fans way of expressing their masculinity was that they broke with the historical disavowal of African American culture and instead conspicuously embraced black cultural forms, particularly appealing was the hyper masculine bravado of some black subcultures. Scholars have identified how southern black bluesmen, hustlers and jazz musicians built an oppositional “hipster-trickster” black masculinity that celebrated swagger, boasts, style and virility (Williamson, 59; Kelley, 41; Kreil, 26). Bertrand argues that poor southern males like Elvis found in black male culture an opportunity to enhance their own masculinity even as they reproduced some racist ideas about black masculinity (75). It is thus important to recognize that Elvis’ success is not just built around repackaging black music for white audiences but black masculinity as well.

Finally, Morrissey’s connections to masculine crises and the working class are well documented in his music and by scholars.

Morrissey's songs have long held a fascination and admiration for neighborhood toughs. Whether he is asking them for help ("Ganglord"), asking for compassion for them ("Sweet and Tender Hooligan," "We'll Let You Know"), lamenting their short tragic life ("First of the Gang to Die") or blasting the middle-class for looking down on working-class men ("Reader Meet Author," "Teenage Dad on His Estate") the working-class lad has long been one of Morrissey's favorite themes to sing. Morrissey's lyrics also frequently describe these hard young men in a language of love and admiration: from "sweet and tender hooligan" to "pretty petty thieves," to "handsome devil." At the very least Morrissey's lyrics disrupt the binaries of "hard" and "soft" or masculine and feminine. Scholars have attributed these lyrics to both homoerotic desire and the admiration of a supposed authentic working-class masculinity these men represent (Power 106). Bannister argues that Morrissey has a masochistic and "eroticized" relationship to working-class masculinity constructed as his Other (152).

As with the economic transformations surrounding the rise of James Dean and Elvis, Martin J. Power notes that the Thatcher era in the U.K. resulted in massive unemployment due to deindustrialization, cuts to the welfare state, and the tearing down of old working-class slums and schools (97-103). The working-class was forever transformed along with its understanding of blue-collar masculinity. Morrissey's songs about rejection, marginalization and humiliation—not to mention references to an idyllic pre-Thatcher England—hit a chord with many young men growing up in the U.K. in the 1980s. Morrissey's ability musically and lyrically to hold a tension between different competing conflicts has especially made him appealing to fans. Indeed, one of Morrissey's enduring aesthetic strategies is to create a tension between gloomy self-obsessed lyrics and an upbeat musical backing.

Moreover, Morrissey's celebrated and criticized—and many would say carefully calculated—refusal to adhere to gender and sexuality norms has elevated him to cult hero (Woronzoff; Hopps; Hawkins *The British Pop Dandy*; Hubbs). His intense brooding (reminiscent of Dean), perfect pompadour (à la Elvis), a simultaneously supreme narcissism and self-

deprecation and playful masculinity made Morrissey an interestingly enigmatic figure.

Morrissey crafts from his own working-class background and from those of Dean and Elvis a paradoxically glamorous image. Rundown city blocks, dilapidated bicycles, thrift shop clothes, government-issue glasses and poor haircuts become props of a quiet rebellion against conformity and rigid definitions of identity. If Dean's Jim Stark ultimately wanted a return to "authentic" masculinity, Morrissey mines the aesthetic but seeks no return; he dwells in the loss and ambiguity. Moreover, by openly acknowledging his own fandom of James Dean and Elvis Presley Morrissey places himself in the historical legacy of male stars that were misunderstood in their own time, challenged prevailing norms and did so deliberately through style. These traits made him attractive to fans around the world.

Moz Angeles¹

Despite some clear differences between Morrissey and his Chicano fan base there are many biographical and contextual parallels to be made between Chicanos and Morrissey such as the fact that in many ways to grow up an Irish Catholic immigrant in a working-class neighborhood in Manchester, as Morrissey did, has some similarities to growing up Chicano in the Eastside of Los Angeles. Indeed, documentarian William E. Jones' film on Chicano/Latino Morrissey fans titled *Is It Really So Strange?* argues that perhaps the strongest connection between Morrissey and Chicanos is the similarity between a destitute post-industrial Manchester and an equally destitute Eastside that extends into the Inland Empire. A fan Jones interviews playfully comments: "I think it's funny that he's so far away from us but he's just like us. There's nothing different, except the fact that he doesn't speak Spanish."

¹Latino Morrissey fans affectionately re-named Los Angeles to Moz Angeles in honor of their idol

Economic and gender transformations, coupled with a long standing interest in British rock music made Morrissey's music an appealing site to make sense of life's ambiguities for Mexican-American and other Latino men coming of age in Southern California in the 1980s and 1990s. As in the U.K., Southern California was undergoing deindustrialization, cuts to the welfare state along with the vilification of immigrant communities. Southern California since the 1970s is also in the midst of a transformation in the economy and its demographics. Beginning in the 1970s heavy manufacturing jobs in industries like aerospace and automobiles began to move overseas or to other parts of the country. Gaye Theresa Johnson notes that by "1988 not one of the auto, rubber, or steel plants was left standing" (129). The deindustrialization of the southland profoundly weakened middle-class communities, forced an exodus of African-Americans and contributed to the growing demand of labor from Latin America. By the 1990s a large cohort of American born Latinos rapidly changed the demographics of schools, workplaces and cities. As of 2014, Latinos comprise the majority of Los Angeles County and have surpassed European Americans statewide (Lopez).

At home, many of these young men confronted rigid views of masculinity, while their exposure to American culture or acculturation to U.S. norms provided other models of masculinity that conflicted with the home culture. Whether it's the figure of the Latin macho, the *pachuco*, or the cowboy Latino tropes of masculinity emphasize self-reliance, virility and stoicism. Morrissey's vulnerability and gender play provided an ambiguous model of masculinity during an uncertain time personally and economically.

“Learning to Listen and Listening to Learn”²

I collected a total of eight in-depth semi-structured interviews from Morrissey fans in addition to a total of 12 (5 video interviews, 7 audio interviews) short interviews at a Morrissey concert in Los Angeles. The data collection spanned the years of 2009 and 2010. The data collection process was guided by apost-colonial Chicana/o cultural studies theoretical framework which cultural critic Gaspar de Alba has labeled the “alter-Native grain” that emphasizes popular culture as oppositional resource and contextualizes Chicano/Latino culture as a distinct yet not subordinate part of American popular culture. My use of semi-structured interviews channels the work of Charles Briggs on interviewing techniques and challenges. I am particularly influenced by Briggs’ astute assertion that social science research takes the interview process for granted and that “What is said is seen as a reflection of what is “out there” rather than as an interpretation which is jointly produced by the interviewer and respondent”(3). On this note, Briggs adds that the interviewer’s process cannot be to extract “the truth” out of the vessels called respondents but rather the task calls for “interpreting the subtle and intricate intersection of factors that converge to form a particular interview” (22). In my interviews I focus on the dialogical process of interviews by asking respondents to reflect on their fandom and theorize its meanings. Furthermore, by listening to music during the interviews with the respondents I found that I disrupted the mechanical process of extracting answers or “truth” and instead co-constructed a space from which to mutually explore feelings, memories and popular culture theories.

The goal was to use music to trigger memories, foment discussion or focus on specific songs or lyrics. Overall, the music collection proved

²I borrow this phrase from George Lipsitz’s “Listening to Learn and Learning to Listen: Popular Culture, Cultural Theory, and American Studies.” *American Quarterly* 42 (1990): 615-636.

useful as scrolling through the song titles alone proved to be useful for interviewees. In one interview, a fan played music I did not have from his cell phone. Hearing the music allowed a more in-depth conversation about the feelings and memories triggered by the song and it also created an affective bond between the interviewer and interviewee. I felt a growing kinship through talking about Morrissey and common experiences. As a popular music aficionado I have always felt an important basis for friendship is the shared affinity for the same popular music and in this case my own Morrissey fandom responded to the sentiments expressed in the interviews. As we listened to music I felt a bond was created between interviewer and interviewee which facilitated trust, intimacy and an open discussion.

All of the in-depth interviews surveyed young Mexican-Americans or other Latin American origin fans between the ages of 21 and 33 and representing various areas of Southern California. All of the respondents claimed to come from working-class backgrounds and were at least partially fluent in Spanish. All of the respondents were at the time of the interview either in college or recent college graduates. The college experience, as will be noted further below, did make a difference in how they articulated their fandom for Morrissey. Their college education exposed them to a critical academic vocabulary and a social awareness of race, gender, class and sexuality issues.

The in-depth interviews ran from one and a half hours to two hours. The interview analyses that follow are based on my discussions with, León Villa, Moz005, Eric, and Pedro. All the names are pseudonyms selected by the interviewees.

"I'm Not The Man You Think I Am"

The persistent question in the mind of many music journalists is why do Latinos like Morrissey at all (See, Arellano; Aitch; Torres)? This need by the media to make sense of Latino Morrissey fandom and account for difference has unfortunately led many a journalist down a

slippery slope of stereotypes, mockery and latent racism. The following description from the *Houston Press* exemplifies the pitfalls:

And now there's the Mexican-American Morrissey craze. In Morrissey's adopted hometown of Los Angeles, Morrissey Mania among young Hispanics is almost religious. There's a booming trade in his relics—autographs trade for \$60 and up, even those of dubious authenticity, and some even ascribe mystical powers to him. (It's said that the 1986 Smiths album *The Queen Is Dead* and other recordings foretold Princess Diana's death in 1997.) Vintage Chevy Impalas roll down the East L.A. streets, full of sinister-looking gangbanger types, and in place of English-script "Lopez" or "Rodriguez" stickers in the rear window are ones that read "Morrissey." There's a Hispanic Morrissey tribute band there called the Sweet and Tender Hooligans, and one Latin Morrissey fan there has a back-length tattoo of an iconic shot of a slouching James Dean with Morrissey's head. (Lomax)

Unsurprisingly, many fans have taken offense to this coverage and its stereotypical assumptions and belittling undertones. The largest online fan forum for Morrissey fans includes threads such as "StigmaAgainst Hispanic Morrissey Fans" where Latinos report feeling ostracized by the media and non-Latino fans. Many fans felt that the media treated Latino Morrissey fans as "aliens" who inexplicably follow Morrissey. Indeed, this "alien-ness" (non-human, non-citizen, and non-consumer) permeates the media's perception and feeds a discourse that exoticized and ridiculed fans and their ethnic origins.

Examples from news sources like the *Houston Press* also demonstrate how the media's deficient knowledge about this fan culture and Latinos in general make them reliant on stereotypes. In the above example, we can identify stereotypes of Mexicans as superstitious, quixotic and dangerous bandidos. Many of these stereotypes can be traced back to the American conquest of the U.S. Southwest (Nericcio). Other

media outlets have used two primary modes of representing Latino Morrissey fans: The “gangbanger” and the just-arrived immigrant—the two most common media stereotypes about Latinos in the U.S. For Instance, British fashion magazine *Dazed and Confused* featured an article on Latino Morrissey fans titled “Smiths Crips” a play on an English snack food and Los Angeles street gangs. Also, In the documentary *The Importance of Being Morrissey* produced by the BBC the Latino Morrissey “phenomenon” is discussed accompanied by shots of recent immigrants in East Los Angeles, when in fact, Morrissey’s Latino fans tend to be young Latino youth who are English dominant and hail from the suburbs.

Many of these media reports on also rely on Latino masculinity caricaturesto mock a supposed disconnect between young “macho” Latino men and the effeminate and presumably homosexual Morrissey. The above quote from the *Houston Press* that described male fans as “sinister-looking gangbanger types” alludes to this trope. This discourse is ultimately a critique of their masculinity that marks these young men as bizarre in their musical taste and men who have failed to achieve a “natural” Latino machismo by being tainted by Morrissey’s queerness.

The question of gender and sexuality has long been a source of controversy for Morrissey as journalists have repeatedly tried to infer and cajole a confession of his queerness (See, Henke). Meanwhile, Morrissey has claimed to be a prophet for the “fourth gender,” which appears to allude to a fourth option from the normalized categories of male, female, and gender invert (male in a female body, or vice versa) (Hubbs 269). Early in his career Morrissey also publicly opted for a fourth option in his sexual orientation in claiming to reject heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bi-sexuality, for celibacy. Although Morrissey no longer claims celibacy the desire to resist categorization and fixed definitions remains an essential part of his star persona (Egan).

Given the amount of attention on Morrissey’s gender performance and sexual orientation, I asked fans to discuss whether or not Morrissey’s gender and sexual orientation was important to them and whether or not it had influenced their own ideas about gender and sexuality. Universally,

the fans I spoke with, who all identified as heterosexual, claimed that Morrissey's gender performance and sexuality mattered little to their fandom, what they cared about, they claimed, was the music and how it made them feel. Yet, most fans did admit that if they had to guess they would categorize Morrissey as queer. Although these fans accepted Morrissey's sexuality—whatever it may be—others around them scorned Morrissey's ambiguity. His "queerness" became a stigma to some fans, Patricia recalled classmates taunting her for wearing a tee shirt that featured a reclining, shirtless Morrissey. Similarly, Eric recognized that "Morrissey was always dogged as the queer guy." I was particularly interested to hear what male fans had to say about Morrissey's gender performance and the related discussion of masculinity and sexuality.

The male fans I interviewed reasoned that Morrissey subverted established gender roles by, for example, twirling flowers on stage, performing in an effeminate manner and using vague lyrics such as pronouns that defy gender roles or refuse to specify. With some important caveats the men interviewed stated that Morrissey's music expanded their horizon of possible gender expressions, made them more aware and accepting of gender differences and allowed them to more freely express their emotions.

When I asked Pedro how he felt about Morrissey's gender expression when he first started listening to Morrissey he described being unsure how to interpret what he saw. However, Pedro felt that this was also how he developed a social consciousness towards gender and "queer" issues:

I was confused why he does this stuff. Why are his lyrics like this? Why does he play with gender? He also does it in his performance. I remember the first time I saw that he carried flowers in his back pocket and wove them around and how he dances is very effeminate. It introduced me to that and gave me self-empowerment and just expanded my mind coming from a catholic background. I grew up with very judgmental elders. I can tell you of this time I was at Kmart

(discount department store) and saw these two *cholo* attired (clothing associated with Latino street gangs) guys holding hands and I was with my *tia*(aunt) and my mom and they noticed it and said 'oh my god.' And I knew as soon as we got back into the car they were going to start talking about it. The whole time we were paying I was trying to think of something to say [in defense of the men] even though I knew I was going to get into trouble for sure, I might get hit and I probably won't go out for another week. It [Morrissey's music] got me to stand up for it, it doesn't matter. And I think it influenced me in the classes I take. I've taken gender classes and I'm taking a queer communities class right now. It's just getting me more informed so I can stand up for it—as an ally, not that they can't do it for themselves.

I followed up on this comment by asking him if Morrissey's "effeminate gestures" influenced him in anyway and what they meant to him:

It was definitely different. Dressing the way that I did and seeing how he dressed and looking up to him it kinda broke down those gender boundaries for me. And seeing him come out waving flowers and dancing the way he did, it furthered my understanding of things. You know what: what's wrong with it? Why do people see something wrong with it? So it actually does change the way I see things. I had some person come up to me and say 'oh you listen to the guy that swings flowers' and I said yea so?

The fans I spoke with unanimously celebrated Morrissey's gender "play" and felt that the rigid gender roles and often homophobic ideas they were socialized with were countered by what they learned in Morrissey's music. Eric admitted: "I was homophobic, but it's a learned habit. Growing up having a queer older cousin we would say *sabemosquees* [we know that he *is*]. You would make fun of that but then you grow up." Growing up, for Eric, involved having queer friends in high school and college, learning

about gender and sexuality in college, and being active in political movements for the equality of all people.

León likewise celebrated Morrissey's gender expression and admired Morrissey as a male figure:

I think it's great. He's fine with it being [alludes to androgyny]...I don't want to say masculine. I want to say a man as in he has a penis so maybe this is like what in a better place a person with a penis should be acting like. I see him as a man but not the Hollywood male, the "American" male, the stereotypical white European male. It's to me a more respectable male. Morrissey makes it okay for a man to be vulnerable. So that is something that I want to identify with.

Referencing his earlier comments about Morrissey representing an alternative to the archetypical white male figure León admires Morrissey's masculinity as being more "respectable." Here he alludes to Morrissey being a role model for new definitions of masculinity liberated from oppressive hierarchies and binaries.

Resisting "Latino Machismo"

With the male fans I also presented the popular media idea that Latino males are bizarrely drawn to Morrissey because they are emotional repressed or because of a latent homoerotic desire and asked them to comment. While many fans felt there may be some truth behind the claim they also had cautionary words to express about the stereotypical representation of Latino males and the Latino community in general.

Speaking against the idea that Morrissey's music represents the only emotional outlet for males Eric explained that even before Morrissey entered the picture other artists he listened to pushed against the boundaries of normative gender roles. His earliest example referenced growing up listening to Mexican singer Juan Gabriel who he described as

feminine but being able to sing the bravado filled Mexican ballads known as *ranchera* songs better than anyone. He also described the gender bending styles of bands like Soda Stereo, David Bowie and “hair metal” bands like Poison. “With Morrissey it was like maybe he is [queer] but what does it matter it was more about my how the music made me feel and how I conceptualized it for myself” he added. Eric’s point about Juan Gabriel’s ambiguity also underscores that a queer critique of traditional gender roles is possible and already present from within the Latino community and not only from a cultural outsider like Morrissey.

León also wanted to challenge the characterization that only Latino males practiced machismo. American media has long portrayed Latinos as emblems of sexism (Ramirez Berg; Romero). Indeed, the Spanish word machismo has entered the lexicon to refer to all sexist men but originates as a description of Latin American origin men.

“For Latino men I guess you could say the whole macho thing—which I have a hard time with because white men do the same thing. Because I’m brown I don’t think I’m pushed more to be a masculine figure than a white dude. It’s assumed that we want to be machos or are forced to be machos when white guys are just as much, maybe in a different way.”

León argued that the reasons Latino males enjoy listening to Morrissey could be said of any male fan, across race and ethnicity, looking for a different expression of masculinity.

With these critical caveats noted I asked if Morrissey did allow Latino men to more fully express their emotions; all the fans agreed that listening to the Smiths and Morrissey did open up a momentary space of greater emotional freedom. Moz005 commented on his own experience and theorized about why other men might enjoy the music too:

Personally I had trouble... I wasn’t always able to express myself or my feelings. Or be in touch with myself or with my feminine side or whatever. But something about his music does make me feel like hey I could talk about things without having to put on

this facade of being a macho man or something like that. Music does kinda help; maybe it's his tone of voice when he is singing. I'm not gonna say feminine but a lot of people associate Morrissey as being gay—because he's so secretive about his life—which has never been proven. Because of his mannerisms on stage or the way he carries himself. I've never personally cared for that cause I just love the guy for the music, for him you know, but that's probably why men do listen to his music and you feel somewhat in touch with him or his songs. It probably would make it easier for them to express themselves and be able to get in touch with themselves more.

Eric also believed men could more fully express themselves through Morrissey and added that concert spaces and being with other fans allowed male fans a temporary reprieve from strict gender roles. In particular Eric was struck by the now common place rush of male fans scaling the concert stage to embrace their idol:

With Morrissey you are allowed to be happy, more effeminate. You're allowed to show your emotions. They [Latino men] are not allowed to be effeminate or show their other side. They're repressed. Emotionally repressed and now they are finally allowed to [express themselves]. Specifically, in a dark room where you know some of the Morrissey fans are like you so you are allowed to do that too. But if your family saw you they'd say "*está loco estecabrón*" [this dude is crazy]. The band allows you to do that, the venue and the audience. It's a play; everybody is in on the joke.

The interviews further demonstrate that popular music is a space where gender relations play out and where norms are transgressed, however fleeting, and new identities are explored (Espinoza; Bragg and McFarland; Schippers; Vargas; Perez). This phenomenon, of course, has a long historical trajectory in the Chicano community. Historian Vicki Ruiz argues that young Mexican women growing up in Los Angeles in the 1920s found an alternative to the strict gender roles of the family and the

church in the “flapper” culture of the era (67). Being able to witness and consume an alternative way of life lent the young women’s choices an “aura of legitimacy,” according to Ruiz.

In the 1950s and 1960s the Chicano community was a key cross-cultural audience of rhythm and blues and early rock music. Black R&B singer Brenton Wood performed long after he had any hits on the radio due to an extremely loyal Chicano community in East L.A. who supported him for a long period of time attending shows, purchasing his music and making requests on the “oldies” station (Reyes and Waldman xx). Moreover, Chicano rock legend Ritchie Valens earned the moniker the “Little Richard of the San Fernando Valley” for emulating the swagger and sound of R&B and rock pioneer (Reyes and Waldman 38). These fans looked to black masculinity and sound to define the soundtracks of their lives. As part of this trajectory, Morrissey fans in the 1990s confronted gender and racial boundaries and experimented with different expressions of masculinity via listening choices and effects.

What these fans articulated also echoes recent scholarly and creative work that seeks to problematize rigid notions of Latino Masculinity. The anthology *Muy Macho: Latino Men Confront Their Manhood* showcases personal reflections from writers and scholars as they come to terms with machismo has shaped their sense of self. Similarly, research by Gabriel S. Estrada and Alfredo Mirandé interrogate the patriarchal binds and mythology of Latino masculinity and suggest new understandings of masculinity are needed whether they come from pre-Hispanic traditions as Estrada suggests or a grounded praxis of Latino experience as advocated by Mirandé.

Mexican poet and essayist Octavio Paz theorized that the colonized history of Mexico had produced in Mexican men a symbolic hardened mask of masculinity that never cracks except in moments of revelry, violence or the mutual surrender of true love (42). Based on the interview data Latino Morrissey fans remove, if only briefly, and experiment with their masks through reveling in the vulnerability and aesthetic bleakness of Morrissey’s music. And just as Paz grounded his psychoanalysis of

masculinity in the historical circumstances of Mexico we must likewise return to the context of Latino listening.

Conclusion: “No, It’s Not Like Any Other Love.”

Latino Morrissey fan culture speaks to the unique characteristics of growing up Latino in the U.S. Southwest and the social transformation underway in the 1990s. For a large cohort of Latinos growing up in Southern California their admiration for Morrissey was unlike any other pop idol love. In the song “Hand in Glove” Morrissey sings of a covert love affair: “No it’s NOT like any other love/this one’s different/because it’s us!” The strong personal identifications made by fans and the emotional nature of the music generated in many fans an intimate feeling of being personally understood by Morrissey. A fan’s comment of “I think it’s funny that he’s so far away from us but he’s just like us. There’s nothing different, except the fact that he doesn’t speak Spanish” exemplifies this relationship.

For the young men that participated in this study their relationship with Morrissey’s music, and its play of masculine/feminine images, expanded their understanding of masculinity and gender non-conformity. Moreover, the emotional vulnerability of the music connected the men to their emotions in ways that did not seem possible in other music or other parts of their lives. Finally, this critical re-examination inspired more tolerant and accepting perspectives of various forms of social queerness. Morrissey’s music and persona represents a vehicle for deconstructing rigid notions of masculinity imposed by Latino and American culture. But they do not become clones; Morrissey’s gender ambivalence is used as an archetype to explore other types of Latino masculinities that can expand how Latinos and non-Latinos view Latino masculinity.

The lyrics also speak to the unique context that made Morrissey’s relationship to his Latino fan base possible. It is not a coincidence that Morrissey’s music resonates with Latino fans in a moment of economic and cultural transformation. The deindustrialization of Southern

California's heavy industries, cuts to the welfare safety net, criminalization of youth of color and the vilification of immigrant communities through state ballot initiatives such as proposition 187 which sought to deny basic social services to undocumented immigrants made it a difficult time to be a young Latino. These structural factors also have cultural impacts.

The rise of the service economy meant many men had to take on "feminized" service labor jobs and the stagnation of family income meant more women joined the workforce. Globalization has shifted the historical pattern of men migrating to find work; instead women have now become the dominant workforce of industries around the globe (Sassen). This shift is also evident in Latino communities as the bulk of low skilled jobs have become domestic work and service jobs preferring the gendered labor of women to fill these positions (Romero *Maid in the U.S.A.*; Hondagneu-Sotelo). In a culture where men are traditionally the primary income earners these changes destabilized gender norms within Latino families and some men may feel emasculated. Scholar D. Inés Casillas has noted that this gender anxiety is often visible and audible in popular culture like radio programming that revels in hypermasculinity. Under these conditions many Latinos looked to build different models of masculinity from Latino, Mexican and American Popular culture. For many music fans Morrissey provided an emotionally vulnerable masculinity steeped in working-class images and outsider angst that sounded familiar, sounded irresistible.

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Pleasures and Perils of the Performance of Music, Masculinity, and Cool

Melinda Mills
Castleton State College

Abstract:

This article considers two songs linked by allegations of copyright infringement. These songs are Robin Thicke's (2013), "Blurred Lines," and Marvin Gaye's (1977), "Got To Give It Up." In this paper, I conduct a lyrical analysis of the songs, to unpack other similarities beyond the musical and stylistic ones. Specifically, I consider the performance of masculinity, as expressed in ways that I argue supports patriarchy and rape culture. I draw comparisons between the songs to show how, despite the anticipated expanding possibilities of masculinities (Connell 1995), some performances or forms of masculinities remain the same. The stability and permanence of hegemonic masculinity accommodates the violence against women expressed in this music. I illustrate and argue that the normalization of violence in the song lyrics constitutes a linguistic violence. This violence makes the construction of new masculinities, and the dismantling of rape culture, that much more of a challenge and an imperative.

Keywords: Hegemonic masculinity, sexuality, music, media, rape culture, violence

Müzik Performansının Zevkleri ve Riskleri, Erkeklik ve *Cool*¹

Melinda Mills
Castleton State College

Özet:

Bu çalışma, telif hakkı ihlalleri konusunda birbiri ile alakalı iki şarkıyı dikkate almaktadır. Bu şarkılar, Robin Thicke'nin "Bulanık Çizgiler" (2013) ve Marvin Gaye'nin "Vazgeçmeyi Öğrendim" (1977) isimli eserleridir. Bu araştırmada, şarkıların sözleri üzerinden, müzikal ve stile ilişkin olanlardan farklı, diğer benzerlikleri ortaya çıkarma temelli bir analiz yapılmıştır. Özellikle, erkeklik performansı ve bunun ifade şekillerinin aterkil yapıyı ve rap kültürünü desteklediğini ortaya koydum. Şarkılar arası karşılaştırmada, genişleyen erkeklik ihtimallerinin arttığına dair önkabüle rağmen (Connell 1995), hala erkekliklerin performans ve şekillerinin aynı olduğu gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır. Hegemonik erkekliğin durağanlığı ve devamlılığı, müzikte ifade edilen kadına karşı şiddetle de bağdaşmaktadır. Şarkılardaki şiddetin normalleşmesinin dilsel bir şiddet inşa ettiğini gösterdiğim bu çalışma, bu şiddetin yeni erkekliklerin inşasını ve rap kültürünün dağılmasını –ki bu bir meydan okumadan ve bir zorunluluktan ötedir- gerçekleştirdiğini savunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Hegemonik erkeklik, cinsellik, müzik, medya, rap kültürü, şiddet

¹ *Cool* popüler, havalı, umursamaz kişiler için kullanılır.

Introduction

In the fall of 2013, Robin Thicke's record label, Sony, was sued by Marvin Gaye's family. The legal case alleged copyright infringement, or unauthorized use of and close similarities between Thicke's overwhelmingly popular summer smash, "Blurred Lines," and Marvin Gaye's, "Got to Give It Up." In the summer of 2013, Thicke song's enjoyed mixed reviews from the consuming public, and conversations were abuzz with debates. Proponents of the artist adamantly defended the song, denying (or refusing) to see the provocation in the lyrics. Opponents, conversely, expressed their disapproval, if not their outrage. How could music companies and media corporations support the circulation of such questionable lyrics and its attendant video? Did the proponents of the artist, song, and lyrics see the possible flaws?

In this paper, I will examine the song, "Blurred Lines," drawing a comparison to Marvin Gaye's, "Got to Give It Up." Then, I will discuss the two songs in terms of the performance of masculinity, and to engage the question of violence against women in the form of a normalized rape culture. Since the two songs are musically linked through the alleged appropriation of one into the other, I use that "borrowing" as the final theme to explore the idea of "thieving" or stealing culturally and physically. That is, I consider how the allegations of thievery relate to *both* the cultural appropriation of Marvin Gaye's music, without his permission, as well as the overarching thievery of women's sexual agency and bodies through lyrics and music that colonize or deny women's bodily autonomy and sexual freedom.

I organize my thoughts around the thematic of images of masculinity as dominating and rapacious masculinity as a potentially threatening thievery of women's liberation, under the guise of such. I link the lyrical content of both songs together to consider the historical legacy of sexual violence, and the cultural productions of masculinity as performed at different historical moments, by men located at different social intersections regarding race and class.

Mediated Masculinities

In her seminal work, *Masculinities*, R.W. Connell (77) explains, “At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others 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) continues to clarify that hegemonic masculinity entices men of various social positions, not “always the most powerful people,” to perpetuate it and reap its rewards. This supports the system of patriarchy and male domination, or as Connell (77) posits, “hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual.” Since I focus in this paper on mediated masculinities, and the lyrical content of two songs by men music artists, I borrow from Connell’s discussion of hegemonic masculinity. Both Marvin Gaye and Robin Thicke have enjoyed great popularity and success in their respective eras and genres. Both could be said to articulate hegemonic masculinities, in ways that align with the notion that hegemonic masculinity “embodies a ‘currently accepted’ strategy. When conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony. The dominance of *any* group of men may be challenged by women. Hegemony, then, is a historically mobile relation.” (Connell 77).

Connell illustrates how hegemony encourages men’s consent to male domination in a patriarchy. She argues that the structure of society invites and then rewards men’s complicity in the system. For music artists such as Gaye and Thicke, they occupy (occupied, in the case of Gaye) different social locations within this society. Nevertheless, both arguably benefited from their performance of masculinity, as they

engaged in their musical performances. In the next section, I discuss each song in greater depth, offering some interpretations of the lyrical analysis I conducted of each song.

The Performance of Music, Masculinity, and Cool

“Got to Give It Up”

In 1977, Marvin Gaye released his song, “Got to Give It Up.” The song opens by describing a man who does not appear to be socially facile. He desires social skillfulness and facility but remains nervous at parties. His bodily yearning motivates him to shake his nerves, or perhaps his dancing diminishes his nerves. Gaye sings, “I got up on the floor and thought, ‘Somebody could choose me.’ No more standin’ there beside the walls. I done got myself together baby and now I’m havin’ a ball.” The lyrics to this disco song serve as a reminder of the times in which this music was produced, as well as how people understand gender performance in specific historical contexts.

Connell (202) speaks to this point in anticipating emergent expressions of masculinities that might encourage a reconceptualization or broadening of the collective understandings of the gender category and its attendant performances. Connell (202) writes, “The expansion of possibilities is not only a question of growing variety in current sexual practice. There has also been a flowering of utopian thinking about gender and sexuality, a sense of expanded historical possibilities for the longer term.” Expressions of masculinities reflect the historical moments in which they are lived, as does the music in which these masculinities are constructed and performed.

The emergent music form of disco spawned its own unique dancing style, fashion, and music culture. That Gaye produced a song within this era that speaks to the vulnerabilities and pleasures of being embodied in his male body gives us a refreshing perspective on how men navigated the party scene and large social landscape in the 1970s. The

publicity of this vulnerability stands in contrast to the perpetually stoic and strong image of hegemonic masculinity.

Additionally, Gaye's lyrics are interesting in showing how a man moves, literally and figuratively, on the dance floor and in social life. The lyrics describe a man, perhaps one lacking confidence in or comfort with himself, moving from a bit reserved or reluctant to a fun-loving, getting-down kind of guy. This transition could be read as a social success story for a man who learns how to embody confidence and can comfortably adapt to any setting. A deeper reading of these lyrics invite consideration of the transformation that occurs throughout the song, and the type of masculinity arrived at by the song's end, and that which is performed and described throughout the song.

One part of this performance is that of "cool." Majors and Billson (1992) explore the performance of "cool" by defining and discussing the "cool pose" in their book of the same name. They explain,

By cool pose we mean the presentation of self many black males use to establish their male identity. Cool pose is a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control. Black males who use cool pose are often chameleon-like in their uncanny ability to change their performance to meet the expectations of a particular situation or audience. They manage the impression they communicate to others through the use of an imposing array of masks, acts, and facades.

As Majors and Billson (1992) note, the cool pose operates as currency and a liability for black men. The cool pose extends or complements hegemonic performances of masculinity that require men to wear a mask. For black men, this mask protects them from secondary status created by a racial hierarchy that positions them lower than white men in this society. "Cool pose ...provides a mask that suggests competence,

high self-esteem, control, and inner strength. It also hides self-doubt, insecurity, and inner turmoil." (Majors and Billson 5).

This mask also makes real romantic relationships and intimacy less of a possibility or actuality. The performance of cool interrupts the very relationships that men may desire. Their cool pose prevents them from cultivating wholeheartedness and true intimacy. As Majors and Billson (43) note, "Being cool is paradoxical because the behaviors that afford black males a semblance of social competence and control elsewhere in their lives are the same behaviors that ultimately help run their relationships with women aground."

Applying the cool pose to Marvin Gaye's song, "Got to Give It Up," helps us understand the limitations and contradictions of cool, and of the expectations or pressures of masculinities. They also help illuminate the complexity of black masculinity, as a conflictive or tenuous performance. If black masculinity centers around wearing a mask or not looking vulnerable, what are the dangers that exist in relation to this "cool pose"? To "play it cool" is to pretend not to have feelings or participate in one's self-objectification. What are the ways that the performance of masculinity becomes dangerous? I address these questions in a subsequent section, but turn first to discuss the dimension of dancing as it surfaces in the Gaye song.

The Conundrum of Cool

Another part of the performance of masculinity and cool centers around dance in "Got to Give It Up." Marvin Gaye's song offers a potentially playful flirtation or suggestively dangerous dance between a man and a woman. While some dance scholars argue that dance precedes communication, others view dance as a mode of communication. Thinking about dance as an embodied expressive art adds to the performance of masculinity. As a form of creative and communicative movement, dance can be understood as an improvised and ritualized performance, reflective of the broader culture and society.

It has been said that dancing is like sex, or implies a sexualized dynamic between people. Simon Ottenberg (13-14) posits,

Dance may involve sexual-like movements and gestures which are acceptable in performance but not otherwise in public non-secular dances which serve ritual purposes. Dance situations may create an air of sexual freedom that encourages liaisons and matings, particularly if the dance is held way into the night and drinking occurs.

Others suggest that dance can be “performed for entertainment,” (Castaldi 2006:44). In discussing Dagan (1997), Castaldi notes the interpretation of dance, under Western eyes. Dagan draws associations between dance and procreation, or the ritualized sexual presentation of self and performance of initiation. Castaldi argues, “Dance becomes symbolic of the act of knowledge in so far as it embodies a process of sharing energy, that unstable, undetermined vital force that lends unity to the universe and constitutes the ‘surreality’ of the everyday world” (Castaldi 2006:52).

Here, the heteronormative frame structuring the discussion of dance in its sexualized and ritualistic forms proves useful but limited. When applied to the lyrics in Gaye’s song, we can see evidence of the sexual initiation and wooing, as euphemistically described by “grooving.” It makes sense that the lyrics in the song progress to involve some sexual pursuit: “As long as you’re groovin’, there’s always a chance. Somebody watching might wanna make romance. Move your body, ooo baby, you dance all night to the groove and feel alright.” The lyrics echo Castaldi’s point about the social sexual connotations and functions of dance. The lyrics are loose enough to suggest that the “groovin’” that Gaye refers to may be innuendo for sexual foreplay or a reference to sex, but also to dancing.

The disco era has been celebrated (and critiqued) for contributing to the shifting sexual mores of the time, loosening up people’s sexual standards and thus their (presumed) sexual behavior. The lyrics above depict that. They capture the linkage between dancing, sexuality, and

sensuality, as well as the collective tensions and anxieties around the expression of this sexuality.

The innuendo in the song remains suggestive, blurring the lines between dancing and sexual activity. The bodily pleasures of dancing may feel akin to that of sexual pleasures, or may be a kind of sexual pleasure, or simply serve as an invitation to sexual pleasure. If dance is an expressive art that can be “defined as a prelinguistic form of communication that allows for the expression of emotions that cannot be domesticated into the linguistic system (raw instincts) because they exceed the signifying capacity of language,” can dance movement ever be misinterpreted or become a form of miscommunication?

What if the signals of dancing as an invitation to sexual pleasure, on the dance floor, or beyond, are not clear to all involved? What if the “somebody watching” mistakes a “dancing-as-pleasure” look for an invitation to “make romance”? How do we learn to interpret and understand these distinctions between autonomous embodied pleasures and social ones intended to attract others or to initiate sex? What do these lyrics reveal about the performativity of masculinity through dance? Are the lyrics choreographing grooving as dancing or a dangerous threat of violence to women?

An example of the ambiguity in these dangers surfaces when Gaye sings, “Everybody’s groovin’ on like a fool but if you see me spread out then let me in. Baby just party high and low. Let me step into your erotic zone. Move it up, turn it ‘round, ooo, shake it down.” What is her erotic zone? How do we know that what is erotic to him is the same to her? Do these lyrics enforce a phallocentrism, or male dominance? Does the woman want him to do as he desires or as she desires?

These lyrics illustrate men’s gender performance as aggressors in sexual pursuit of women and pleasure. This kind of hegemonic masculinity problematically also links this performance to violence. As Connell (1995:83) explains, “A structure of inequality on this scale, involving a massive dispossession of social resources, is hard to imagine without violence. It is, overwhelmingly, the dominant gender who hold

and use the means of violence. Men are armed far more often than women." Connell continues to describe the variations in expressions of violence, including violence expressed from positions of power and domination or marginalization and oppression.

These ideas link to that of Michael Kaufmann (1987), who suggests that violence exists as a triad, with violence directed at men themselves, other men, and women. In the case of the lyrics in "Got to Give It Up," the announcement of the man stepping into the woman's erotic zone proves problematic in that he does not seek her permission. A world without permission creates a world of violence. Anti-violence activists and scholars instead advocate for global educational efforts that encourage "enthusiastic consent," or a consensual "yes!" instead of a coerced "no" (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth; Friedman and Valenti). Securing or expressing a "yes" mutually means conveying individual interest and clarifying blurred lines. It allows people to facilitate communication in order to activate the language of consent and their sexual agency. Moving from a questionable yes to an enthusiastic one minimizes misunderstandings that stem from presumptions, particularly for those with more power and privilege to do so.

Presuming to know, but not asking, what women want is another way men objectify women, deny women their sexual agency, perpetuate the gender binary that constructs men as always already desiring sexual subjects and women as always already to-be-desired sexual objects. This is problematic for everyone, because it operates as a persistent form of social control. It disciplines our gender expression and sexuality (whether as sexual subjects or objects) and endorses rape culture because women experience these gendered sexual scripts as limitations or frustrations.

According to MacKinnon (45), "Consent is supposed to be women's form of control over intercourse, different from but equal to the custom of male initiative. Man proposes, woman disposes. Even the ideal in it is not mutual." If women cannot control who steps into their erotic zone, what parts of their own bodies and sexualities can women

control? MacKinnon's discussion here reminds us that women are not always in control of women's sexuality: "The deeper problem is that women are socialized to passive receptivity; may have or perceive no alternative to acquiescence; may prefer it to the escalated risk of injury and the humiliation of a lost fight; submit to survive. Also, force and desire are not mutually exclusive under male supremacy." (MacKinnon 48). Put differently, women may or may not want to control themselves, a choice constantly constrained by the controlling force of patriarchal domination and the construction of gender.

Traditional gender expectations encourage initiation, assertion, and dominance from men, which in turn work to control women's bodily autonomy and sexuality. Hegemonic heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity mandates this dominance by men of women. To be a woman, based on this gendered expectation, is to submit to men. This submission includes a sexual kind, and follows this logic: "Sex itself cannot be an injury. Women have sex every day. Sex makes a woman a woman. Sex is what women are for. The sexualized submission of women offers partial explanation for the 'eroticization of dominance and submission.'" (MacKinnon 49). This begins to explain the reciprocal relationship in which "sexuality is violent, so perhaps violence is sexual. Violence against women is sexual on both counts, doubly sexy." (MacKinnon 49).

Because women are treated as sexual objects, "it further follows that acts by anyone which treat a woman according to her object label, woman, are in a sense sexual acts. The extent to which sexual acts are acts of objectification remains a question of one's accounts of women's freedom to live their own meanings as other than illusions, of individuals' ability to resist or escape, even momentarily, prescribed social meanings short of political change." (MacKinnon 49). Drawing the line between the reality and representation of masculinity, between sex and violent, between consent and coercion remains difficult. The dismissive tones registered in reactions that suggest songs are just that ignore or overlook the actuality of linguistic violence (Gay). As Butler and others

argue, words wound. They take on meanings that prove to be injurious or hurtful, even violent.

This scholarship encourages a closer examination of music and lyrics as “just songs” and pushes us to consider a shift from words that wound dismissed as “just words” to *just* words in a world of *just* sex. This would challenge us to see “rape as violence not sex” (MacKinnon), to discourage the perpetual perception of sex and violence as mutually exclusive, and to encourage the more accurate view of them as mutually definitive. By encouraging this education, people would be prompted to engage in and enjoy enthusiastic consensual sexual relationships or acts, and to minimize the blurred lines that frame so much of our mediated realities. I discuss this topic next.

From “Got to Give It Up” to “I Know You Want It”

Behind the allegations of musical appropriation as evidenced in the borrowing from Marvin Gaye’s song, “Got to Give it Up,” Robin Thicke stands as a symbolic reminder of this process. That Thicke took the liberties to borrow from a musical legend without sufficient permission becomes an ironic metaphor relating to the very song in question. The lawsuit underscores the larger problematic of blurred lines, culturally, socially, and sexually, with Thicke’s actions lending themselves to a broader discussion of thievery.

Considerations of the lyrics to the hugely successful, “Blurred Lines,” and the legal case regarding Marvin Gaye’s song involve some recognition of the sad reality of rape culture. According to Buchwald et al. (2005: xi),

Rape culture...is a complex of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent.... A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women and presents it as the norm.

One example of this stems from the very legal case involving Thicke himself. Arguably, the US legal system better protects the property and legacy of Marvin Gaye than of victims of sexual violence (MacKinnon 1989). In other words, did the lawsuit against Thicke receive more attention than related instances of sexual violence did during that summer? What does it mean when women, who are so often understood as property, are offered less legal protection than the copyright to a song? What do we learn about masculinity as embedded in and expressed from these institutions? As MacKinnon (53) asks, "What is it reasonable for a man to believe concerning a woman's desire for sex when heterosexuality is compulsory?" That is, when masculinity is always already heterosexual and consent appears always already assured, what blurred lines between consent and coercion could exist?

The blurred lines stem from the uncertainty of Thicke's intent or knowledge of using Gaye's music to shape his own song echo the uncertainty that many people have about the song itself. The lyrical analysis of "Blurred Lines" offers a subjective interpretation of the song, and intends to link the cultural appropriation of Gaye's song to the men's thievery of women's sexual agency, in music and in society. This analysis works to put on display the language present in the songs of Gaye and Thicke, to highlight the normalization of rape culture through the performance of music and masculinity. This masculinity supports the problematic dynamic of linguistic and sexual violence against women. The analysis exposes the extent to which "reality" is constructed through frames of masculinity. It remains as MacKinnon (53) argues,

One-sided: male-sided.... The one whose subjectivity becomes the objectivity of 'what happened' is a matter of social meaning, that is, a matter of sexual politics. One-sidedly erasing women's violation or dissolving presumptions into the subjectivity of either side are the alternatives dictated by the terms of the object/subject split, respectively.

That men feel a sense of entitlement stemming from male privilege offers partial explanation for men's behavior. In *Proving Manhood*, Beneke (75) argues, "Sex could then be a domain free to express itself without being perceived through the oppressions of gender." Yet, the expressions of masculinity, and the expectations of femininity, found in today's society suggests otherwise.

Let's return to Marvin Gaye's song, "Got to Give it Up." Gaye sings, "You can love me when you want to babe. This is such a groovy party baby. We're here face to face. Everybody's swingin'. This is such a groovy place. All the young ladies are so fine! You're movin' your body easy with no doubts. I know what you thinkin' baby. You wanna turn me out. Think I'm gonna let you do it babe. Keep on dancin'. You got to get it. Got to give it up." The song lyrics move from describing a confident woman who stands in contrast to that of the uncertain man who stands next to the wall, instead of dancing and having fun. Throughout the song, the man gains confidence and begins to pursue one of the many "fine" ladies. He suddenly gains enough confidence and social competence that he becomes knowledgeable about the woman. In claiming to "know what you are thinkin' baby," Gaye asserts male privilege. This privilege shifts to an imposition in the lines, "You wanna turn me out. Think I'm gonna let you do it babe." This imposition then becomes more of a directive: "Keep on dancin'. You got to get it. Got to give it up." These lyrics tack on to "Blurred Lines," not simply because Robin Thicke's gratuitous use of Gaye's music makes it so, but because of the problematic thematic that threads the two together.

For example, in "Blurred Lines," Thicke sings, "But you're a good girl. The way you grab me. Must wanna get nasty. Go ahead, get at me." Much of the discussion about Thicke's "tribute" to Marvin Gaye generated suspicions about his integrity, given the similarities in the style of music. Thicke admitted to wanting to replicate that "grooving" style of music, as the lawsuit alleges he approximated too closely. Notably, no one, to my knowledge, engaged in drawing comparisons between the substantive style of the songs. What are the similarities

between Thicke offering himself up to a “good girl” who “must wanna get nasty” and the lyrics I discuss above in Marvin Gaye’s song?

The lyrics in “Blurred Lines” later grapple with the contradiction created by the “good girl/bad girl” dichotomy, which Thicke identifies when he pronounces, “I always wanted a good girl. I know you want it.” Or “I know you want it, But you’re a good girl. The way you grab me, must wanna get nasty. Go ahead, get at me.” Some consumers of this song have *generously* argued that Thicke is supportive of women’s sexual agency, but again there is a “blurred line” between men being supportive of women’s agency for the men’s benefit (sexual pleasure/desire) versus purely being supportive of everyone enjoying their own sexual agency (on their own terms, not someone else’s). The lyrics make clear his sexual subjectivity (“go ahead, get at me”), but they deny women the voice to clarify their own desire, which begs the question: “Do the women ‘wanna get nasty’ or get at him?” These lyrics trouble the “blurred lines” between “good girls” who ostensibly abstain from sex, and “bad girls” who engage in it. The lyrics also blur the line between sexual pursuit and predatory behavior, between consent and coercion. We are not encouraged to see the images as examples of rape culture, which is exactly how rape culture gets reinforced (because it gets normalized).

In “Blurred Lines,” Thicke sings, “And that’s why I’m gon’ take a good girl. I know you want it. I know you want it. I know you want it. You’re a good girl. Can’t let it get past me. You’re far from plastic. Talk about getting blasted. I hate these blurred lines.” Anti-rape activists and sexual assault prevention experts would argue that “getting blasted” creates the very blurred lines that frustrate Thicke (Bogle; Kimmel). Legally, one cannot consent to sex if one has been drinking, or “getting blasted” (see Bogle; Buchwald et al.). Not drinking would clarify these blurred lines, but those lyrics might not sell as many records. The public, in other words, might not be convinced by a performance of masculinity where men respect women, seek consent before sexual situations, and refuse sex at all, but especially in situations where consent cannot be offered (when someone is “blasted” or more generally, been drinking).

Throughout the song, and as can be observed in these lyrics, Thicke relies on the false good girl/bad girl dichotomy to pursue his own interests. Ironically, he desires the “good girl” yet wants to “take” her, or have sex with her. This lyric promotes the idea that women should be virginal and virtuous “good girls,” that women are “girls,” and that men who sleep with “good girls” enjoy both social and sexual rewards of such activity. These lyrics reveal the double standard that penalizes women for being sexualized, even if not sexual, while celebrating men’s sexual pursuits and conquests (Bogle; Kimmel).

Thicke casually notes, “Can’t let it get past me.” This lyric draws attention to the male privilege and sense of entitlement that most white men enjoy in this society. To say that he “cannot” let a woman get past him is to insinuate, if not announce, that he feels a sense of entitlement to sex with a woman who he knows wants it. This feeling of ownership is further crystallized in reference to the woman as “it,” a linguistic indication of her objectification. In some instances in the song, the use of “it” veils the suggestive sex he wants, but the “it” that replaces “her” makes the cultural misogyny of this patriarchy transparent and pervasive (or in its pervasion).

The Right to Look?

Timothy Beneke’s (75) discussion of “stolen images,” or “men’s visual experience of women and women’s bodies,” becomes more of a matter of “stolen goods,” when men feel entitled to physically or sexually experience women and women’s bodies. His work is useful here, in helping to frame men’s sense of ownership of women. Beneke (77) explains, “Stealing images and glossing the activity are deeply humiliating and isolating for men...as a chronic, fearful, humiliated stance toward women that often pervades men’s daily social experience of sexual longing.” Beneke posits that men experience sexual looking, or “seeing is touching,” from a position of vulnerability. Women who look attractive or invite (men’s) attention has been viewed by some men as a weapon that weakens men. Because men are not allowed to be men and

remain men, they must then dominate these women, or seek revenge. Thus, Beneke (80) argues, “If a man rapes a sexy woman, he is forcing her to have sexual sensation she doesn’t want. It is just revenge.”

Tricia Rose discusses this problem of the objectification of women’s bodies, and the consequences of that behavior. Rose (172) argues that this objectification facilitates “male domination over women.... Many men are hostile toward women, because the fulfillment of male heterosexual desire is significantly checked by women’s capacity for sexual rejection or manipulation of men.” In talking with men music artists, she learns of the “reckless boundaries” of men’s desires in relation to women’s powerful embodied of to-be-looked-at-ness or desirability. For men, “the greater your desire, the more likely you are to be blinded by it and, consequently, the more vulnerable you will be to female domination” (Rose 172). According to Rose (172), that desire has become increasingly “aggressive, predatory, and consuming.”

When Thicke sings about not letting a woman get past him, he is describing his desire but obscuring or ignoring any desire the woman possesses (or not). This underscores Beneke’s point that “men experience intrusive images and the process of stealing images as both injurious to their self-esteem and sexually frustrating” (Beneke 81). While stealing images is encouraged in our image-based and media-saturated society, stealing sexuality or thieving women’s bodies and sexual agency is equally problematic. According to MacKinnon (50),

With rape, because sexuality defines gender norms, the only difference between assault and what is socially defined as a noninjury is the meaning of the encounter to the woman. Interpreted this way, the legal problem has been to determine whose view of that meaning constitutes what really happened, as if what happened objectively exists to be objectively determined. This task has been assumed to be separable from the gender of the participants and the gendered nature of their exchange,

when the objective norms and the assailant's perspective are identical.

That these activities are encouraged in the lyrical linguistic violence of songs makes them harder to confront, and harder to dismantle. The language of rape culture reflected in Gaye's song is much more subtle, and perhaps questionably rapacious at that. Gaye sings, "All the young ladies are so fine! You're movin' your body easy with no doubts." The lyrics point to the aesthetic appeal of women's bodies and the visual pleasure that men might enjoy by consuming women. As Mulvey describes, women have a "to-be-looked-at" quality that encourages men's stealing glances and stolen images (see also Beneke). Visual pleasure, or scopophilia, facilitates men's objectification of women, and enables their visual, and perhaps sexual, consumption of women as well. Women have learned a to-be-looked-at-ness because of the male gaze (Mulvey).

In following Mulvey, Mirzoeff (164) writes,

In later Freudian analysis, looking has been reconceptualized as the gaze, taking a still more central position in the formation of gender identity. The gaze is not just a look or a glance. It is a means of constituting the identity of the gazer by distinguishing her or him from that which is gazed at. At the same time, the gaze makes us aware that we may be looked at, so that this awareness becomes a part of identity in itself.

Historically, the male gaze reflects a power in looking. However, race and class complicate this gender discourse and the practice of looking for visual pleasure. That is, there are different ways of looking, some of which are considered dangerous and other ostensibly innocuous. White men of means (in terms of social class and status) have been able to embody the male gaze from a powerful position. The position of power deflects or diminishes any suspicions of these ways of looking as "dangerous" ways of looking at women. In contrast, black men have been constructed as dangerous in and of themselves. Their male gaze, by

extension, becomes dangerous as well. Thus, the black male gaze marks a dangerous way of looking (Collins).

Throughout history, the black male gaze has been regarded with fear and considered threatening and menacing. White men with power attempted to regulate and discipline the black male gaze through disciplinary techniques and punishment. By deeming the black male gaze “reckless eyeballing,” white men were able to legally regulate black men and their male gaze. Reckless eyeballing was regarded as a criminal act, punishable by death or painful punishment. Laws attempted to manage and control not simply these “dangerous” ways that black men were perceived to be looking at (white) women, but these “dangerous” black men themselves.

In her work, Deborah McDowell (1997) examines “race and the subject of masculinities,” focusing in part on the gaze. In her essay that appears in the anthology of the same title, McDowell borrows from Mulvey, crediting her for her pioneering work on visual pleasure. McDowell notes Mulvey’s contribution to cultural studies includes giving critics “one of their central axioms: the subject/object dichotomy of seeing/being seen is a gendered accessory to the ideological production of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity.’” (McDowell 365). This masculinity typically gets linked to and expressed by the male viewer, and femininity typically gets linked to the female object of the male gaze.

McDowell pushes the conversation that Mulvey’s work invites into, by asking a set of questions about cultural studies and masculinity. What happens to men’s bodies when they fall under the same male gaze that they are expected to embody and express? What understandings or conclusions do cultural studies scholars want to arrive at, in regards to studying masculinity? Who can study masculinity? In discussing the dynamics of the male gaze, one must also discuss the position of the spectator. How does the researcher get situated in discussion of the gaze and its economy of looking? Does being a brown-skinned biracial researcher produce a reversal of the traditional ways of looking, so as to disrupt or disable the male gaze? Does the feminist researcher studying

the male gaze and the subject/object dichotomy come to look through the eyes of a man, or appropriate the male gaze for investigative purposes? What are the dilemmas inherent in this arrangement, and how does the study of the gaze as a feminist woman researcher trouble the narrative of visual pleasure and the consumption of bodies? Does the research project itself become a sort of gaze directed upon the objects of inquiry, in this case, two men music artists?ⁱ

These questions support the idea of the panoptic reality of our society, and the constant surveillance that everyone endures, irrespective of our subject positions (Foucault 1997). The intensity or persistence of the gaze and modes of surveillance occur specifically in direct relation to subject positions, not despite them. As such, I draw from McDowell's work, to underscore the importance of encourage women's participation in the production of knowledge about masculinities. As she suggests, academics engage in building muscles metaphorically, if not literally, and one way of ensuring that women compete is by allowing us to discuss this important topics alongside men. In some ways, this inclusion also works to complicate, if not queer, masculinity, by recognizing that women scholars have much to say on the "subject of masculinities" (Stecopoulos and Uebel 1997).

This discussion about the male gaze ignores the ways that women might invite the male gaze or not desire it at all. The differential perception of "dangerous" ways of looking also ignores the real and imagined threat of the white male gaze, at the expense of over-focusing or attending to the real and imagined threat of the black male gaze. The power of looking reflects social power, or people's positions within a society. The white male gaze circumvents much of the critique that falls upon the black male gaze because of the collective position of power that white men occupy in this society. As McDowell (365) notes, "The white male never fully relinquishes his hold on spectatorship, nor on its privileges and powers."

Nicholas Mirzoeff echoes this point, in his in-depth examination of the gaze, including the imperial and colonial gaze. In *The Right to Look*,

Mirzoeff (3-4) explores the existent “complex of visibility, or “classifying, separating, and aestheticizing together form.” This visibility relates to planes of power and control. He illustrates the many mechanisms of discipline and punishment (Foucault 1977) exacting through the ways of looking and panoptic technologies.

As Mirzoeff (1) notes,

The right to look is not about seeing. It begins at a person level with the look into someone else’s eyes to express friendship, solidarity, or love. That look must be mutual, each person inventing the other, or it fails. As such, it is unrepresentable. The right to look claims autonomy, not individualism or voyeurism, but the claim to a political subjectivity and collectivity.

The link between the gaze and the control of bodies reflects the dilemma embedded in the lyrics of both Gaye’s and Thicke’s songs. The men, as artists and singers, have the agency to sing about and center their thoughts and ideas, as expressed through song. The women in the lyrics can only be responsive or reactive, not active, objects, not subjects.

Both Gaye and Thicke utilize terms such as “baby” or “girl” in reference to women. While the term is one of endearment, it can also be used as a diminutive. In other words, it can infantilize grown women who are adults. That infantilization denies women their own agency. The infantilization of women further compounds the problem of women lacking control of their lives, as a result of men’s domination. Constructing women as children only works to “legitimate” men’s attempts to control women. This discursive move remains particularly apparent in Thicke’s song.

Not only does Thicke continue to dominate women with discourses that infantilize them through his repetitive use of the term “girl,” but he also objectifies women by strengthening the existing stereotypes of them as animalistic. What adds insult to injury is that he also naturalizes this association: “Okay, now he was close, tried to

domesticate you. But you're an animal, baby, it's in your nature." Feminist scholars have created the naturalization of women as animals, primarily because it appears to encourage similar behavior from men. It accommodates a hostility and violence directed toward women by men who dehumanize others (Collins). It endorses rape culture (Buchwald et al.).

In the video and lyrics for "Blurred Lines," we see women degraded, associated with animals, treated with disdain, disrespected, showing up like accessories, outnumbering the men. Recognizing or falsely constructing a woman as an animal reflects the dehumanization and objectification characteristic of a rape culture. Having sexual agency makes one human (a sexual subject); being denied that sexual agency makes one an object. When Thicke sings, "Just let me liberate you. You don't need no papers. That man is not your maker. And that's why I'm gon' take a good girl. I know you want it." From the vantage point of privilege, Thicke can sing about the impossibility of liberating a woman, rather than fully recognizing that an individual liberates herself, not someone else.

These lyrics link back to my earlier point about women's lack of body autonomy. Following MacKinnon (1989), I argue that these lyrics normalize misogyny, and make space for the degradation, dehumanization or objectification of women. Troublesome is the popularity of this song, given the evidence of the normalization of rape culture and violence against women. Thicke wants to liberate a woman from the threat of another man's threats to domesticate her, yet Thicke neglects to see how his own desire to "liberate" a woman are predicated on the pursuit of that woman (objectification), and the fulfillment of his own sexual pleasures (gratification).

This phallocentric way of being and thinking gets reflected in lyrics where the women all but disappear, a point Susan Bordo (1999) makes in her work, *The Male Body*. Other scholars discuss the power of the phallus and the disappearance of women as symptomatic of global patriarchy (see Kimmel).

Conclusions

In *Misframing Men*, Kimmel suggests that a social shift is taking place, creating the space for new masculinities and more gender equity. He writes (2010:15), "At work and at home, in private and in public, women's increasing equality has been an issue to which men have had to respond." Men's responses, as evidenced by the representations of masculinities depicted in the lyrics of songs, have been problematic at best, and dangerous at worst. While Kimmel (2010:15) suggests that men have responded "somewhere between eager embrace of women's equality and resigned acceptance," others would argue men's response continues to be quite hostile, if subtle.

Mediated masculinities remain hegemonic masculinities. Men continue to construct and invest in masculinities that afford them power, privilege, and control, or the illusion of those things. The dangers to men and women are evident, as the representations reflect a violence that everyone endures. To normalize rape culture through lyrics that glorify non-consensual sex or avoid clarifying "blurred lines" is to confirm that it is still a man's world.

Songs such as "Blurred Lines" and "Got to Give It Up" encourage people to interrogate the dominant representations of and messages about masculinity. Perhaps people will consider why masculinities are enhanced, not jeopardized, by the expression of violence against women, and why music lyrics become a successful tool for the normalization of this violence. Despite the anticipation of new masculinities that move away from hegemonic expressions, we see little evidence to suggest such an expansion of masculinities is emergent or incipient. This leaves room for continued conversations about the construction of masculinities that embrace and celebrate gender equity in this current moment.

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ⁱ As a practice of method, scholars take care to situate themselves in relation to the subjects (or objects) that we study, but seldom do we elaborate upon the possibilities of our participation in knowledge production perpetuating or supporting the very problems we choose to investigate. That is, pushing beyond the questions of how being a biracial feminist and/or a woman shifts the discourse on the study of masculinity, we arrive at a more nettlesome question: how do we reconcile potentially supporting or participating in the problematic practices that constitute the topic of our research? How does one resolve the resulting cognitive dissonance that this participation, as part of the process of investigation, produces?

To address these questions, I entertain and expose them as they emerge in the process of the research study. While I have been trained to acknowledge and consider the implications of my own subject positions, I received less training about how to handle the questions I posed above. In the process of conducting this analysis, these questions surfaced, inviting me to contemplate the ironies of talking about subject/object relations, and simultaneously undoing and redoing them at once. The expense of abandoning this intellectual and analytical endeavor does not seem to outweigh the benefits of using this research project as a vehicle for examining those questions more fully and closely.

The meta-analysis of the gaze proves powerful in its complexity of visibility. That is, I recognize this methodological conundrum as a productive tension in the production of knowledge. In looking at the ways men look at women, in both textual and visual analysis (of lyrics and video imagery), I am able to acknowledge this looking of my own, as well as theirs. I am also able to question who “originates a gaze” and who is objectified by it (McDowell 365). McDowell notes, “there are those who study and those who are the objects of study. Non-white men dominate the latter camp.... [The] concerns with the ‘meaning of blackness for whiteness,’ not the meaning of whiteness for black men, typify this pattern in which black men become mainly the passive, and thus feminized, objects of the white male gaze.” (McDowell 366). Do brown-skinned women researchers appropriate the male gaze as a method of investigation? Are we guilty of replicating the “right to look” in a way that is powerful, objectifying, or both? Is embodying the male gaze as a feminist woman a paradox, or a

powerfully subversion position to be in, because one is arguably not *being* objectified while studying the process of objectification of women, as a woman?

McDowell writes, "This is as good a place as any to confront the vexing and perhaps inevitable question about my role as a black feminist commissioned to write the afterword to a volume of essays, which otherwise absents that point of view." (363). Her observation connects to my own, in its admission of the importance of expanding masculinities studies to include a plethora of voices, even the unlikely, though no less qualified, ones. Doing so extends our collective understanding of how we collectively make sense of our own gender performances, but especially that of others, including media celebrities.

Does Patriarchy Only Oppress Female: The Role of Masculinity and Fatherhood in Our Social Realm

Hediye Özkan
University of Pennsylvania

Abstract:

Many civilizations have patriarchic structures in which males represent the authority figure while females have passive roles both at home and in the society. However, are only females affected negatively in a patriarchic system, or does the dominant system control the roles of males as well? By depicting different male characters, *Babam ve Oğlum (My Father and My Son, 2005)* shows how patriarchy plays a crucial role defining the roles of men and the concept of masculinity in conventional perceptions. *My Father and My Son* portrays how essentially the gender roles are constructed, shifted, and defined according to our social norms. The relationship between the fathers, male characters, and the generations describes the ways in which patriarchy becomes the dominant power dynamic, which has the ultimate control over gender roles. In the film, Hüseyin, as a dominant father figure, symbolizes the patriarchal structure of the whole nation. Hüseyin and the male dominant society function for the same purpose in order to shape, control, mold individuals, and restrict them with prescribed roles, and assumptions. Representing the traditional Turkish family, the director Irmak actually mirrors the society, and illuminates the power relations between males both at home, and in our social realm. As a core structure of a society, the family becomes a model for the social order in which even males are oppressed, and subjected to perform the roles allotted to them. *My Father and My Son* addresses patriarchy through a different angle, and suggests a distinctive perspective to the issues of fatherhood, masculinity, gender roles, and family dynamics in a male-dominant society.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Masculinity, Fatherhood, Babam ve Oğlum

Ataerki Sadece Kadına mı Baskı Yapar: Sosyal Alanda Erkeklik ve Babalığın Rolü

Hediye Özkan

University of Pennsylvania

Özet:

Pek çok medeniyet, erkeğin otorite figürü olduğu, kadının ise hem evde, hem de toplumda pasif roller aldığı ataerki yapıları sahip olagelmıştır. Ataerki sistemden olumsuz anlamda etkilenenler yalnızca kadınlar mıdır, yoksa erkeklerin rolleri de kontrol altında mıdır? *Babam ve Oğlum* filmi (2005), farklı erkek karakterlerin tasviri üzerinden, ataerkinin, alışlagelmiş algıda erkeklerin rollerini ve erkeklik kavramını nasıl şekillendirdiğini göstermektedir. Babam ve Oğlum, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin nasıl inşa edildiğinin, nasıl yön değiştirdiğinin, ve sosyal normlara uygun olarak nasıl tanımlandığının resmini çizmektedir. Filmdeki erkek karakterler, babalar ve kuşaklar arasındaki ilişki, ataerkinin toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri üzerinde kontrol sağlayan temel güç dinamiği olarak işlev görme yollarını ortaya koyar. Filmde baskın baba figürünü temsil eden Hüseyin, tüm ulusun ataerki yapısını sembolize etmektedir. Hüseyin'in amacı, erkek egemen toplumun amacıyla ortaktır: Bireyleri önceden belirlenmiş rol ve varsayımlar doğrultusunda şekillendirmek, kontrol etmek. Yönetmen Çağan Irmak, geleneksel Türk ailesini tasvir ederken, erkek ve kadın arasında evde ve sosyal alanda hüküm süren güç ilişkilerine ışık tutmaktadır. Toplumun çekirdeğinde yer alan kurum olarak aile, erkeklerin de baskı altında olduğu ve paylarına düşen rolü icra etmek zorunda bırakıldıkları sosyal düzenin modeli olmaktadır. Babam ve Oğlum, ataerkiyi farklı bir açıdan ele alarak, erkek egemen toplumda babalık, erkeklik, toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri ve aile içi dinamikler üzerine kendine özgü bir bakış açısı ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ataerki, Erkeklik, Babalık, Babam ve Oğlum

Babam ve Oğlum (*My Father and My Son*, 2005) reflects a crucial era including the 12 September military coup in 1980, which affected many people and their lives as an “outsider force that disrupt[ed] the internal harmony of home” in Turkey (Suner 29). Çağan Irmak portrays social conditions of the 1980s by embedding history into a highly dramatic family story, which arouses sympathy and causes tears. In one of his interviews Irmak says, “in Turkey, everybody was influenced by the military intervention in some way”. It intervened in social and cultural life, used imprisonment, restrictions, torture, and the death penalty as main tools to spread fear, depoliticize, and silence the society (Tekin 4).

In spite of the restrictions, censorship and ongoing suppression in the following years of the military intervention, the aftermath of the coup and its impact on socio-cultural life was projected through cinema. In many 12 September films, fear and suppression is in the center of the narratives surrounded with the problems, conflicts, and melancholy of individuals. Lives turned upside down by the 12 September military coup, sorrow, and trauma aftermath are analyzed to portray and criticize the chaotic system. Silence and trauma are voiced by the directors of 12 September films and projected through different perspectives. The common theme focuses on a revolutionist character released after many years of imprisonment, coming back home and the dramatic changes the society went through due to the impact of the coup. Confronting the new society, his old friends, and family, the male character reflects the transformation, alienation, and conflict amongst broader social change. However, directors who implicitly criticize the negative impact of military intervention on politics and social life in 1980s replace with those who easily address the military regime, generals, accurate victims and stories in 2000s. Besides, the narrative is woven with nostalgia, humor, and tragicomic elements in *Beynelminel* (2006), *Babam ve Oğlum* (2005) and *Vizontele Tuuba* (2004) produced in 2000s, while drama and tragedy was popular in films released between 1980s and 1990s.

Cinema is considered a significant tool reconstructing the past and transmitting the memories from one generation to another. It structures

the history through a reflective and interpretative way of communication. Reflecting the social and political unrest through private lives, *My Father and My Son* tells us our stories, “by overcoming the forms of the outer world, namely space, time, and causality and by adjusting the events to the forms of the inner world, namely attention memory imagination and emotion” (Singh 51). Past and present, memory and imagination, private and public significantly intertwined so that characters’ travels to their past, in other words, to their selves reveal their desires, mistakes, regrets and give them a second chance to fix injured feelings and damaged relations.

My Father and Son tells the story of Sadık, a revolution supporter, leaves his parents, becomes a journalist as opposed to his father’s wish and settles in İstanbul with his wife. However, Sadık loses his wife and learns that he is going to die soon. He comes back to his village in order to find a shelter for his son Deniz and the film began to be intriguing after their arrival. Although *My Father and Son* revolves around the memories of individuals, both “personal and collective remembering” play an important role in the films which have themes about the coup of 12 September (Tekin 5). As Suner states, such stories also “enable the audience to revisit their own past and consider new ways of representing their cultural identity” (40). *My Father and My Son* creates empathy, identification and triggers the process of remembrance of the audience within the idea of nostalgia. It not only “contributes to the dialectic process of the history” but also provides a space to re-think the past within a broad perspective (Tekin 5). The film reflects the oppression that caused traumas in individuals’ lives and played a significant role in which those individuals confront their pasts and issues that remain unsolved.

Irmak uses melodramatic elements such as “the interrelated family of the characters and repressive small town,” which essentially “lead the audience focus on the tragic stories rather than the reason of the tragic events” (Wambach 114). According to Kolker, “melodrama sutures the viewer into its fabric and makes the viewer’s emotional response part of that fabric’s pattern” (237). *My Father and My Son* hooks and does not

release us through the film. It blends our emotions with the characters' and makes us a part of the story. Irmak combines melodramatic elements with the themes of family relations, self-discovery, patriarchy, masculinity, social pressure, trauma, and its effects on individuals (Wambach 98). By doing so, he shows how political and public issues affect individuals through the domestic sphere where men and masculinity are portrayed according to conventional perceptions. I will examine how patriarchy affects not only women but men as well in our social realm and focus on the reciprocal relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor in terms of gender roles. I want to show how masculinity and fatherhood are represented in patriarchy and function as a significant determinant in social relations.

Identity Formation

Turkish society is considered "highly patriarchal with clear-cut gender role differences" (Uğurlu 649). The institutions such as family structure and marriages are under the control of patriarchy. The father is considered the dominant sex, "the ruler of the family and is regarded as the formal authority to whom the wife and the children must ultimately respond" (Uğurlu 649). The father is the decision-making mechanism and head of the family who is responsible for making basic income. According to traditional values, the father or the oldest male figure—grandfather in extensive families, is the authority who demands respect and obedience. The roles are clear-cut so that the father is the protector, provider, and representative of the family while the mother has to take care of the children, their upbringing, and domestic duties. In recent decades, although women have participated in the job market in considerable numbers, their responsibilities at home do not decrease. However, the expected roles for both males and females in the family are gradually changing in recent years because of urbanization, educational, economic, and social opportunities.

In *My father and My Son*, a traditional Turkish family and the relationships between its members are represented in a striking way. Sadık, the main character of the film, resists his dominant father Hüseyin's plans for him and challenges his prescribed role which is to show complete obedience towards his elders especially his father. Sadık not only repels his dominant father's ideas but also the culturally accepted assumptions and the undemocratic system processing under a military coup that takes away people's freedom of speech and imprisons them into silence. When the military intervention "shatters the protective shell of small town life," Sadık protests the social order, raises his voice against the outsider force as an earnest journalist, and struggles with his father's supremacy as a rebellious son (Suner 33). It is hard to define which identity Sadık has when he argues with his father. Does Sadık leave his journalist identity and be the youngest son of Hüseyin or does he still have those so-called anarchist ideas and bring them back to the house? On the surface, it seems that the fights between son and father can be considered ordinary or common; however, it is more than a father-son conflict that gains a deeper meaning when it becomes a battle of ideologies.

Sadık's journey to his father's farm in a town in the Aegean coast begins right after he learns his serious illness whose symptoms show that he is going to die soon. With a desire of finding a safe and permanent place for his son, Deniz, Sadık decides to come back to the house in which he spent his childhood and which he hopes will be a warm place and protection for Deniz. Deniz lost his mother while she was giving birth to him at the coup night. We see Sadık's pregnant wife opening the door at the beginning of the movie and questioning her husband in a nervous mood because of his being late and drunk. She shows her anxiety about the tense condition of the country and warns Sadık about being more careful since they will have a baby very soon. Sadık defends himself by saying that he is upset because his article was not published due to the new editor who is scared of someone or something. Sadık touches his wife's stomach and calls the baby "breast" which has both positive and negative connotation in Turkish culture and is mostly associated with masculinity. He implies that the baby could be energetic and naughty

which are considered as common and obvious characteristics of a boy. Sadık's wife's reaction "what if it is a she?" verifies that he is expecting a boy instead of a girl and supports the idea of the secondary status of female in male's world.

This scene shows the ongoing discussion about the issue of gender construction and the prescribed roles allotted to the sexes by our surroundings and the social forces. Sadık starts to define his baby's behaviors by attributing to it certain roles although it is still in its mother's womb. His wording about the baby reveals his unconscious desire for a boy who will bring him honor since boys are considered superior to girls in paternalistic cultures in which lineage is traced through the father. The idea of being the father of a boy will bring him prestige among his friends and strengthen his masculinity, which parallels with the concept of power over femininity. Ironically, Sadık has to practice the role of both motherhood and fatherhood after he lost his wife at a park while giving birth. His wife has labor pain in the middle of the night; however, the military takes control and bans anyone from being outside. So Sadık and his wife cannot understand why there are no people on the streets to take them to the hospital. Their despair becomes more touching when it unites with their screams for help and with the music, which triggers sympathy. In the next shot, we see Sadık's exhausted face in blood, holding the baby covered with his shirt and his dead wife's bloody body in a blurred image. Then a soldier comes, asks if it is an accident, and says that he will call the ambulance. Sadık says, "My wife is dead. The baby was born and she lost too much blood" with dull eyes and a senseless expression, then asks where everybody is. When the soldier says, "There has been a military coup," the melting music starts and the camera first zooms into Sadık's face, then the moving eyes of the baby who has been separated from his mother by 12 September which means a sad and an orphan start for Deniz (Başcı 167). The role of the military invention on the communication between the generations is clear in this scene. It scatters the family, cuts the link between the son and the mother with death, and causes social alienation. Irmak suggests that the military coup separated children from

their parents and the nation from its past by not keeping its promises such as peace, social welfare and development.

The movie continues with a couple shots of Sadık's torture scenes in a prison, his trial in a court, and the maid who takes care for Deniz when his father is in prison. It is ambiguous what Sadık's crime is and what he is accused of. However, under a military regime and an undemocratic political milieu, individuals do not have right to question the justice. The scene in which Sadık comes home and hugs his two year old son tells us that he spent two years in the prison and implies his deadly illness is due to those tortures. Sadık's illness gives his life another direction, which brings him to his father's house where he left years ago. Contrary to his Father's wishes, Sadık studied journalism instead of agriculture, stayed in Istanbul instead of coming back to the town, and married Aysun, instead of Birgül from the same town. Sadık's decisions show his independent character, and rebellious soul which does not want to accept another sovereignty in his territory. However, both his father and the undemocratic system try to pull Sadık into their own regions where there is no free will but limited choices and prescribed roles. In this respect, Hüseyin and the military government function as a mutual mechanism to control individuals, leading them in the direction of its ideals and desires. Both father and government take the individual's freedom and prevent them from seeking their own rights.

Sadık is one of those rebellious individuals who goes for his own goals and achieves them by ignoring the barriers in his way. In one flashback, while Sadık's mother Nuran is shouting at him not to leave the house, Hüseyin tells Nuran that neither of them can come back to the house if she goes with Sadık. Young Sadık does not say anything or look back but just walks away with his backpack. His silence in this scene is a defeat against Hüseyin's threat. However, it is actually a victory for him. Sadık shows his courage by leaving a place and people that limit his freedom. His walking away without looking back shows his ambition and indicates that he does not care for his past but future and own plans. This is Sadık's first journey in order to pursue self-fulfillment and the desire of

defining who he is without his landowner father's power over him. He believes that he cannot express himself thoroughly and be the person he wants under his father's shadow, which encloses each of the family members.

Fatherhood

The conflict between the father and the son appears essentially as a contradiction between two men whose expectations do not match with their perceptions of masculinity. Hüseyin is a stereotype and a traditional Turkish father figure who wants to control everything and everybody around him. His understanding of fatherhood, normative practices, and assumption about his masculine role in the family are learned through culture. Hüseyin constructs his role according to the norms and values of the social realm. He can never leave his landowner self and be a father for his sons or a husband for his wife. Drawing borders for everyone and ordering the people around him makes Hüseyin satisfied about his status and keeps his reputation alive. He acts like a landowner at home, expects absolute respect from family members, and practices his landowner identity in his social relations. Hüseyin's obstinacy is one of the reasons why he does not talk to Sadık for years and why he does not welcome Sadık and Deniz when they first meet. His prestige among the other family members is threatened, his steady status in the town is shaken, and his authority is diminished by Sadık. Now, Sadık becomes a rival and a threat for Hüseyin rather than a son.

Another father-son relationship represented in the film is between Sadık and Deniz. Sadık represents an unselfish, patient, keen father figure. There is an intimate relationship and strong communication between the two. Sadık is Deniz's only friend and his hero who protects him all the time. Deniz's inner world is projected by the stories he tells. Deniz reads comic books that inspire him to create his own world in which he tells stories as a narrator. The narrative becomes complicated and multilayered by Deniz's dreams and stories since they are stories

within a story. He filters those fictional events and superheroes in the books through his imagination and adopts them to the accurate events and people. By doing so, he becomes mature and forms his own memories. The structure of the narrative is enhanced by Deniz's imagination and the books which make the movie intertextual.

In one of the scenes, when he first enters his grandfather's house and sees the wooden door of their room, Deniz's voice is heard telling a story about little Deniz and his father who have to pass through the door cursed by a witch and the forest full of monsters. After the camera zooms into the wooden door from Deniz's point of view, the next shot starts with a dark forest scene in which Deniz and Sadık are walking by the monsters. When the bat-like monsters block their road, Sadık scares them with his sword so they can continue walking. Until they pass the door, his father becomes a brave hero who saves him from being kidnapped and thrown into the well by the monsters. Deniz continues his story, telling that Deniz is not scared because his brave father is with him. The forest scene ends in the next shot when we see the inside of the bedroom and they open the door and come in with their luggage.

The dark forest scene takes us to a child's imagination and shows us how he interprets the real life events and how they take different shapes and meanings for him. The tense environment also affects him as much as it does the adults. Although he is too young to understand properly, what happens around him and cannot express himself, his stress, concerns, and fears are conveyed through the stories he tells. It is clear that there is always a fear about being away from his father, which is one of the main themes of his stories communicating with us on behalf of Deniz. Those comic books not only become a bridge between the audience and Deniz but also between the grandson Deniz and the grandfather Hüseyin. They turn into a good reason to develop a close relationship with Deniz and his grandfather. After learning Deniz's interest into comic books, Hüseyin goes to town to buy some and give them as a present. Thus, the comic books function as a communication tool not only connects the character and the audiences but the generations as well. On one hand, they make the

structure complex and multilayered by forming a story within the story of the film; on the other, they clarify the narrative by reflecting the inner thoughts and feelings of the youngest male character, Deniz.

Prescribed Roles through Naming

The climax of the film starts with an argument between Sadık and Hüseyin in the middle of a night. Sadık tells Hüseyin that they need to talk and the discussion will not be about asking for forgiveness. The argument starts with Sadık's question about why his father chose to give the names Sadık and Salim to him and his brother. The meanings of the names are ironic since Sadık means loyal and Salim means quiet and healthy. Sadık actually implies how Hüseyin is obsessed about controlling everything even from the beginning of their life. Hüseyin wanted them to be obedient and devoted to their family and values. These names were a reflection of Hüseyin's subconscious desire about his sons' lives.

The discussion about names reveals Hüseyin's secret intention that the audiences do not realize and lead them to question his autonomy. On the other hand, as an ideological tool, Deniz reveals the director's intention, and Sadık's subconscious. He criticizes his father for being obsessed about controlling their lives from the beginning but we witness that Sadık does the same thing for Deniz. Deniz was the name of a famous Marxist-Leninist revolutionary and political activist who was executed after another military coup in 1972. Sadık wants to reflect his leftist political view through Deniz and chooses an identity for his son. Sadık appears to be as an unselfish, indulgent, socialist father figure. However, he infuses his ideology and control Deniz, who has to carry the burden of his father's political view throughout his life. What if Deniz became an ardent supporter of the right-wing party, would Sadık still be a gentle and insightful father or act like Hüseyin who is a control freak? We do not know the answer; however, we cannot ignore the fact that Sadık chooses this name on purpose in order to emphasize his strong political view.

The shifting relationships and roles between the generations and the sons demonstrate that the roles are socially constructed and historically contingent. Sadık sometimes performs the roles that he criticizes and cannot separate from that part of the society as an individual. The former generation—Hüseyin wants to impose his ideology and ideas to Sadık who is the next generation. This cycle continues between Sadık and Deniz. The power dynamics between the characters are structured and reconstructed through the impact of military intervention and values intermingled with social norms, specific set of rules, cultural conditions. In spite of his fathers' oppression, Sadık has to trust Hüseyin and let Deniz live with them. Although Hüseyin's house is associated with suppression and family members have limited freewill, Sadık demands a place for Deniz saying, "Give him a room, dad. Let him have a home, but he could leave time to time." Sadık is in a desperate situation, has nowhere to go and no one to trust. His wife died, his revolutionary friends came over and became the spokesman of the government. On the other hand, Sadık's words demonstrate his longing for home, contradicted feelings about belonging, unconscious reliance to the security and warmth of the family. To Sadık, Deniz needs support and no one can compensate his absence except Hüseyin's house. This belief comes from Sadık's cultural values acquired unconsciously. 'Grandparents' household' is coded with a positive connotation which gathers everyone, be a shelter and is the reason why Sadık takes Deniz there.

My Father and Son provides a surface account of 12 September through a domestic sphere. It essentially projects the breaking family links because of the military intervention into private lives as well as public. The contradiction and power structures between males and the tension between the generations are analyzed in a rural setting within the perspective of past, present and future. The film questions gender roles subjected to change and based on myriad social factors in the perpetuated patriarchal relations and male privileges. Among these factors, society, parents, and peers play a significant role over individuals and their identity formation. In this respect, individuals always feel the pressure of their environment such as patriarchal masculinity, social relations, and

political unrest as a determiner of their identities and actions. Not only women but men are also subjected to the influence of patriarchal masculinity perpetuating the idea that men have the right to dominate, control and lead women, children and other men. *My Father and My Son* suggests, although people challenge the accepted assumptions in a patriarchal socio-political system, and “break culture’s rules,” they “have to pay” (Kolker 240). It can be said that Sadık pays the price heavily by suffering in between. On the other hand, he would have never known the consequences, if he did not leave. *My Father and My Son* confronts us with the possibility of what would happen if we followed a different way than the way of culture and the patriarchy want us to do. The possibilities vary according to various power relations and depend on different circumstances, surroundings, and cultures.

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“Towards an Interrogation of Masculinity’s Commodification: Deleuze’s Control Society & The Big Lebowski”

Terrance H. McDonald
Brock University

Abstract:

In the Coen brothers’ *The Big Lebowski*, the character of the Dude appears to offer a radical identity that opposes consumerism, but, by examining the film with Deleuze’s theoretical concept of the control society, it is clear that the Dude and other masculine characters are trapped in closed loops of consumption. Examining the commodification of gender, this paper seeks to open up the potentialities of creative and revolutionary subjectivities beyond the confines of late capitalism. Recognizing that such potentialities are routinely sealed off in the interests of capital, it becomes necessary to reflect on the mechanisms that capture and enclose modes of resistance. Therefore, instead of employing economic models and language that frame cultural capital, this analysis embraces culture as creative force.

Key words: Masculinities, gender commodification, Deleuze studies, control society, *The Big Lebowski*

Erkekliğin Metalaştırılmasını Sorgulamaya Doğru: Deleuze'ün Kontrol Toplumu ve 'The Big Lebowski'

Terrance H. McDonald
Brock University

Özet:

Coen Kardeşler'in The Big Lebowski adlı filminde, 'Dude' karakteri, tüketimciliğe karşı koyan radikal bir kimlik ortaya koyar gibi görünür. Oysa ki filmi, Deleuze'ün 'kontrol toplumu' kavramı çerçevesinden incelediğimizde, Dude'un ve filmdeki diğer eril karakterlerin kapalı tüketim döngülerinin tuzağına kapılmış oldukları açıktır. Bu makale, toplumsal cinsiyetin metalaştırılmasını inceleyerek, geç kapitalizmin sınırlarının ötesindeki yaratıcı ve devrimci öznellik olanaklarını tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu olanakların, rutin bir biçimde sermayenin çıkarları içinde mühürlü kaldıkları kabul edildiğinde, direnmenin çeşitli biçimlerini el geçirip kuşatan mekanizmalar üzerine düşünmek elzem hale gelir. Bu nedenle, burada sunulan analiz, kültürel sermayeyi çerçeveleyen ekonomik modelleri ve dili işe koşmak yerine, kültürü yaratıcı bir güç olarak ele almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erkeklik, toplumsal cinsiyetin metalaşması, Deleuze çalışmaları, kontrol toplumu, The Big Lebowski

This paper examines the commodification of gender, specifically masculinity, in *The Big Lebowski* (Coen and Coen 1998)¹ through Deleuze's concept of the control society. Such an analysis aims to open up the creative potential of culture that is restricted and contained by consumption practices that continuously defer and deny the embodiment of transcendent ideals of gender. These transcendent ideals of gender are formed by a series of representations, such as the hard bodies of the Reagan era (Jeffords 1994), and upheld as the quintessence to aspire towards for a particular group of gendered consumers. Mediated by our visually saturated culture, transcendent ideals of masculinity and femininity are associated with goods and services that individuals consume within ritualistic patterns in attempts to embody their quintessence of a gendered body. Although subjectivities in *The Big Lebowski* (1998) appear to be modes of resistance to the commodification of gender, I will argue that any resistance is re-inscribed into consumption practices that suppress the capacity to challenge dominant ideologies and other power structures. What is at stake in such an analysis is the possibility of masculinities, and moreover creative and revolutionary subjectivities, outside of closed loops of consumption that are structured by mechanisms of capitalism. Therefore, as a move towards embracing the potentialities of culture as creative force, we need to further interrogate the ways that capitalism limits and, in turn, feeds off of our imaginative acts of expression.

The Commodification of Masculinity

First, what is commodification of masculinity? As John Beynon defines it, the commodification of masculinity is "the commercial devices whereby masculinity, in all its varieties, is packaged and promoted in advertising, fashion and the media" (159). Initially, commercial masculinity is discussed through the emergence of the "New Man" and the rise in marketing of products to men in the 1980s (Nixon 1996, Edwards 1997, & Benwell 2003), which causes masculinities to be increasingly defined by the purchasing of goods and services. Thus, I

define the commodification of masculinity as the visual idealization of masculinities that create transcendent ideals of gender, or mediated masculinities.² In an attempt to embody these mediated masculinities, individuals continuously purchase products and services associated with these ideals. As Helene Shugart argues, “the pervasiveness and even entrenchment of commercial masculinity in contemporary popular culture are undeniable” (282). It is the undeniable pervasiveness of masculinity as represented by commodities that mark an important phenomenon to interrogate because of its association with capitalism and its implications for culture as modes of resistance.

Shugart, in “Managing Masculinities: The Metrosexual Moment”, outlines how the commodification of masculinity initially poses a threat to conventional, normative masculinity and, then, she goes on to argue that metrosexuality functions as an important rhetorical device that negotiates and manages this tension between commercial and normative masculinity. I want to call attention to the ways that such a negotiation adjusts masculinity within the coordinates of commodification, which reframes masculinity through consumption practices as opposed to designating commercial masculinity as a challenge of conventional, normative masculinity (Shugart 295-297). This negotiation has crucial repercussions for the formation of creative and revolutionary subjectivities because such potentialities are doubly enclosed within gender as well as commodification. While critical examinations of gender are ongoing within gender studies discourses³, the relationship of gender and commodification remains largely unexamined.

If, as Braidotti argues, “gender is just a historically contingent mechanism of capture of the multiple potentialities of the body, including generative or reproductive capacities” (98), then, what implications arise for already limited potentialities when further restricted by commodification? In my view, this double capture further limits the body by framing its potentialities within consumption practices. Therefore, gender studies should approach the openness of individualist expression within the coordinates of global capitalism with

caution as the endless availability of identities are themselves restricted by closed loops of consumption. As Braidotti argues,

advanced capitalism is a spinning machine that actively produces differences for the sake of commodification. It is a multiplier of deterritorialized differences, which are packaged and marketed under the labels of 'new, dynamic and negotiable identities' and an endless choice of consumer goods. This logic triggers a proliferation of vampiric consumption of quantitative options (58).

The production of differences appears to open up possibilities for celebration because we now have the ability to be who we want to be, but these new, dynamic, and negotiable identities are means for consumption as opposed to ends in and of themselves. In a society saturated by market logic, our freedom is no longer a choice and, instead, as Shaviro states, "[t]he objective function of the market is that it 'forces us to be free'" (80). Creative and revolutionary subjectivities are stripped of radical potentialities and framed within closed loops of consumption that deliver a ceaseless stream of goods and services that structure these commodified identities. Such a limitation has effects all gendered bodies in our current historical location, but, in this paper, I will focus primarily on the ways in which masculinity is commodified as a way of beginning an interrogation of the implications and consequences.

How can creative and revolutionary subjectivities escape the double capture of gender and commodification? Reeser appears to ask the right questions to begin such a project: "How could masculinity be considered not in reaction to stasis, but as pure becoming? How could masculinity look forward to change and new forms instead of backward to previously articulated definitions created by me and my cultural context?" (46-47). In *Masculinities in Theory*, Reeser goes on to argue that "by employing a framework influenced by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, masculinity would be defined as a series of possibilities, a series of constant becomings" (47). However, Reeser wants to reterritorialize these potentialities in relation to subjectivities

that he simplifies as “an endless series of different masculinities that never recur” (47), which he frames as “a possible springboard for pleasure in change” (47). While Reeser is posing the questions that open up capacities to collapse the capture of creative and revolutionary subjectivities, his focus remains within the pleasure of consumerism (Casarino 201). Viagra is given as a representative of this new possibility because of its ability to make the non-erect into a once-again-erect (47), but Reeser’s generation of an identity through the consumption of a drug specifically packaged and marketed as a means to access new, dynamic, and negotiable identities fails to escape the coordinates of the spinning machine of capitalism.

Furthermore, a framework influenced by Deleuze and Guattari should not seek the pleasure of consumerism; rather, it should seek “to untie the pseudobond between desire and pleasure as an extrinsic measure” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 171, ATP hereafter). As Deleuze and Guattari state in ATP, “pleasure is in no way something that can be attained only by a detour through suffering; it is something that must be delayed as long as possible because it interrupts the continuous process of positive desire” (171-172). Perhaps Reeser’s discussion is victim to its attempt to oversimplify philosophies of immanence, but, nonetheless, masculinities can never escape into a series of constant becomings if masculinities are something that is to be defined or if these masculinities occur in relation to consumerism. Moreover, masculinity will always exist as the molar line par excellence (ATP 320) and if we want to embrace the creative and revolutionary potentialities of subjectivities then it becomes necessary to disengage these potentialities from the confines of gender and commodification. This disengagement will involve a break from the capture of commodification, but it is to be followed by another break from the restriction of gender so that the mechanisms that formulate identities based on the binary of masculinity/femininity are collapsed.

So, how do we initially break from the closed loops of consumption that are sustained by the commodification masculinity? First, a distinction becomes necessary between pleasure and the

pleasure of consumerism. In the pleasure of consumerism the subject “is caught in a circulation and is forever leaping from commodity to commodity in search of that final commodity which will surely grant the ultimate pleasure” (Casarino 199). Within closed loops of consumption, masculine consumers leap from commodity to commodity, always already searching for that next product or service that will allow them to embody the mediated masculinity that is idealized. I will not critique pleasure as such because pleasure as such “is the fold of desire: it is the immanent point of tangency between our bodies and the force of desire” (Casarino 202). Therefore, instead of seeking what new pleasures may be possible by consuming Viagra, this thinking aims to demonstrate that our pleasures exist in any and every moment in which we embrace the event we find ourselves within as opposed to the next instant of pleasure to come, or the instant that will grant the ultimate pleasure. While closed loops of consumption promise the commodity that will ultimately allow the embodiment of transcendent ideals, this commodity is always already the next commodity to be consumed. Instead, by recognizing the denial and deferral of pleasure in the commodification of masculinity, it becomes apparent that products and service do not construct masculinities; rather, masculinities are always what they are in a moment.

On the one hand, we can pursue the pleasure of consumerism and use a product like Viagra that offers a productive reterritorialization, which continues to seek a pleasure that is always deferred and denied in the instant of the next pleasure to come. On the other hand, we can embrace a deterritorialization of masculinities, which I propose is possible through the recognition that masculinities are merely codes and are no different than the codes of femininities or animalities or technologies. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, “it is as though human alienation through surplus labor were replaced by a generalized ‘machinic enslavement,’ such that one may furnish surplus-value without doing any work (children, the retired, the unemployed, television viewers, etc.)” (ATP 542-543). If we seek to be defined, if we seek commodified identities, then we will no doubt be sold them and given

the bits of deferred pleasure that come along with a Viagra prescription or a weekend spent golfing. Selling is not done all at once and, more often than not, we are not even aware we are buying in. But, even those on the outskirts are slaves to commodification – think of the hippest of countercultures and the regulation of appearance and activities they constantly undergo. If masculinities are to escape definition and enter into a series of constant becomings that realizes creative and revolutionary subjectivities, then we must go beyond Reeser's goal that is "to focus on what [masculinity] can and does become and how it continues to become something new" (47). Masculinities are already all they can ever become. Masculinity can only become if we define it. When we collect the codes that suit our ideal of who we are and structure them and submit to stratification, then we remain committed to the pleasure of consumerism that flashes briefly in the instant of the next commodity as we maintain the masculinity we have constructed. Even when we add new, dynamic, and negotiable identities and assume we have somehow ceased to represent a hegemonic ideal, the potentialities of our bodies remain doubly captured by gender and commodification. So, how can we escape to spaces outside of this capture? One important move in launching such an escape is to examine the coordinates of the society that controls us.

Deleuze's Control Society and *The Big Lebowski* (1998)

In my view, it is necessary to take into account the parameters of Deleuze's control society if what is at stake is the possibility of masculinities, and moreover creative and revolutionary subjectivities, outside of closed loops of consumption that are structured by mechanisms of capitalism. In a late essay, "Postscript on Control Societies", Deleuze outlines how we have shifted from disciplinary to control societies. This shift creates a society where, as Skott-Myhre states, "no one's social position is secure and no one knows for sure who they are or how to achieve success within the realm of shifting social expectation" (45-46). A lack of security and certainty is produced

because “[t]he categories of development, such as age, rites of passage, maturity and the entry and exit points into adolescence, middle age and old age become indeterminate” (46). With specific reference to the commodification of masculinity, Deleuze’s concept of the control society allows us to understand how masculinity is continually denied and deferred through the consumption of products and services associated with ideals of masculinity. This uncertainty is evident in the anxieties of the other Jeffrey Lebowski in *The Big Lebowski* (1998). He laments, “Funny – I can look back on a life of achievement, on challenges met, competitors bested, obstacles overcome. I’ve accomplished more than most men, and without the use of my legs. What? What makes a man, Mr. Lebowski?” (*The Big Lebowski*). The indeterminate characteristics of the categories of development that define masculinity and manhood are clear in the other Jeffrey Lebowski’s inability to determine if he has been made a man. He references a life of achievement that should secure, in his view, a position within society: a man, a successful man. However, the other Jeffrey Lebowski remains unclear as to how to achieve success and how to make oneself a man. This scene continues with a relational quality that, for the other Jeffrey Lebowski, used to determine masculinity and make someone a man. He asks the Dude: “Is it being prepared to do the right thing? Whatever the cost? Isn’t that that makes a man?” (*The Big Lebowski*). What the other Jeffrey Lebowski’s uncertainty represents is the erosion of clear categories of development for masculinity and making men, which is a characteristic of Deleuze’s control society.

Without the ability to determine clear categories of development, in a control society the commodification of masculinity captures the potentialities of bodies within closed loops of consumption. It is in a control society, within closed loops of consumption, that “advertising and marketing produce subjectivities that define themselves by what they consume more than what they produce” (Holland 71). Therefore, the result is that a man is never made. The uncertainty expressed by the other Jeffrey Lebowski is characteristic of masculine subjectivities that are never able to completely embody transcendent ideals of gender,

which are continuously deferred and denied, and, as a result, these subjectivities are endlessly redefined through consumption. Thus, on the one hand, we have the other Jeffrey Lebowski's 'trophy wife' Bunny, the wall of awards and achievements purchased through philanthropy, and the mirrored cover of time magazine which epitomizes the inability to hold and maintain the stable identity Lebowski seeks – an idealized version of masculinity associated with successful capitalists and philanthropists. On the other hand, we have the Dude who is unimpressed by the other Lebowski's lifestyle, but, nonetheless, the Dude defines himself equally through what he consumes – bowling and White Russians – as opposed to what he produces.

So, on one level, the Dude's refusal to concern himself with employment and production appear to be a challenge to normative masculinity as the other Jeffrey Lebowski refers to him as a 'bum', but it is apparent within the parameters of a control society that such a challenge does not constitute a creative or revolutionary subjectivity. Despite the logic in Kazecki's argument that "[b]eing a bowler does not require the characteristics needed from a man in the production-orientated modern capitalist society" (156), recognizing the ongoing shift from a disciplinary society to a control society strips the Dude's subjectivity of any radical defiance. Unlike the Cynthia's dog that Walter brings bowling, the Dude is continuously buying beer, bowling shoes, White Russians, marijuana, burgers, and what have you. He may not define himself by a business legacy or philanthropy, but the Dude is captured by a closed loop of consumption suited to his 'new, dynamic, and negotiable' lifestyle. Therefore, Martin-Jones' claim that "[t]he Dude does not adhere to the throwaway ethos of consumerism, as we see in his treatment, or rather in the film's treatment, of his car" (145) is simply not valid when considering the parameters of a control society. Sure, the Dude is not regularly buying a new car, but he is continuously purchasing a set of goods and services that characterize his subjectivity: mainly White Russian ingredients and bowling. Reading the Dude's subjectivity as a rejection of consumerism and as a mode of resistance, like Kazecki's and Martin-Jones' readings, fails to recognize the

consumption practices that structure the Dude's subjectivity.⁴ Therefore, such readings support the need for the further examination and interrogation of the economization of everything because it is apparent that sites of resistance are no longer easily carved outside the modes of production or social institutions. Through the recognition of the economization of everything, examining our current historical location exposes the fact, "that we will increasingly lack a space for creative 'resistance'" (Marks 54). Refusing to buy a car is simply a consumer choice as opposed to a mode of resistance because an endless selection of other consumer choices is available to capture the radical potential of any refusal. Even refusing to work is simply choosing to defer an investment of your human capital in the marketplace (Shaviro 78). When everything is commodified, refusing as a mode of resistance becomes increasingly impossible.

The Dude's lack of employment seems to be an enigma in the film. As Wall points out, "one of the mysteries the film leaves us with is precisely what he does to support his bowling and White Russian habits" (122). It is significant that Wall recognizes these pursuits as habits because it reframes the apparent site of resistance, that some believe the Dude occupies, within the coordinates of consumption. Not simply consumption out of necessity, rather, habit that suggests a dependency and ritualistic repeating. Thus, by recognizing the ongoing shift from disciplinary society to control society that is occurring in the historical location of the film – set in the early 1990s when Deleuze is also writing "Postscript on Control Societies" – it is apparent that the revolutionary subjectivities of the disciplinary society are re-inscribed into the developing neoliberal framework. Therefore, the other Jeffrey Lebowski's statement rings ever more true: "Your revolution is over, Mr. Lebowski. Condolences. The bums lost. My advice is to do what your parents did; get a job, sir" (The Big Lebowski). Although, it is evident that the other Jeffrey Lebowski's insistence on employment is unable to provide the stability he assigns to it – recall his lamentation discussed previously – the 'bums' do seem to have lost and what they have lost is the radical potentialities of refusing. Refusing to purchase, to work, and

to participate is increasing sealed off and the modes of resistance once aligned with such creative and revolutionary subjectivities are diluted in White Russians, marijuana, and bowling.

The Dude is far from the only radical 'bum' that no longer exerts revolutionary potentialities. Walter and Donny, the Dude's friends, Smokey, the conscientious objector and pacifist, as well as Marty, the Dude's landlord, and the nihilists all represent diluted radical positions that were once modes of resistance. As Wall observes, "[w]ith these characters the film announces itself as a mediation on the fate of the sixties, its various types and its revolutionary and utopian aspirations" (123). Walter's character signifies the increasing impossibility to define a radical masculinity via violent and military pursuits, which leads Walter searching for conflicts to prove his masculinity and, when ultimately his searching proves impotent, he retires to the bowling alley to drink beer and ponder his past efforts in the Vietnam war. Donny's character signifies a similar impotency through the failed resistance of radical countercultures like surfing. While, no doubt, such countercultures functioned as modes of resistance against the rigid structures of institutions, the current pursuits of surfing, skateboarding, snowboarding, among other radical activities, including parkour, no longer represent a radical opposition. Instead, these pursuits are offered an endless choice of consumer goods that are catered to the formation of new, dynamic, and negotiable identities. Marty, the Dude's landlord, does not consume bowling and beverages like the Dude, Walter, and Donny, and he appears to represent a radical, artistic subjectivity. As Wall notes, Marty is "a performance artist – this aesthetic mode surely has its roots in the happenings of the sixties and seems relevant here for its implicit rejection of the art object's commodification" (133). A major concern of Marty's, however, is the venue where he will perform, which is the first thing he says: "Dude, I finally got the venue I wanted" (*The Big Lebowski*). Perhaps, arguing that Marty privileges a venue, a site purchased for his performance, over the performance itself is reading too much into a minor character and scene in the film. However, considering Wall's point, perhaps such instances should be given more

analysis in relation to the economization of everything. My first reaction to Marty's insistence on a specific venue might be: whatever happened to performing on the street? Then, I quickly recall how even street art today, like the work of Banksy, is quickly cut from buildings and sold to wealthy 'admirers'.

While violence, most obviously, as well as countercultures and art are increasing commodified, especially the identities defined through participation in these once potentially creative or revolutionary pursuits, what about pacifism and nihilism? Without going into specific details of each belief system, it appears either foundation could frame a radical identity opposed to consumerism. Thinking of the general foundations of each philosophy, objection to violence and objection to meaning, there seems to be a foundational opposition to the pursuit of commodified ideals. The Big Lebowski reveals, however, that these belief systems are not guaranteed to be adequate modes of resistance against the commodification of masculinity. If we recall the nihilists from the film that supposedly believe in nothing, it is apparent that this form of nihilism does believe in something: money. This belief is something to be afraid of when encountering these nihilists, despite Walter's reassurance to Donny: "No, Donny, these men are nihilists. There's nothing to be afraid of" (The Big Lebowski). It turns out these nihilists do have a foundational ethos beyond an objection to meaning: the pursuit of money.

The final conflict between Walter and the nihilists, when a ransom is demanded, demonstrates the nihilists' ethos:

WALTER. No, without a hostage, there is no ransom. That's what ransom is. Those are the fucking rules.

NIHILIST #2. His girlfriend gave up her toe!

NIHILIST #3. She thought we'd be getting million dollars!

NIHILIST #2. Its not fair!

WALTER. Fair! Who's the fucking nihilist here! What are you, a bunch of fucking crybabies?

The Coen Brothers, with their keen knack for humourous dialogue, create a comical situation that, within the diegetic space of the film, contributes to the comedy as a whole. Moreover, for the purpose of thinking this film in relation to Deleuze's concept of the control society, this interaction reveals a distinction between a fascist nihilism and a capitalist nihilism (Badiou 158-162). As discussed by Badiou these two nihilisms belong to the same world that "of money, of blind power, of cynical rivalry, of hidden gold of primary resources, of total scorn for peoples' everyday lives, and of the arrogance of a self-certitude based on the void" (158). On the one hand, fascist nihilism commits acts that remain unnamed and the nihilists remain anonymous as well (Badiou 160). On the other hand, capitalist nihilism is "nihilist in its extensive form, the market having become worldwide; nihilist in its fetishization of the formalism of communication; and nihilist in its extreme political poverty, that is to say, in the absence of any project other than its perpetuation" (Badiou 161). Thus, the nihilists from *The Big Lebowski* do not represent a radical subjectivity that functions as a mode of resistance, but, instead, they represent the fundamental basis for the economization of everything: only capital means anything. Sell sex, exploit animals, ignore global warming, and cut off your toe because nothing else matters – ethically, morally, or politically – and everything is a means to acquire money.

It is within this capitalist nihilism that the commodification of masculinity captures the radical potentialities of creative and revolutionary subjectivities and re-inscribes them into consumption practices. Participation in closed loops of consumption seals off any threat from these once-upon-a-time modes of resistance and produces: "Man as shopping" (Badiou 161). All modes of resistance find themselves in the same limbo, or bowling alley, purchasing goods and services that structure their identities. We may feel that we are new, dynamic, and negotiable, but, in actuality, we are all the same. According to Badiou:

As man (or woman) the consumer is the same as everyone else insofar as he or she looks at the same window display...The principle is that anyone who is able to buy –

as a matter of right – anything being sold is the equal of anyone else... However, as we all know, this equality is nothing but frustration and resentment (Badiou 161).

Therefore, the pacifists can take pleasure in consumption together with the militants, which is visible in the relationship between the Dude and Walter because each man defines his character within a separate belief system, but this system is a mere consumer choice, a flavour, in the commodification of masculinity. It seems everyone from Smokey to the Jesus to Walter can pay for a lane and repeatedly knock down some pins. At the same time, the frustration and resentment that Badiou acknowledges as comprising this equality of the consumer is evident in the outbursts of the various characters, such as Walter's constant concern about the rules or the Dudes' persistent irritation due to Walter's Vietnam references. The pleasure of consumerism has no pleasure at all as the pleasure it promises is always deferred and denied. Similarly, the pleasure of transcendent ideals of gender is always deferred and denied. So, what options do we have to escape the capture of commodification?

The frustration and resentment becomes amplified when we attempt to find, within the coordinates of culture, a mode of resistance because we quickly discover, as Shaviro argues, that "[e]ven when we seek to oppose the most outrageous depredations of human livelihoods and of the physical environment, we find ourselves using the language and the presuppositions of cost-benefit analysis, optimization, and so on" (79). We repeat the words of state, of capital, and of media: "this aggression will not stand" (*The Big Lebowski*). Furthermore, we feel ever more inadequate as the aggression continues on. What becomes apparent is that "[w]e no longer have the language to articulate radical demands. We suffer from a failure of imagination" (Shaviro 79). We consume our goods and services with the anticipation of a revolution, a masculinity, a pleasure, or anything that is other than this, but all we find is a deferral or a denial. When faced with the failure of radical endeavours, when the plan proves to be nothing more than a consumer

choice, what do we have left to say but: "Fuck it, Dude, let's go bowling" (The Big Lebowski)?

Recognizing this message in the in film, Douglass and Walls observe how susceptible people are to consumerism within the coordinates of nihilistic capitalism without explicitly articulating it. In their essay "Takin' 'er Easy for All Us Sinners," in *The Philosophy of the Coen Brothers*, Douglass and Walls conclude that life is purposeless and meaningless "[a]ccording to The Big Lebowski..." and "[u]nless we can identify some objective or transcendent source of purpose or meaning, we may be hard pressed to disagree" (160). It is apparent that the functioning of late capitalism offers only dismal lives at best and because of this dull reality we welcome, with open wallets, any product or service that promises a transcendent source of meaning or purpose. In comparison, objective sources seem to be continuously fading. The Big Lebowski demonstrates that categories of development have eroded, which reveals that the meaning of something like masculinity "...is basically impossible to define, rather than some performed abstraction on display" (Sutton and Wogan 90). So, amid our anxiety that stems from an inability to know for sure who we are, direct and devious advertisements solicit lifestyles comprised of products and services that promise a way out through the embodiment of a transcendent ideal of gender. But, even when the shortcomings of such lifestyles are obvious and we search for something that has more value, something that pay-offs in the end, something that is worth earning, we must ask is there meaning and purpose outside of the economization of everything? Can we break free of consumerism and commodification?

Despite the bleak outlook for creative and revolutionary identities that can establish a mode of resistance through culture, in my view, by interrogating the coordinates of our confinement in commodification, or the economization of everything, a line of flight is still possible. In relation to Deleuze's society of control, Skott-Myhre states that, "by the time a self can be comprised as a site of resistance or challenge, all definitions have shifted to accommodate, enclose and incorporate the insurrected knowledge and radical self identification" (46). As subjects

we are free to move then – for example masculinities are always in fluctuation or ongoing negotiation⁵ – but identifying a site of resistance only leads to enclosure within the closed loops we are trying to escape. The potential way out is continuous fluctuation, the embracing of an ongoing negotiation that has no goal to completely negotiate. It is not a bad idea put off job-hunting to go bowling with friends instead; it is an experiment. However, to assume this practice could become a solution in itself is an issue. Then you begin defining yourself through bowling. You say, “Fuck it, dude. Let’s go bowling” (*The Big Lebowski*) and you seek out the pleasure of consumerism found at the bowling alley. You get a new, dynamic, and negotiable identity to replace the old identity that was previously shed. When I state that we should embrace what masculinities have yet to become, I am not talking about trying to be an actual *Big Lebowski* that defines himself through business and philanthropy. I am not talking about smoking a lot of marijuana and drinking a lot of White Russians. I am not talking about achieving high scores, being all that you can be, realizing one’s true potential, or even winning. Why? Because, as Skott-Myhre states, “this is not a transcendent ‘yet’, an idealized, perfected self not yet realized, but the ‘yet’ of nothing. It is the unthought, undone, unspoken, unpracticed ‘yet’ of infinite possibility; the mass of ‘yet’, the horde of ‘yet’, the ‘twinkle’ in the eye of nothing” (48). Instead of working towards transcendent ideals of gender that continually defer and deny embodiment, this thinking proposes that we consider subjectivities as creative force, which resists definition by its capacity to act. Therefore, instead of using an ideal, a model, a solution, this thinking proposes that masculinity, identity, and revolutionary would no longer be concepts, but subjectivities would be always what they have yet to become and already other than what they are.

Conclusion

Therefore, we need to continue opening up language and thinking that no longer restricts itself within the confines of commodification. This will not occur through the repetition of mediated messages or in closed loops of consumption. Rather than accept the language and possibility we have been given and sold, we need to experiment with a multiplicity of creative and revolutionary subjectivities. We should break from the routines of our capture, which will involve the realization that

A qualitative step forward is necessary if we want subjectivity to escape the regime of commodification that is the trait of our historical era, and experiment with virtual possibilities. We need to become the sorts of subjects who actively desire to reinvent subjectivity as a set of mutant values to draw our pleasure from that, not from perpetuation of familiar regimes (Braidotti 93).

In addition, if we are to move towards embracing the potentialities of culture as creative force, we need to further interrogate the ways that capitalism limits and, in turn, feeds off of our imaginative acts of expression. One need look no further than the after-markets of *The Big Lebowski* that continue to generate profits for an example of this feeding.⁶ So, turning away from cultural capital towards culture as creative force will require creativity dedicated to continuously reimagining subjectivities that experiment with “the natural play of haecceities, degrees, intensities, events, and accidents that compose individuations totally different from those of the well-formed subjects that receive them” (ATP 280). Such reimagining rejects the privileging or valuing of a particular identity as radical, and, instead, embraces revolutionary as continuously mutating and reinventing as opposed to celebrating and returning to a once successful resistance. To avoid praising and attempting to repeat past forms of success, we must be diligent in our critiques of the economization of everything because,

within the parameters of a control society, all sites of resistance will eventually become commodified.

In relation to gender, future interrogations of the commodification of masculinity and femininity are necessary to breakdown the limitations imposed on subjectivities through this double capture. The capacity to turn the mechanisms of gender and commodification back on themselves and open up radical potentialities can allow us to collapse both structures. By recognizing and critiquing the apparatuses of commodification that are at work in cultural products we are sold, like films and TV shows, we can uncover the radical lines that are sealed off. In "The Big Lebowski: Bowling, Gender, Temporality, and Other 'What-Have-You's'," Sutton and Wogan ask: "with so many references to previous masculine styles and posturing on display in [The Big Lebowski], echoing through the filter of past movie and TV references, how can any claim to masculinity not ring hollow?" (90). Indeed, as the film demonstrates, all claims to masculinity are hollow. While this detection may create anxiety that motivates the need to solidify our identity, and consumerism is at hand to fill this void with an abundance of products and services that promise meaning and purpose, an alternative is opened up. Rather than responding negatively to this hollow, we should embrace its affirmative capacities. If, by critiquing the commodification of gender in the parameters of a control society, we can reveal that masculinity and femininity are nothing other than hollow, then we can discard them like the shells they are. Once shell-less, we will have the ability to continuously experiment with new modes of resistance in a constant state of becoming other than what we are as we take pleasure in the moment of our creative acts.

Notes

1. I want to stress that this will not be an extensive analysis of the film itself, but I do believe such a project is necessary. For the paper at hand, the film provides illustrations that highlight the shift from a discipline society to a control society and the outcomes of this shift.

2.I develop this in greater detail in my current project: *Mediated Masculinities: The Commodification of Masculinity in American Cinema, 1995-2005*.

3.I am referring specifically to Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), *Bodies That Matter* (1993), and *Undoing Gender* (2004) as well as R. W. Connell's *Gender and Power* (1987), *Masculinities* (1995), *Gender* (2002), and *Confronting Equality: Gender, Knowledge and Global Change* (2011). Moreover, this remains an ongoing concern in the interdisciplinary field of women's and gender studies.

4.The authors do make valid arguments within their own context, but, in light of Deleuze's concept of the control society, they appear to be misconceived.

5.I am referring here to recent research in masculinities and film studies by Barry Keith Grant, *Shadows of Doubt: Negotiations of Masculinity in American Genre Films* (2011), and Philippa Gates, *Detecting Men: Masculinity and the Hollywood Detective Film* (2006). Both scholars critique the notion of a crisis in masculinity by revealing, through the analysis of films, that masculinity is always in an ongoing negotiation or in a state of fluctuation. As a result, masculinity has no prior period of stability that a crisis could develop in relation to.

6.Jenny M. Jones gives an extensive overview of these after-markets and the Lebowsky culture industry in *The Big Lebowski: An Illustrated, Annotated History of the Greatest Cult Film of All Time* (2012).

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Masculine Plural and Singularly Masculine. Oscar Wilde, Charles Baudelaire and Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly: Three Dandies Seen Through the Prism of the Masculinity of the Nineteenth Century

Antoine Defeyt
Université libre de Bruxelles

Abstract:

An inescapable figure of nineteenth-century society, the dandy still resists any form of normative categorization, and including in his capacity as a sexual being.

As part of this research, we endeavoured to compare this assertion with the non-written sources that are portraits through the media of painting, photography and caricature. This was also done by examining three iconic figures of dandyism, i.e. Oscar Wilde, Charles Baudelaire and Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly. To do this, as a first step, we sought to establish the markers of masculinity and femininity that prevailed in the nineteenth century. In a second step, we tried to identify these markers in each of the images used for this project.

The analysis of different representations of Wilde corroborates the literature. The Irish author perfectly embodies the androgyny of the dandy as stated in the literature. As regards Charles Baudelaire and Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, the images that caught our attention failed to highlight the existence of an identity crisis in terms of gender. On the other hand, we were able to establish, through scrutiny of these portraits, three different attitudes to masculinity.

Keywords: Dandyism, Masculinity, Virility, Decadence, Sexual identity.

Eril oęul ve Tekil Olarak Eril. Oscar Wilde, Charles Baudelaire ve Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly: 19. Yüzyılın Erkeklik Prizmasından Yansıyan Ü Züppe

Antoine Defeyt
Université libre de Bruxelles

Özet :

19. yüzyıl toplumun kaçınılmaz bir figürü olarak züppe, cinsel kapasitesi de dahil olmak üzere normatif kategorilendirmenin her şekline karşı hala direnmektedir. Bu çalışmanın bir parçası olarak, biz bu savı resim, fotoğraf ve karikatür gibi yazılı olmayan kaynaklar üzerinden karşılaştırmaya çabaladık. Bu aynı zamanda Oscar Wilde, Charles Baudelaire ve Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly'nin üç ikonik züppe figürünün analiziyle de sağlanmış oldu. Bu amaçla, ilk olarak 19. Yüzyılda baskın olan erkeklik ve kadınlığın belirleyenlerini ortaya çıkardık. İkincil olarak, bu projede kullanılan her imajda bu belirleyenleri tespit etmeye çalıştık. Wilde'ın farklı temsillerinin analizinin de literatürü desteklediğini gördük. İrlandalı yazar literatürde de belirtildiği üzere züppenin androjenliğini çok güzel somutlaştırıyordu. Charles Baudelaire ve Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly'in kullandığı dikkatimizi çeken imajlarda ise toplumsal cinsiyet oluşumu açısından yaşanan bir kriz öne çıkmıyordu. Diğer yandan, bu portreler üzerinden bir analiz yapıldığında, erkeklığe üç farklı bakışın da ortaya çıktığını saptadık.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Züppelik, erkeklik, erillik, gerileme, cinsel kimlik

The starting point of our research was the discovery of a caricature of Oscar Wilde, the preponderant figure of end-of-century dandyism, published in the satirical weekly magazine *Punch* (Partridge 113). At first glance, one is struck by an obvious ambivalence of the character and the assertion of an identity disorder. Having noted the absence of studies proposing a "reading from a gender perspective" of the identity ambivalence that had struck us, which was, at the very most, touched on during the scandal surrounding his trial for homosexuality in 1893, a decision was taken to seek to position Oscar Wilde in relation to the climate of masculinity of the time. Then we develop a bicephalous research topic by focusing on the masculinity of the nineteenth century in order to understand how the dandy fitted into this masculine landscape or, conversely, was marginalised. In terms of time and space, we can say that without having adopted a strict chronological timespan, we focused on a period from 1844 to 1900, a period which corresponds respectively to the publication of Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's essay *Dandyism and George Brummel*, and the death of Oscar Wilde. As to the geographical setting, it is no surprise that the characters in whom we are taking an interest are based in Paris and London. For this reason and because it would be very difficult to compile a sufficient corpus of sources concerning Belgium, we did not choose to work on the country.

In this article, we will not develop a reflection on "gender studies" (Defeyt 10-14). We will just settle for pointing out, based on the analysis by Ann Oakley, that masculinity and femininity are not 'natural' substances inherent to the individual, but these are instead psychological and cultural attributes, the fruit of a social process during which the individual acquires the characteristics of masculine and/or feminine (Oakley).

In order to move towards a vision of dandies through the prism of masculinity, we conducted an analysis in three successive steps that will enable Oscar Wilde, Charles Baudelaire and Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly to be positioned in comparison to a normative environment of masculinity.

We initially performed a deconstruction of a masculinity taken for granted by trying to understand what is encompassed by the concept of masculinity and what are its constituent elements and markers. Our interest here is in the rule rather than the exception, through prescriptive frameworks within which we find the largest possible number of "society of men" as individuals of the male sex.

So the masculine ideal at the end of the 18th century may be defined by a desire for power, the necessary upholding of one's honour, and the importance of courage.

In parallel to that, learned naturalists such as Buffon and Burdach consider Man as dominating creation. The morphological picture that they draw up emphasises the compactness of the flesh, the firmness and solidity of the muscles, warmth, abundant hair, a rough-hewn, upright overall impression. This picture reveals, on the other hand, the lack of manliness given away by a rounded body, soft, smooth, flabby flesh, lack of hair and a high-pitched voice (Mosse 12). This has obvious psychological consequences. Man, like his genital organs, is turned towards the outside, his vigour predisposes him for physical effort, he must control his fear and his emotions, take up challenges and display courage on the battlefield. As for the impotent man, he is cowardly and incapable of exerting dominance over women (Guillet 83-24).

Beyond the body and its importance, appearances and bodily attitudes show signs of a manifestly identifiable virility. So, the muscles which will enable strength to be deployed, the beard and the moustache which are signs of entering manhood are good indicators. As to the figure of the tall, slim and well-proportioned, it comes from warlike imagery and formed a role model for young, bourgeois men from the Restoration onward (Bertaud 109-129).

It should be borne in mind that in the 19th century, masculinity was not considered as the masculine gender, but more as a group of associated characteristics.

Alongside this stereotype of virility to which the masculine gender is supposed to conform, we find 'outcast' figures co-existing, opposites who can not only not attain an ideal masculinity but moreover, enhance and reinforce the stereotype to which they cannot aspire. In this way, Jews, gypsies and homosexuals, pederasts or lesbians all have in common, in the collective imagination and representations of the 19th century, that they are the opposite of the virile ideal, while being unable to escape its influence. They then tried either to imitate the dominant type, or to define themselves in contrast to it.

Finally, to finish dealing with this sacrosanct notion of virility, we emphasise the fact that it is not only defined in contrast to femininity and is therefore not synonymous with masculinity. Therefore, many individuals display a lack of virility without anyone thinking of questioning their masculinity, a term that dictionaries almost gloss over, and which is not part of everyday language. Incidentally, some women can demonstrate masculinity through their sense of grandeur, honour or sacrifice for their country.

In the second part of our analysis, we attempted to understand the crisis of masculinity that appeared at the end of the nineteenth century in the context of economic and social changes brought about by new demands of industrialization and democracy. Feminist claims began to be heard and male anxiety was aroused, both in Europe and the United States.

The republican ideology and access to education for girls that it made possible would be one of the elements that would allow the birth of a women's emancipation movement, against which most men reacted with hostility. At every level of the social scale, they felt threatened by this new creature who wanted to be like them and saw this as "*the death-trap*", to borrow the words of Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, leading to the dissolution of their specificity (Badinter 31).

The emancipated woman, suspected of being a feminist, was "*a man in a woman's body, a virago*" one monstrosity that begets another:

the feminised man, the Decadent par excellence. In 1903 Otto Weininger, a misogynist if ever there was one, made the following observation:

There are eras when more masculine women and more feminine men are born. That is precisely what is happening today ... The vast increase in recent years in both 'dandyism' and homosexuality can only be explained by a widespread feminization (Weininger 73).

Note that dandyism, homosexuality and feminization of society are, in the view of the author, all interconnected evils.

This view is interesting to compare with the one expressed twenty-five years earlier by Barbey d'Aurevilly in *Les Bas bleus*. Concerning the dandy,

in the history of humanity, there are periods of real social hermaphroditism, where man becomes effeminate and woman mannish, and when these fusions that are against nature occur, it is always so that order may be disrupted even further; the female that absorbs the male until there is no longer either male or female, but instead who knows what neuter substance, what feed for winners, for the first people who are prepared to assimilate it! (Barbey 19).

The fact that Barbey emphasizes that it is the female that absorbs the male demonstrates that it is on the female side that the danger lies. He describes a passive, victim male whose gender-based characteristics are absorbed to the point of becoming neuter. This image is reminiscent of the figure of the invert that haunts the second half of the nineteenth century, dogged by learned discourse about sexual perversions, the invention of a binarism of sexual categories or orientations into which each individual is now expected to fit, and finally the birth of a modern homosexual world in Paris, London, Berlin or New York (Revenin 23-45).

Concomitantly with Weininger, Karl Kraus denounced the modern cult of the androgen, in other words, a blur, a confusion and "intermediate forms"ⁱ. The androgen is the artistic sex par excellence.

In addition, the concept of bisexuality introduced by Freud forced men to take account of their irreducible feminine side and feel unease as a large proportion of the male intelligentsia realized that masculinity is never permanently achieved.

So the end of the nineteenth century was characterized by the resurgence of defamatory books for the female sex.

Ultimately, the loosening of the prohibitions that inhibited women and the new permissions they were granted to move around, to show themselves at café terraces, to stay at spas without their husbands or family, to openly read sentimental novels, to take the baccalaureate examination and then attend university, curbed the privileges of men and hindered the display of scenes of collective virility. The crisis of masculinity was at its peak and it was not until the First World War that men were able to resume their traditional role of warrior to assuage male anxiety for a while.

In the third and final part of our research, we tried to position the dandy in relation to a surrounding climate of masculinity, impregnated with an imperious injunction to be virile, and in relation to the crisis of masculinity that we just addressed indirectly by considering the situation of women. The starting point of our analysis can be formulated as follows: in a world where the female was emerging, certain questions tormented the collective subjective consciousness; did the male sex still exist, and subject to what rules? Also, could it be that the end-of-century dandyism was the mirror of this identity crisis, by putting on one's body the symbols of a strong but ambiguous sexuality, sometimes showing manhood, sometimes identifying oneself with women? What can we perceive about its positioning in relation to the injunction to show virility that we have described? Can we identify discrete cracks which pervaded the nineteenth century and would lead to a crisis of masculinity that would continue in the twentieth century?

Faced with a complex subject to grasp using the conventional tools of historians, we did not hesitate to use a dose of inventiveness. That is why we used iconographic sources borrowed from the three

different media of painting, photography and caricature. This original approach should be understood in terms of a twofold justification.

On the one hand we witness in the nineteenth century, increased importance of the visual character of exteriority which is shown off, and on the other hand, the existence of photographic portraits of Oscar Wilde and Charles Baudelaire contributed to conveying a certain image of these dandies among their contemporaries but also an image that has been handed down to us. Note that having chosen these figures also allows us to understand their portraits in terms of their textual productions. Finally, we emphasize that we have seen in these iconographic sources a potential for exploration previously unexploited from this viewpoint, and a response to the limited theoretical and conceptual tools that researchers interested in masculinity can use.

Indeed, while Wilde's lifestyle and the scandals surrounding him played an important role in the collective imagination that has shaped the image of the poet and playwright, the epitome of end-of-century dandyism, with his well-known ambivalence and uneasy identity, his numerous portraits, some of which were reproduced as postcards, certainly there were not unconnected with this either. Especially as we can see in Wilde a kind of self-publicity, he does not hesitate to use popular culture to make himself a commodity. In the same way as consumer society shows itself off, the dandy exhibits himself as a work of art and as a commodity.

As regards the author of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, we examined in detail the analysis of a representative caricature reproduced in the satirical weekly *Punch* in 1892. While his character can, in our opinion, as an illustrious representative of a trend, provide a rich reading of dandyism, it is in terms of sexual and masculine identities that the selected drawing provides the most fruitful questioning.

At first glance, we notice the constructed pose of the character and the artificiality it gives him. This is particularly noticeable in the way of holding the hand¹¹ and fingers against his face, in his manner of holding the fan, crossing his legs, curving his spine while emphasising his hip, all

of which are traits of femininity. In this way, at the end of 19th century, the character of the decadent dandy will tend to be confused with that of the male homosexual. Thus, Wilde became around 1890, the main referent of homosexuality in England (Tamagne 102). Alan Sinfield also emphasizes that homosexual representations are then built around concepts that were brought forward in his famous trial namely: "his effeminate nature, leisure, laziness, immorality, luxury, insouciance, decadence, aestheticism" (Sinfield 11). If the figure of the dandy haunts literature and theatre through authors or their characters, not only in England but also in France with Baudelaire, Balzac, or Huysmans and Proust, obviously not all of them are homosexuals. However, some, like Jack and Algernon in Wilde's *The Importance of being Earnest*ⁱⁱⁱ, maintain sexual ambiguity by their dislike of social obligations and taste for pretence. Moreover, before the Queensberry scandal^{iv} broke, some people have supposed that Wilde assumed the "gender" of an effeminate aesthete and was pretending to be a homosexual (Tamagne 102). It was his trial and its aftermath which contributed to making him a symbol of vice for the middle classes of Victorian England. However, concomitantly, some homosexuals constructed their identity by reference to he who had "the courage of his desires." So pretence was no longer to be understood as a mask or an artifice, but as a symbol of the homosexual struggle for recognition of codes that became easily decipherable to those in the know. In France, the fascination with the figure of the decadent dandy contributed to a certain morbid experience and a taste for the strange and the depraved which was typical of the turn-of-the-century. The choice by decadent artists, to elevate the homosexual dandy, a symbol of social disorder, to the rank of a sort of hero, was a way of marking their rejection of a virile identity that is realized by being built around "*materialistic and imperialist values*" (106). They showed society "*the distorting mirror of its hidden vices*"^v.

In the portrait painted by Toulouse-Lautrec in 1895, undoubtedly one of the most feminizing of those we analysed, we find one of the manifestations of decadence which favours the dissolution of identity

boundaries and hybridization of categories, spreading the nostalgia for a lost primordial unity.

In these portraits, we added a comparison of four photographs of Napoléon Sarony, selected from a series of twenty-seven photographs that illustrate the complexity and ambivalence of the character of Oscar Wilde, imposing, delicate, refined and feminine all at the same time.

Ultimately, it seems particularly interesting to note that, both through the portrait by Toulouse-Lautrec and through the photographs by Sarony, we detect, on an aesthetic level, a shift from masculine towards feminine, part of a broader trend.

Philippe Perrot notices two male ideals: the good masculine "*constitution*", rugged and muscular, defined by contrast to the feminine on the one hand, and beautiful masculine "*conformation*", the slender waist, the lean, graceful limbs, which mimic the female constitution on the other hand (Perrot 164).

With the aim of expanding our analysis by comparing and understanding how they position themselves in relation to the figures previously discussed, we also scrutinised, in a less detailed manner, some images from the substantial visual output concerning two major scholars of dandyism: Charles Baudelaire and Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly.

From these various analyses of photographs by Nadar, we note in particular that Baudelaire displays a far less flamboyant and more austere dandyism than his British counterpart would do twenty or thirty years later, according to the portraits. Indeed, several of Nadar's figures that we have used share a gloomy character, which emphasises the face of the subject and does not dwell on the clothes, as Sarony was able to do for Oscar Wilde. In this case, dandyism seems to be more internalised than ostentatious. These figures seem to point, via the facial expressions, to the profound and complex personality of Baudelaire rather than material considerations. This psychological dimension can also be found in the portrait of Etienne Carjat, a portrait in which we perceive a great melancholy. Only his skilfully-knotted tie perhaps evokes the taste for

ploys which we find in his writing. For the author of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, overall behaviour was more important than clothes. Imposing himself to the point of apparent self-effacement is the ultimate mark of elegance. Finally, we note that these various portraits are not greatly marked by "gendered" characters and depict a dandy character in which we do not recognize the ambivalence of a Wilde a few decades later. With Baudelaire, we are confronted by a dandyism with more profound ethics, before the decadence turns it into a suffering and refined dandyism.

As to the two portraits that we selected of Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, a painting by Emile Lévy in 1881 and a caricature of 1892, they reveal at first glance and manifestly some of the markers of virility that we already identified. So, we notice a rigorously disciplined moustache, the rigidity of his stance, which gives him an imposing and authoritarian air, or the wearing of a cape, a masculine attribute of choice for showing off.

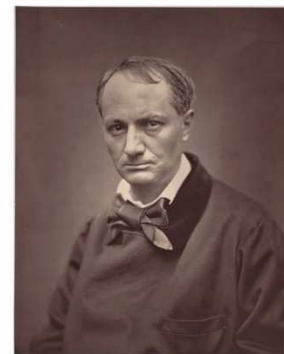
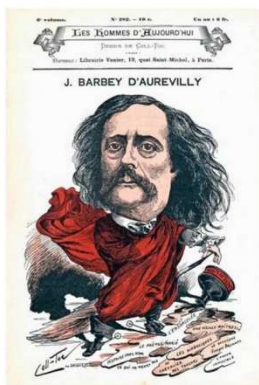
It appears at the end of this analysis, based on an iconographic approach, that the figure of Wilde, who did not fear, in the words of William Pollack, of "*leaving the straitjacket of traditional masculinity*" is, as we had anticipated, the most promising to scrutinise in terms of the norms of masculinity. We can also ask ourselves whether, through the caricature taken from *Punch* and the photographs by Sarony featuring a man with visible feminine traits, these images contribute to the mechanism reinforcement of virility by the invention of fantastical counter-types that Mosse highlighted in *Invention de la virilité moderne*.

It appears, as stressed by David Tacium, and as we were able to notice in these images, that the dandy seems to want to display a sexuality that is in turn masculine and deliberately feminine. Oscar Wilde did not fully erase the traces of masculinity to assume those of femininity, but proceeds to a more aesthetic staging that allows him to become "*a woman in some ways, without ceasing to be a man*" (Tacium 8). This dimension is similar, as we have noted, to a shift in the course of the nineteenth century from the masculine to the feminine aesthetic ideal. A

shift that would reach its climax at the end of the century and which would merge with the decadent aesthetics of the androgynous figure.

In the case of Baudelaire, this questioning was less fruitful. These portraits contain few markers of masculinity, nor indeed of femininity. His dandyism is less fashionable and more internalized. He wears "*the black sun of melancholy*" as Nerval said in his poem *El desdichado* and his discreet elegance is in accordance with the prescriptions of Barbey d'Aurevilly.

The latter, in his portraits, is the champion of the triumphant virility of the nineteenth century. He depicts a kind of hyper-virility in line with the values of the society in which he lives. Thus, his transgression will not be seen, as it is with Wilde, in displaying a gender disorder. It seems to be an illustration of the fact that a normative model of masculinity is, as pointed out by Raewyn Connell, theorist of the concept of "*hegemonic masculinity*" to present oneself as unique, to the detriment of women, but also subordinated masculinities.



Endnotes

- ⁱ By "intermediate forms", here we understand homosexuality.
- ⁱⁱ The placing of the hands has often been a way of confirming femininity in caricatures of men and dandies.
- ⁱⁱⁱ "The Importance of Being Earnest", published in 1895.
- ^{iv} The Marquess of Queensberry, father of Lord Alfred Douglas, Wilde's lover, was behind the trial of the famous writer, calling him a "posing sodomite" [sic].
- ^v Idem.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Steger, Brigitte and Angelika Koch, ed. *Manga Girl Seeks Herbivore Boy. Studying Japanese Gender at Cambridge.*

Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013. Print
ISBN 978-0-7391-6625-3
English; 240 pages; 29,90 Euro

When Itō Kimio writes in the introduction to *Danseigaku nyumon [Introduction to Men's Studies]* that the 1990's is the "period of men's problems" (1), the concept that men are in crisis finally had reached Japan. The ground shaking changes of the economic system deprived today's average young Japanese students of the certainty of a job and life-time employment and thus of the more or less stable living conditions of the preceding generations. After the war the *salarīman* – a white collar employee whom Dasgupta calls "the 'everyman' of Japan" (118) – became the role model for the average young Japanese man. With this role model hardly being appropriate anymore, ideas of what a man should be like diversified.

In this book, editors Brigitte Steger and Angelika Koch compiled essays of four young scholars of Cambridge University, who address issues of gender constructions in contemporary Japan that until now have hardly met with scholarly interest. Their analyses widely range in topic from the popular culture of *manga* to the discourse on the new masculinity of the so-called "herbivorous men". By doing so, they provide a collection of groundbreaking work that is not only meant to be an introduction to gender questions but also provides a basis for further research. The editors show the relevance of gender analysis with regards to the dynamics of contemporary Japanese society and thus make a valuable contribution to the discussion of problems, which are relevant for developments of contemporary Japan.

Hattie Jones analyzes the depiction of female characters in boys' *anime* and *manga*. Boys' *manga*, she argues, used to be analyzed within discourses on pornography, *salarīmen* and science fiction. She seeks to determine whether the depictions of women in recent boys' *manga* are more varied than previously assumed. Jones presents the analyses of the four popular works *To Love-ru*, *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*, *Demon Detective Neuro Nōgami* and *Gintama*. Her analysis is centered on the always implicit axis of masculinity in contrast to femininity. This approach is useful and necessary, as gender is a concept which is "[...] inherently relational. 'Masculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity'. A culture which does not treat women and men as bearers of polarized character types, at least in principle, does not have a concept of masculinity [...]" (Connell 68) or femininity. Hattie Jones shows in her fascinating analysis that discourses on constructing femininity and thus gender in general are not as simplistic as they once were. She suggests that this is the sign of changing overall perceptions of gender and thus a further step towards gender equality. However, this can only be an assumption. Further elaboration, especially on other aspects of producing cultural artifacts, is needed in order to evaluate if changing depictions of femininity in *manga* and *anime* really are an indication of a development towards a more gender equal society.

Zoya Street approaches gender discourses in Japanese society from the perspective of moral education in Japanese textbooks, paying special attention to constructions of father figures. Her endeavor to carve out the position and role of the father figure in morality textbooks is a very intriguing one, given the increasing absence of the father in postwar Japanese family life. Street's analysis shows to what extent gender is incorporated into aspects of everyday life, education and social discourses. When she points out that the fundamental characteristics of father figures in textbooks are silence and absence from home, she proves that moral education is drawing on hegemonic gender discourses and by doing so it reproduces them. Unmasking the relationship between gender, social development and school curriculums could be – even though not directly stated by the author – a great contribution to

the understanding of contemporary dynamics in Japanese society and politics. Unfortunately, Street does not further elaborate on these issues. However, her work may serve as a starting point for questioning the gender roles conveyed by moral education.

One of the buzzwords appearing in Japan since 2006 has been *sōshoku(kei)-danshi*, the “herbivorous man”. The expression became one of the key terms of public discourse when referring to changes of masculinity primarily with regards to the younger generation. Chris Deacon analyzes the discourses on *sōshoku(kei)-danshi* and interprets them by taking into consideration theories of masculinity and gender performance, trying to understand the position of these young men within Japanese society. Deacon conducted an interview study with 35 university students and also draws on the results of Morioka Masahiro, focusing on three main areas: “[...] working habits, shopping/fashion, and relationships.” (136). He shows that in Japan gender is not so important a category during childhood. However, it becomes very important when entering adult life. Referring to Butler’s theory of gender performance, Deacon seeks to find out how the shift from the non-gendered boy to the gendered adult male occurs. He argues that Japanese society has institutions whose function is to prepare young males to become full members of society. Negotiating Japanese masculinity has long been and still often is characterized by an androcentric world view and thus by the perspective of an “ought to be” working male. When Deacon interprets the meaning of *sōshoku(kei)-danshi* in the context of Japanese society, however, he convincingly evokes two other aspects that contribute to the formation of masculinity – fashion and relationships. He argues that by stepping out of the conventions of the “normal Japanese male” in terms of employment, beautification and relationships, *sōshoku(kei)-danshi* subvert Japanese society and by doing so partially loosen its chains.

Deacon’s endeavor is a daring one. He analyzes a phenomenon that is probably the newest and least explored of those addressed in this book. Thus, his article cannot be more than a first encounter with this subject matter. That, of course, has its downsides as it does not leave any

space to investigate several topics in depth. Yet, Deacon's results are very intriguing and provide a good overview of the existing discourses on *sōshoku(kei)-danshi*. He furthermore presents some first ideas on how to approach and discuss this phenomenon.

Nicola McDermott analyzes how transgender identities in Japan are negotiated. Drawing heavily on the work of Mark McLelland she calls into attention indigenous Japanese transgender discourses that differ from the discourse of transsexualism in the West, introduced to Japan in the 1990's. However, McDermott sees this discourse as very problematic. Japan adopted the guidelines for diagnosing GID (gender identity disorder) entirely from the USA, which means that "[...] Japanese media and society have appropriated the hegemonic model of transsexualism, and some in the transgender community have internalized this model, marginalizing Japan's indigenous transgender identities." (193). The guidelines for GID, she argues, further reinforce conservative views of gender identity. She elaborates on the problems caused by the discourses used to negotiate the topic of transgender in Japan, giving examples such as the Japanese family register *koseki*.

McDermott provides in her article a very insightful analysis on how gender is constructed discursively. She investigates how certain discourses were introduced to Japan from the West and how these discourses changed the means by which gender identities are constructed and the ways in which they are perceived. She pointedly shows how these foreign hegemonic discourses cause problems for indigenous Japanese transgender identities which do not fit the Western mold. McDermott convincingly argues in her conclusion that her findings do not necessarily only hold true for Japanese transgender identities but also for those in various other countries. By doing so, she provides us both an intriguing evaluation on how hegemonic gender discourses create and recreate social reality, and an insight into the extent to which the "glasses of binary gender-relations" still dominate the way the majority of people understand the world.

All contributors to this book provided insightful and fascinating analyses regarding problems of gender constructions in contemporary Japan. They did so by investigating topics that as of yet have been largely ignored by most researchers. Of course, sometimes the reader feels that the in-depth analysis should start just when a chapter ends, or that some theories and works of other scholars could have been discussed more critically. However, given the fact that the contributors just graduated, their efforts and results deserve praise and respect. Maybe it is its “flaws” that at the same time are the “strengths” of this book. It is easy to read and very comprehensible and thus serves well as an introduction to topics whose academic exploration is just beginning.

Ronald Saladin (M.A.)

Department of Japanese Studies,
University of Trier, Germany.

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Erkekliğin Masal Biçimi

“Ağır Erkeklik: Erkekliğin Ağırlığı” Atölyesi 26 Nisan 2014 tarihinde Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Drama Salonunda yapıldı. Eleştirel Erkeklik İncelemeleri İnisiyatifinin düzenlediği atölyeye, aynı zamanda atölyenin destekleyicisi olan, KASAUM Müdürü Prof. Dr. Serpil SANCAR, atölyenin özel davetlisi sinemada erkeklik çalışmalarıyla tanıdığımız Prof. Dr. Nejat ULUSAY, 1. Toplumsal Cinsiyet Çalışmaları Öğrenci Kongresine¹ gelen Türkiye’nin birçok üniversitesinin yüksek lisans ve doktora programlarındaki öğrencileri ve sosyal bilimler alanında çalışan bir çok akademisyenin katılımlarıyla gerçekleştirildi.

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Murat GÖÇ’ün küçük bir açılış konuşması ile başlayan atölyede, Göç, Ulus Devlet projesinde yeni Türkiye’nin yeni başkenti olan Ankara ile İzmir’in, kentsel yaşam pratiklerinin karşılaştırmasını arkadaşları ile kendi aralarında yapmaya başlayarak ve bunun akabinde nasıl “eleştirel erkeklik incelemeleri inisiyatifini” oluşturduklarını anlattı. Bilindiği gibi Ulus Devlet projesinde Yeni Türkiye’nin yeni başkenti 1928 yılında Hermann² Jansen tarafından “bahçe şehir” kavramına göre inşa etmişti. Aykut Kansu’nun³ da iddiası ile bu inşa süreci muhafazakâr versiyonu önermekteydi. Konuşmasında Göç’ün de işaret ettiği gibi Ulus Devlet projesini aynı anda eklemlendirerek farklı düşünmenin “eleştirel erkeklik incelemeleri inisiyatifini” daha yerinde görülebileceğini söyledi. Keza bu inisiyatifin eleştirel düşünmeye katkısının fazla olacağı kanısında olup aynı zamanda feminist politikaya da katkı sağlayacağı düşüncesindeyim.

¹ Ankara Üniversitesi, Kadın Çalışmaları ABD- 1. Toplumsal Cinsiyet Çalışmaları Öğrenci Kongresi, Nisan 2014

² Alman kökenli mimar ve şehir plancısı.

³ Aykut Kansu, “Reaksiyoner Modernist Bir Başkent Tahayyülü: Jansen’in Ankara’sı” Tarih Vakfı Ankara Tartışmaları, Mayıs 2014 de sunulmuştur.

İki oturumda gerçekleştirilen atölyede Göç'ten sonra ilk sözü Selin Akyüz aldı. Akyüz, güçlü devlet geleneği, militarist gelenek, batılılaşma-modernleşme/ gelenekselleşme-İslam antagonizmaları ve lider oligarşisini feminist siyaset bilimci bakış açısıyla, bir alan olarak siyasetin nasıl cinsiyetlendirildiğini “Er Meydanı: Türkiye’de Siyasi Erkeklik Halleri” çalışmasını tartışmaya açarak gerçekleştirdi.

Devlet Baba Tezahürü

Akyüz üç bölümde incelediği Türk Siyasi Kültürünü güçlü devlet geleneği olarak nitelendirdiğini ancak bu nitelendirmenin ta kendisinin köklü erkek egemenliği olduğunu verdiği örnekler eşliğinde sundu. Akyüz Osmanlıdan başlayarak erkek egemenliğinin nasıl devam ettiğini ve ulus devletin kuruluşunda modernleşme projeleri çerçevesinde her ne kadar kadın görünse de bunun modernist erkek elitler tarafından resmedildiğini ve dahası biçimlendirildiğini ifade etti. Akyüz yeni erkek ve yeni kadının, modernleşme projeleri kapsamında toplum mühendisliği ile tasarlandığını iddia ederek, erkeğin ailesinin reisi aynı zamanda devletin de reisi olduğunu, yani devletin kurucularının da bu erkek elitlerin olduğunu ve bunu sıklıkla hatırlatmaktan, yeniden inşa etmekten geri durmadıklarını da belirtti. Bu halin ise “Devlet Baba” tezahüründe ve yeri geldiğinde sert, yeri geldiğinde şefkatli bir toplumsal hafıza yarattığından aynı zamanda günümüze de taşındığından bahsederek siyasetin ve devletin cinsiyetini gözler önüne serdi.

Eril Öğeler: Militarizm

Akyüz, Türk Siyasi kültürünün diğer bir esasının ise militarist gelenek olduğunu, Türkiye’nin kurulduğu yıllara dayanan bu militarist geleneğin, tabii Osmanlıdan alınan kalıntılar üzerine inşa edildiğini de söyledi. Cumhuriyetin kurulduğu yıllarda ise bu militarist geleneğin daha

yerleşik bir hal aldığından bahsetti. Bu yerleşiklik “Her Türk Asker Doğar”a kadar uzanarak, hem erkek olmanın hem de erkelik sınavının bir göstergesi haline geldiğini ifade etti. Bu yeni erkelik sınavında sınavı geçenlerin; evlenmek için, iş bulabilmek için ve dahası hayata devam edebilmek için toplumsal ölçülerde yeterlilik almış olduklarından bahsetti. Aynı zamanda erkelik sınavını başarıyla geçen Türk Erkeği de bu sınav içinde sınırları çizilen bir zeminde meşruluğunu alıp güçlenmeye başlıyordu. Normatif olarak sunulan tüm erkelik sıfatlarının; güçlü, cesaretli, vatanını seven, kadını koruyan, toprağını koruyan, erkek baskın kültürün kökleşmiş eril öğelerinden biri haline dönüşüyordu.

Gelenekselleşme: Batılılaştırma-Modernleşme ve İslam Antagonizmaları

Akyüz üçüncü Türk Siyasi Kültürel esasının ise; batılılaştırma-modernleşme ve geleneksel-İslam antagonizmaları olduğunu söyledi. Batılılaştırma-Modernleşme ikiliğinde Tanzimat’tan başlayan Erken Cumhuriyet döneminde hız kazanan bugün ise Avrupa Birliği’ne üyelik özelinde hala anlamlı olan batılılaştırma, Türk siyasi hayatının belirleyenlerindendir. Akyüz Batılılaştırma ile modernleşmenin yanlış okunarak birbirlerinin yerinde kullanıldığı, daima kendini yenileyerek tekrar ettiğini ve bu durumun sorunluğu olduğunu ve başka bir tartışma konusu yarattığını söyledi. Yine yanlış kullanım kapsamında geleneksel olanın muhafazakârlık ve İslam geleneğiyle eş anlamlı ve birbirleri yerine kullanıldığı gibi seküler, Batılı, Kemalist de birbirleri yerine kullanılmakta olduğunu, bu kavram karmaşasının boyutlarının serzenişinde bulunur. Bu serzenişin örneklerini ise günümüz siyasi aktörlerinin hallerini tartışmaya açarak yaptı.

Akyüz “Siyasetin Erkelik Hallerinden” bahsederek bu durumun tarihsel incelemesinde ne kadar yer kapladığını, yer yer bu kapsayışın nasıl normatifleştiğini, normal olanın bu olduğunu sanmamıza ve bu

hâkim kültürü nasıl feminist siyaset politikası ile okunabileceğini ve alternatif bir queer kavrayışın olabileceğini bu çalışması ile bizlere işaret etti. Akyüz sunuşunu ikinci bölümde Beril Türkoğlu'na⁴ bırakarak tamamladı.

Beyhan YENİ

Ankara Üniversitesi

Kadın Sorunları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Şefi

Kadın Çalışmaları ABD Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi.

⁴ Beril Türkoğlu, "Fay Hattında Erkeklikler: Çalışma Ve İşsizlik Ekseninde Erkekliğe Bakış," sunuşu, Nisan 2014

Kırılgan Erkeklikler

Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu, 2013 yılında 229, 2014 yılının Temmuz ayı itibarıyla de 149 kadının erkekler tarafından öldürüldüğünü bildiriyor.¹ Yanı sıra, her 3 kadından birinin erkek şiddetinin herhangi bir türünü gördüğü belgelenmiş durumda.² Kadına yönelik şiddetin bu kadar normalleştiği bir zamanda ve yerde, kırılgan erkeklikler diye söze başlamak ilk bakışta biraz garip görünebilir. Ancak, tabi buradaki kırılganlık, erkekliğin inşa sürecindeki fay hatlarına değiniyorsa, bu aslında ataerkinin ve onun bir yüzü olan kadına yönelik şiddet açısından da farklı bir mecra açar.

Birçok feminist araştırma kadınların mağduriyetine odaklanır ve toplumsal cinsiyet rejimini eril bir düzenleme olarak tanımlarken, giderek artan sayıda feminist araştırmacı da kadınların mağduriyetine, ataerkinin bir yüzü olarak ele alır.³ Örneğin, kadına yönelik şiddet ve eril şiddet meselesinde gördüğümüz gibi, erkekler şiddete bir açıdan teşvik edilirler ancak bu şiddet sadece kadınlara yönelik değildir, ‘erk sahibi’ erkek olarak kabul edilmeyenlere de yönelir. Bu bakımdan, feministlerin ataerki ile her türlü mücadelesinde erkeklik çalışmaları olmazsa olmaz bir yer tutar zira, erkeklik çalışmaları eril tahakkümün oluşturulduğu, kimi zaman müzakere edildiği, ve kurumsallaştırıldığı alanları gözler önüne serer.

Bu yazıda değerlendirmesini yapmaya çalışacağım ve Eleştirel Erkeklikler İnceleme İnsiyatifi tarafından Ankara Üniversitesi Kadın Sorunları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Merkezi (KASAUM) ile işbirliğinde düzenlenen, “Ağır Erkeklik: Erkekliğin Ağırlığı” isimli atölyenin “Fay Hattında Erkeklikler: Çalışma ve İşsizlik Ekseninde

¹ Cinayete kurban giden kadınların isimlerinin de bulunduğu, sanal anıt için bakınız: <http://www.anitsayac.com/?year=2013>

² Türkiye’de Kadına Yönelik Şiddete dair böyle bir çalışma için bakınız: Altınay and Arat.

³ Kadına yönelik şiddet konusunda erkek ve eril arasındaki bağlantı ve ayrımlar için bakınız: Acar-Savran (47) .

Erkekliğe Bakış” başlıklı ikinci oturumuna giderken, erkeklik üzerine bir diyalogun gelişmesinden değil belki ama biçiminden kaygı duymaktaydım. Mesela, böyle olası bir diyalogda, kadınların erkekleri ‘bilinçlendirme’ pozisyonunu eşitliği zedeleyici görüyordum, zira bu adeta ezilenin ezeni eğitmesine benziyordu. Ezilenin ezeni eğitmesi sorunu, Audre Lorde’un da altını çizdiği üzere, ezenin güçlü pozisyonunu ‘bilinçlendirilen’ olarak perçinler ve dolayısıyla, ezenin sorumluluk almasını ‘anlamsız’ hale getirir (Lorde 281). Halbuki, ataerkiye karşı her türlü mücadele hayat boyu devam eden ve bir biçimiyle kolayca halledilebilen bir bilinçlendirme sorunu değildir. Her türlü şiddet döngüsü, sarmal halinde hayatın gündelikliğinden, kurumlarına kadar topyekun bir alanı kapsar ve mücadele edenlerin, çözemeyecek olsa dahi sorumluluk almasını gerektirir. Üstelik bahsettiğim ezilenin ezeni eğitme durumu kadın hareketini ve erkeklikle ilgili eleştiri getiren diğer hareketleri de güçsüzleştiren bir pozisyonudur da. Atölye öncesi bu tür sorular çeviriyordum aklımda; ancak kaygılarım bir yana, benim için bu atölyenin önemli soruları şunlardı: erkekliğin nasıl bir kırılabilirliği var? Bu kırılabilirlik, daha önce bahsettiğim toplumsal cinsiyet rejimi ve mağduriyetler kısılacında nereye denk gelir? ve bu minvalde, farklı hareketler arasında ortak zeminlerin nerelerde kurulabilir? Tabi bu soruların cevabı kuşkusuz bir değil birçok olası diyalogu içinde barındırıyor.

Atölyenin merkezindeki sunuş, 21 erkek katılımcı ile yapılan derinlemesine görüşmeler etrafında örgütlenen ve Beril Türkoğlu tarafından yapılmış bir araştırmaya dayanıyor.⁴ Mekânsal olarak Çankaya-Ankara’da ikamet eden erkeklere ulaşılabilmiş. Belki sayısal anlamda yeterli olmayan bir küme olmakla beraber, içerik ve analiz açısından oldukça öğretici ve paylaşımcı bir sunuş oldu bence ve ileriki araştırmalara da önemli bir veri kaynağı sunuyor.

⁴Araştırmmanın yayınlanmış makalesi için bakınız Türkoğlu.

Beril Türkoğlu, sunuşuna hegemonik erkeklik içerisinde fay hatlı bir coğrafya yaratan kırılğan erkekliğin veçhelerini anlatmakla başladı ve bir işte çalışmanın veya iş sahibi olmanın özellikle de “aile reisliği” mefhumu üzerinden örgütlenerek kurulduğunun altını çizdi. Burada aile reisliği derken, hem ekonomik hem de toplumsal diğer öğelerin erkek elinde toplanmasını kastediyorum. Diğer önemli nokta, erkekliğin mutlaka başka kişilerin şahitliğiyle var olabilmesine yapılan vurgu. Dolayısıyla, diğer erkeklerin ve kadınların da onayı ataerkil tahakkümün kurulmasında başat. Son olarak da, erkeklik kadınlıkta da olduğu gibi sergilenir (performatiftir). Zaten bu sergileniş aynı zamanda onayı da içerir ve hedefler. İşte bu bağlamda, işsizliğin erkekliği kaybetme olarak kurgulanması erkekliğin sergileniş biçimlerinden birini oluşturur.

Yukarıdaki minvalde sunuş üç bölümden oluştu. “Kazanılan erkeklik” isimli ilk bölüm, erkeklerin erkekliklerini nasıl kazandıklarına yönelik fikirlerini bir araya getirdi. Diğer bölümlerde olduğu gibi, bu kısımda da araştırma dahilindeki katılımcıların sorulara yanıtlarından alıntılar, atölye katılımcıları ile paylaşıldı. Yöntemsel açıdan da erkeklerin erkekliklerini nasıl kazandıklarını izlemek zaman zaman trajikomik zaman zaman da insanı hayretlere düşürücü bir deneyim. Mesela, erkeğin illa ki hesap ödediğini ancak buna rağmen, cüzdanın yularının kadında olduğunu iddia eden bir alıntı salondakileri oldukça güldürdü. Aslında, alıntılarla ilerlemek pür-i pak birtakım erkeklik tanımlarını da düşündürme olanağı sunuyor. Bununla birlikte, erkekliğin de diğer iktidar ideolojilerinde olduğu gibi orantısız çatlaklar ve çelişkilerle dolu olduğunu gözler önüne sermiş oluyor.

İlk bölümdeki alıntılarda erkekliğin daha çok fiziksel ve manevi güç ile tanımlandığını gördük. Güçlü olmak, başka erkeklerden dayak yememek veya onlar tarafından ezilmemek anlamına da geliyor. Bununla birlikte, erkeğin gücü kendinden düşük konumda gördüklerine (mesela kadınlara) yardım etmesi veya kadınlara karşı güçlü bir pozisyonda (mesela, ekonomik güce sahip olmak veya bu gücü elinde bulundurmak) durmaya devam etmesiyle de yeniden inşa oluyor. Dolayısıyla, erkekliğin var olmaya devam etmesi veya yeniden yeniden kazanılması (mesela,

sünnet, evlilik, askerlik, ev geçindirme...vb.) belli şartların devamlı üretilmesine de bağlı ki; bahsedilen şartlar, aynı zamanda erkek olmayı değerli hale getiriyor.

İsminden de anlaşılabilceği gibi, kazanılan erkeklik farklı manalarda kaybedilebiliyor da. O zaman hangi erkeklik veçheleri öne çıkıyor ki, bunlar kaybolursa, erkeklik de yitirilmiş veya yara almış addediliyor? İkinci bölümde, Beril Türkoğlu araştırmaya katılan erkekler açısından erkekliğin 'gücünün', sorumluluk ve çalışmak ile bağdaştırıldığını anlattı. Bu kısımda sunulan alıntılar, evli ve bekar erkekler analitik ayrımı yoluyla aktarılması da önemli. Böylece, evliliğin erkekliğin inşası sürecindeki önemli yerinin de altı çizilmiş oldu. Mesela, evli erkekler açısından sorumluluk, ailenin sorumluluğunu taşıyabilmeyi, özel hayatı 'koruyabilmeyi' ve dolayısıyla eve bakmak ve/veya eve ekmek getirmek gibi temalarda anlam kazanırken; bekar erkekler açısından kız arkadaşla ilişkinin sorumluluğu ile birlikte gelecekteki aile sorumluluğuna hazırlanmak ki; zaten, alıntılar, hepsi heteroseksüel erkeklere ait gibi görünüyordu gibi anlatılarla kendini kurguluyordu.

Yukarıdaki çıkarsamalardan da hareketle, Beril Türkoğlu, erkeklik ve güç ilişkisi çerçevesinde fiziksel güçten ziyade ekonomik gücün erkekliğin tamamlayıcı unsuru olduğu saptaması ile sunumuna devam etti. Dolayısıyla, çalışmak kendine güvenin bir teminatı olarak erkekler arası rekabetin ve iktidarın da gerçekleştiricisi ve göstereni. "Baba parası yememek", "evi geçindirebilmek" ki; bu tam zamanlı bir işte çalışma manasına geliyor ve sonuçta, "kadının parasını yememek" tabirleriyle izlediğimiz erkeğin çalışarak 'kazandığı' güç, işsizlikle karşılaştığında kırılabilir ve hatta yenilmiş olmakla bir tutuluyor. Aslında tarihsel açıdan bunun bir vechesini Nukhet Sirman (234-44), geç osmanlı ve erken cumhuriyet dönemi romanlarında gözlemliyor. Büyük evdeki babasına isyan edip, ardından başka bir eve 'kapılanmak' şeklinde zuhur etmiş bu durum, şimdiki zamanda babayı yenmenin bir aracı olarak çalışmak şeklini almış gibi görünüyor.

Çalışmanın erkeklik açısından bu güçlü konumlandırılışı, işsizliği “erkeklik gururunu” incitici ve “eşten bağımsızlığı zedeleyici” bir tehdit olarak algılamayı getiriyor. “Etraf ne der?” baskısı da beraberinde izlediğimiz anlatılardan. Bana kalırsa sunuşun yine en çarpıcı noktalarından bir tanesi de işsizliğin bekar erkekler arasında (meşru) bir intihar sebebi olarak gösteriliyor oluşu. Sunumun hemen bitimindeki, bekar ve genç bir erkeğe ait bu anlatı, işsizliğin inciticiliğinin aynı zamanda kendine yönelen bir şiddet veya başka araştırmaların da gösterdiği gibi kadınlara yönelen bir şiddet olarak ortaya çıkabileceğini gösteriyor.⁵ Bu açıdan eril şiddet sarmalının, erkeklerin kendisinden düşüklere kendindeki düşüklere yönelttiği şiddet yoluyla tamamlandığını da söyleyebiliriz.

Atölyenin katılımcılarının büyük bir kısmı kadınlardan ve konuşulanlardan çıkardığım kadarıyla da bir biçimde feminist veya LGBTTİQ aktivizmi yapan kadınlardan oluşuyordu. Katılımcıların niteliğinden kaynaklı olsa gerek, atölye sonrası konuştuklarımız feminist kadınların veya kadınların erkekler tarafından nasıl algılandıkları üzerineydi. Mesela, katılımcılardan biri, feminist kadınların erkek ortamlarında kadın değil de erkek olarak algılanışlarından dem vurdu. Başka bir katılımcı, modernleşme ve çalışma pratikleri içerisinde toplumsal cinsiyetin önemli yerine işaret etti. Sonuçta, erkekliğin tezahür etme biçimlerine dair bir araştırmanın, feminist politika ve argümanlar açısından da zihin açıcı olabileceğini göstermiş oldu. Bu minvalde, mesela sorulabilecek sorulardan bir tanesi ise şöyle formüle edilebilir: madem, iş hegemonik erkekliğin en önemli unsurlarından bir tanesi; bu durum, emek ve emek piyasalarının erilliği ve kadınların bu piyasalara erişimi hususunda ne der? Bu soruyla birlikte, son olarak atölyenin aklımda uyandırdığı başka bir mesele de karma örgütlenmelerin veya analiz etme biçimlerinin olanakları oldu.

Türkiye’de karma örgütlenme pratikleri yok değil. Takip edebildiğim kadarıyla da bu pratiklerin öncülerinden bir tanesi İzmir

⁵ Özellikle bakınız Altınay and Arat (72-77).

Savaş Karşıtları Derneği.⁶ Erkekliğin olmazsa olmaz ve geçilmesi gereken aşamalarından biri olan askerlik (yoksa kız da iş de verilmiyor) üzerine İzmir’de yapılan karma toplantılar erkeklik çalışmaları açısından da önem arz ediyor. Bu minvalde, sadece askerlik değil başka alanlarda da bir türlü ulaşılamayan hegemonik erkekliğin analizi içerisinde toplumsal cinsiyet ve heternormativite eleştirilerini getiren tüm hareketleri güçlendirebilecek öğeler içeriyor. Bu yüzden, İzmir savaş karşıtları örneğinde de değinmeye çalıştığım gibi, bir çeşit bağlılıklar⁷ veya ittifaklar politikasının olanaklarını araştırmak gerekli. İşte bu açıdan, Beril Türkoğlu’nun sunuşunun da bir parçası olan atölye oldukça verimliydi.

Eda ACARA

Queen’s Üniversitesi

Coğrafya ve Planlama Bölümü Doktora Öğrencisi

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⁶ İzmir Savaş Karşıtları Derneği’ndeki karma grup deneyimleri ve şiddetsizlik üzerine, Acara’da özellikle 3. Bölüme bakınız.

⁷ "Alliance politics", Türkçe’ye ittifaklar politikası olarak çevriliyor. Ama aslında bağlılıklar daha doğru bir kelime. Çünkü burada sorumluluk alan bir politikadan bahsediyoruz. İttifaklar çevirisi, hala bir çeşit iktidar iddiasını içinde barındırıyor.

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Ashley Morgan

Ashley Morgan is Senior Lecturer and Constellation Leader in the Cardiff School of Art and Design. Current research interest is in representations of masculinity in Popular Culture. Past research was on Cosmetic Surgery.

Antoine Defeyt

I'm an historian graduated from the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) specialized in gender studies. At first I studied female history especially in colonial contexts before taking an interest in masculinity. Currently I continue my curriculum in studying law at Université de Saint-Louis in Brussels.

Beyhan Çolak Yeni

For many years she worked in various departments at Ankara University. She received her MA from Educational Administration and Supervision Dept. During her final project, she was interested in feminism. She received a second graduate degree from Ankara University Women's Studies Department. Currently, she is working as a chef at Ankara University Women's Studies Center and a PhD candidate at Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Studies Dept.

Eda Acara

Eda Acara is PhD candidate at the Geography department of Queen's University in Ontario, Canada. Her research interests draw from a number of topics, which include cultural geographies of memory, place and spatiality, environmental geographies of neoliberalism in the Global South and postcolonial and feminist geographies of Middle East. She is also interested in alternative methods for knowledge production and dissemination, such as digital maps and environmental history databases. She works in the Editorial Board of Feminist Critique (FE) Journal since 2009, published by Ankara University, Turkey.

Hediye Ozkan

Hediye Ozkan is a PhD candidate at Indiana University of Pennsylvania where she earned her MA degree as well. Currently, her academic concerns lie in exploring nineteenth-century American Literature, Women's Literature and Gender Studies. Some of her researches are about female writers who chose writing as a goal of their life and whose works function as an activist agenda against the patriarchal society in the nineteenth-century America. Her studies caused her to consider the question of how women writers tried to show social ills and countered to cultural assumptions, which silenced and imprisoned women into domestic sphere.

Henning Bech

Henning Bech is a professor emeritus of sociology. He is mainly engaged in the research of gender, sexuality, culture, city life, societies and critique of science. He is the author of many articles and books among which are 'Når mænd mødes' in 1988, 'Kvinder og mænd' in 2005 and 'Seksualitetsforskning: En introduktion' in 2009. He is currently working on a project entitled 'Are Danes racists?' along with associate professor M. Umit Necef at the Center for Middle-East Studies at SDU.

José G. Anguiano

José G. Anguiano holds a Phd and is currently teaching at Chicano Studies, California State University, Los Angeles.

Kathryn King

She just finished her first year as a graduate student at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California, where she also teaches Rhetorical Arts to college freshmen as part of her teaching fellowship. Her graduate emphasis is in English and American Literature. Her graduate areas of interest are gender and cultural studies, with particular emphasis on representations of women with mental illness in the long 20th Century.

Melinda Mills

Melinda Mills is an Assistant Professor of Sociology, and the Coordinator of the Women's and Gender Studies program at Castleton State College in Vermont. Her research interests center around race, class, and gender in popular culture representations, multiracial identity formation, interracial relationships, and street harassment.

Ronald Saladin

Ronald Saladin holds an MA in Japanese Studies and he is currently teaching at Japanese Studies Department at Universitat Trier, Germany.

Terrance H. McDonald

Terrance H. McDonald is a PhD student in Interdisciplinary Humanities at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. His dissertation, entitled "Mediated Masculinities: The Commodification of Masculinity in American Cinema, 1995-2005," incorporates his research interests in film studies, the intersections between masculinities and capitalism, posthumanism, gender studies, and philosophies of immanence.

Guidelines

Masculinities is an online biannual journal of interdisciplinary and critical studies of gender and masculinity. It aims to enable researchers and scholar 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.

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Murat Göç
İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü
Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi
Pamukkale Üniversitesi Denizli Türkiye
masculinitiesjournal@gmail.com