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Until the late 1980s/early 1990s, masculinities did not receive much scholarly attention, for they were often taken for granted, being seen as something natural and universal, i.e. as the norm. This has started to change since then and an “outpouring” of books on masculinities in a wide range of disciplines, ranging from psychology and sociology to media studies, was noted (cf. Coates, 2003; Kiesling, 2006). In relation to construals of gender on television, though, research has mainly focused on those related to women, as “masculinity and male heterosexuality continued to be understood as fixed, stable, unalterable” (Feasey, 2008, p. 2, my emphasis). Specifically, in the 1970s, men were not the object of investigation per se; they were rather compared only to women in studies of women’s construals on TV. In those studies, men were construed as active, authoritative, and dominant (cf. Gauntlett & Hill, 1999; Gunter, 1995), their work understood as crucial in their lives, opposed to marital and parental status (Gunter). Studies on “male” TV genres (e.g., adventure-action) were conducted in the 1980s investigating hegemonic

Drawing data from the Greek fictional TV series, Σχεδόν Ποτέ (Almost Never, broadcast in the seasons 2003-4 and 2004), the Greek version of Sex and the City, this paper explores the ways the male characters both construct themselves and are construed by the heroines in terms of gender and sexuality, building upon recent studies on masculinities in Greece, an area largely under-researched until lately, an adapted Faircloughian Critical Discourse Analysis framework of analysis is employed. Findings point towards hegemonic masculinity when men construct themselves. However, the heroines in the series articulate alternative, opposing discourses. All this shapes and is shaped by the wider socio-cultural context of Greece, where changes in gender relations are seen to be taking place.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, hegemonic masculinity, alternative discourses, fictional TV
masculinity. Findings pointed towards aggression, toughness, dominance, power, authority, and an emphasis on the male body as well as on technology (Hanke, 1992).

Cantor (1990), however, underscoring that gender construals are genre-dependent, made the point that construals of men such as just mentioned were absent in comedy shows, where instead men were portrayed as lacking authority. Construals of fathers also prevailed. At the same time, construals of men who did not fit the hegemonic model were also featured in TV series, such as in thirtysomething and L.A. Law. Herein, men were sensitive, expressed their feelings, were less sexist and showed interest in their relationships with women (Hanke, 1992; see the same author for the argument that such construals comply with patriarchal ideology). Similar construals were encountered in later studies, such as that of Inspector Morse, the protagonist being romantic, emotional and caring, and not afraid to express his feelings (Thomas, 1995), whilst “sensitivity and gentleness, and male-bonding” characterized the male characters of Friends (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 59). Equality between the genders was found to exist in a number of drama shows, too, in the 1990s (Gauntlett), whereas in “postfeminist” TV shows such as Sex and the City (S&C) men were made fun of and treated as sexual objects (Gauntlett; on men’s construals in S&C, see also below)

In Greek studies in particular, men were construed in a more positive light compared to women (e.g. Sarris, 1980/1992), namely as superior, having the role of women’s protector—sexually, professionally, and in terms of family life (Pantazi-Tzifa, 1984), as smart, active, financially successful (Doulkeri, 1990) and charming lovers who treated women as sex objects (Diamantakou, 2000).

This brief overview of men’s construals in TV shows indicates that either they are not dealt with fully, or in cases they are indeed the subject matter, research is not linguistic. Yet media texts function through language, the latter being closely linked to ideology and power1 (e.g. Fairclough, 1989). Hence, a linguistic analysis provides more nuanced meanings, more insight, about how media texts work, uncovering ideologies and power relations. What is more, media, TV included, play an important role in relation to gender, not only because they have been conceptualized as “central sites at which discursive negotiation over gender takes place” (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 41), but also because they are closely linked to gender norms (Feasey, 2008), conveying, defining, prescribing, or even attempting to challenge such norms. However, as Connell (1995, p. 68) contends “[d]efinitions of masculinity have mostly taken our cultural standpoint for granted.” Hence, there is a need to problematize them instead, shedding light on the various construals of masculinities. Indeed, given that masculinities (cf. Connell, 1995), including (male) sexualities (cf. Cameron & Kulick, 2003; Kosetzi, 2010), are social constructs, they can be variably construed at any given place and time, hence the plural, allowing for competing and conflicting masculinities (cf. Kiesling, 2006).

Taking into consideration the aforementioned theoretical underpinnings, in this paper I embark on an examination of the discourses on masculinities and male (hetero)sexualities in the Greek TV series Σχεδόν Ποτέ Ποτέ (Almost Never) (SP)2 as these

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1 Ideology is used here as “representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9, my emphasis), and is also seen as not fixed, i.e. a person may shift ideologies.
2 The data analysed in this paper was collected for a broader study undertaken for my PhD research (Kosetzi, 2007). In that, the series SP and the audience (female focus
emerge from/in men’s self-constructions and women’s construals of men,3 in an attempt to answer the question of the various ways masculinity is construed in the series in relation to the socio-cultural context in question.

**DATA**

*SP* takes place in Athens, Greece, and mainly follows the (sexual) relationships of four liberal, heterosexual, career women approaching thirty: Maria, a radio-producer; Kalia, a fashion shop owner and fashion designer; Vada, an actress; and Stephania, a pro bono lawyer that works in an institute for battered women. Maria is also the narrator of the series. The audience watches the protagonists as they meet in coffee shops, bars, restaurants and each other’s houses, where they have intimate conversations on problems in their love and sex lives, (over)analyzing them. Explicitly concerned with sex and gender relations—centralizing the heroines’ quest for the hard-to-find “Mr Perfect”—the series is a worthwhile site for an exploration of discourses on gender and sexuality.

Men have a marginal role in *SP*. Their characters are not rounded or fully developed. This could be attributed to the fact that women *per se* are the focus of the series, but it may also be indicative of how men are treated by the specific protagonists, as analysis will probe. It is also important to mention that men in *SP* are heterosexual, heterosexuality being taken for granted. However, there is one exception of a gay character. This is Johnny, Stefania’s father. Johnny appears momentarily in the series, that is, he has a marginal role. The narrator of the series, by way of voiceover, refers to him as being sexually confused, his “new” sexual orientation also coming as a big blow to his daughter, causing her problems with men and general confusion. Apart from the marginal presence and this negative commentary on the character, his construal further reinforces stereotypes about gays, as he is portrayed as camp and limp-wristed (cf. Baker, 2005; Kosetzi, 2007).

The above-presented description of *SP* brings forward the existence of similarities with *S&C*. In effect, according to popular consideration in Greece, this series is the Greek *S&C*. This could be attributed to similarities between the two series in their main subject matter, i.e. the protagonists’ quest for Mr. Right, the number and delineation of the characters, the sub-topics dealt with, and the use of similar technical solutions (e.g., use of a narrator, characters talking to the camera in the initial episodes). The producer and the scriptwriter acknowledged similarities in terms of the broad topics.4 Similarities can further be spotted in men’s construals, which will be foregrounded in the analysis.

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3 For definitions of the terms, see below.

4 Nevertheless, they did not accept that their product was the Greek *S&C*, or that it was their intention to do so (Kosetzi, 2007). Such a “denial” could of course be attributed to their fear of being accused of lack of originality or even “copying” *S&C*. Indeed, the focus groups participants in this research attributed many characteristics of *SP* to *S&C*. 

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In gender and language research there has currently been a shift in theoretical positions, i.e. from the position that people talk the way they talk because of who they are, to the consideration that people are who they are because of the way they talk, a shift associated with the “discourse turn” in social sciences (cf. discussion in e.g. Bucholtz, 2003). Hence, discourse analysis has been considered “a flexible and incisive tool for the study of gender” (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 64). I draw on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) both as a theoretical and methodological framework of analysis, considering it particularly useful because it is explicitly concerned with social issues and problems (e.g. Fairclough, 2001). The social issue I am concerned with here is changing gender relations in (urban) Greece, investigating one of its discursive aspects, i.e. men’s construals on fictional TV.

CDA being a heterogeneous field, I employ Fairclough’s approach to CDA (mainly the version outlined in 2001, 2003) because it links discursive to social changes. Fairclough explains his approach succinctly:

> CDA is analysis of the dialectical relationships between discourse (including language but also other forms of semiosis, e.g. body language or visual images) and other elements of social practices [e.g. social relations and identities, productive activity, means of productions]. Its particular concern is with the radical changes that are taking place in contemporary social life… (2003, p. 205)

From his analytical framework, I conduct what Fairclough (2001, p. 239) names “interactional analysis,” which is “the analysis of actual conversations, interviews, written texts, television programs and other forms of semiotic activity,” including linguistic/semiotic analysis of text, interdiscursive analysis of interaction, and social analysis of interaction (2001, p. 240). I have, however, adapted this framework (Kosetzi, 2008) to also include analysis of irony, visual cues, the narrator’s role, and recontextualization where and as prominent in the data.5

Below I focus particularly on lexis, presuppositions, denials, and irony. These categories “emerged” as prominent in the data when I “immersed” myself in them, acting as “traces/cues” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24) in the discourse identification. In particular, lexis is important because of its ideological nature (cf. Vološinov, 1973, p. 13): it can maintain unequal power relations as it legitimates, dissimulates, and/or reifies a state of affairs (e.g., to call a sexually active woman a “slut”), or else challenge a state of affairs (e.g., to characterize motherhood as “not heaven,” as opposed to “something wonderful” which is a dominant conceptualization of motherhood; see Kosetzi, 2007). Therefore, the presence of one specific lexical item over another is important. Presuppositions are taken for granted assumptions, the aim being to foreground such assumptions and make them explicit. Denials, for Fairclough (2003, p. 47), imply “the assertion ‘elsewhere’ of what is being denied.” Regarding irony, I draw on Clift’s approach (1999) and the notions of “footing” and “framing” (Goffman, 1974, 1979). Unpacking this, Goffman draws a distinction between (1) the an-

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5 As there are no visual elements of interest to the points made in this paper, an analysis of these does not take place here. The same applies for “recontextualization.”
Imator of an utterance, the person who articulates it, (2) its author, the person who “wrote” it, and (3) its principal, the person committed to its proposition. A person’s adoption of one of these perspectives is his/her “footing.” In irony, there is a “footing shift” from “committed participant to detached observer” (Clift, 1999, p. 532). When there is such a footing shift, “the ironist frames what is said, thus becoming principal of an outside—framing—meaning” (Clift, 1999, p. 533). In framing, then, one meaning is inside the other.

These features of the linguistic analysis, along with my own reflexive social and cultural understandings of the social context of Greece, as well as knowledge of the relevant literature, inform the interdiscursive analysis of the texts, interdiscursivity covering “how different genres, discourses or styles are articulated ... together in the text” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 218). Discourses that surround masculinities are my concern here. As far as the naming of discourses is concerned, I rely on those identified in the relevant literature. In case discourses were not previously identified, I named them myself taking the above-mentioned features into account. Regarding the third component of Fairclough’s framework, the social analysis, this is based on available research on the Greek context, along with my own informed knowledge of the social context of Greece, thus situating the data and their linguistic/semiotic and interdiscursive analyses.

Within this framework, I have already employed a number of concepts that need definition and clarification. Central in the analysis is the concept of “discourses” as “particular ways of representing part of the world” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26; favoring myself, though, the term construe, see immediately below). This is of significance as it implies that different discourses construe the same “aspect or area of social life” from different perspectives (cf. Fairclough, 2003). According to the perspective adopted, a discourse manifested in a text may be, say, hegemonic or it may challenge hegemonic discourses. I have conceptualized a “challenge” to a discourse to be taking place when this discourse is simply criticized, but without being explicitly substituted by another one.

I also make use of the term “self-construction” when a person talks about him/herself (cf. Coates, 2003; Sunderland, 2004), but not when a person talks about someone else, as this other person may or may not take up this positioning (see discussion in Sunderland). Put differently, “construction” is seen as stronger, as it implies a change and a re-make of (a part of) the world, as opposed to “construal” (Fairclough, 2007). For this reason, when a person talks about someone else I employ the latter term. I also favor this term over “representation,” as the former may be taken to suggest a more active process and the latter an overly simple relation between language and the world (Fairclough, 2009).

Another key term already employed in the paper is that of “hegemonic masculinity,” a particularly widespread but also contested term. The term “hegemonic” derives from Gramsci’s (1971) concept of hegemony as preservation of the status quo through consent rather than coercion. Connell (1995, p. 77) posits that hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity that is “culturally exalted,” though not “a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same” (p. 76). In effect, it

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6 The term “construal” originally comes from Langacker (e.g., 2000).
7 For criticisms and addresses to the criticisms, see Connell and Messerschmidt (2005).
is not about how men are in real life, but it pertains to a model against which real men position themselves. Significantly, it opens out onto “multiple competing hegemonic forms at any time, some compatible, but some in conflict” (Kiesling, 2006, p. 296). This type of masculinity is further defined in relation to women, without implying that men dominate women in any universal way, according to Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005) recent reformulation of the concept. Hegemonic masculinity is also defined in relation to other men, hence the plurality and hierarchy of masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt), including subordinate masculinities, such as homosexual masculinity (Connell, 1995). In line with the nature of the notion of “hegemony” per se, highlighting struggle for domination between groups/ideologies, hegemonic masculinity is always contestable (cf. Connell, 1995, p. 76). This “contestation” comes in SP from female characters whose contributions provide valuable information on hegemonic masculinity.

**Social Context**

**Honor and Shame**

In order for the data and their analysis to be contextualized and better understood, vis-à-vis the theoretical positioning that masculinities are historical, the socio-cultural context where they are situated cannot be ignored. My account necessarily will be partial, as I have to focus on aspects that set the broader context and relate to gender and sexuality in ways relevant to the scope of this paper.

Despite differentiations from area to area, ethnographers of Greek society in the 1960s and 1970s underline that men are defined in opposition to women and as superior to them by and large. On the one hand, men are described as logical, endowed with intellect, and are thought to be responsible and brave. Women, on the other hand, are described as inferior, stupid, unreliable, irresponsible, modest, emotional, less rational compared to men, and vulnerable (e.g. Campbell, 1964; du Boulay, 1974; Friedl, 1962). Furthermore, men are the breadwinners, their place being in the public realm, see e.g. the market and the kafenia (coffeehouses), as opposed to women who are thought to be silenced, obedient to their husband and largely confined to the private sphere (e.g. Campbell; du Boulay, 1974; Friedl, 1962). In fact, women are seen to be “both functionally and symbolically” associated with domestic space (Dubisch, 1986b, p. 197), the latter reflecting even their morality. Dubisch explains: “If she has tended it properly, she has not had time to engage in mischief and her house is in order. If, on the other hand, she has engaged in improper behavior [such as illicit sexual activity or gossip (the pollution of words)], she has neglected the house” (1986b, p. 200).

The main way women could “acquire full status in the society” is through marriage (Lampiri-Dimaki, 1983, p. 177; cf. Campbell, 1964). In this way, they turn to the archetype of Panagia, the Mother of Christ—chaste, modest and respected (du Boulay, 1986; cf. Campbell, 1964)—as opposed to being Èves (see below). Their destiny indeed is figured as giving birth to and bringing up children (du Boulay, 1986), hence the social pressure on women to get married and have children is enormous. In order for a woman to get married, however, men in her family have the obligation to give to her future husband and his family a dowry. This obligation is seen as an “outward manifestation of masculinity,” as male honor would also depend on that (Friedl, 1962, p. 69; cf. Safilios-Rothschild, 1969). Comparing to women, the
social pressure on men to get married is considerably weaker. This entails that there is a heavy demand for a husband, men being valued more as husbands compared to women as wives. In turn, the implication is that men could “dictat[e] their own terms for marriage,” and ask for as large a dowry as possible (Lampiri-Dimaki, 1983, p. 177).

Honor is indeed a male characteristic of outmost importance having various manifestations. For instance, it resided in men being respectable fathers, husband figures, and providers for their home, fulfilling the obligations to the family, and especially to its female members (du Boulay, 1974; Friedl, 1962). Honor is also associated with protecting manhood in instances of verbal abuse and quarrels between men as well as protecting women’s sexuality (Campbell, 1964), given that the latter is seen as a threat to a man and his honor. A telling narration is that of Friedl’s (1986, p. 46): “Both men and women warn their sons about the dangers of associating with loose women who can ruin a man’s life […]. They tell tales about how the wife runs around with other men, neglects her children and the household” (cf. Kennedy, 1986). Especially unmarried women are considered to be Eves (du Boulay, 1986): seductresses, weak and generally inferior.

Therefore, in order for women not to compromise male honor and consequently the honor of the family, they should demonstrate sexual shame (Campbell, 1964). They have to restrain their sexuality, sex taking place within the boundaries of marriage and for procreation. Hence, unmarried girls should be virgins, wives faithful, widows abstinent. Indeed, “honor and shame,” as just described, associated with morality, have been vital in Greek society. When men’s honor, and consequently the family’s and girls’, are offended, honor crimes are very common (Avdela, 2002; Safilios-Rothschild, 1969). These take place when a man has a relationship with a girl and does not accept to marry her when their relationship is revealed or when a man breaks his promise for marriage. In these situations, men are murdered (usually) by the girl’s brother, restoring his, the family’s and the girl’s honor, blood being the only thing capable to “wash away shame.”

Whereas control of sexuality holds for women, a man can have pre- and extramarital activities without endangering his family (du Boulay, 1974; exceptions discussed by Campbell, 1964). Generally speaking, men’s sexuality is considered natural, makes a man, manhood being closely associated with sexuality (cf. Campbell & Sherrard, 1968). If men want sex, women must not resist, willing or not. Male sexuality is also uncontrollable and can threaten women’s virtue, for instance through rape (Campbell, 1964), or it can be “self-centered,” in masturbation (Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991b). According to another variation of heterosexuality, sex can take place outside marriage, outside procreation purposes. This is found in the context of the coffeehouse and is motivated by kefi (desire) (Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991b, p. 225). Needless to say, women who are the sexual partners in this context are strongly criticized by married women. Another phenomenon associated with Greek men is that of kamakia (literally meaning harpoons) (Zinovieff, 1991).

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8 Apart from men killing men, honor crimes also occur with women as offenders and men victims, usually throwing vitriol to them. (In Campbell’s 1964 study, women do not have such an option. They are either killed by their brother or they commit a suicide.) What is more, there are cases where women—daughters/sisters/wives—do not lead a sexually moral life, and are consequently murdered by relatives (Avdela, 2002).
Kamakia are men—usually local and of low status—flirting foreign women with the aim of having sex, treating them as fish to spear, as prey. Men would take pride in how many women they would score, having a very low opinion of their morality and their Western backgrounds. The use of the term over the years extended to men flirting with women generally. Heterosexuality being taken as the norm, homosexuality is highly condemned. The word *poustis*, used for the “passive homosexual,” comes to be used equally for a man who is a coward, a liar, a thief, a man without honor, i.e. not a man; a man cannot live without honor (Campbell, 1964).9

Criticism and Changing Contexts

The above-discussed analyses that focused on men’s domination over women have been variously criticized. The first type of criticism refers to the fact that this kind of research reifies a dichotomy of the private and public spheres, stereotypes women and men presenting them through binarisms and polarization (cf. Friedl, 1986; Herzfeld, 1986), while men’s and women’s “capacity for variation and change” is largely ignored (Herzfeld, 1986, p. 215). Related to that, women’s power is largely unaccounted for, and women’s points of view about their self- and other perceptions are overlooked, being less accessible to researchers, as the “male world [is accepted] as the cultural model” (Dubisch, 1986a, p. 32, emphasis in original). Exceptions can be found when Friedl (1962, p. 50), for instance, supports that public male domination is a façade, since women have the power at home (cf. Campbell, 1964; du Boulay, 1986), especially regarding children-related issues; this is even more so with women owning lands as their dowries. Kennedy (1986) describes how men see women as able to exploit their sexual power to destroy them, that is, their honor.10 Still, public/private boundaries are not fixed, and prove community-dependent, complementary, and interconnected (Dubisch, 1986a, p. 12; cf. Campbell, 1964).11 At the same time, institutions may “span […] both private and public sectors of Greek life,” particularly the *nikokyrio* (household economy), with *both* men and women “deriv[ing] public prestige and social equality from the success of the nikokyrio itself” (Salamone & Stanton, 1986, p. 98). Even though only women go through a process of “learning” how to achieve it from the time they leave school

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9 It also goes almost without saying that women are not seen to have similar to men’s “‘nature’ and ‘physiological’ problems” and the “possibility of sexual love between rural Greek women is ‘unknown’ in the sense of unconceptualized, and so unrecogn-ized” (Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991b, p. 229). The authors stress, however, that this is not the case in cities, with a visible lesbian culture. There are also exceptions in the dominant form of women’s sexualities, e.g. in cases of adultery (cf. Campbell, 1964; Kennedy, 1986), intercultural courtship (Zinovieff, 1991), and friendships with men where sex does takes place, but not for procreation purposes (Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991a).

10 See also Dubisch (1986a) describing other forms of women’s power, “illegitimate” or socially disapproved ones, such as nagging, withholding sex, or using *poniria* (cunning deviousness). Importantly, however, these are negatively viewed.

11 Cf. Friedl (1986) for tasks performed with no difference either by women or women or by both; cf. Campbell and Sherrard (1968) for women and men being a complementary team.
until the time they get married, they have power due to the fact that their husbands must rely on them for guidance in order to become competent householders.

Another major line of criticism refers to the above studies do not account for variation; variation in terms of contexts outside marriage, between marriage types, and beyond rural contexts. Regarding the first, it is only later that different fields are investigated, for instance women’s friendships, being empowering for women, as they feel stronger, self-reliant, supported, recognized, and valued (Kennedy, 1986); the phenomenon of kamakia (Zinovieff, 1991; see above); and the coffee-shop (see Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991a). Variation occurs across three marriage types (Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991a). The first type has to do with communities where men, when married, live near the houses where born. In these cases, they dominate, while women are silenced and limited to their roles of good housewives and child-bearers, being excluded from the public sphere. There is also the opposite pole, when married women live near the houses where born having themselves power. There is also a third type falling between the two poles, where there are minimal areas where men show superiority. Finally, Campbell and Sherrard (1968) describe how different the situation in cities is from that of the countryside: women work outside the home, even though husbands might not really approve it given the assumption that they are inadequate providers; fathers are less authoritarian; arranged marriages are a less frequent phenomenon; and although the institution of dowry remains strong, a girl’s job can be taken as an equivalent to her having a dowry. In affluent, upper-class families, differences are most pronounced.

In all the previous presented studies, masculinities are not the object of anthropological investigation per se, rather discussed in relation to women. This changes, however, in the 1980s, work by Herzfeld (1985) being a case in point. He describes that a man must, inter alia, know how to use a knife, keep his word, be generous with money and open to everybody, “stand up to anyone who dares to insult him. He must protect his family from sexual and verbal threats, and keep his household at the level that befits a ‘master of the house [nikokiris]’” (Herzfeld, 1985, p. 124). Any man who does not show power of mind and body is defamed as effeminate. Furthermore, men should be able to perform in public, in dancing, singing, drinking, eating, gambling. Still, in the 1980s, men spend their leisure time in coffee-houses, regarding these as their own space. Herzfeld also finds out that the attributes associated with men and women fall in the same pattern found in other studies: “men portray themselves as rational, self-controlled, and strong, in contrast to the affectionate but also gullible, incontinent, and often weak-willed women” (Herzfeld, 1985, p. 90), making, however, the point that such oppositions are “actively negotiated in social interaction” (p. 90). Women, once more, derive existential meaning from being married.

Scholarship in the 1980s branded work done in the 1960s and 1970s and the associated motifs of dowry, women’s chastity, and modesty, and family honor, as outdated and “socially inadequate” (Lampiri-Dimaki, 1983, p. 183). Reasons include the new social reality emanating from demographic, economic, political, legal, educational, and cultural changes, as well as proclaimed by the women’s

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12 Lampiri-Dimaki is aware that the changes she describes apply mainly to a “female middle-class elite,” which she sees as “pioneers of female progress in Greece, [and as] the living examples of the new role that the Greek woman is able to play and so help to alter the traditional image of a woman…” (1983, p. 192).
movement. Pertaining to women’s rights, changes occur in family arrangements, employment, social security, individual freedoms, and health care. For instance, civil marriage, consensus divorce, and the right of women to keep their family name after marriage are constituted. Dowry is abolished, as well as discrimination between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” children; abortion is legalized (General Secretariat for Equality [GSE], 2004; Lambiri-Dimaki, 1983). More recently, an increasing number of women is making considerable strides in the political, educational, and professional arenas. Their participation in national and EU parliaments, in higher education, and the public work arena has been increasing (GSE). In 2001 another revision of the Constitution included a new article according to which positive measures must be taken to promote gender equity (GSE).

As the linguistic/semiotic and interdiscursive analyses will show next, the masculine dimensions identified in ethnographic work of the 1960s, 1970s and the 1980s still exist, particularly men’s assertion of heterosexuality; avoidance of associations of manhood with feminine characteristics, such as emotionality and expression of feelings; men’s general struggle for dominance and control over women; and relatively weak social pressure on men to get married. Women, however, have come a long way since the publication of cited studies, as the changes in the 1980s point to, unavoidably affecting (the ways they treat) men (cf. Segal, 2007). To this analysis I shall now turn.

Almost Never: Linguistic/Semiotic and Interdiscursive Analyses

Before proceeding to the actual analysis, I should clarify a methodological point. My focal point is occasions where male and female characters in the series SP position themselves in relation to explicitly gendered issues. Put differently, I did not just rely on the fact that there is a male speaker talking in order to draw conclusions on construals of masculinities, as his gender may not be necessarily relevant or foregrounded in the given instance, taking into consideration relevant criticism (see Stokoe & Smithson, 2001), and aligning myself with the view that gender and language researchers cannot “dispense with gender as an a priori explanatory category” (Swann, 2002, p. 60). The female characters, protagonists and secondary ones, position themselves in relation to the topic on innumerable occasions. In this case, only selected, typical examples can be presented here. The same, however, does not hold for men. Their positioning to gendered issues is especially limited, there being only two instances. This could be explained by the marginal role that male characters have in the series. This in turn could arguably be attributed to the fact that SP is not presented through men’s point of view, or even to the way the female protagonists treat men, namely attempting to challenge hegemonic masculinity. The same applies to Johnny who appears only twice in the episodes analyzed, making a very small contribution in just one instance relevant to gender discussed here.

For a delineation of the feminist movement in Greece before the 1980s, see Kosetzi (2010).

That said, I should note that in terms of practices in the episodes analysed, there are a number of occasions where female characters are mistreated by the male ones (e.g. being insulted, cheated, threatened to be beaten up).
This can again be indicative of his role in the series and arguably of the role of gay characters in general in SP.

Hegemonic Masculinity

“Men are afraid of commitment.” According to this discourse, men are afraid to commit themselves to (marital) relationships. This has been especially pervasive in men’s magazines. In particular, Stevenson et al. (2000, p. 373) talk about aspects of masculine behavior such as “obsessive forms of independence (read: fear of commitment and connection) [that] have become the new focal point,” explaining that “marriage is ultimately seen as a way of feminizing and castrating men” (Stevenson et al., pp. 375-376). In S&C, one encounters “commitment-phobic men” (McCabe & Akass, 2004, p. 207; Cramer, 2007). Similarly in the Greek context, in a study in an Athenian high school Hiraklidou (2005) reports of boys’ fear of committing themselves to a relationship, while Kosetzi and Polyzou (2009, p. 161) note that in the prototypical and high-in-circulation men’s lifestyle magazine, Nitro, “(real) men” are construed as “unwilling to partake in anything more than sex,” barring commitment to a relationship and marriage. In SP, the following examples of this discourse are telling:

Case 1:

In the street, CU of Elena, a lawyer, addressing the camera

If I did not have so many clients with a divorce, I would not believe that there are also men who get married. Still, even those who get a divorce, prefer to use marriage as an example to avoid.

Elena presents to the audience both the “rule” and the “exception that proves the rule:” The additive conjunction (in Greek κι “also”) in there are also men who get married presupposes that all the rest do not get married, the rest being the norm and the ones who do get married being the exception. However, these once-married men have the opinion that marriage is to be avoided, connoting hence that it is something negative. Along the same lines is another “exception that proves the rule:”

Case 2:

A hotel bedroom door, ECU of a ‘Do Not Disturb’ sign, implying that people are having sex.

ECU of half of Kalia’s naked body, lying on a bed, a tattoo on her hip, looking up at Panos who is getting dressed, walking away from the bed

MARIA (V.O.) introducing Kalia to the viewers]

[ ] why did she choose Panos, who is married, out of all possible men? Maybe, because he is evidently not afraid of commitment, as she says.

15 The data is presented in two columns: camera shots and contextual information on the left and the dialogue on the right, with “traces/cues” in italics. Regarding camera shots, the ones used in the examples analyzed here are:

- Extreme Close-Up (ECU) “detail shot”
- Close-Up (CU) “Just above the head to the upper chest. Cuts just below the necktie knot”
In this excerpt there are several issues. First off, the denial in he is evidently not afraid of commitment implies that that other possible men are afraid. Panos, though, whom Kalia wants to marry, is the exception and is not afraid of commitment, because he has already committed himself, as he is married. The irony here is double. Having an affair negates the true meaning of (marital) commitment, namely fidelity, and at the same time, even though he is not afraid of commitment, he cannot marry Kalia, as he is already married with another woman. Further on this, Maria’s tone of voice and comment per se as narrator are ironic: Maria distances herself from what she “reports” to the viewers, as she says, implying that it is Kalia’s words and not her own. Put differently, Maria does not really believe that Panos is not afraid of commitment. Using Goffman’s terminology (1974, 1979), there is a “footing shift” here as Maria is just the “animator” and not the “author” or “principal” of the specific words, and a “framing” of the situation through mockery takes place.

Self-construction. In the above occasions, men do not speak themselves; instead, they are construed through the (scriptwriter’s presentation of) women’s views about them. However, there are occasions where men do speak for themselves on this issue:

Case 3:
At a restaurant, MCU of Stephania and Tellis. The former gives a present to the latter who does not like this gesture.

TELIS I didn’t get it. All of a sudden, we will exchange gifts, we will celebrate anniversaries, I will send you flowers on St. Valentine’s day? I do not know what you thought of me, but you will not wear the breeches.

... I know you, the hens, really well who have stayed on the shelf, and pretend to be liberated and are desperate to snare a man. You are mistake*. You were wrong to think something like that for me.

In this example, Telis interprets Stephania’s gift as an attempt to “keep” him (see “How to get your man and keep him”16), and thus as a way to get him to commit himself to her. This is unacceptable for him as he sees it to cost him his freedom (cf. Stevenson et al., 2000). Specifically, the expression you will not wear the breeches, meaning “you will not assume the power,” “you will not control me,” entails its assertion. Unpacking this, Telis sees Stephania’s action as an attempt to deprive him of control and hence of power. Therefore, he makes the point that he is not letting

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16 “How to get your man and keep him” is found in “Western” magazines for women and adolescent girls, where advice is frequently given about what girls/women should do in order to get and keep a man (e.g., Gauntlett, 2002; Sunderland, 2004), based on the presupposition that there is a shortage of men (see “There are (no) real men” below). Due to this shortage, it is difficult for a woman to find one. Consequently, when a woman finds a man, she needs to do everything possible to keep him.
this happen. In the same vein is his accusation of her *snarling* him, connoting an attempt to make him lose his freedom. At the same time, Telis constructs himself as a man in relation to a woman by trying to reject effeminacy, as it is men who “wear the breeches” and not women. Explaining this, if he lets women or this specific woman wear the breeches and snare him, then he will no longer be a man, or less of a man. Needless to say, he tries to avoid this at all cost, expelling femininity from him and asserting his masculinity.

For these reasons, Telis rejects the gift, and Stephania in essence, to whom he speaks in a degrading and insulting way, see the lexical items *hens, desperate* and the phrases you *have stayed on the shelf, you pretend to be liberated*, i.e. you are not liberated, and *You are mistake*.17 In this way, he demonstrates his power over her, constructing himself as a knowing person who sees through women who act accordingly, expressing contempt for them at the same time. Aggression, manifested here through the verbal insults, and in turn domination, desire for control, and power are normative characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (cf. Archakis & Lampropoulou, 2011; Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Politis, 2006). Similarly, men avoiding any associations with effeminacy is a common finding of studies investigating masculinities (e.g., Kiesling, 2006; Politis, 2006), typical at least of hegemonic masculinity as the latter is defined vis-à-vis femininity (Connell, 1995).

In another instance, the man explicitly articulates that he does not wish to get emotionally involved with the woman:

**Case 4:**
Kalia’s living room. Vada is watching television, covered in blankets. Paris (the guy she has sex with every Sunday, something he arranged) comes in, wearing his underwear and a sweatshirt on top. He kisses her and takes the remote control from her hand and switches off the television. MS of both.

PARIS: We must not watch television together.

VADA: What’s wrong now?

PARIS: When couples watch television together, bond and I have explained to you, I do not want that.

The “trace/cue” of the discourse in this instance is the denial *I do not want that*, i.e. I do not want the bonding. In order to show how important this is for him and how serious he is about not wanting the bonding, Paris employs deontic modality in his previous utterance in its negated form *We must not*. Simply put, for him, this is a strong imperative. Thus, he is just preoccupied with sex without emotional attachment along the lines of hegemonic masculinity (cf. Archakis & Lampropoulou, 2011; Coates, 2003; for the Greek context, see Delianni-Kouimtzis & Sakka, 2005a; Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Polyzou, 2010).18 In this way, he explicitly rejects com-

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17 Telis uses the English word “mistake” (ungrammatically) to convey, *You are wrong*.
18 Even in cases where in men’s magazines there is advice on how men can sexually please women, which contradicts beliefs about men being only interested in sex, show-
mitment. A common dichotomy of the male body can also be seen to be echoed here, that men use only the lower part of their bodies, i.e. their penis, when it comes to sex, where the sexual body resides, and not the upper where the psyche resides (Yannakopulos, 1998, p. 80).

Moreover, in this excerpt Paris makes the point that he runs the show here showing his dominance over Vada, who (he assumes) wants emotional attachment and not just casual sex. A question to be begged, though, is whether the fact that Vada is a woman is the reason for such an assumption, given men’s belief that “women want […] more when men want […] just sex” (Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010, p. 369). This lack of emotionality and of expression of feelings has been associated with manhood, as opposed to emotionality and sensitivity seen as “feminine” traits. This is an association men always strive to avoid in order to avoid their association with femininity and its further link with weakness (cf. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi & Sakka, 2005a; Grigoropoulos, 2007; Politis, 2006; Seidler, 1989; but also Greek ethnographic studies discussed above). In other words, denying or suppressing the need for intimacy is key to hegemonic masculinity.

As already pointed out, Telis’s and Paris’s cases align with other studies stressing that tenderness and caring on men’s behalf are mainly a weakness and a failure of manhood, as opposed to (emotional) independence and an emphasis on numbers of conquests. However, these cases stand in some contrast to a study on societal conceptions of male identity conducted in the second biggest city of Greece (Grigoropoulos, 2007). Here, participants included under male characteristics both men being caring partners in the sense of expressing their feelings and lack of expression of feelings. In the same study, family and marriage are presented as pertaining to “indisputable social and moral laws that the man has to serve” (p. 188). Regarding the former discrepancy (expression of feelings), this can be attributed to some renewal in the ordering of masculinities, as the author himself also underscores. What, however, applies to both instances of discrepancy (expression of feelings and marriage), is that there is not one kind of hegemonic masculinity. In effect, hegemonic masculinity is time- and space-dependent, and what holds in one context may not hold in another.

Generally speaking, though, the discourse “Men are afraid of commitment” is supported by the results of a 2009 panhellenic research, according to which 60% of men run away from a relationship when the partner attempts in a cunning way to make them commit/marry, 25% when she wants cohabitation, and 34% when she assumes men’s roles (Ta Nea online, 2009), the latter being Telis’s example. Personal experience as a person living in contemporary Greece confirms the panhellenic research in the sense that men in Greece are afraid of serious commitment/marriage. Furthermore, the age men get married at nowadays in Greece has been increasing, as men expect first to settle down professionally and thus financially, which takes longer than in the past (mainly) due to prolonged education. Specifically, in 1980 men got married at 26 on average, in 1999 at 30.3, as
opposed to 35 in the 2000s (Ikones, 2009, p. 78). Moreover, both in the past (as discussed) and currently, the social pressure on men to get married has always been much weaker in Greece in comparison to women. The word used for an unmarried man, *ergenis* “bachelor,” bears no negative connotations. On the contrary, it implies someone who actually enjoys life, while unmarried women are *gerontokores* “spinsters” and being “left on the shelf” (see Telis’s example, too) with all the negative associations, and is indicative of the social pressure on women to get married, as if they do not, they face the risk of being labelled as such.

**Alternative Discourses**

I now turn to opposing discourses that challenge the established status quo, as hegemonies are always contestable. Challenges to hegemonic masculinity have indeed been identified in men’s TV construals. For instance, emotionally expressive heroes that go against the stereotype of emotionally restrained hegemonic masculinity have been found in soap operas, in science fiction, and fantasy TV (Feasey, 2008), as well as in other TV series in the 1990s. At the same time, challenges to the importance of the father’s role/construals of problematic father figures have been noted both in soaps and in adult animation (Feasey, 2008). The challenges to hegemonic masculinity present in my data are of a different nature, though, and come from female protagonists, not from men themselves.

“There are no (real) men.” This discourse relies on the presupposition that “real,” i.e. heterosexual men, are scarce, the reason being their turning gay19 (see Charitou, 2005). This indeed points to a recent social phenomenon according to which women are single complaining about not finding a (real) man to have a relationship with. The insinuation of homosexualization is an attack to hegemonic masculinity according to which men are heterosexual (cf. e.g. Coates, 2007; Connell, 1995; and in the Greek context, Archakis & Lampropoulou, 2011; Grigoropoulos, 2007; Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Politis, 2006; Polyzou, 2010). In SP:

**Case 5:**

In a coffee shop, MCU of Theoni, **THEONI**

addressing the camera Until now I thought that the problem was demographic; that men are fewer than us. However, I came across the last census results that say that thank God they are more [than women]. Since we are single, where has the surplus gone? I refuse to believe that they are all gays.

Theoni commences her complaint by articulating that Until now I thought that the problem was demographic; that men are fewer than us, echoing what Faludi (1999) called “man shortage.” Nevertheless, “man’s shortage” is dismissed with the use of the oppositional However. Thus, the reason women are single is not that there are not enough men, but that men “have turned into” gays. This is implied in her direct question where has the surplus gone?, and stated explicitly in I refuse to believe that they

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19 This complaint has been extended in the literature to other non-hegemonic masculinities, such as “metrosexuals” or “technosexuals” (Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009).
are all gays. The denial per se entails that the belief that men have turned into gays exists. It is also worth commenting that it is women who are articulating their interest in finding a man and not vice versa (too). Johnny, the gay character of the series, also articulates this discourse:

Case 6:
In a coffee shop, MCU of Johnny, Johhny addressing the camera

Johnny explicitly refers to the fact that women complain about the scarcity of heterosexual men: *women complain that there are no men*. However, his further comment challenges in essence the reason provided by women for this scarcity, i.e. men’s homosexuality—*why am I single as well every weekend?* Elaborating on this, if men were turning into gay, he, being gay, should have found a male partner. Since he cannot find one, he does not accept that this is the reason why women cannot find a man. The very fact, though, that he “turned gay” after a point in this life is ironic, as it could be seen as the biggest proof of women’s complaint and of the discourse itself. It should not be overlooked, either, that Johnny actually asserts the discourse that there no men, no matter what the real reason is. Regarding himself, his lament over not having a partner constructs him as unhappy, especially accentuated by the frequency of the phenomenon *I am single every weekend*, matching the tradition of construals of gays as confused and unhappy on global TV (cf. Feasey, 2008; Hermes, 2006; but also Connell, 1995 on subordinate masculinities), and in Greek media particularly (Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Polyzou, 2010).

“Men as (sexual) objects.” *SP* draws heavily on the discourse the sees men in terms of physical appearance and sexuality. This is also a historically newer discourse pointing to social change, as it is a recent experience for men to be “expected to spend time in the gym, working to develop ‘tight, toned’ bodies” (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 78), and there being a growing preoccupation with appearance in men’s magazines and advertisements aimed at men (Gauntlett). Men in S&C are defined by their “anatomy and how they perform sexually. In this sense, they are objects” (Cramer, 2007, p. 421), their sexual performance being “subject to laughter and scathing review” (Gauntlett, p. 60). In other words, women are no longer the object of gaze, but instead the subject, leaving men “to foreground their own to-be-looked-at-ness” (McCabe & Akass, 2004, p. 7). In *SP*, occasions where the heroines explicitly refer to men in terms of appearance and sexual attributions abound. Here, I limit myself to a case where the man is objectified in terms of appearance, and another one where men are sexually objectified:

Case 7:
At the hairdresser’s

Stellina is facing the mirror in front of her, talking to the camera through it.

Stellina

I form relationships with mediocre men [in terms of looks] and “hit” a good-looking one—mainly as a one-night stand—just in order to feel good, to boost my self-confidence.
In this example, men are objectified in a number of ways and through a number of linguistic means. Through lexis used for a description of physical appearance, men are defined in terms of their looks—mediocre, good-looking. Importantly, this is the only way they are defined. Beauty is the prime criterion for men’s classification and categorization; there are mediocre men and good-looking men. Additionally, they are the object of this woman’s actions, the passive recipient of her initiatives (I hit), where Stellina is agentive and construed as a “hunter” through a predator image-metaphor. One step further, men are construed as having a purely utilitarian function. They are used for the specific woman to feel good about herself. Put differently, they are not construed as individuals and as human beings in their own right, but in relation to what they offer to women, which is also limited to one domain, i.e. sex.

Moving further to men’s objectification, in the cases where men cannot perform sexually, they are criticized by women:

Case 8:
Coffee shop. Angela goes in ANGELA front of the camera. MCU

Just once or twice? Lately, this has been happening to me all the time. And they offer me loads of excuses. I cannot complain. Once, a man told me that it is the first time this is happening to him, the second guy that he has drunk a lot, the third guy that he is stressed, the fourth that I remind him of his mother and he feels threatened by his father, the fifth got blocked because he likes me a lot, the sixth that he had hormones given in the army. I honestly cannot remember for how many months what we call “normal” has not happened to me: i.e. to go with a man and have sex all night long like animals.

According to Angela, a man not being able to perform sexually is a common phenomenon. Just once or twice? Lately, this has been happening to me all the time. Along the same lines is the list of men and the list of the reasons men offer when they cannot perform sexually. These lists are notable exactly due to the number of men and of the reasons offered, as they reveal the extent of the phenomenon. Angela further characterizes the reasons that men use as excuses, i.e. not real. Moreover, her tone of voice is ironic when she comments, And they offer me loads of excuses. I cannot complain, which is an oxymoron, as it is actually exactly what she is doing. In her listing these excuses and using the words these men have used in cases where they could not perform sexually, and not her own, a “footing shift” is marked. Angela is just the “animator” and not the “author” or “principal” of the words spoken, i.e. “framing” it. In other words, Angela is distancing herself from what is said and is ironic, the object of the irony being particularly significant. Elaborating, given that men’s sexual performance is central in hegemonic masculinity (cf. Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010), in all the cases that Angela recounts, the specific men’s masculinity is an issue, since they have failed to fulfill their role. Indeed, “the social ties which bind masculinity with sexual adequacy, and sexual adequacy with penile potency” (Segal, 2007, p. 184) are very strong. In this context, Angela shows no sympathy or understanding, and takes into no account other aspects of men’s relationship to women—love, sharing, companionship. Men’s sexual ability, or, more precisely, the lack thereof, is what men are reduced to, this is what defines
them and becomes the only criterion they are judged by—“only” being the key word pointing to men’s objectification.

In the same excerpt, however, whereas men’s failure to sexually perform is established by Angela, men’s sexual drive is asserted in the denial that she is employing in I honestly cannot remember for how many months what we call “normal” has not happened to me: i.e. to go with a man and have sex all night long like animals. That said, this is an exception in SP. Moreover, the reference is made to men who are actually not presented in the series and the situation does not apply currently (for how many months). All these parameters negate the importance of the comment. Indeed, the rule in the series is that male sexual drive is challenged, to an analysis of which I now turn.

**Challenging “male sexual drive.”** It is noteworthy that SP is largely framed by an absence of “male sexual drive” (Hollway, 1984) in the sense of it being presented as biological, natural, instinctive, and uncontrollable. This lack contrasts with the long tradition of how male sexuality has been conceptualized in Greek society, in the past as well as in more contemporary research (e.g. Polyzou, 2010). However, it could be attributed to the fact that the heroines are construed as sexually active and assertive; they themselves seek sex and do not expect men to do so, which would construe the latter as showing biological and uncontrollable sexual drive.20 Specifically, there is a case of a male character, Steve, who refused Vada’s invitation to spend the night together, i.e. to have sex, as he had to get up early for work the next morning and had to be well-rested. Here is Vada’s reaction and Kalia’s comment:

**Case 9:**
At Kalia’s apartment

VADA
Did you get anything? He left without asking my phone number and was bored to fuck me. Or did I just think so?

KALIA
That’s not news. Don’t take it personally. It’s the new trend. They [men] are just content to realize that you fancy them and are bored to have sex. [ ] This does not eliminate the possibility that he is vegetarian and that he will not touch the prey.

Vada construes her partner as showing no sex drive, as he is bored to have sex, something that Kalia confirms. However, Kalia does not stop there. She goes further and provides two explanations for Steve’s behavior. One is that this is about a new trend, a general phenomenon and not a marginal case. Indeed, Drakoula (2009) describes the model of the “asexual” man in Greek society, where he may date and flirt women, but does not have sex with them. Women complain about the situation and the fact that they are single. The other explanation Kalia offers is that the man is gay, revealed through a predator-image where the man is the hunter, who,

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20 This discourse “encourages […] misrecognitions—men’s denial of need and vulnerability, women’s denial of their own power in sexual relationships” (Segal, 2007, p. 181), even though the latter could be seen as not applying here.
nevertheless, does not touch the prey, being vegetarian. Hence, if a man shows no interest in sex, a strong possibility is that he is gay, given that “sex is [perceived to be] the way in which you prove yourself to be a ‘real man’” (Seidler, 1989, p. 39). Put differently, manhood is not only strongly linked to sexual activity as in case 8, but significantly to heterosexual activity, lying as a matter of fact at the heart of manhood and avoiding at any cost any associations with homosexuality (see e.g. Coates, 2007; Connell, 1995; and the Greek studies, Archakis & Lampropoulou, 2011; Deliyanni-Kouimitzi & Sakka, 2005b; Grigoropoulos, 2007; Kosezti & Polyzou, 2009; Politis, 2006; Polyzou, 2010). Even though “work” could be seen as another “core” hegemonic masculinity feature (cf. Kosezti & Polyzou, 2009), the female protagonists seem not to take work and it being a priority over sexual activity into consideration, and draw instead conclusions about the man’s sexuality.21

“All men are a bad lot.” Men’s evaluation by the heroines does not stop in the former’s appearance and sexuality. It also extends to their personality, treating them as problematic and defective products (see also the motto of earlier decades that “all men are pigs” articulated by women). This discourse is such an instance, a discourse that emerged from my data, a large part of the episodes analyzed revolving around it. In S&C, too, men are seen to be construed as “freaks” with pathological, sexual, psychological, and financial “deficiencies”/“abnormalities,” and as defective products (Greven, 2004). In Greven’s words, whereas the “consumer women [i.e. the heroines] now have the ability to scan and survey, buy and return, the gendered goods are generally degenerate, already in the process of decaying” (p. 40).

Case 10:
At the hairdresser’s. Vada wants to have her hair died olive green. Stellina attributes Vada’s need for change to the fact that she broke up and tries to dissuade her. MS of Stellina

STELLINA

I am telling you, do not have anything done on your hair for the sake of any asshole. All right? Let me tell you the other thing, too. If he were not [an asshole]—which seems to me highly unlikely—, then you could have the change. Have it for your sake. But, he is an asshole and you are doing him this favour...

This discourse is identifiable in the repeated derogatory lexical item asshole, also inferred through ellipsis in two more occasions If he were not [an asshole], which seems to me highly unlikely [that he is not an asshole]. Stellina offers here no explanation for her accusation, but still finds the man Vada was in a relationship with the one to blame. On top, she takes this for granted, which seems to me highly unlikely, leaving no room for debate. In another case, even a man makes use of this discourse:

21 There is another male character also uninterested in sex, preferring instead to watch televised football matches and TV programs commenting on the matches (with his friends), while Vada with her friends are ready to have sex with them. In this occasion, however, sex is turned down for another “core” element of hegemonic masculinity, what has been named “Sporty masculinity” (cf. Kosezti & Polyzou, 2009; Politis, 2006; also Connell, 1995). This is about hegemonic masculinity being “linked to athletic prowess [...]. In the Greek context, masculinity is often linked not only to playing but also to watching sports, especially football” (Kosezti & Polyzou, 2009, p. 157).
The lexical item *dud* alludes to this discourse, where men are seen as the reason for women’s problems/as the problem itself. It is noteworthy that this reason is offered instantaneously as the first and only (?) reason for a/this woman’s problems. Here, Markos could be making use of this discourse through the given characterisation of a man, but this could be because he is speaking on Stephania’s behalf, i.e. it is something he would expect a woman to articulate.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Analyzing the Greek fictional TV series, *SP*, the aim of the paper has been twofold: on the one hand, it intended to shed light on the various (fictional TV) construals of Greek masculinities including male heterosexualities in order to make this diversity more visible and, on the other, to improve the cultural understandings of the conflicting masculinities in Greek society. Hence, I investigated how masculinities and male (hetero)sexualities are discursively constructed by exploring the ways the male characters both construct themselves and are presented by the heroines in terms of gender and sexuality.

Analysis, specifically, shows that the male characters in the data—who are not even secondary characters—construct themselves according to features of hegemonic masculinity: they are heterosexual, controlling, and domineering, rejecting any associations with femininity. They are also afraid of commitment and have sex without any emotional attachment. Such findings are also reported both by ethnographies in Greece in the past and by other contemporary studies. A gay character is also included in the series and hence homosexuality is not “utter taboo.” However, his role is marginal and the way he is construed still perpetuates the definition of homosexuality as negative masculine identity. These facts point to/can be attributed to that social attitudes towards gays have been slowly changing on the one hand, and on the other that there is still a long way to go for their equal status in Greek society due to stereotypes and homophobia (cf. Deliyanni-Kouimzi, 2005; Kositzi, 2012; Politis, 2006; see also Campbell, 1964). Mediated construals of masculinity and sexuality privilege an essential heteronormativity.

Men’s self-constructions come in opposition to their construals by the female protagonists. Although the latter also recognize that men are afraid to commit themselves to a (marital) relationship, they articulate opposing discourses, evaluating men in terms of personality and sexual performance, treating them as problematic and defective, objectifying them sexually, complaining that there are no longer real men, as the majority of them have turned gay, and questioning their male sexual drive and hence their manhood.

This “struggle” lies at the very essence of the notion of “hegemony” and can be explained through a number of prisms. Aligning myself with the theoretical posi-
tion that media constitute cultural fields where struggles of meanings—including gendered meanings—take place, and that there is a dialectical relationship between media and society, i.e. the media both shape and are shaped by society (e.g. Fairclough, 1995), all this shapes and is shaped by the wider socio-cultural context of Greece. This is a context which can be seen in a transitory phase regarding gender and sexual roles, relations, and practices. For instance, men leave a relationship when the woman wants marriage or cohabitation, or assumes men’s roles and get married at an older age than they used to, and women make considerable strides in various fields of the public sector. Such changes lead to further changes in personal relations: women are single and complain about not finding a (“real”) man to have a relationship with, leading them to question the heterosexuality of men (case 5); women question men’s sexual drive, again making assumptions about them being homosexual (case 9); women assume the role of the “hunter” (case 7) previously exclusively associated with men, given the long tradition of men’s uncontrollable sexuality and especially the Greek phenomenon of kamakia (see above); finally, women treat men as problematic objects (case 10), including as (problematic) sexual objects (cases 7, 8).

Hence, the coexistence of hegemonic masculinity and of discourses oppositional to hegemonic masculinity can be taken as evidence of the shifting nature of masculinities in contemporary Greece. Men’s self-constructions along hegemonic discourses could be seen as backlash to feminist progress, as delineated earlier: men might feel the need to protect their “threatened” masculinity and reassert it (cf. Benwell’s, 2003, p. 14, similar claim in relation to the British context regarding the so-called “crisis of masculinity” given changing gender roles). Furthermore, men’s given self-constructions could also be in line with men’s still dominant position in many domains in Greek society: men still occupy higher ranks than women, are less illiterate and less unemployed than women, and spend considerably less time on housework and childcare, while there is still a gender pay gap (see Kosetzi, 2007). Hence, discourses associated with features of hegemonic masculinity suggest that men still manage to hold on to what has been traditionally male.

An alternative but related explanation for the prevalence of hegemonic masculinity in the data could be its male audience. Quite unexpectedly for but happily welcomed by the producers, men also watched the series (Kosetzi, 2007). Given that TV series are products to be consumed, driven by market forces, they have to be appealing to male audiences (and thus, to advertisers); hence, they have to reproduce, promote, and “sell” these hegemonic images of masculinity. Put differently, they should not threaten the status quo if wanting to retain male viewers. SP need not be an exception. That said, the target group of the series has been primarily women. Thus, the incorporation of alternative discourses which in essence criticize men and their behaviors and roles could be attributed to a need on the scriptwriter and producers’ behalf to keep the main target audience happy, for the exact same reason. Profit runs TV, after all.

The alternative discourses employed by the heroines may alternatively be attributed to the fact that they are scripted as professionally successful, financially independent, and sexually liberated. They can afford assuming a critical stance. This in turn could be seen as result of women’s achievements and considerable advances in a number of areas in the—mainly—public sphere, which arguably have an effect on the personal sphere. The changes in women’s roles and lives in turn entail
changes in men’s, too, the former influencing the latter.  

Concluding this paper, two final points should be made. The first has to do with a lack of a wide range of masculinities in the series that would correspond to the multiple masculinities on offer in contemporary Greek society. The men’s, including Johnny’s, not-round characters and limited role in *SP* could be a reason for such a lack. Hence, it is far from my intention to claim that only hegemonic masculinity, its being challenged, and subordinate masculinity obtain in Greece. This lack, however, should not be seen as undermining the findings of the study, myself concurring with Feasey who argues,

> [t]he lived experience of masculinity will always be more complex and fluctuating than those representations of manhood and the male role being depicted in contemporary television programming, however, this does not detract from the power of the medium to define norms and conventions, to provide ‘common-sense’ understandings of gender and sexuality and to portray what is considered to be both ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate social relations.’ (2008, p. 155)

As a second and related note, I do align myself with the theoretical position that there is not a single kind of hegemonic masculinity (Kiesling, 2006), as what is hegemonic in one (micro-)context can be subordinate in another. Thus, the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity identified in this study should be seen within the given context, acknowledging the complexity of the term. Nevertheless, the findings of men’s self-constructions according to hegemonic masculinity fall in line with other recent Greek studies drawing on discourse analysis both of popular culture (Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Polyzou, 2010) and of male identities (see e.g. Archakis & Lampropoulou, 2011; Deliyanni-Kouimtzi & Sakka, 2005a, 2005b; Grigoropoulos, 2007; Hiraklidou, 2005; Politis, 2006). Importantly, though, these studies did not identify any challenges to hegemonic masculinity or any alternative discourses to hegemonic ones, as the present study. Without denying the importance of such alternative discourses, however, alternative to hegemonic masculinity discourses have significantly not been employed by men themselves for self-construction. Neither has an alternative, positive form of masculinity superseded that of hegemonic masculinity. This is what is needed indeed.

**REFERENCES**


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22 One could even argue that the alternative discourses could be attributed to the similarities between *SP* and *S&C* However, there is a need for the discourses that circulate in a series to be anchored in given social contexts in order negative consequences to be avoided, see e.g. low ratings.

23 Grigoropoulos (2007) points to renewal of masculinities when the respondents refer to men being caring partners.


Herzfeld, M. (1986). Within and without: The category of “female” in the ethnography


Swann, J. (2002). Yes, but is it gender? In L. Litosseliti, & J. Sunderland (Eds.), *Gender identity and discourse analysis* (pp. 43-67). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.


Late-Victorian debates on the root causes of criminality worked sometimes through the demonization of elements of popular culture such as “penny dreadfuls”—cheap magazines featuring sensational and often violent tales in which criminals were frequently cast in the role of heroic underdog. These penny dreadfuls were thought to exercise a degrading influence over the working-class boys who were presumed to be their principal readership. But the social reach of concerns over degenerate masculinities went beyond any single subcultural formation, taking in decadent intellectuals and bohemian artists as well as the urban residuum. Accordingly, the middle-class periodical press mulled over social distinctions not just in terms of a vertical social hierarchy but also in accordance with a wide-ranging

This paper examines the ways in which the concept of “pernicious influence” was mobilized in late-Victorian periodical publications to reinforce a normative conception of masculinity through powerful discourses on the relationship between textual consumption and identity. Discussion of the threat posed by “penny dreadfuls” drew not only on widely held assumptions regarding the criminalizing influence of popular fiction, exemplified by the case of Robert Coombes, but also made connections with the supposedly corrupting effeminacy of the “degenerate” intellectual, with the trials of Oscar Wilde as the main focus. The paper goes on to explore Wilde’s engagement with the concept of influence across a wide range of his writings, in the course of which he developed an alternative critique of all influence as a perversion of self-realization. This relates in some respects to existing strands of critical debate relating to Wilde’s sexuality (for a summary of this scholarship which dominated critical discussions of Wilde in the 1990s, see Small, 2000; and Bashford, 2002). However, the current essay seeks to frame Wilde’s contribution in terms of late-Victorian debates on the cultural significance of reading practices and in relation to Wilde’s own critique of influence, by means of which he contested many of the assumptions underpinning bourgeois conceptions of normative masculinity.

Keywords: influence, literature, Victorian, masculinity, criminality, Wilde
division between bourgeois normativity and the typology of these various forms of degeneration. Anxieties relating to reading—or, to be precise, the “pernicious influence” of reading—were thus a common feature, from the penny dreadful to the poetry of decadence.

Of particular significance in this regard is the fact that the critique of pernicious influence, like the discourse on degeneration more broadly, was articulated from within the dominant masculinist culture itself (Smith, 2004, p. 4) and is thus best understood as a defensive strategy against a perceived threat to its norms and privileges. Late-Victorian theories of masculinity operated on the basis of what Andrew Smith describes as a “bifurcated model” of the subject in which male identity was deemed to be under threat from an innate tendency towards debasement. This discourse denoted the non-normative as a pathological tendency and, in seeking to delimit the scope of such diseased states of being, sought to quarantine them and thereby preserve the status and privilege of bourgeois masculinities at a time when, as John Tosh has shown, they were felt to be under threat (Tosh, 1999). This was evident in the critical discourse of the middle-class periodical press, which policed both popular and highbrow literary genres for pernicious influence. The ideological work that such criticism performed will be explored in the current essay with reference to two landmark legal cases from 1895, both of which hinged, in different ways, on the question of corrupting textual influence. One of these—the trial and conviction of Oscar Wilde for gross indecency—scarcely needs any introduction. The case of the Plaistow Matricide, on the other hand, has sunk into comparative obscurity, though it was reported internationally at the time. It therefore seems fitting to begin with an account of it.

At around 4am on July 8th 1895, Robert Allen Coombes, aged thirteen years, stabbed to death his mother, Emily Harriet Coombes, at their house at 35 Cave Road, Plaistow, East London. He killed her with a knife he had bought specially for the purpose. The day after the murder Coombes and his younger brother left their mother’s corpse where it lay on the bed and went to watch cricket at Lords. The boys’ father, a steward on a transatlantic liner, was in New York so that the murder was not discovered for ten days. During this time Robert and his younger brother spent the housekeeping money their father had left on dining out, taking taxis and otherwise living the high life. When the murdered woman’s sister-in-law eventually forced her way into the house and discovered the body Robert admitted to the crime but attempted to shift some of the blame onto his younger brother, whom he alleged had given an agreed signal that he should go ahead and stab their mother. The younger boy was subsequently acquitted (“Old Bailey Online”, 1895).

When the Plaistow Matricide case came to court, the judge stated that “he did not remember ever having read a case, so far as the depositions disclosed the facts, that was marked with such cruelty and so much heartlessness” (Central Criminal Court, September 9, 1895). An article in The Lancet in September 1895 described the case as “one of the most remarkable in the history of legal medicine,” and Coombes’s crime as the most “revolting, foul, and unnatural” it is possible to conceive (“The Plaistow Matricide”, 1895a). The case was reported internationally and press coverage appeared in local papers up and down England. It went on to become the subject of editorial columns in The Times and The Daily News and of a lurid front cover for the Illustrated Police News depicting the act of murder and the discovery of the corpse in an advanced state of decomposition—ironic, given its own disapproving comments upon Coombes’s appetite for sensational literature.
Both Robert and Nathaniel have been greedy devourers of sensational literature; indeed, there have been found in the house all kinds of penny ‘dreadfuls’ and blood-curdling narratives … The demoralizing influence of pernicious reading had begun to tell on the boys for some months, particularly on the elder, who a few years ago was treated by a now deceased doctor at Bow for a brain affection. (“Murder of a Mother at Plaistow”, 1895)

The journalist Hugh Chisholm, writing in *The Fortnightly Review* in the immediate aftermath of Coombes’s conviction for the murder, also picked up on the boy’s reading habits, asserting that a police search of the house at Plaistow had turned up “a pile of cheap romances, reeking with bloodshed and all modes of criminal horrors,” which were “immediately and naturally associated in the public mind with the motiveless act for which this wretched boy and his brother have so nearly escaped the gallows” (Chisholm, 1895, p. 765). Chisholm was drawing upon a widely held view that perceived a causal relationship between the reading of sensational fiction and the emergence of tendencies towards juvenile delinquency (Springhall, 1998, pp. 71–97). Indeed, the jury of the Coroner’s Court investigating Emily Coombes’s death, prior to any criminal proceedings, seemed already to have made up its mind when it added a statement to the verdict of “Willful murder” to the effect that “the Legislature should take some steps to put a stop to the inflammable and shocking literature that is sold, which we are of the opinion leads to many a dreadful crime being carried out” (“Inquests”, 1895).

This view of sensational fiction as a stimulus to criminality was evident in periodicals and newspapers before and after the Plaistow Matricide case was tried—for example, see (Greenwood, 1873) (Salmon, 1886a) (Salmon, 1886b) (Gattie, 1889) (Hitchman, 1890) (Humphrey, 1893) (Ackland, 1894). During Coombes’s trial itself this bed of assumptions underpinned the prosecution’s suggestion that the boy had been corrupted by books discovered at 35 Cave Road, which “related to crimes of one kind or another,” to which Mr Justice Kennedy replied “Some do certainly, judging from the titles” (emphasis added) (“The Plaistow Matricide”, 1895b).

Later in the trial the medical officer of Newgate and Holloway, where he had been on remand, was called to give testimony regarding the boy’s history of “excitability,” and a pattern of headaches and “cerebral irritation” was invoked. These were ascribed by the witness to pressure on the brain caused by the use of forceps at birth. The same witness further commented that “[p]ernicious literature would be worse for a boy who was suffering from a mental affection” (“Old Bailey Online”, 1895). The bifurcated model of masculine identity associated with fin de siècle theories of degeneration is evident in this assessment, as is the role of the pernicious external stimulus as a trigger to activate latent criminality and thus erode moral agency and the ability to repress anti-social impulses in line with norms of respectable masculinity (Smith, 2004, p. 4). Robert Coombes appeared to have been doomed twice over to a criminal disposition, by an immanence tendency towards degeneration and by the pernicious influence of sensational fiction, rendering him an object of both pity and dismay. Another significant medical assessment of Coombes appeared in *The Lancet* in September 1895, which did not mention Coombes’s reading habits directly but settled on a more general suggestion that “his life-history points to moral alienism as his usual state.” The same article also noted that this form of mental disturbance, culminating in Coombes’s “impulsive homicidal mania,” was distinct from the legal category of “intellectual insanity”
(that is to say, the inability to distinguish right from wrong), which was the only one deemed to relieve defendants from criminal responsibility. *The Lancet* openly stated that Coombes was legally culpable for a capital sentence; however, it “unhesitatingly endorse[d] the verdict of the jury” because to “have convicted Coombes would have been an injustice; to have sacrificed his life would have been a crime” (“The Plaistow Matricide”, 1895a, p. 743).

In an editorial commentary on the case, *The Times* also welcomed the court’s acceptance of Coombes’s plea of temporary insanity on the grounds that the 1890s were “more tender times” than the days in which “a boy of eight was hanged for setting fire to a barn” (“The Trial of Robert Allen Coombes, A Boy”, 1895). Like *The Lancet*, *The Times* expressed no doubt over Coombes’s guilt nor his lack of remorse. It also pointed out that there was evidence of premeditation in the purchase of the knife and in statements Robert Coombes made to his brother signaling his intention to kill their mother that night. This made a “temporary insanity” defence seem unsupportable but the sentencing decision was nevertheless approved by the editorial because “In no event could Robert Coombes have been hanged.” If the *Times* expressed doubts regarding what was seen as a rather “peculiar kind” of insanity it ultimately agreed with the jury’s verdict to ameliorate a capital sentence because of the influence upon Coombes of “the vile, sensational books which seem to have been his favourite study.” Thus, Coombes’s implausible mitigation was approved once again, in this instance because of the absence of legal provisions relating to “pernicious influence” that could have ascribed his murderous impulse and callous indifference to his exposure to demoralizing literature.

The various branches of the periodical press and the court alike appear to have taken the view that, without the penny dreadful as a source of pernicious influence, the case of the Plaistow Matricide would not have come about. Gavin Sutter notes, however, that no clear evidence was ever presented to support the idea that penny dreadfuls really did have a criminalizing influence (See Sutter, 2003, p. 163–8). Moreover, as John Springhall points out, none of the books named in *The Daily News* in its reporting of the trial of Robert Coombes were actually bloodthirsty tales of criminal life. In reality they were commonplace detective, mystery and light gothic romances: *The Crimson Cloak; The Secret of Castle Cloney; The Witch of Fermoyle; Revenged at Last; The Mesmerist Detective; Joe Phoenix’s Unknown; Cockney Bob; The Rock Rider* and *The Witch* (Springhall, 1998, p. 91). None of these books matched the descriptions provided by the Coroner’s jury, the prosecution or the judge in Coombes’s trial. The conclusions derived from these false impressions by the *Illustrated Police News, The Times* and Hugh Chisholm must therefore have been equally false. And yet such views held sway because they belonged to the dominant discourse on mass culture, which they shared with moral campaigners such as the Pure Literature Society, promulgating anxiety over the pernicious influence through the printed word and forming the basis of supposedly “natural” assumptions linking literary consumption to transgressive performance.

During the second half of the nineteenth century the relationship between reading and character was explored as a topic of considerable concern in periodical publications (Turner, 2000, p. 239–40) (Sutter, 2003, p. 166). For example, Henry Mansel’s polemical “Sensation Novels” (1863) (reproduced in (Regan, 2001, pp. 44–47)) inveighed against the spreading “virus” of “morbid” appetites from lower to middle-class readerships and concern over the effects of the sensational effects of literature upon “unruly female physiology” (Talairach-Vielmas, 2007, p. 99). Dia-
tribes against the penny dreadful were sustained and widespread throughout the period, focusing on the concern that working-class boys were particularly susceptible to what Francis Hitchman denoted as “literature which has done much to people our prisons, our reformatories, and our Colonies, with scapegraces and ne’er-do-wells” (Hitchman, 1890, p. 152). In both instances the perceived dangers indicate above all the anxieties of Victorian middle-class and patriarchal hegemonies during the second half of the nineteenth century in respect of the challenges posed by women and the working class to their social dominance. Hitchman flags up the ideological significance of textual influence explicitly, quoting at the outset of his essay Lord Sherbrooke’s remark during the 1867 Reform Bill debate that “We must educate our masters’ (Hitchman, 1890, p. 150). Such concerns about sensation fiction and penny dreadfuls thus provide specific points of focus on class and gender within a more general and growing sense of unease about the socially transformative potential of mass culture.

Victorian critics often discussed literature and reading practices in terms of their physiological or nervous impact (Dames, 2007). Cultural anxieties relating to print media were similarly couched in terms of their degenerative psychological influence, with Alfred Austin complaining in 1874 that “such reading as at present prevails has, by reason both of its quality and quantity, led to a deterioration of the human species” (Cited in Mays, 1995, p. 175). This generalized anxiety, in which the appetite for reading was feared in and of itself as a cause of mental addiction and moral decline, reached its peak in 1885/6 according to Kelly J. Mays (Mays, 1995, p. 165). The Plaistow Matricide case took place almost a decade later and the publicity it generated reignited debates regarding the demoralizing effects of popular fiction and the relationship between reading and degeneration. The editorials and polemics the case spawned worked over the same ground as earlier campaigns against the penny dreadful in terms of the threat from below. But in the wake of Oscar Wilde’s trials a few months earlier, the case also became the means by which concerns over pernicious influence were invoked not only in relation to the pitiful figure of Robert Coombes, but were also connected to the supposedly corrupting effeminacy of elite literary formations of which Wilde had become the icon (for a fuller discussion on the significance of Wilde’s trials in the construction of the stereotypical image of the male homosexual, see (Sinfield, 1994 and Cohen, 1993).

Wilde’s three trials—the initial libel case against the Marquis of Queensberry and two subsequent criminal trials for gross indecency—had taken place during April and May 1895. At the end of the first criminal trial, which ended inconclusively, an editorial in Reynolds’s Newspaper entered the fray with the comment that “this whole case has stamped as pernicious the kind of literature with which Wilde’s name is closely identified. That literature is one of the most diseased products of a diseased time” (cited in Arata, 1996, p. 54). The murder of Emily Coombes was reported in July and the inquest and trial in August and September. Then, in November, Chisholm’s essay “How to Counteract the Penny Dreadful” was published, whose first paragraph drew together the two cases in a fashion that would have been unmistakable for a contemporary readership, though Wilde’s name seems already to have entered the realm of the unmentionable:

Coming so soon after the exposure of the abominable immoralities of an accomplished producer of non-moral literature for the upper circles of the reading world, it is not surprising that there should be an outcry against
such publications as these, which incite a less cultivated section of the public to even more dangerous crimes. (Chisholm, 1895, p. 765)

Chisholm not only exhorted the authorities to prosecute the publishers of “quasi-criminal” literature, but also to classify penny dreadfuls alongside literature considered to be sexually immoral as both being “punishable, criminal, and obscene, within the meaning of the law” (Chisholm, 1895, pp. 767, 766).

The cases of Wilde and Coombes were dissimilar in terms of the characteristics of the defendants and the nature of their offences, except insofar as they could be deemed to illustrate the dangers posed by “one corrupting sort of literature as well as another” (Chisholm, 1895, p. 767). The fact that the law in 1895 made a distinction between, on the one hand, obscenity (which was prosecutable) and, on the other, “murder-mongering” fiction (which was not) was, Chisholm argued, an anomaly because both forms of writing possessed a tendency “to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to immoral influences” (Chisholm, 1895, p. 768; 770). The connection he makes between the cases of Wilde and Coombes is, at one level, mere opportunism, intensifying the notoriety of one case by combining it with another—both of which had featured in sensationalizing illustrations on the front page of the Illustrated Police News. However, Chisholm’s essay is also perhaps revealing of something else insofar as it shows how public discourse on literature and reading practices in the late-Victorian period were concerned with policing a variety of masculinities whose only obvious similarity was their divergence from a prescribed norm. In addition, though, the cases of Wilde and Coombes are unified not only in terms of late-Victorian debates over the nature of manliness (see Adams, 1995; and Tosh, 1999), but also through the desire to exercise control over the development of masculinities by structuring influence, which thus becomes a key term in the debate. Chisholm tapped into the dominant discourse on print culture and degeneration, directing it towards Wilde and Coombes together and, in so doing, defining deviations from normative masculinity in terms of a common pathology of “pernicious influence,” with the bourgeois periodical press not simply guiding public taste and standards but, as the Victorian journalist and author E.S. Dallas suggested, creating “to a very large extent … in fact—the public” (cited in Mays, 1995, p. 168).

Such definitions run the risk, however, of over-simplifying the relationship between varieties of print media and their constituent readerships. As Laurel Brake points out, the readers of daily newspapers in the late-Victorian period were still predominantly men, whilst middle-class women made up a substantial proportion of the audience for periodicals carrying the kind of essays debating the merits of reading matter (L. Brake, 2001, p. 139). The creation by the Victorian periodical press of a sense of the public as an entity was thus complicated by the fact that this did not designate a unified field of discourse. For example, The Artist, a periodical with a significant female readership and a proportion of male homosexual readers, was prepared to refer more or less openly to the homosexuality at the centre of the Cleveland Street scandal in 1889, whilst the male-dominated daily press suppressed such details, which Brake argues shows “an articulation of male anxiety about masculinity by a male press in a heterosexual male space” (L. Brake, 2001 op. cit. see also the discussion of W.T. Stead’s popular journalism coverage of the scandal in Laurel Brake & Codell, 2005, pp. 213–235). It is thus important to maintain awareness of the distinctions between Victorian periodicals and their audiences (between,
for example, penny dreadfuls, daily newspapers, salacious magazines such as the
*Illustrated Police News*, and critical reviews).

However, whilst essays such as Chisholm’s, published in middle-class periodicals, may have had a significant female readership they nonetheless frequently sought to reinforce the residual ideal of muscular Christianity that had facilitated male privilege in the mid-nineteenth century when it was disseminated through the fiction of Thomas Hughes and Charles Kingsley (Vance, 2010). Such efforts should be read as a defensive response to the perception that male authority was increasingly in question. As John Tosh has noted “the contradictions which had always been inherent in masculine domesticity had by the end of the century come into the open” and in particular “the role and capacities of fathers were widely disparaged, and children of both sexes were less inclined to accept paternal authority” (Tosh, 1999, pp. 194, 145; Griffin, 2012, pp. 99-100; see also Nelson, 2007, pp. 46-71). Reading, on the other hand, was thought to exercise a substantial influence over the formation of character and, as Kelly J. Mays notes, the debate that took place in the 1880s around the “reading problem” functioned “to establish and sanctify social boundaries in new terms” (Mays, 1995, p. 181), with middle-class periodicals attempting to offset the declining authority of the Victorian patriarch through prescriptions and proscriptions of popular taste.

Edward G. Salmon, for example, in an essay in the *Fortnightly Review* entitled “What Boys Read” (1886) described boys’ fiction as “a system of hero-worship” with the potential either to reinforce manly virtues of hard work and fair play or to pose the risk of “pernicious influence” if “filled with stories of blood and revenge, of passion and cruelty” (Salmon, 1886a, pp. 250, 255). Chisholm, writing in the same vein, decried “these ‘penny dreadfuls’—for most of them are sold at that moderate figure,” in which “the foulest crimes are discussed and described in a purposely seductive and exciting manner; the attraction of adventure and the halo of publicity being cast over their dare-devil heroes in a way calculated to occupy the mind and inflame the imagination of any boy, particularly in the lower classes, with a spark of untutored enthusiasm in him” (Chisholm, 1895, p. 765). Chisholm foregrounds the significance of class and the affordability of sensational publications because, in his opinion, the threat of criminalization was “essentially a Board School question” (Chisholm, 1895, p. 770). He was not alone in this view. In fact, the danger posed to Board School boys by penny dreadfuls was raised as early as 1873, when James Greenwood wrote an article decrying the fact that the London School Board were not empowered “to root up and forever banish from the paths of its pupils those dangerous weeds of literature that crop up in such rank luxuriance on every side to tempt them” (Greenwood, 1873, p. 161). For Chisholm, the problem with Board School boys was due directly to a presumed deficit in authority figures in their lives, because, according to Chisholm, their teachers were “afraid to enforce discipline” and their parents were “incapable of controlling their own children … or too much occupied … to attend to them” (Chisholm, 1895, pp. 770-771). By the time of the Plaistow Matricide trial such assumptions about Board School boys like Robert Coombes had hardened into received wisdom and the penny dreadful was widely believed to possess the capacity to transform a wayward youth into a cold-blooded killer. Given the absence of any compelling evidence to support such a view, its pervasiveness is in itself quite extraordinary, and indicates its importance as an ideological support to the authority of bourgeois masculinity.
Not everyone was prepared to go along with it, though. G.K. Chesterton, in his “Defence of Penny Dreadfuls” (1901), ridiculed “the custom, particularly among magistrates, to attribute half the crimes of the Metropolis to cheap novelettes” and was critical of the idea “firmly fixed in the minds of most people that gutter-boys ... find their principal motives for conduct in printed books.” Chesterton was certainly not opposed to the enforcement of traditional values—far from it. However, he saw the threat to bourgeois norms coming not from below, but from what Dr Bull in The Man Who Was Thursday (1908) would call “dirty modern thinkers” (Chesterton, 2001, p. 141). Whereas Chisholm connected the pernicious influence of the penny dreadful and the decadent artist as equally dangerous, Chesterton sought to pull them apart, insisting that it was “the modern literature of the educated, not of the uneducated,” which was “avowedly and aggressively criminal” because it promoted “profligacy and pessimism” (Chesterton, 1904, p. 15). Chesterton’s contrarian intervention highlights not only how general the view of the penny dreadful as a criminalizing influence had become, but also how readily the upper and lower ends of the literary hierarchy were linked in terms of their perceived threat to normative values. Similar concerns to Chesterton’s had been expounded almost a decade earlier by Max Nordau in Degeneration (1892), in which he focused on the degenerate intellectual as the culturally privileged analogue to the criminal, with both groups threatening to exercise a corrupting influence over “many who are only victims to fashion and certain cunning impostures.” It was therefore, Nordau contended, “the sacred duty of all healthy and moral men to take part in the work of protecting and saving those who are not already too deeply diseased” (Nordau, 1920, pp. 551, 557).

The policing of reading habits thus extended beyond a concern with the criminalization of Board School boys to include studies and commentaries on the textual consumption of all social groups. According to Joseph Ackland, who in 1894 produced a survey of reading patterns since the introduction of the 1870 Education Act, the growth of mass readership and the attendant expansion of periodical publications were linked to a concomitant “decay of literature” which he claims commenced in 1885. This association of mass culture with a degradation of aesthetic value was picked up by Wilde himself when he wrote in “A Few Maxims for the Instruction of the Over-Educated” (1894) in the Saturday Review that “In old days books were written by men of letters and read by the public. Nowadays books are written by the public and read by nobody” (Wilde, 1988, p. 1203). Wilde also reworked the rhetoric of decline in his dialogue, “The Decay of Lying: An Observation,” (1889) in which he takes up the example of the penny dreadful as the basis for the idea that “Life imitates Art:”

The most obvious and the vulgarlest form in which this is shown is in the case of the silly boys who, after reading the adventures of Jack Sheppard or Dick Turpin, pillage the stalls of unfortunate apple-women, break into sweet-shops at night, and alarm old gentlemen who are returning home from the city by leaping out on them in suburban lanes, with black masks and unloaded revolvers.... The boy-burglar is simply the inevitable result of life’s imitative instinct. He is Fact, occupied as Fact usually is, with trying to reproduce Fiction, and what we see in him is repeated on a grand scale throughout the whole of life. (Wilde, 1988, pp. 982, 983)
Wilde’s response to the moral panics relating to mass culture, as manifested in notions of aesthetic decline and pernicious influence, was thus oblique. On the one hand he recast the despondent concerns of critics such as Ackland in the comic aloofness of his aesthetic pose. On the other hand Wilde converted the fear and hostility regarding the penny dreadful into a general theory of self-realization through Art:

Life holds the mirror up to Art, and either reproduces some strange type imagined by painter or sculptor, or realises in fact what has been dreamed in fiction … [T]he basis of life … is simply the desire for expression, and Art is always presenting various forms through which the expression can be attained. Life seizes on them and uses them, even if they be to her own hurt. (Wilde, 1988, p. 985)

The corruption of a boy and his pursuit of self-destruction by means of an imitation of art are themes at the core of Wilde’s novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890/1891), which, Norbert Kohl suggests, is a kind of parody of the classic Bildungsroman narrative with its movement from self-absorption to self-knowledge and compassion for others (Kohl & Wilson, 2011, pp. 160–161). Dorian Gray’s pursuit of narcissistic hedonism and moral ruin provoked critical consternation when the novel was first published in Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine in June 1890. Famously described in a hostile review in the Scots Observer as being fit “for none but outlawed noblemen and perverted telegraph-boys” (Beckson, 1970, p. 75), Wilde’s novel was linked by some to the Cleveland Street scandal, in which it was revealed that post office boys had been working as prostitutes for upper-class male clients (Ellmann, 1987, p. 266). The reviewer condemned The Picture of Dorian Gray as a danger to “public morals” claiming that its subject matter was “only fitted for the Criminal Investigation Department or a hearing in camera.”

The question of the pernicious influence of decadent literature has a particularly interesting twist here because Dorian Gray himself is corrupted, above all, by a “poisonous book” that Wotton gives to him:

For years, Dorian Gray could not free himself from the influence of this book. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he never sought to free himself from it. He procured from Paris no less than nine large-paper copies of the first edition, and had them bound in different colours, so that they might suit his various moods and the changing fancies of a nature over which he seemed, at times, to have almost entirely lost control. The hero, the wonderful young Parisian in whom the romantic and the scientific temperaments were so strangely blended, became to him a kind of prefiguring type of himself. And, indeed, the whole book seemed to him to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it. (Wilde, 1985, p. 158)

Dorian says to Harry Wotton, “you poisoned me with a book once … promise me that you will never lend that book to anyone. It does harm” (Wilde, 1985, p. 257), reconfiguring the 1880s debate over the “disease of reading” within an elite literary milieu (the original source for the “poisonous book” being Huysmans’s novel of aristocratic decadence, A Rebours). But the conception of pernicious influence underpinning Dorian Gray is the same, drawing upon the bifurcated model of
masculinity and the widespread concern that exposure to sensational literature would trigger dormant regressive impulses, those “poisonous influences that came from [Dorian’s] own temperament,” and an appetite for the sensuous pleasures derived from “those natural rebellions that wise men still call sin” (Wilde, 1985, pp. 149, 156).

Sin and art, criminality and self-realization, beauty and scandal: these conjunctions are not incidental motifs in Wilde’s writings. Wilde theorized these ideas, with mischievous humour, in his essays published in Intentions (1891) such as “The Decay of Lying,” “The Critic as Artist,” “Pen, Pencil and Poison,” and in “The Soul of Man Under Socialism” (1891) in which he argued that “Disobedience ... is man’s original virtue” (Wilde, 1988, p. 1081). In “The Critic as Artist,” for example, Wilde suggests (only half-jokingly) that criminals should be viewed alongside avant-garde artists as agents of History, by virtue of the challenges they present to the status quo: “What is termed Sin,” he writes, “is an essential element of progress” (Wilde, 1888, p. 1023). In The Picture of Dorian Gray Wilde combines a Paterian doctrine of maximal aesthetic experience with the lurid subject matter of popular fiction and the New Journalism, crossing back and forth between these distinct, but related, registers of the literature of sensation. The plot is woven around a thematic exploration of the relationship between connoisseurship and debauchery, and it is developed through the signature incidents of sensational fiction: deception, seduction, drug-taking, a graphic murder followed by blackmail and the disposal of a corpse—plus numerous hints of other, undisclosed crimes—achieving what Ian Small and Josephine M. Guy describe as “a perfect balance ... [of] both “high” and “low” art (Guy & Small, 2006, p. 169). Wilde’s treatment of Dorian Gray’s character capitalizes upon the popular taste for such sensational subject matter in order to explore the possibilities of what Jonathan Dollimore has called Wilde’s “transgressive aesthetic” (Dollimore, 1991, pp. 64-73). Wilde’s novel, in other words, seems in many respects to support the argument put to him in court that books and the flattery of older men can indeed exert a corrupting influence. In the libel case against the Marquis of Queensberry the Lippincott’s edition of Dorian Gray was quoted extensively during Wilde’s cross-examination by Edward Carson Q.C. Amongst the passages quoted by Carson was Basil Hallward’s confrontation of Dorian over the rumours surrounding him, in which he raises the question of Dorian’s influence:

Why is your friendship so fateful to young men? There was that wretched boy in the Guards who committed suicide. You were his great friend. There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England with a tarnished name. You and he were inseparable. What about Adrian Singleton, and his dreadful end? What about Lord Kent’s only son, and his career? I met his father yesterday in St. James Street. He seemed broken with shame and sorrow. What about the young Duke of Perth? What sort of life has he got now? What gentleman would associate with him? (Wilde, 1985, pp. 183-184)

Carson, leading up to a series of questions about the propriety of a letter Wilde sent to Lord Alfred Douglas, suggested that Hallward’s words implied “a charge of unnatural vice,” to which Wilde responded: “It describes Dorian Gray as a man of very corrupt influence, though there is no statement as to the nature of the influence. But as a matter of fact I do not think that one person influences another, nor do I think there is any bad influence in the world.” Carson pursued the point...
A man never corrupts a youth?
- I think not.
Nothing could corrupt him?
- If you are talking of separate ages.
No, sir, I am talking common sense? [sic]
- I do not think one person influences another.
You don’t think that flattering a young man, making love to him, in fact, would be likely to corrupt him?
- No. (Hyde, 1948, p. 132)

Wilde’s responses here are strategic, but they emerge from a strong existing preoccupation in Wilde’s writings not only with transgression but also with the question of influence. This includes The Picture of Dorian Gray, collections of aphorisms, stories such as “Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime” (1887) and “The Portrait of Mr W.H.” (1889), and the dialogue “The Critic as Artist” (1891). In “A Few Maxims for the Instruction of the Over-Educated,” for example, Wilde wrote that “Education is an admirable thing. But it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught” (Wilde, 1988, p. 1203). Similarly, in “Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young” (1894) he asserted that “A truth ceases to be true when more than one person believes in it” (Wilde, 1988, p. 1205). The strategy of such paradoxical aphorisms is to invert the common sense understanding of things, which might be to view education as the transfer of knowledge or define truth as a statement that is universally valid. But beyond the frisson of the paradoxical inversion, the thrust of Wilde’s critique is directed at precisely the model of character formation that underpinned the controversies over reading and pernicious influence in the late-Victorian periodical press. The things that are worth knowing—those things that are “true” in the sense of an epiphany—are, for Wilde, the outcomes of self-realization (a key concept in F.H. Bradley’s critique of utilitarian ethics in Ethical Studies (1876)—see Kohl & Wilson, 2011, p. 158). Truth, for Wilde, can never arise from instruction or from indoctrination but only from moments of illumination gained from openness to experience and from encountering new possibilities for self-expression. In “The Soul of Man Under Socialism” (1891) Wilde further developed his radical conception of Individualism into a utopian ideal of “the full development of Life to its highest mode of perfection,” a condition that was available in the nineteenth century only to “the poets, the philosophers, the men of science, the men of culture—in a word, the real men, the men who have realised themselves” (Wilde, 1988, p. 1080). Wilde’s conception here of what defines “real men” departs from normative masculinity in two respects. Firstly, it is not bourgeois but rather is based on the experiences of an intellectual elite; and secondly it validates the individual precisely by virtue of their fidelity to their own personality and not by virtue of conformity to a social norm. Wilde’s critique of influence—including that of socially sanctioned role models as well as the Mephistophelean Harry Wotton—suggests therefore that it is always pernicious because any acquired personality trait would tend to pervert the immanent tendencies of individuals from being realized. Hence Wilde’s affirmation of the value of an inchoate nature: “Those whom the gods love grow young” (Wilde, 1988, p. 1204). What may seem in this last aphorism like a romantic ideal of innocence is illuminated within this context as an injunction to resist influence of all kinds, prescribed or proscribed alike. The narrator in “The Portrait of Mr W.H.” articulates
this same critique on influence, which he describes as “simply a transference of personality, a mode of giving away what is most precious to one’s self, and its exercise produces a sense, and, it may be, a reality of loss” (Wilde, 1988, p. 1196).

Wilde’s statement during cross-examination that there is no such thing as a bad influence contradicts the critique he had developed throughout his writings, but his reasons for evading the implication of an older man corrupting a younger one are obvious. Notwithstanding this understandable contradiction, Wilde repeatedly invoked the theme of influence in such a way as to eschew not only agents of corruption like Harry Wotton, but also and equally that demand for positive influence that was so ingrained within late-Victorian public discourse on the formation of masculine character. In Dorian Gray, as in “The Portrait of Mr W.H.,” the disastrous effect of influence is thematically encoded into the tragedies of each narrative. Basil Hallward, for example, opens up the story by telling Sir Henry Wotton of his trepidation when he first met Dorian: “I knew that I had come face to face with some one whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself. I did not want any external influence in my life” (Wilde, 1985, p. 28). Hallward’s anxiety of influence gives way, however, to intemperate adoration once he yields to temptation. He comes to embrace Dorian’s influence as revealing his own true self as well as renewing his artistic vision through a kind of telepathic transference, as though “Some subtle influence passed from him to me” (Wilde, 1988, p. 33). But Hallward’s artistic fascination is qualified by what Harry Wotton perceives about his friend’s new muse, namely Dorian’s “finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair” (Wilde, 1985, p. 39). Under Wotton’s lingering gaze Dorian’s fascination shifts from his personality to his visible, corporeal qualities, and the nature of his influence changes from some kind of spiritual-artistic sympathy to a more physical appeal that suggests both innocence and sexual objectification.

If Wotton’s perspective on Hallward and Dorian slips between these aesthetic and erotic registers, Hallward’s warning against Wotton using his dandyish charisma on Dorian suggests a shift from the pleasurable effects of an aesthetic/erotic influence to the dangers of a moral (or rather, immoral) one, as he jealously pleads “Don’t spoil him. Don’t try to influence him. Your influence would be bad” (Wilde, 1985, p. 36). But, despite Hallward’s pleading, Wotton does meet Dorian and seeks to charm him with flattery and wit, at the same time re-casting Hallward’s concerns about his own immoral influence as a general critique:

“There is no such thing as a good influence, Mr. Gray. All influence is immoral—immoral from the scientific point of view.”

“Why?”

“Because to influence a person is to give him one’s own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of some one else’s music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him. The aim of life is self-development. To realize one’s nature perfectly—that is what each of us is here for.” (Wilde, 1985, pp. 40-41)

Wotton’s speech, laden with seductive aphorisms, exemplifies a performative contradiction in warning against external influence at the same time that it seeks to
mould Dorian’s thoughts and feelings through sententious injunction and seductive flattery. Wotton, whilst speaking up for the fulfillment of an inner self, infuses Dorian with his own influence. Dorian is left stupefied, figuratively compared to a pollinated flower as he sees a bee in the garden crawling into the “stained trumpet of a Tyrian convolvulus” (Wilde, 1985, p. 47), an image that combines connotations of aesthetic, moral and sexual impregnation. And Wotton’s warning against external influence is borne out by ensuing events. The aesthetic/erotic influence that Dorian exercises over Hallward appears in his portrait as the uncanny figuration of shameful secrets, setting in motion the events that lead inexorably to the artist’s murder. Similarly, Wotton’s influence over Dorian leads him to overvalue his own beauty and experience of pleasure, which turns into an ultimately self-destructive narcissism. For both Dorian Gray and Basil Hallward, influence is quite literally fatal.

In both Dorian Gray and “The Portrait of Mr W.H.” the masculinities on display, and the modes of influence exercised, fall outside the parameters of middle-class norms. Cyril Graham, the central character of “The Portrait of Mr W.H.” is an “effeminate” youth who, like Dorian, was raised not by his parents but by an aristocratic grandfather “who swore like a costermonger, and had the manners of a farmer” (Wilde, 1988, p. 1152). This represents a double-blow to the idea of the paternal reinforcement of normative masculinity both in terms of the absence of actual fathers and in the characterization of this residue of patriarchal influence as a course and outmoded figure. The homoerotic possibilities of Graham’s effeminacy are reinforced by the subject matter of the narrative, which explores a theory regarding the identity of the beloved youth of Shakespeare’s sonnets. This becomes a consuming and, ultimately, fatal passion that is exchanged between a series of men, a sequence whose eroticism is foregrounded by what Stephen Arata describes as “the cycles of critical tumescence and detumescence undergone by each reader in the story” (Arata, 1996, p. 69). “The Portrait of Mr W.H.” also codifies criminality explicitly within the narrative because it is a story of forgery (Graham fakes an Elizabethan portrait of “Will Hughes” in order to substantiate his theory). Both “The Portrait of Mr W.H.” and The Picture of Dorian Gray combine aestheticism, effeminacy and overt criminality with a thematic preoccupation with fatal influence. But in “Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime: A Study of Duty,” Wilde takes a protagonist who is perfectly conventional, aside from his aristocratic status, and shows how even an apparently admonitory influence against moral danger has its own deadly consequences. Lord Arthur has a chance encounter at a party with Mr Podgers, a cheiromantist, who reads the young aristocrat’s palm with a look of horror, eventually revealing that he is destined to commit murder. The premise of the story plays upon the motifs of degeneration and pernicious influence with Lord Arthur’s identity split between a respectable social persona and a latent criminality that is triggered by the influence of an act of (palm) reading. As a dutiful man, however, Lord Arthur sets to work immediately to get the murder over and done with, in the hope that this will leave him free to marry with a clear conscience provided he is not caught and does not debase himself in the commission of the crime. After a series of failed attempts to assassinate an elderly aunt and the Dean of Chichester, Sir Arthur wanders along the bank of the Thames in despair, only to encounter Podgers leaning over the parapet. In a flash he seizes his opportunity, grabs the man by the ankles and hurls him into the river, thereby completing the prophecy. Thus, a good man pursuing his duty is transformed by the ostensibly improving in-
fluence of a warning of moral danger into a murderer he would not otherwise have become. Wilde satirizes bourgeois efforts to structure influence and in so doing he unpicks the apparently unassailable virtues of normative masculinity and renders catastrophic the attempts to classify and reform those who fall outside of it.

This same bourgeois preoccupation with the role of positive and pernicious influences in the formation of masculinities is evident in the prominence of penny dreadfuls in the Robert Coombes case and was central to the allegation of Wilde’s corruption of young men in his own trials. There is a profound irony in the fact that Wilde’s writings offered a fully developed critique of this model of character formation and its role within the rhetoric of reactionary cultural politics. In its place, Wilde proposed a theory of self-realization that seems still quite radical today in its critique of any kind of structured influence as a stultifying ideological apparatus. Alongside transgression as a motif and an aesthetic strategy in Wilde’s writings, then, it is important to consider the significance of his critique of influence as a key part of his intellectual contribution to late-Victorian debates over masculinity.

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“As it is with the individual, so it is with the nation,” Theodore Roosevelt told the Hamilton Club, Chicago, in April 1899 (1902b, p. 4). In this address, “The Strenuous Life,” Roosevelt figured American imperialism in Cuba and the Philippines as an expression of personal and national virility. Roosevelt imagined colonizing as a weightlifting competition between nations, in which America must prove its might, or else “some stronger, manlier power would have to step in and do the work, and we would have shown ourselves weaklings” (p. 9). Roosevelt’s rhetoric utilises the inherent connection between imperialism and masculinity theorized by R.W. Connell: “Empire was a gendered enterprise ... initially an outcome of the segregated men’s occupations of soldiering and sea-trading” (1995, p. 187). Gail Bederman argues that Roosevelt’s gendered construction of imperialism as “a prophylactic means of avoiding effeminacy and racial decadence,” successfully masked the fact that imperialism was “a new departure in American foreign pol-

This article examines how concerns about American interventions in Cuba and the Philippines in 1898 are figured through the White male body in Owen Wister’s novels. *Lin McLean* and *The Virginian* are contextualized within a contemporary discourse employed by Theodore Roosevelt that connected a corporeal construction of masculinity with strong nationhood. However, Wister’s fiction demonstrates problems in defining the White male body at the frontier and suggests that the desire for conquest stems from fears of bodily weakness, rather than the virile male form. The evasion of violence against the male body throughout both novels suggests that Wister was troubled by the effects of imperial activity on the male body politic and the bodies of individual men.

*Keywords:* American literature; Wister, Owen; nineteenth-century masculinity; Western fiction; imperialism

* Keele University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Katie McGettigan, Keele University, Keele, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG. Email: k.e.mcgettigan@keele.ac.uk
icy” by connecting it to a martial form of White manhood that was particularly popular in late nineteenth-century America (1995, p. 187).

For supporters of Roosevelt’s policies, the Spanish-American War of 1898 provided a new frontier on which White men, too young to have taken part in the Civil War and the winning of the western frontier, could establish their masculinity. This colonial expansion would allow American men to take up the “white man’s burden” that moulded their European counterparts (see Rotundo, 1993, pp. 233-235, and Greenberg, 2005, p. 280). Victory would also further White supremacy by proving the explicitly racial construction of both civilization and manhood that had emerged alongside wider acceptance of Darwinism (Bederman, 1995, p. 25). This led to the pervasive construction of the American body politic as that of a White man—Roosevelt goes so far as to claim that “we gird up our loins as a nation”—connecting the two entities in the American psyche and establishing the male corporeal form as a figure for national concerns (1902c, p. 296).

It was in the midst of this popular association of manhood and empire that Owen Wister published his western fiction. For Wister, writing is a method of establishing a White male hegemony by connecting the White male body with the American landscape. In 1930, he writes that, on his first trip to Wyoming, he “kept a full, faithful, realistic diary.… I had no purpose in doing so, or any suspicion that it was driving Wyoming into my blood and marrow and fixing it there” (Roosevelt, p. 28-9). Wister appears surprised at the ability of his writing to appropriate the frontier space, yet this literary appropriation of land is central to Wister’s novels Lin McLean (1898) and The Virginian (1902). Through narratives in which tough landscapes are tamed by White men whose virility initially seems unquestionable, Wister’s fiction re-enacts the winning of a frontier that was, by the turn of the twentieth century, already closed. Such writing is a form of conquest devoid of actual violence, and therefore can be productively read against contemporary imperial activity, and the ideologies of martial manhood and nationhood by which it was fuelled.

Whilst Roosevelt, a close friend of Wister, was pleased by “the note of manliness which is dominant throughout the writings of Mr. Wister,” later critics have disagreed over the extent to which Wister’s fiction reflects late nineteenth-century orthodoxy concerning manhood (quoted in Watts, 2003, p. 146). Barbara Will claims that The Virginian articulated a new and urgent literary vision of masculine potency and conquest, while Jane Tompkins finds Wister’s portrayal more challenging, claiming that The Virginian unconsciously reveals Wister’s homosexual desires and “hostile and twisted” feelings towards women (Will, 1998, p. 294; Tompkins, 1992, pp. 151-1, p. 140). I am closer to Tompkins in arguing that Wister’s problematic depictions of frontier manhood display unease with the location of imperialist ideology in the male body and the realities of imperial practice on the male body. If imperial conquest strengthens the personal and national bodies, then the continual desire to conquer testifies to a weakness that cannot be healed; a weakness that is then radically reiterated in the violence wreaked upon bodies and landscapes by frontier conflicts. This tension is articulated through Wister’s contradictory and self-effacing images of whiteness, his fixation on the fragility of the White male body, and his aversion to the portrayal of violence against that body. As such, Wister’s fiction gestures towards the paradoxical necessity of the weakened body in Roosevelt’s theories of muscular nationhood observed by Sarah Watts: “[Roosevelt’s] vision of manhood rested on the notion of a once strong but now fragile and weakening American male self” (2003, p. 172). Through images of the male
body under strain, *Lin McLean* and *The Virginian* portray an ambivalence towards American imperialism that can be neither entirely articulated nor entirely suppressed.

On April 21st 1898 the Spanish-American War began, and Owen Wister married Mary “Molly” Channing. Whilst the Wisters honeymooned, Roosevelt formed the Rough Riders and their friend Frederic Remington, who had illustrated many of Wister’s works, went to Cuba to report on the action. The timing is coincidental, but Wister’s choice of domesticity over the new frontier mirrors the uncertainty of his attitudes towards the war in comparison with those held by his friends. These attitudes are revealed in Wister’s only sustained and direct treatment of the conflict, “My Country: 1899” a poem he delivered to the Phi Beta Kappa society at Harvard. The long poem is a dialogue between Uncle Sam, representing the government of the day, and Columbia, who is the national spirit of America. Uncle Sam envisions the war as a refiguring of the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, and as an illustration of American prowess:

> And Santiago’s drop will serve to hold  
> Embleméd my steel and temper of my blood,  
> Changeless, with Lexington and Gettysburg one flood. (p. 640)

Columbia, however, argues that America should not her “separate path entwine/With alien tangles” (p. 641), reflecting Wister’s own ill-feeling towards non-White peoples, before levelling this accusation at Uncle Sam:

> Your camps and carrion filled more graves than Spain.  
> Inquire, ignore, pretend: paint out the stain  
> With varnished falsehood—let the trick be sure;  
> Prevent, deny, defend; do anything but cure. (p. 641)

Wister transfers the sickness of the American soldiers in the camps onto the body of the nation itself, so that this imperialist activity does not strengthen America but sickens her instead. Uncle Sam responds with racial justifications for war, arguing that the Filipinos are too backward to consent to government (“Unripe yet rotten, what consent know they?”; p. 641), and finally, with an irony that seems lost on the speaker, figures the war as an anti-imperialist statement: “so I’ll still provide/That racing Empires from my glebe shall turn aside” (p. 641). The poem concludes with the two figures accepting each other’s arguments and setting forth together to begin a new golden age for America and her new-found colonies, but it is unsatisfactory. Uncle Sam’s hackneyed generalizations about White supremacy and foiling European empires seem weak when compared to Columbia’s vivid and local depictions of destruction. In Columbia’s vision, both personal and national bodies are maimed in a conflict that gains America only the problem of new, non-White populations. “My County: 1899” is a poem that is at least deeply ambivalent, and at times actively hostile towards American imperialism.

Although Wister’s fiction does not address the Spanish-American War directly, the two can be related through the links between the conflict of 1898 and the western frontier that existed in the zeitgeist of fin-de-siècle America. Both western fiction and imperial ambitions provided spaces in which a form of masculinity based
in the virile body and in martial action could be articulated. Moreover, Remington referred to the war in Cuba as “The Cowboy War,” conceivably prompted by the Western-styled uniform that Roosevelt had chosen for his regiment (Watts, 2003, p. 161). Indeed, as Bederman notes, “by nicknaming his regiment the “Rough Riders,” the nation showed it understood the historical connections Roosevelt always drew between Indian wars in the American West and virile imperialism in Cuba and the Philippines” (Bederman, 1995, p. 191). There was an irony in the Pacific and Cuba being imagined as the new West; many volunteer recruits “wound up drilling in the hot Texas sun for a moment of combat that never came” (Collin, 1985, p. 131). The conflict was so brief that would-be soldiers practised pretend military manoeuvres at a frontier that was already closed. This process of linking the western frontier to the Philippines and Cuba also made the new conflict consumable for the public. Remington’s depiction of the Rough Riders at San Juan Hill is both stylistically identical to his illustrations for Wister’s western fiction, and was based on a re-enactment, a fictionalization performed after the fact. Even more overtly, William F. Cody, better known as Buffalo Bill, transformed the charge at San Juan Hill into one of his western shows in which Cody himself played Roosevelt (Watts, 2003, p. 144). The deeply held connection between the West, and the Pacific and Cuba, and the need to transform imperialism into the easily palatable consumable that the western frontier had become, allows us to read the “colonial romance” of The Virginian (as Wister himself referred to it) as not only an historical fiction at a frontier that was now closed, but an expression of attitudes towards a frontier that had just opened (Virginian, p. 6).

Wister’s essay “The Evolution of the Cow-Puncher,” crafted as a response to Roosevelt’s 1894 essay “What ‘Americanism’ Means,” is a statement of the White-supremacist ideology that was a foundational component of American imperialism. To argue for the dominance of the White man, Wister constructs a lineage between Anglo-Saxon adventurers of the past and the modern-day cow-puncher whom he perceives as the embodiment of American values; their Saxon heritage is “the bottom bond of race [which] unified the divers young men, who came riding from different points of the compass” to be cowboys (“Evolution,” p. 336). As such, whiteness is the clearest indicator of the “quality” that Wister describes as marking the “true aristocracy” in The Virginian (p. 101). When non-White characters appear in Wister’s fiction, and they rarely do so, it is to prove the superiority of the White man. In the short story “Specimen Jones,” two White cowboys are able to save themselves from a party of Indians by pretending to be insane. The irony of their plan is obvious; by playing at losing their minds, the White men’s cunning shows their superiority over the Indians, who are too stupid to be able to distinguish between feigned and real madness.

Yet the ease with which Wister argues for an inherited White supremacy is problematized by the pains taken to establish the whiteness of characters in The Virginian. At the Swintons’ barbecue, Molly Wood, pointing at the unnamed protagonist, asks her dance partner, “Who is that black man?,” and receives the response “Well—he’s from Virginia, and he ain’t allowin’ he’s black” (p. 81). The qualification is unnecessary, because Molly is clearly referring to his hair colour. The same over-enthusiastic assertion of racial identity is made by Scipio Le Moyne, the cook hired by the Virginian as he travels through Omaha, on account of his typically black name: “Yes, you’re lookin’ for my brass ear-rings. But there ain’t no ear-rings on me. I’ve been white for a hundred years” (p. 111). Whites are clearly considered
superior, but these instances show an anxiety about establishing who is White, indicating the instability of whiteness as a category. Furthermore, Scipio displaces the marker of race from skin colour onto the ear-ring, an accessory that pierces the human skin but is not part of it. This undermines the racial biology that Wister constructs in his essay by suggesting that race is distinguished by artificial tokens of appearance, rather than biological essentialism.

This is problematic because Wister relies on racial essentialism to legitimize the position of the cowboy on the frontier, through his descent from the Anglo-Saxon explorer and the whiteness he shares with the Eastern gentleman. “The Evolution of the Cow Puncher” suggests that the Easterner and the cowboy differ only through their clothing, and The Virginian ends with the hero donning a “Scotch homespun suit of a rather better cut than most in Bennington,” implying that this makes him indistinguishable from any Eastern gentleman (“Evolution,” p. 366; Virginian, p. 324). This interchangeability of White men is exemplified by the figures of the Virginian and the narrator. Both nameless, they begin as antithetical figures—the paradigmatic cowboy and the “tenderfoot”—contrasted by their clothing; the English clothes of the narrator led him to be nicknamed “the Prince of Wales,” whilst the first description of the Virginian focuses on his “loose-knotted, dull-scarlet handkerchief” and “the cartridge belt that slanted across his hips” (p. 32, p. 13). However, by the climax of the novel, the two men are able to “change places” as the narrator comforts the Virginian after he has lynched Steve, even having “the sense to keep silent,” a central attribute of the Virginian’s manliness (pp. 260-1).1

Wister suggests that such exchanges are possible because the two men are the same racial type; the Eastern gentlemen and the cowboy are both members of the “quality,” which Wister juxtaposes with the less-than-equal “equality” in The Virginian (p. 101). Yet, as with racial identification, Wister feels the need to stress that point by giving his cowboys origins outside of the West; Lin McLean comes from Boston and the Virginian’s moniker emphasizes his origins in Jefferson and Washington’s state. But in literalizing his argument that cowboys are identical to Easterners, Wister suggests that skin colour alone is not the unifying bond amongst men that it appears to be. Both the quality and equality can be White; all quality are White men, but not all White men are quality. Therefore, Wister has to create a specific type of male whiteness that is linked, geographically, to the history of America. Suddenly, being White is not in itself enough to guarantee a place in the Anglo-Saxon succession, and whiteness as a category is destabilised further.

Problems with White male identity also emerge through the curious vacancy of the men’s bodies beneath their knotted handkerchiefs and starched collars. When Molly is examining the Virginian’s wounds, having found him lying in Sunk Creek, she sees “the slack prone body in its flannel shirt and leathern chaps,” as though it is impossible to conceive of his body without its clothing (Virginian, p. 215). Like the earring for blackness, chaps become a signifier of the white body, with Wister ignoring the fact that between “25 and 35 per cent of cowboys were black men”

1 It is also interesting to note that the back-cover blurb to the 1970 Paperback Library edition of the novel mistakenly amalgamates the two characters; ‘he was from the soft, effeminate East and that made a tough rattlesnake of a cowboy called Trampas think he could spit filthy words in the newcomer’s face. But this man was THE VIRGINIAN’. In the novel, the Virginian is not a newcomer and Trampas does not insult the narrator.
Using clothing as a marker of whiteness undermines the essentialist view of race by constructing the White man through extra-bodily features. And just as whiteness must be configured through something outside of itself, the namelessness of the Virginian similarly means he must always be addressed through an intervening medium, such as his place of birth or his appearance. This distance allows him to become an everyman—or an every-American—and to swap places with the also-nameless narrator, but similarly threatens him with becoming no-one at all. The interchangability of white men, so central to Wister’s theories of racial superiority, not only destabilizes Whiteness by effacing its subjects, but also by facilitating exchanges between white men of different “qualities.” Having met the Virginian the night before he will lynch Steve and Ed, the narrator stands “awkward and ill at ease, noticing idly that the silent one [Ed] wore a grey flannel shirt like mine” (Virginian, p. 249). “Idly” seems disingenuous; if the narrator is so nonchalant about wearing the same clothes as a man who is about to be hanged, then why does he mention it? Here, the interchangeable nature of White male bodies is so absolute that the two men do not even have to change their clothes. That the narrator, an Eastern gentleman who will soon swap positions with the “quality” hero of the novel, can also change places with a criminal, suggests that the very adaptability that makes the White man superior carries with it the risk of destabilising that White identity.

The whiteness-as-absence of the male body in Wister’s writing is mapped onto his descriptions of the landscape, connecting the male and national bodies through Wister’s attempts to create a White national space. In The Virginian, Wyoming is repeatedly portrayed through its emptiness; as he travels to Judge Henry’s ranch, the narrator describes being “swallowed in a vast solitude” (p. 43). Wister creates a blank canvas in the West onto which he can paint scenes which reflect his own Eastern values, creating a text that, as Margaret Reid argues, “works to annex a borderland, a previously contested area, to the known and planned” (2004, p. 164). The West that Wister writes is the America that he desires, a White national body devoid of “encroaching alien vermin, that turn our cities to Babels and our citizenship to a hybrid farce” (“Evolution,” p. 331). When non-White characters are required by the plot in The Virginian, they are pushed to the margins of both the text and the landscape. The Indians that attack the Virginian are “unseen” by Balaam and reside in the Bow Leg Mountains which “lay along the end of the vast yellow distance” (p. 208, p. 190). Whilst Wister needs Indians to exist in order to create the danger of the West, only their deeds, and not their bodies, can enter the text.

A comic episode in Lin McLean further dramatizes this absence of Native Americans in a more problematic reworking of the encounter between Whites and Indians in “Specimen Jones.” Both Lin and his friend Tommy are determined to win the hand of Katie Peck, who is newly arrived in Riverside. Lin suspects Tommy of lacking bravery, so when reports of Indians reach the town, he hatches a plan to prove it. On a night when Tommy is with Katie in her cabin, Lin and his friend the Virginian pretend to be Indians, exposing Tommy as a coward. In fact, it is revealed that there never were any Indians at all; the reports are dismissed by Lin as “put up

\[2\] Rather pertinently, Roosevelt referred to the character as ‘A Virginian’ in a letter to Wister of December 13 1897, the indefinite article furthering this sense of interchangeability (quoted in Wister, Roosevelt, p. 55).
by the papers of this section” to bring soldiers and their money to Riverside (p. 64). On the surface this incident supports Wister’s fantasy of a White national landscape. Indians are not only relegated to the margins, but are now devoid of any agency at all, being written into existence by White men for their own purposes. However, it also profoundly destabilizes White manhood by suggesting that it cannot be defined outside of an encounter with the Indian Other.

More problematically, the boundaries between White and ethnic Other appear permeable. The men become momentarily savage, “shooting and yelling round the cabin, crazy with their youth” (p. 71). In pretending to be Indians, the men explore a fashionable faux-savage manhood, which was constructed through pursuits like hunting. But the word “crazy” suggests the troubling possibility this may expose real savagery, problematizing the distinction between civilized White imperialists and their subjects on which imperial ideology was based. Furthermore, when the incident is stripped of its masks and the trick is revealed, we are left with a troubling incident of Whites attacking other Whites. In the absence of a real Other as foe, the violence shifts to the “familiar-as-Other”: a pattern identified by William R. Handley, as iterating “traces of historical violence on a local, identifiable scale” (2002, p. 18). Victory at the frontier does not definitely indicate an end to conflict, and a healing of the national body. Finally, when Tommy’s cowardice is revealed, the Virginian immediately regrets the prank; “if I could have foresaw, I’d not—it makes yu’ feel humiliated yu’ self” (McLean, p. 73). Reflecting the incident back onto himself shows the Virginian’s awareness that he has removed the façade of White supremacy; Tommy has proved that White men can be as cowardly as non-White ones.

In contrast with the corporeal absences in Wister’s fiction, the physicality of the body was crucial in constructing White male identity in late nineteenth-century America: a period which saw the emergence of a fascination with a muscular physique, thought to be unachievable by non-White races. As Anthony Rotundo argues, “the body itself became a vital component of manhood; strength, appearance and athletic skill mattered more than in previous centuries” (1993, p. 6). Conversely, whiteness was also visible in male bodies that were perversions of this ideal; the weak, neurasthenic body of the White Easterner. In his 1881 book American Nervousness, George M. Beard uses neurasthenia as an umbrella term for a variety of symptoms prevalent in the American upper classes, including headaches, depression, nausea and insomnia. He believed the condition was caused by factors which were linked either to the American climate, or to the strains of modern life—like railway travel, the telegraph and even an increased need for punctuality (Beard, 1881, pp. xix-xx). Although neurasthenia was not celebrated, to suffer from it confirmed the patient’s racial superiority; Beard defines neurasthenics as members “of the civilized, refined and educated rather than of the barbarous, low-born and untrained” (p. 26). Likewise, it is easy to detect a perverse nationalist pride in Beard’s claim that “a fleet of Great Easterns might be filled with our hay-fever suffers alone; not Great Britain, nor all of Europe, nor all the world could assemble so large an army of sufferers from this distinguished malady” (p. 22). A disease of the White Easterner, neurasthenia is connected to Roosevelt’s ideology of American imperialism in two ways; it confirmed the evolutionary superiority of the White body, but it also revealed the need for a new frontier to combat the effects of over-civilization that Roosevelt perceived as a cause for concern.

Like many young, wealthy Eastern men of his generation, Wister was diagnosed
with neurasthenia. In 1885, his health collapsed, apparently due to the strain of being recalled from Europe by his father and set to work in an office. He was treated by Silas Weir Mitchell, a friend of the Wisters, who recommended that Wister go west, thus locating the cure for neurasthenia at a frontier, albeit one that was no longer open (Payne, 1985, pp. 75-76). The direct connection between Wister’s neurasthenia and his first encounter with the West has led Barbara Will to read *The Virginian* as a novel of neurasthenic anxiety; the text is “produced by, and inseparable from, a neurasthenic view of the world,” but works to overcome the enfeebling aspects of the East whilst retaining the East’s entrepreneurial spirit in the West (1998, p. 296). Additionally, the West as a place of bodily restoration is central to Lee Clark Mitchell’s argument for the importance of scenes of convalescence in the western genre: “Westerns treat the hero as a rubber doll, something to be wrenched and contorted so that we can then watch him magically recover his shape” (1996, p. 182). These readings share the assumption that, once restored and remade in the masculine ideal, the sick body disappears from the text, in much the same fashion that Roosevelt apparently banished his physical weakness (and his weak public image as a dandy) through sport and cattle ranching. Wister’s novels, however, do not always bear this out, suggesting instead that the haunting presence of the weak body is fundamental to the continuous construction of both the martial man and the martial nation, and cannot, therefore, be absolutely healed.

In places, Wister’s fiction does illustrate the restoration of weak male bodies through the healthy activities of the frontier. The Virginian is correct when he tells the narrator that he “will be well if you give over city life and take a hunt with me”; by the end of the novel the narrator is as hearty as the eponymous hero (*Virginian*, p. 63). But as Jane Tompkins notes, *The Virginian* is a novel that “states so openly the counterargument to its point of view” (1992, p. 155). If the West is a place of healing it is also inhabited by the spectre of the sick body. The narrative space devoted to the Virginian’s feverish illness following the Indian attack means that not only is the process of recovery emphasized, as Mitchell argues, but also the experience of being sick. It is in this moment of sickness that the White body is most realized, evading the characteristic bodily vacancy previously discussed. Having laid the Virginian on her bed, Molly undresses him, exposing the whiteness below the clothes and subjecting the sick body to an erotic gaze that combines its virility and weakness: “the whole body, the splendid supple horseman, showed sickness in every line and limb” (*Virginian*, p. 219). The splendour and the sickness cannot be separated as it is only through the latter that the former is exposed. To form the virile masculine ideal, its weak counterpart must exist, like the non-White Other, to define its boundaries.

For men like Roosevelt, masculinity was constructed by constantly excluding from themselves any weaknesses that contradicted the virile ideal; Roosevelt literally fought off his asthma with boxing training. This formation of a healthy body physicalizes the process of gender construction theorized by Judith Butler: “the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, “inside” the subject as its own founding repudiation” (1993, p. 3). Moreover, the need to continually establish the virile body suggests that the weak body is never truly cast out, but remains, as Butler argues, inside the subject as a threatening spectre. The foregrounding of sickness in Wister’s writing reflects this; the prominence of the sick body in the narrative negates the text as a space in which absolute
healing can take place. Furthermore, this latent weakness is depicted in the character of Lin McLean who, having broken his leg before the narrative takes place, has “in his stride the slightest halt possible” (McLean, p. 120). Although barely visible, Lin’s bodily defect can never be entirely forgotten. It marks both the fragility that defines him as a White man, and the weakness that paradoxically provokes the creation of martial manhood.

Martial manhood and imperialist ideology are connected by a shared need to expel weakness from the male and national bodies respectively. Whilst figured as an expression of national strength, American imperialism is driven by a profound fear of national malaise, with Roosevelt claiming that “we must ever keep the national core of our being sound” (1902c, p. 287). If American imperialism is driven by a fear of weakness, then the national body can never be fully healed, because to do so would remove the need for further imperial expansion; weakness becomes, therefore, paradoxically and subconsciously desirable for those who advocate muscular nationhood. Whilst Wister is able to foreground the Virginian’s illness in order to more fully establish his healthy masculinity, the idea that sickness is desirable is so subversive that it can only be partially articulated; as the Virginian tells Molly “I have never had a right down sickness before.… If any person had told me I could enjoy such a thing—” he is prevented from completing the statement by a kiss (Virginian, p. 236). Normative heterosexual behaviour swiftly disguises the emasculating utterance, but is also prompted by it. This scene is a microcosmic re-assertion of the necessity of the Virginian’s sickness in his conquest of Molly. Rather than his displays of heroism, it is this spectacle of physical weakness that secures both Molly, and, as Handley correctly argues, “democracy’s perpetuation in the reproduction of a racial type” through their “many children”: Wister’s prevailing national concern (Handley, 2002, p. 68; Virginian, p. 327). The Virginian’s period of weakness is instrumental in raising him to the socially acceptable masculinity of the railroad-capitalist patriarch, just as a perceived weakness in America led the nation towards imperial conquest. That Wister begins to express this link, but does not allow himself to fully realize it, implies an anxiety over these foundations of American imperial ideology.

That anxiety surrounding the connection between imperial ideology and corporeal weakness is further manifest in Wister’s evasion of violence against the body in The Virginian. From reading both his fiction and his biography of Roosevelt, Wister appears perturbed by the damage to bodies, and especially male bodies, that inevitably accompanies imperial activity. In the Roosevelt biography, Wister refers to the former President’s celebrated involvement in the Spanish-American War only perfunctorily: “We lost but few lives in battle during that brief war, compared to the young men who died in swarms from foul conditions in camp. Nevertheless, that brief war opened a new chapter for us. The whirl of history put us among the world’s great nations” (Roosevelt, p. 59). The Swift “nevertheless” with which Wister turns from the deaths of soldiers—signifying a refusal to linger over both “few lives” that were lost and the “swarms” who died of disease—suggests a profound unease with this effect on the body of both illness and conflict. Elsewhere in this section of the biography, a lexicon of disease permeates Wister’s writing. He describes how the 1898 campaign “cleaned the yellow fever out of [Cuba]” (clearly neither America nor Roosevelt’s own priority in the campaign), and portrays the crisis over the gold standard that shaped the 1896 election campaign as a “quantity
of symptoms” that threatened the health of the nation (pp. 59, 54). Despite ostensibly describing victories, both in Cuba and in the election, Wister does not seem to be able to dismiss the threat of decay to both personal and national bodies, even as he tries to frame these events within America’s movement forwards through the “whirl of history.”

Wister’s difficulties in accepting these threats to bodies emerged before the Spanish-American war had even begun. Wister seems to be particularly troubled by Frederic Remington’s illustration What an Unbranded Cow has Cost, which accompanied “The Evolution of the Cow-Puncher” in Harper’s Magazine. Remington’s painting vividly depicts slaughter, with the maimed bodies of fallen men and horses strewn over the landscape, and a gunman to the left about to shoot the only man still standing. Reflecting on it, Wister wrote: “It is not only vast, it states itself utterly. It struck me dumb” (quoted in Watts, 2003, p. 152). Whilst observing the power of Remington’s work, Wister appears in awe; the image “states itself utterly,” yet Wister is unable to say anything at all in response. Even though Wister does not explicitly state that the image is disturbing, his reference to its scale places the illustration in the realm of the sublime. Any admiration Wister feels, therefore, appears to be tinged with horror. When considering the portrayal of violence in The Virginian, it is notable that Wister did not ask Remington to provide the illustrations for the novel in 1902. Having moved from Harpers to Macmillan before publishing The Virginian, Wister apparently offered no objections to Arthur Keller being employed to illustrate the novel (Tatum, 2003, p. 5). Remington had already noted that their styles were beginning to diverge, with the lack of action in Wister’s late fiction leading the illustrator to tell the author “you get harder all the while for the plastic man” (quoted in Vorpahl, 1973, p. 279). Keller’s illustration of Shorty’s death that accompanied the “Superstition Trail” chapter, in contrast with Remington’s illustration, masks the violence that has taken place. The dead body of the hapless Shorty is slightly hidden by the thick grass, and he is lying on his back, disguising the shot from the murder that has been “done from behind” (Virginian, p. 274).

The refusal of Keller’s illustrations to depict the realities of violence against the body is mirrored by an effacing of violence within The Virginian itself. Sarah Watts cites Remington’s advice to Wister that he should “let the blood be half a foot deep [in his writing]” as evidence for his “foregrounding of violence,” but, in reality, the blood in The Virginian reaches barely half an inch (2003, pp. 148-150). Violence, like the Indians, is consistently excluded from the narrative. The reader does not see the Indians attack the Virginian, but encounters his injured body at the same time as Molly — after the incident. The lynching of Steve and Ed by the Virginian is also not narrated. As the Virginian rides off with the criminals, the narrator, in his makeshift bed, explains how he “put the blanket over my head,” and he remains there until “their hooves grew distant, until all was silence round the stable” (Virginian, p. 254). The narrator actively refuses to acknowledge the violence, doing everything in his power not to experience it, and so denies the reader that experience.

Even the shootout at the climax of the novel between the Virginian and Trampas is curiously absent from the text:

A wind seemed to blow his sleeve off his arm, and he replied to it, and saw Trampas pitch forward. He saw Trampas raise his arm from the ground and

Figure 2. Arthur L. Keller, ‘I wish I could thank him’ (1902). Published in Owen Wister, *The Virginian*, New York: Macmillan. Courtesy of Professor Stephen Railton, University of Virginia.
fall again, and lie there this time, still. A little smoke was rising from the pis-
tol on the ground, and he looked at his own, and saw the smoke flowing up-
ward out of it (p. 313).

The gunshots are transformed into “a wind,” removing their materiality, and so
their ability to penetrate the body, from the text. The idea of the gunshot “replying”
also emphasizes how most of the confrontation in the novel takes place through
language rather than action. In comparison to this rather muted encounter, the Vir-
ginian’s tall-talk battle with Trampas about the fictitious frog-farms of California
is a far more vivid episode, and one in which the violence of conflict is more clearly
articulated. The Virginian can say “Frawgs are dead, Trampas, and so are you,”
because there is no real possibility that Trampas, or anyone will die in this battle
of wits (p. 135). Conversely, in the shootout in which Trampas does die, it is not ex-
plicitly stated that Trampas is dead until the Virginian returns to the hotel where
Molly awaits him.3

In the shootout, the reader does not see the impact of violence itself—the bullet
penetrating Trampas’s body—but only his body responding to it. The smoke that
rises from both pistols provides a literal smokescreen that blocks the reader’s vision
of the wounded body. The only depiction of the body as explicitly penetrated
within The Virginian is the Virginian’s shoulder wound from the Indian bullet. As
Molly drags his body from the creek, “she saw the patch near the shoulder she had
moved grow wet with new blood” (p. 215). Whilst the blood reveals the rupture in
the skin, Wister simultaneously establishes the blood as evidence for Molly that
the Virginian is still alive. The blood demonstrates that the body is fundamentally
intact as well as indicating that it has been harmed; Wister does not allow the Vir-
ginian’s wound to only signify destruction.

When violence against bodies can only signify destruction, however, there is a
need to efface it that goes so far as to expunge it from the novel. The chapter “Bal-
aam and Pedro,” which describes the mistreatment of a horse at the hands of a
cruel cowpuncher, originally appeared as a short story in Harper’s Monthly in 1894,
and was rewritten before being published in The Virginian. In its original form, Wis-
ter’s description of Balaam’s brutality towards the horse Pedro, is far more graphic.
The gouging of Pedro’s eye that is implied in the text of the novel—”suddenly [Bal-
aam] was at work at something”—is made explicit in the story (Virginian, p. 203).
“I got an eye out on him” proclaims Balaam, and the Virginian sees “the ruined
eye that Balaam’s fingers had blinded” (“Balaam and Pedro,” p. 303). Throughout
The Virginian, Wister suggests a closeness between animals and humans; Em’ly the
troubled chicken is described by the Virginian as having “sort o’ human feelin’s
and desires” (p. 60). Violence against animals is not, therefore, sufficiently dis-
tanced from violence against humans. The description of the wound to the horse,
which is almost a part of the cowboy’s body, has too much potential to reflect onto
the rider; indeed, Pedro’s previous owner, Shorty, will also be dead by the end of
the novel.

Wister removed the explicit description of the injury on the recommendation of
Roosevelt; Roosevelt had always hated the passage, but Wister only removed it
after frontier violence had been realized in the war of 1898. The President told the

3 For a detailed discussion of the talk-battles in The Virginian, see Mitchell (1987).
author, according to Wister’s biography, that leaving the passage in would “deform the book” (Wister, Roosevelt, p. 99). Roosevelt’s reaction, or at least Wister’s recollection of it, transposes the violence committed against the horse on to the text itself. It is as though allowing a true portrayal of violence into the text will itself gouge a hole in Wister’s carefully constructed fiction of a frontier where men solve problems by wounding egos rather than bodies. What is perplexing, however, is that Roosevelt’s apparent aversion to violence in art does not transfer to a similar aversion to violence against real bodies, even his own. Writing to a friend after the Spanish-American War, Roosevelt observed that “I have always been unhappy, most unhappy that I was not wounded in Cuba ... in some striking and disfiguring way” (quoted in Watts, 2003, p. 201).

The connection between wounding the male body and wounding Wister’s vision of the west is central to establishing that the evasion of violence in Wister’s writing is a reflection of his doubts about American imperialism. To register the violence of frontier conquest would be to acknowledge the connection between imperialism and corporeal destruction, thus problematizing the frontier as a space in which idealised male bodies would be constructed. By suppressing both violent acts and their effect on the body, and by transferring competition into the sphere of language, Wister writes violence to the body out of his literary conquests of the West in the same way that he avoids the deaths in the Spanish-American War in his biography of Roosevelt. However, in evading violence so conspicuously, Wister inadvertently calls attention to the very gulf between the ideologies of American imperialism and its practice that he seems determined to disguise. Like the too-neat compromise ending of “My Country: 1899,” this suppression does not assuage the problematic aspects of imperialism but works against itself to reveal Wister’s doubts.

But why can Wister partially reveal the roots of a desire for imperial expansion in physical weakness, and yet be so determined to disguise the damage to the body that results from such conflicts? Ultimately, this apparent contradiction seems rooted in the racial ideologies that structure Wister’s writing. The revelation that imperial ideology is the product of a sick White body is disturbing, but nevertheless it supports the construction of the White body politic, because that fragility is itself a marker of whiteness. However, a wound to the White body, when mapped onto the body politic creates a rupture in the nation, through which the non-White can possibly enter. This echoed the central fear of the anti-imperial opposition to foreign expansion which had been growing in the years before the Spanish-American War: fears which Wister himself expressed in “My Country: 1899.” Whilst imperialists claimed that the new colonies needed American support for governance, anti-imperialists feared this would allow non-Whites into the nation, thus harming the ideal of the White nation to which they subscribed; the ideology behind the opposition to imperialism was as racist as that which supported it (see Rowe, 2000, p. 8).

The climatic wounding of the White male body in *Lin McLean* manifests these fears of ruptures in national boundaries that are forged by, and then exacerbated by encounters with the Other. In the penultimate chapter, Lin meets his ex-wife Katie Peck—who deserted him for her first husband after Lin discovered their marriage was bigamous—in a saloon in Drybone. She has taken an overdose of opium; the pseudo-Oriental object of her addiction linking her to a dangerous, non-White Other. A doctor advises that her only chance for survival is if Lin keeps her walk-
ing around, and so he is forced to literally hold her up. By this stage in the novel, Katie is a grotesque parody of womanhood who is lascivious and overweight, and whose hyper-feminine dress, decorated with pink ribbons, only serves to exaggerate her unwomanly nature. Her strength and sexual appetites are the gendered challenge to White male hegemony that mirrors the racial challenge of the non-White Other.4

As Lin supports her, literally taking on the task that imperialists argued was America’s duty in the Philippines, his body is torn apart: “the fingers quivering and bloody and the skin grooved raw beneath them” (p. 262). The erosion of Lin’s skin is especially troubling; the Whiteness that marks the body and nation as superior has been obscured. Ultimately, Lin’s actions enhance his manhood, but the language in which he expresses this—“I know I am a man now—if my nerve ain’t gone”—voices the fear that the opposite, emasculation, may have occurred (p. 262). The reference to Lin’s “nerve” seems to conjure the very spectre of the weak, neurasthenic body that such frontier encounters were supposed to dismiss. In the immediate aftermath of this disturbing scene, Lin’s masculinity remains uncertain. As such, the novel suggests that the results of violent confrontations with the Other cannot be easily codified, and nor are they entirely safe.

In his political rhetoric, Roosevelt constructed the new imperial frontiers of Cuba and the Philippines as places in which the bodily weaknesses of White men could be remedied, thus stabilising White male identity and establishing the superiority of the White race. Problematizing Roosevelt’s notion of the healing frontier, Owen Wister not only gestures towards bodily weakness as a necessary precursor to imperial conquest, but also indicates that such conquests do not ultimately heal this weakness. Instead, the imperial frontier is, potentially, a place at which encounters with the Other damage, rather than restore, the body personal and the body politic. In such encounters, whiteness, never a stable category in Wister’s fiction, is not confirmed, but risks being effaced altogether.

It would, however, be incorrect to restate this ambivalence over American imperial activity as either a clearly articulated critique of fin-de-siècle American foreign policy, or an expression of sympathy towards the colonial subject. The hesitant anti-imperialism expressed in Wister’s writing stems from a fear of the non-White being forced upon the exceptional White nation, and is as motivated by racist ideologies as the opposing desire for colonial expansion. And it is perhaps this hesitancy itself that is most characteristic of Wister’s writing. Unlike his address to the Phi Beta Kappa society, Wister’s fiction shies away from overtly addressing contemporary political issues, instead figuring them through “colonial romance” and manifesting responses to such issues in what is suppressed as much as what is articulated. If, in The Virginian, being a man consists of being silent, Wister’s fiction uses the same methods as its hero in its attempts to bolster a conception of White masculinity that seems increasingly fragile—albeit with far less success.

4 Citing Leslie Fiedler, Handley notes that, following the end of the Indian wars, ethnic Others are often replaced by gendered Others in Western fiction: “heterosexuality becomes the structure of difference, and often men are ‘Other’ to women who are imagining their own destiny” (Handley, 2002, p. 15).
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Sexism from another era is easy to recognise. In 1967, when Barbara Castle introduced the breathalyser test in Britain, a BBC radio interviewer opened with a challenge that now seems breathtaking in its smug masculine superiority: “You’re only a woman. You don’t drive. What do you know about it?” It is hard to imagine such overt sexism being articulated on the contemporary airwaves, without so much as a hint of reflexive “irony.”

In broadcasting since then, battles have been fought and won to gain acceptance for women’s voices and faces, for both frontstage and backstage work. These days, female media professionals are highly visible and audible. Women newsreaders are now commonplace, even covering the male preserve of football. Female D-Js are no longer restricted to night-time slots and have a share of the primetime broadcasting schedule. For young people who have grown up immersed in a “post-feminist media culture” (Gill, 2007), sexism must indeed seem like a thing of the past.

And yet there is a range of mainstream programming in which a masculine smugness and sense of superiority is very much in evidence. In this study, I attend to so-called “zoo format” media and the limited discursive space it makes available for women. Examining male hosts’ positioning of female colleagues on their programmes, my main focus of attention is informal talk on BBC’s Radio One Breakfast Show, hosted by Chris Moyles.

Keywords: radio, sexism, interaction, zoo format
hosted by Chris Moyles. I will also refer briefly to another radio programme, Radio One Drivetime, hosted by Scott Mills, and to a television programme, Chris Moyles’ Quiz Night broadcast on Channel 4.

The study of media texts is dominated by a focus on representation, especially in cultural studies. In fact, in the Birmingham tradition, attention to text is defined in those terms (e.g., Hall, 1997). Presented in Figure 1 is a recent version of the cultural circuit in which media discourse circulates; text is in the representation node. Examining texts as part of an investigation of media discourse, however, needs a model that facilitates attention to more than just representations; aspects of the interpersonal are crucial: “If we are to have a comprehensive account of the role of media discourse in the reproduction of social life, then it must be one that includes the interpersonal dimension of talk as well as its ideational aspects—the social relational as well as the ideological” (Montgomery, 1986, p. 88). Critical discourse analysis has since argued strongly that the social relational is, in any case, full of ideological significance (e.g., Fairclough, 1995).

In this study, I present one detailed example of media interaction as representation. My focus of investigation, then, is interaction on air as a performance for a mass listening audience. While focusing on the representation node in the model, I attend to issues of participatory structure, power and control in enactments of social relationships that are broadcast for consumption by distant listeners. The study is a continuation of my own previous CDA-influenced media discourse analysis (e.g. Talbot, 2007). In order to investigate the participation framework of daytime radio, however, I have had to adopt a more informal method, combining discussion of transcribed data with anecdotal observation.

**BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

A few words of explanation are in order for D-J talk as the chosen topic. My attention was drawn to women’s positioning in the participation framework of daytime radio as a potential cause for concern a few years ago. While on research leave
in 2006—working on a book on media discourse—I was a regular at my local gym. Consequently, I became an enforced listener to Scott Mills’ slot on Radio One in the afternoon. A new producer, Beccy Huxtable, had just taken over the programme. I was startled by the abusiveness I was hearing from Scott Mills, both in the tone of his interaction with the producer and in the regular prank calls. “Wind-up” phone calls to unsuspecting members of the public were one notable and, to me, distinctly unpleasant, feature of the programme. Regular put-downs of the female producer were another (cf. Cook, 2000). As note-taking in public places is difficult, only a single sample of these put-downs made it into my notebook. It was the following remark to Beccy Huxtable: “I don’t mean to be cruel, but you really are stupid, aren’t you?” I identified this type of D-J discourse as a potential topic for future investigation. Of course, when I finally return to it several years later, things have moved on considerably. Bulletins from the period by Ofcom, British broadcasting’s regulatory body, make interesting reading, however. The following extract reports on an investigation into one of the “wind-up scenarios” that I had heard, a prank call to a woman at home:

Scott Mills—BBC Radio 1, 2 February 2006, approx 16:48

Introduction

[...] a listener had nominated his partner for a “revenge” call after she mistakenly threw away his football tickets. The co-presenter rang the woman at home and pretended to be from an after-school club that her son was due to attend. He then outlined what he said were the “rules of the club” which included: “Rule 1: I don’t take any s***” and “Rule 2: Shut the f*** up” and referred to the woman’s son as a little s***. As the exchange continued, the co-presenter called the woman an idiot and she became increasingly angry and upset. The co-presenter finally revealed his identity and explained that the woman had been “set up.”

[...]

Decision

[...]

Wind-up scenarios are a common feature of many radio stations’ programming output and they are generally good-natured.

[...]

Given the circumstances, the call made for, at the least, very uncomfortable listening. Although the swearing was bleeped, the frequency and severity of the language was clear. Furthermore, the tone of the call was aggressive and unpleasant. Ofcom had not received a complaint from the mother, and so whether permission was given by her to broadcast the conversation was not a matter of this investigation. Nevertheless, she clearly appeared at the time of the broadcast to be distressed, angry and upset. The item was not suitable for broadcast when children were likely to be listening and was therefore in breach of Rules 1.3 and 1.5 of the Code. Moreover, we consider that the treatment of the woman in this way caused offence and breached generally accepted standards and was therefore in breach of Rule 2.3.1 (Ofcom, 2006)

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1 (1.3) Children must be protected by appropriate scheduling from material that is unsuitable for them; (1.5) Radio broadcasters must have particular regard to times when
When I returned to Scott Mills’ show again in 2010, aggressive prank phone calls involving members of the public were no longer a feature of the programme (at least, I heard none during the six week period when I was listening), though the same producer was still routinely positioned as a figure of fun.

The same Ofcom bulletin from 2006 covers various complaints about Chris Moyles, including complaints about him addressing several women texting in as “dirty whores.” Shortly before, he had been reprimanded for addressing the newsreader as “slut” as he handed over to her. Chris Moyles has also been called upon to apologise for homophobic and other discriminatory remarks. Such breaches and reprimands are ongoing; at time of writing, Chris Moyles has recently been in trouble with the Polish community. An upshot of these regular brushes with the regulating authorities is that fines are now in force, rather like in Premier league football. Such punitive measures are perhaps appropriate, as these D-Js do indeed have salaries of Premier league proportions. It is not surprising, then, that in such a context explicit abuse is in abeyance.

“ZOO MEDIA:” A CLICHÉD FORMAT

My focus is on interaction, particularly the participation framework of a broadcast in so-called “zoo media” format. This format involves the regular and deliberate breaching of the professional broadcasting procedures that keep behind-the-scenes talk out of a broadcast. The distinction between frontstage and backstage talk (Goffman, 1981) becomes blurred as a result of seepage of in-house talk into the broadcast itself. As a broadcasting style, zoo has been in the UK since the 1980s, imported from United States.\(^2\) It was adopted by the BBC in a bid to win back the youth market in the 1990s, and it is now somewhat clichéd. The D-Js employed to do this were initially Steve Wright and then Chris Evans (an account is provided in Tolson, 2006). Zoo, then, involves what Richardson and Meinhof (1999) have called an aesthetic of “liveness.” It indicates authenticity, spontaneity and lack of pretension and mistakes are positively celebrated. A small sample below serves to illustrate this last point. Rachel Jones, who is actually the producer of the Radio One Breakfast Show, also used to be a very vocal frontstage contributor in it. In extract 1, she is talking about putting a pair of tights on eBay (see the appendix for a transcription key):

**Extract 1**

1. Rachel: actually I’ll put the American tan one in
2. Chris: American tan

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children are particularly likely to be listening; (2.3) In applying generally accepted standards broadcasters must ensure that material which may cause offence is justified by the context. Such material may include, but is not limited to, offensive language, violence, sex, sexual violence, humiliation, distress, violation of human dignity, discriminatory treatment or language (for example on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion, beliefs and sexual orientation). Appropriate information should also be broadcast where it would assist in avoiding or minimising offence.

\(^2\) In relation to broadcasting, the term ‘zoo’ itself can be traced back to New York in the 1980s, to a radio show on WHTZ called *The Morning Zoo* that offered “a wacky mix of music, conversation and comedy” (Popik, 2006).
3. Rachel: with a shite sh-
4. Chris: Wha- What-
5. Dave: Hello
6. Chris: WO HO:::
7. Rachel: oh sorry >that was meant to be a< slight sheen
8. Chris: HAH HAH HAH HAH
9. Rachel: sorry
10. Chris: ’s (h) okay
11. Dave: What denier would it be
12. Rachel: with a slight sheen nothing (.)
13. moving on
14. Dave: with a slight sheen
15. Rachel: sorry
16. Chris/Dave: [laughter]
17. Dave: That’s gonna bring the price down isn’ it
(Radio One Breakfast, aka The Chris Moyles Show, 30 Aug 2006)

As she is the producer, Rachel Jones is presumably the person who has the re-

As she is the producer, Rachel Jones is presumably the person who has the regular job of pulling Chris Moyles into line about breaches of the broadcasting code of practice. This situation would explain the degree of hilarity at her falling foul of a broadcasting occupational hazard in line 3 (namely, anticipatory interference of an initial consonant, leading to unintended utterance of a taboo word). Notably, the producer attempts to pass over her mistake (‘nothing (. ) moving on’ in lines 12-13), but these attempts are ignored.

The zoo format keys the talk in it as non-serious. As Richardson and Meinhof (1999, p. 55) point out, “there is pleasure for broadcasters and audiences in the “rawness” of the transmitted text—an indication that this is not to be taken too seriously.” Edgy live radio has “transgressive” appeal; the impression of “getting away with it.” One can readily draw parallels between this format of radio broadcasting and the “lad mag” genre in publishing. My interest in broadcasts in this laddish environment lies principally in the position of women who participate in them.

ANALYSIS:

“WILL YOU SING ALONG, TINA?” EXTRACT

For this study I recorded six broadcasts of Radio One Breakfast over a space of six weeks in March and early April of 2010. Chris Moyles’ early morning shows have a prime slot and are, by his own account, popular with children (Jeffries, 2010). Close listening to the six broadcasts I recorded formed the basis for the general ob-

3 Both, for example, signal friendship by the assertion of shared values. These shared values are asserted both in the othering of out-groups and in ways of performing friendship and transgression simultaneously, by means of ritual abuse and other humour, offensiveness and taboo-breaking (Talbot, 2007, pp. 51-57).
an hour of such chatter before any discernible content is introduced—by “dis-
cernible content” I mean items such as music from the charts, jingles and trailers,
light-hearted quizzes and games and so on. The show’s track list is relatively short;
in other words, there are fewer songs played overall than on other shows. What
remains is, on the basis of both soundscape and topic, arguably simulated pub ban-
ter. Overall the soundscape consists of overlapping dialogue, much of which is
very rapid and difficult to catch. There is often an impression of indiscernible things
going on in the background. As a consequence, it is impossible to capture ade-
quately in transcription the full texture of this soundscape. Topics range from the
previous night’s television, to football, formula one racing, boxing, boozing, scat-
ological jokes and not least “slagging.” “Slagging” refers to an aggressive kind of
ritualised abuse that has been observed in male-dominated workplaces, including
building sites and off-shore oilrigs (Faulkner, 2008; Watts, 2007). In order to counter
any impression that verbal intimidation is an exclusively male preserve, however,
I turn to a study on violence among girls for a definition: “an umbrella term cov-
ering a range of different types of verbal intimidation, including gossip, threats,
ridicule, harassment” (Alder & Worrall, 2004, p. 193). Wind-up scenarios in D-J dis-
course can be viewed as a form of slagging. They are a key component of Chris
Moyles’ repertoire. I have selected one of these “wind-up scenarios” from a single
broadcast for transcription and close attention (given the nature of the talk, a key
criterion for selection was simply that the interaction was transcribable at all).
The institutional space of the studio defines institutional roles clearly. These are
the people present who are potentially within the participation framework of the
broadcast talk:

Chris Moyles  host/main presenter
“Comedy Dave” Vitty  comedy content assistant
Rachel Jones  producer
Aled Jones  daytime producer
Dominic Byrne  news
Tina Daheley  sport
Un-named technicians

Some of the discourse roles that these institutional roles involve are quite con-
ventional, clear-cut and obvious: the newsreader reads the news, the comedy con-
tent assistant sets up quizzes and games, and so on. However, within the
participatory framework, when these overt, “official” activities are set aside, the
remaining talk is the simulated pub banter. Here, things look rather different:

Star
1st person narratives
Teasing and ridicule
Pranks and practical jokes
Boasting

Sidekicks
1st person narratives
Reaction work (laughter etc)
Other support work (endorsing ridicule etc)

On-air, Chris Moyles is the star, needless to say; all the rest are his sidekicks. He
and his principal sidekick, “Comedy Dave” Vitty, supply almost all the first-per-
son accounts. The other activities are far less evenly distributed. I do not wish to
imply here that Chris Moyles does not participate in the laughter. He does. What I
am doing is drawing attention to a conversational division of labour that is probably not apparent at all on normal listening. On the whole, the star initiates, the side-kicks react.

A second, more substantial extract below contains an extended “wind-up” of one of the participants and provides examples of some of these verbal activities. The extract begins about five minutes before the eight o’clock news and contains a little episode where Chris Moyles tricks Tina Daheley into singing along on-air:

Extract 2

McFly’s ‘Everybody Knows’ is playing

1. Chris: [singing] ‘Everybody Knows’ it
2. c’mon (.) McFly On McFly day
3. Will you sing along Tina?
4. Tina: I er- b- er Yeah
5. Chris: You’ve got a good voice
6. Tina: No you said I’ve got a better scream than I have a 7. singing voice
8. Dave: I thought you nailed it
9. Chris: Shall we have a little sing-along?
10. Tina: Not on my own
11. Chris: Together
12. Tina: We go “ooh ooh”?
13. Chris: Yeah (We’ll have to) get the timing right though
14. CHRIS CUTS MUSIC
15. Tina [singing slightly off-key]: ooh ooh ooh ooh ugh (.)
16. [with echo effect] you’re supposed to join in
17. MUSIC RESUMES

Chris Moyles does not join in with Tina Daheley, as he implicitly promises (lines 11 and 13). Instead he records her singing (in line 15). A good deal of mockery ensues, including some from listeners, whose texted remarks are read out by Dave Vitty:

20. Dave: sounded like a chimpanzee
21. Chris/Dave: [intermittent wailing]
22. Dave: someone’s texted in “are you in pain?”
   [30 SECONDS OF WAILING AND LAUGHTER. OMITTED]

Chris is evidently pleased with the sound artefact he has created at Tina’s expense and invites the audience to join in:

23. Chris: If you enjoyed Tina’s singing please text
24. “Tina amazing” (eight double one double nine)
25. that’s eight double one double nine
26. Tina: Why would anyone do that? =
27. Chris: =because it’s funny

[4 MINS OF NEWS AND SPORT. OMITTED]

Between lines 27 and 28 I have omitted most of the news and sport bulletin from the transcription. These segments of the broadcast were relatively formal; highly conventional in delivery, in fluent and articulate professional newsreader voices. I take up transcription again at the point Tina performs two self-repairs (lines 28 and 29):

28. Tina: and Alan Argreaves (.) Hargreaves even (.) will
29. make a football r- return to football after
30. eighteen months (xxxxxx) injured

31. Chris: [wailing] Alan Argreaves
32. TINA’S OFF-KEY SINGING REPLAYED

After Tina’s second self-repair, Chris cuts in. He does this initially with mimicry of her singing, then with mocking repetition of her pronunciation error (both in line 31), then a replay of her singing (line 32). These incursions disrupt the professional delivery and undermine Tina’s newsreader identity. Her complaint (line 33) elicits more of the same:

33. Tina: Oh stop it (.) I can’t (.) listen to it again
34. SINGING REPLAYED AGAIN
35. Chris: [wailing]
36. Tina: [short laugh] Hargreaves played forty-five
37. minutes...

[TINA COMPLETES THE SPORTS NEWS. OMITTED]

The sports news completed, Dominic Byrne acknowledges her with a receipt token (line 38), as he performs a conventionally professional take-over of the floor. As soon as he finishes the weather report, the mockery resumes:

38. Dominic: Tina, thanks.

39. Chris: [wailing]
40. SINGING REPLAYED FIVE MORE TIMES
41. Chris: It’s that cracked bit at the end
42. Tina: It’s because you didn’t join in
43. Chris: Tina sounds like the wookie off of Star Wars
44. SINGING REPLAYED
45. [Laughter]

From line 46, Dave Vitty joins in the teasing with enthusiasm. The ridicule of long-suffering Tina develops as a co-production:

46. Dave: Can you imagine- Can you imagine karaoke with Tina?
47. Chris: Oh it’d be brilliant (.) Two hours
48. Tina: [Sigh]
49. Dave: Don’t take any lessons, don’t change who you are
50. Tina: No (I want) singing lessons
51. Dave: Don’t change who you are
52. Tina: Charming
53. Chris: You are rubbish
54. Tina: (alright then teach) me to sing
55. Chris: Twelve quid an hour
56. No it’s lovely
57. SINGING REPLAYED EIGHT MORE TIMES
58. Dave: Tina Tuner
59. Chris: Tina Tuner
60. [Laughter]
61. Chris: All right I’ll stop
62. SINGING REPLAYED
63. Tina: (I’m never gonna get a) boyfriend
64. Chris: What?
65. Tina: I’m never gonna get a boyfriend if you keep playing
66. that
67. Chris: But it’s part of your personality Nobody’s gonna care if you can sing in tune or not (.). Never
68. gonna get one anyway You’re too high maintenance

At this point, Chris inserts a pre-recorded voice, some promotional material for the show:

70. Prerecorded voice: [gravelly movie-trailer delivery]
71. Leonardo da Vinci () Donatello () Raphael () Sir Isaac Newton () and Chris Moyles () The world has always loved great artists and this one is here
72. every weekday morning
73. (Radio One Breakfast Show, 19 March 2010)
74.Earlier I identified boasting as another verbal activity by the star of the show. While there is no bragging from him directly in this “wind-up” extract I have selected, there is, however, a great deal built into the same show on his behalf, as in lines 70-74. Of course, the boasting is made ludicrous in the extreme by exaggeration. But an implication is that the teasing-of-Tina is a prime example of Chris Moyles’ work as a “great artist.” The bragging may be absurd but it is relentless. Every programme listing is a fanfare: “The award-winning Chris Moyles Show with the award-winning Chris Moyles.” His website profile hails him as the “saviour of Radio One.” On the morning after an annual awards ceremony in March, his boasting throughout the show became overwhelming.

**Discussion**

In the “wind-up scenario” extract above, no one is being sworn at and there is a great deal of laughter, in contrast with the broadcasts that had sparked my initial interest in D-J talk several years ago. Unsurprisingly, much of the laughter comes, not from Tina, but from the two who gang up on her in their co-production of
ridicule. Chris Moyles returns to this episode repeatedly throughout the broadcast. Moreover, a segment of the wind-up is used later in the day as a trailer for the breakfast show. Consisting of lines 1-16 (“Will you sing along Tina?” etc) plus some of the wailing and laughter I omitted between lines 22-23, this trailer is broadcast on the afternoon show hosted by Scott Mills. From its use in this way, it is clear that it is being used to represent the spirit of the show: what the show is all about.

I have focused here on a twenty-minute segment from a single broadcast. In it, a woman reading sports news is the butt of humour. She is not targeted because she is reading the news; that’s just why she is present at all. I selected it from a sample of six breakfast shows that I recorded and listened to over a space of six weeks. From that listening, I would say that quite aggressive humour is common, but there was only one other lengthy segment where one person was singled out as the butt for prolonged ridicule. It was again Tina and it took place the morning after the award ceremonies. (I did not select that broadcast for close attention because the broadcast talk was virtually impossible to transcribe. Consequently I don’t have a sample.) Tina was allegedly given permission to sleep off a hangover in the studio. This situation triggered thirty minutes’ speculation on what kind of practical joke to play on her, which also generated a long sequence of listeners’ texts with suggestions for unpleasant things to inflict on her sleeping form. The potential offensiveness of the texts was gleefully exploited. Towards the end of the show, for example, they did not miss the opportunity to reading out a text that was apparently sent by a listener disappointed that they did not, after all, actually inflict anything on her (“Bloody woman! What an anti-climax!”). The teasing for being hung-over continued for the rest of the broadcast.

I have been attending to a radio broadcast before the watershed, where the participants are mindful of potential breaches to Ofcom regulations (specifically 1.3 and 1.5 relating to children). Chris Moyles’ show for Channel 4 television is for broadcast after the watershed and, while not live, seems to be attempting something similar to the live radio format. On the basis of a similar sample of viewing of this odd hybrid of chat show and quiz show, there seem to be fewer constraints on the potential for wind-up scenarios than on daytime radio. Women’s place on the show is highly predictable. There is a female guest-contestant most weeks and she is invariably heavily sexualised. On one show, a fellow D-J from Radio One, Fearne Cotton, was subjected to mock-threat of assault on her breasts. On another, the actor Billy Piper appeared to be dying of embarrassment as some sexually explicit scenes were screened, to a very vocal, leering audience on stage and off, from a television drama in which she played a prostitute. These are arguably in breach of Ofcom’s Rule 2.3, which would of course be taking it very seriously.

But how seriously should we take it? Well, the zoo format keys the talk in it as non-serious; its appeal appears to lie in the impression of lightheartedness and “getting away with it.” Moreover, Chris Moyles is sometimes the butt of humour himself. He is occasionally teased about his weight, or more specifically his multiple chins, as his fans are quick to point out. We are not supposed to take it, or him, seriously. But if it really is the case that the professional identities of women working in the media are being systematically undercut within the zoo media format, then how could we possibly do otherwise?

Of course, asking how seriously we should take media representations begs the question of how much influence they have, for which there is no ready answer. A group of studies of “shock jock” discourse on Québec radio has explored at some
length its “contagiousness” as it circulates in the community (Turbide et al., 2010; Vincent & Turbide, 2004; Vincent et al., 2007, 2008). The authors argue that deprecating talk, and aggressive forms of expression generally, have become part of the “natural speechscape” of public discourse as a consequence of the radio hosts’ influence. Now Chris Moyles is no shock jock; his shows are low key, tame perhaps, in comparison to the toxic discourse that Turbide et al investigate. Yet he does have celebrity status and his discursive style in hosting primetime radio and TV shows puts into circulation particular patterns of interaction that are liable to be normalised. His celebrity status imparts influence, since a discourse of celebrity pervades media discourse and informs our understanding of the social world beyond the media:

Mass media images and representations of famous people, stars and celebrities are vehicles for the creation of social meaning. A celebrity always represents more than him- or herself. So celebrity conveys, directly or indirectly, particular social values, such as the meaning of work and achievement, and definitions of sexual and gendered identity. (Evans 2006, p. 2)

In the past half-century, women have made major inroads into professional media environments. But the samples of zoo media I had looked at suggest that the discursive space women occupy there is severely limited. Tina may have achieved the position of sports newsreader but she is routinely positioned as the butt of humour, as a foil for the host’s wit. I began this article by remarking on the sense of smug masculine superiority of Barbara Castle’s radio interviewer in the 1960s. The masculine identity that Chris Moyles offers for daily consumption today sounds every bit as smug, self-satisfied and superior.

**Transcription key**

:: vowel lengthening
(.) pause
= latching (immediate follow-on)
xx- incomplete utterance
(xx) indistinct utterance
(h) laughter in speech

heavy emphasis
[gestures and other “business”]

**REFERENCES**


Phyllida Lloyd’s recent award-winning film, *The Iron Lady* (2012), which depicts former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and her rise to power, features a montage in which Thatcher is seen dancing with U.S. president Ronald Reagan. The short sequence is an eerie yet fitting emblem of the 1980s and a fascinating (gender) image on a number of levels, not just because both political leaders are impersonated by actors in this *danse macabre*, but because their individual political careers have been read as masculinity performances—on the one side, the B-movie Cowboy-turned-President, and on the other the “Iron Lady,” whose alleged lack of femininity was constantly levelled against her and became part of her public image. A conference on British and American Masculinities since 1980 inevitably has to deal with the long shadow cast by the Thatcher and Reagan years, and many of the papers presented during the three-day conference, *Masculinities Between the National & the Transnational, 1980 to the Present*, held at Kent State University, August 5-7, 2011, indeed addressed the diverse cultural and political ramifications of this era. It was the second of three conferences to emerge from the ongoing research project, *Towards Comparative Masculinity Studies*, a transatlantic cooperation initiated by Prof. Stefan Horlacher (Dresden University of Technology) and Prof. Kevin Floyd (Kent State University), sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and Kent State University. Having already welcomed scholars from three different continents in Dresden in 2010 in order to offer transnational perspectives on masculinity and the intersections between literary production and gendered...
identities in the post-war era up until the beginning of the Thatcher/Reagan years, this time, global developments in masculinities of the past thirty years were interrogated by scholars from the United States, the United Kingdom, Estonia, New Zealand, and Germany.

In his opening address, conference co-organiser and host KEVIN FLOYD (Kent State) summarised the current state of research in the field of Masculinity Studies which has undergone both diversification and differentiation in recent years, moving from the groundbreaking work in the 1980s which focused on (monolithic) masculinity as a response to feminism towards post-1990s differentiation, which is dominated by a pluralised conceptualisation of masculinities. With a number of influential studies on male images, representations and embodiments of male identity having been published in recent years, Floyd stressed that there was an increased need not just to re-address traditional questions, but to interrogate masculinities from a transnational and international perspective in the political climate of the past thirty years. He argued that the emphasis of this conference would also have to include perspectives outside the strictly delineated field in order to examine how the neoliberalist movement which started with the rise of Thatcher and Reagan in the U.K. and in the U.S., respectively, has shaped male identity politics in contemporary narratives. Following a short welcoming address by TIMOTHY S. MOERLAND, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Kent State University, the first conference panel (entitled “Handle with Care”) invested much thought into the fragility of male identity constructions, but also addressed the perception of monstrous embodiments of masculinity in popular media. SETH FRIEDMAN (DePauw University) dealt with the disguises of male movie villains in “Constructing the Perfect Cover,” focusing on the way contemporary misdirection films—narratives with twist endings—force the viewers not only to reinterpret the events they have been presented, but also to question their beliefs about gender. Characteristically, the protagonist of misdirection films is male and finds out that he has been living a dream or a hallucination. The villains in both Bryan Singer’s The Usual Suspects (1995) and Shyamalan’s Unbreakable (2000), on the other hand, reveal a paradoxical constellation at the heart of these narratives. Behind the mask of a sick man, a dangerous type of virility is revealed, which proposes a spiritual bond between the figure of the criminal mastermind and contemporary anxieties about disempowered masculinity. The monstrous acts and murders committed by psychopathic villains were also at the heart of KERRY LUCKETT’S (Purdue University-Calumet) paper, “‘In Just Seven Days’: The Frankenstein Image and the Making of Queer Identity through the Male Body”, which applied queer readings to Thomas Harris’ The Silence of the Lambs (1988) and Joyce Carol Oates’ Zombie (1995), interpreting them as contemporary adaptations of the Frankenstein Myth. As the serial killer characters in both texts cultivate their queer selves through their victims’ bodies, it could be argued that the thriller genre challenges the common conceptualisation of queering as a monstrous cultivation of sexual identity; however, these texts still remain ambiguous about the disturbing agendas of their protagonists. The first panel was concluded with observations on “Borderline Personality Disorder and Black Masculinity in Mainstream U.S. Hip Hop” by MERRI LISA JOHNSON (University of South Carolina-Upstate). Johnson presented findings from inquiry into current medical discourse on schizophrenia, a diagnosis often falsely assigned to Black male subjects, and linked this debate with the controversy surrounding U.S. Hip Hop artists like Kanye West, whose lyrics reveal clusters of post-traumatic stress disorder.
Johnson referred to critics like Judith Halberstam, whose readings of popular texts celebrate the monstrous as a subaltern voice, in order to show how West’s rhetoric of protest addresses gendered and raced prejudices. However, these complex subtexts are often sidelined by the general audience, who prefer to read West’s lyrics as ultimately superficial, violent, and dangerous statements of a racial minority.

Friday’s second panel (“Scripting Manliness”) put recent developments in western masculinity scripts under scrutiny: ERIK PIETSCHMANN (University of Tübingen, Germany) examined the confessional first-person narratives of two celebrated Generation X books in his paper entitled “Violence as a Male Narrative.” Whereas Alex Garland’s *The Beach* (1996) depicts the drug-fuelled explorations of European backpackers in Thailand, Bret Easton Ellis’ infamous *American Psycho* (1991) tells the story of yuppie serial killer Patrick Bateman, who seems more affected by questions of etiquette and taste than he is by his cannibalistic murder sprees. Pietschmann showed how the talkative “rhetoric of confession” which has become so characteristic of late 20th-century novels is not only instrumental in translating outrageous incidents to the readers, but does also affirm the fragile masculinity of autodiegetic narrators. The idea that a significant amount of recent cult books and films essentially revolve around fragile and deformed masculinities was also at the heart of “Working Bodies, Dislocated Identities,” presented by RAILI MARLING (University of Tartu, Estonia). Marling argued that the portrayal of men in American and British films of recent years has undergone a shift from the hegemonic “masculinity” (Tasker) of the late 1980s towards powerless working class males, who experience social mobility as a threat to their self-image. Marling demonstrated that a transnational perspective on male identities in British and American film culture hints to some parallels with regard to economic realities and the way these are reflected in gendered notions of power: both the male strippers in *The Full Monty* (1997) and the blue-collar protagonists in *Blue Valentine* (2010) try to compensate for economic powerlessness and their fear of femininity by resorting to archaic ideas about masculinity. KEISHA LINDSAY (University of Wisconsin-Madison), in “Neoliberalism, Feminism, and Ethnic Authenticity in the Black Atlantic,” widened the scope of the conference even more in order to include a different class of narrative altogether: the common perception of a crisis occurring amongst Black males is shaped by crisis authors in different media. Many of these texts share characteristic features in the way they portray Black men as an obsolete group that always seems to be in crisis. Crucially, blame is bestowed not so much on the effects of neo-liberalism, but on professional Black women and Black feminism, as the media construct an over-simplified image of Black women as overachievers. Lindsay furthermore elaborated on the idea that the crisis narratives themselves do not only diagnose the problem, but also contribute to it by sticking to commonplaces of gendered racism.

The opening day concluded with two papers on “Gendered Inversions,” delivered by NADYNE STRITZKE (Justus-Liebig University Gießen, Germany) and Mirjam Frotscher (Dresden University of Technology, Germany). In her socio-cultural take on “The Manly Art of Pregnancy,” Stritzke examined the *topos* of male pregnancy from its biblical roots in the Genesis myth (for what is the story of Eve, who was allegedly made from Adam’s rib, if not a fantasy of a male giving birth?), up to contemporary examples (such as U.S. trans* man Thomas Beatie, who has given birth to three children) and located it within different critical realms. Evidently, the idea of male pregnancy is no longer just the exclusive domain of comedies (like the 1994
Arnold Schwarzenegger-vehicle, *Junior*, the tagline of which boasts that “nothing is inconceivable”), feminist science fiction texts (such as Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time*, 1976) and Internet hoaxes, but has transformed into a politically heated subject in trans* and intersex debates. Stritzke’s emphasis on the performative dimension of fiction was shared by Mirjam Frotscher’s take on contemporary British and American novels, “Gaining Visibility/Undoing Maleness: Non-Normative Masculinities since the 1990s.” Once more, the transnational framework made it possible to draw conclusions regarding the developments on both sides of the Atlantic: By analyzing four contemporary novels (including works by Jackie Kay and Jeffrey Eugenides), Frotscher demonstrated that the last two decades saw an increase in literature where gender is presented as negotiable and where the norms of those who exclude non-conformists are questioned. Frotscher drew upon Judith Halberstam’s concept of female masculinity in order to examine masculinity as a performative phenomenon that is not merely limited to the male body, in order to include female as well as intersex bodies. Frotscher pointed out the irony one can find at the heart of these queered narratives: if masculinity can be performed simply by enacting a few key markers and donning some clothes, then the whole (binary) gender system is eventually revealed as frail, always in danger of being exposed by apt performers.

Saturday’s first panel (“Pater Familias”) dealt with the presentation of different concepts of father figures presented in U.S. and British fiction and film. In the first paper Sonja Schillings (Free University of Berlin, Germany) focused on mostly absent fathers and the figure of the pirate in her talk “Hypermasculine Fatherhood and the Public-Private Divide: Absent Fathers and Outlaw Dynasties in *Pirates of the Caribbean*”. As the pirate motif has seen a renaissance following the success of Disney pirate movies, this renewed interest also sheds light on popular masculinity scripts: the split between hypervisible fathers and invisible mothers, the role of pirates as public agents who serve as male gate keepers of public life, and, of course, the way their parasitical business life-style represents an afterglow of the 1980s “Greed is good”-attitude as a form of freedom. Natalia Georgieva (Kent State University) focused on the absent father and the paternalist system in “Fatherhood and *Fight Club,*” linking the perceived psycho-emotional trauma the protagonist experiences to the figure of the absent father. Palahniuk’s book illustrates the importance of the father-son bond and the disastrous consequences of its disruption, which ultimately results in violence and anarchy in the novel. While Schillings and Georgieva focused on mostly absent fathers who cause their offspring to look for surrogates, Daniel Lukes (New York University) turned his attention to those fathers who are cut off from the reproductive agreement and are left with little to no control or connection to their offspring, in his paper “The Omega Male: Fatherhood in Contemporary British and U.S. Fiction.” Using novels by Will Self and Cormac McCarthy, Lukes expanded on how the role of the father has undergone changes due to the breakdown of the nuclear family unit and how contemporary literary texts articulate, assert, and grapple with models for fatherhood based on nurture, domesticity, and protection.

The second panel (“Drama Queens”) that day was kicked off by a presentation of the many filmic incarnations of the shady character of Tom Ripley. In his talk entitled “Mr. Ripley’s Renaissance: Adaptable Masculinities for the New Millennium,” Wieland Schwanebeck (Dresden University of Technology, Germany) examined how the non-specified, shape-shifting nature of this literary character,
who lacks any real core, motivation, and clear sexual identification, invites opposing and non-stringent filmic interpretations, including depictions of Ripley as a tragic 1950s closet homosexual, as a sadistic sociopath, and as a dilettante upstart. What provides common DNA for these shifting adaptations is their transnational perspective and their subversive potential: Ripley’s parodies of stereotypical masculinities provide a fitting critique of a major dilemma both in adaptation theory and masculinity studies: the persistent idea of the original that must not be betrayed. In the second paper of the panel, entitled “At Home in the Battlefield: Mercenaries and Paramilitary Patriotism in The A-Team, 1983-87,” Charity Fox (University of Baltimore) examined the function of the mercenary figure that appears cyclically in popular American discourse, parallel to times of war, crises in White patriarchal masculinity, and redefinitions of American exceptionalism. Set against the backdrop of a nation still recovering from the Vietnam War, shows like The A-Team offered a combination of serious, isolated, and alienated warrior figures in primarily homosocial battlefield situations, metaphorically highlighting paths for recovery for both “regular” (White male) Americans and the nation as a whole, from the crisis of confidence. The last paper of the panel was delivered by E. Anna Claydon (University of Leicester, U.K.) on “Masculinity and the Crime Drama in Britain and the U.S.: The Transnationality of the Detective and His Nemesis.” Starting with the assumption of crime drama being the one genre which crosses national boundaries with the most ease, Claydon substantiated this claim by marking the crossovers that have occurred between the U.K. and the U.S., focusing on the inclusion of British masculinities in contemporary U.S. detective shows (such as The Mentalist and House, M.D.) in particular. All of these texts formulate the detection of crime within a field of references and pre-existing ideas of masculinity which enable them to re-frame what a “successful” man is or can be.

The last panel on Saturday, entitled “Manning the Nation” broadened the transnational perspective with the papers delivered by Davinia Thornley (University of Otago, New Zealand) and Ed Madden (University of South Carolina-Columbia). Davinia Thornley interpreted Robert Sarkies’ film Out of the Blue, a searing recount of New Zealand’s largest mass-murder (the 1990 killing of thirteen residents of an isolated seaside community) in her talk, “A Case of ‘National Genre Confusion’.” Instead of lingering on the perpetrator and his failed masculinity, Out of the Blue focuses on the community affected by this volatility and emphasizes a psychological rather than a physical narrative development instead. In this regard the film inverts the established relationship between cinematic categories by providing art house narrative and aesthetic conventions while employing subject matter firmly encoded as “Man Alone.” In his paper “Exploring Masculinities: Intimacy, Affect, and Masculinity in Ireland, 1998-2002,” Ed Madden focused on the award-winning short film Chicken (2001) to sketch the changing public attitude toward portrayals of masculinity and male intimacy. Madden traced the evolving cultural representation of masculinity in the 1990s and pointed out how this representation was influenced by historical shifts in Irish culture (both social and economic). In his reading of Chicken, Madden demonstrated that the level of intimacy depicted in the film represents the affect associated with male-male intimacy as the very limit of cultural intelligibility.

Sunday saw one final panel, dedicated to “Transnational/Transactional Masculinities.” Deborah Cohen (University of Missouri-St. Louis) presented some findings from her field work in the milieu of Mexican migrants living in Chicago. Some
of the results outlined in her paper, “Sex and Betrayal: The Long Arm of Patriarchy in a Transnational U.S.-Mexican Social World,” strongly emphasised the resiliency of patriarchy as a social form: Having encountered and interviewed several Mexican men who entertained both relationships with their wives in Mexico and with White, female American women (positing a major tension between reliable, traditional kinship systems and the idea shared by many migrants that extramarital affairs outside of their hometown did not count), Cohen suggested that migrants who had experienced numerous subordinations—with regard to their ethnicity, race, nationality, and class, respectively—often resorted to transnational patriarchal ideology in order to stabilise their disrupted biographical backgrounds. The last text to be illuminated in the conference was a controversial slasher spoof by one of the most celebrated contemporary directors. In “Beyond Gender: Praxis, (Post) Marxist Aesthetics, and Tarantino’s Death Proof,” WILLIAM WHALEN (University at Albany-SUNY) argued that Tarantino’s film resorts to a post-Marxist aesthetics and moves beyond conventional means of representation. By employing Freud’s topographical model of the psyche and a Derridean terminological framework, Whalen analysed a number of scenes from Tarantino’s film in which a multi-racial assemblage of women defend themselves not only against the serial killer, Stuntman Mike, but (on a symbolic level) also enact the re-united fragmented body which Marx draws upon in order to conceptualise the division of labour under capitalism.

During the concluding roundtable discussion, key ideas of the past three days were summarised and re-examined. It became clear that the impetus of many papers pointed to the necessity to move beyond the traditional framework and to offer an even more systemic glance at the gendered political framework; these aspects were readdressed and elaborated on in the final conference of the transatlantic cooperation project in Dresden in June, 2012. For more information on Bodies—Systems—Structures: Masculinities in the UK and the US, 1945 to the Present, see http://tu-dresden.de/slk/bodies-systems-structures and http://www.comparativemasculinities.com. Selected papers from the proceedings of the Kent conference will be published in 2013.
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