

The Governing Gaze of Masculinity in Contemporary Culture



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Abstract

Contemporary culture bombards us with perfectly touched up images of men in a day and age where we are simultaneously told that we should love our bodies for whatever they may look like – hairy, fat, bald, short, skinny, manboobs, beer belly. Are the behavioural expectations instigated by the governing gaze of men in contemporary entertainment and advertising media putting pressure on men to perform their masculinity in specific ways, just as they did in the past, albeit in different ways and forms? This dissertation adopts a critical perspective by drawing on a Foucauldian conceptualisation of disciplinary power as an instrument of coercion and on Foucault's understanding of the construction of the subject, of surveillance and of the Panoptic Gaze. Although Foucault's work does not show much interest in gender/masculinity issues or in media texts per se, his conceptualisation of power will be an asset in deconstructing masculinity issues and power in the media in this dissertation.

Closely examining carefully selected examples of contemporary entertainment and advertising media texts, the purpose of this dissertation is to explore to what extent the rhetoric (in Barthes's sense) of masculinity and constructions of representations of masculinity in adverts, lifestyle magazines, online articles, and film may potentially be considered to serve as agencies of domination in governing men to construct their masculinity and male body image in the mediated mirror image of western hegemonic masculinity. Some of the questions to be addressed are: In what way has the masculinisation of consumption converged with the feminisation of the representation of the male body? How has the male body become commodity fetishism? In what way do representations of masculinity in film and TV, adverts and general interest men's lifestyle magazines contribute to the selling of fitness and of fit bodies?

It will be argued that popular culture texts in the media serve as Foucault's 'regimes of truth', coercing men into constructing their male body image in the light of mediated hegemonic ideals as perpetuated by and in the media. Thus, a critical exploration of the mediated mythscape of masculinity will reveal in what ways the representations of masculinity and of the hypermuscular body in contemporary media texts are used to persuade men into consuming not just a product that can be purchased but also an ideology.

This dissertation contends that media texts in contemporary culture construct power relations among a multitude of bodies, categorising, amongst so many other types, the beautiful, overweight, underweight, healthy, fit, unfit, muscular, and emasculated, by normalising the desire to own the precious hypermuscular physique it promotes. The Panoptic Gaze has encouraged men to survey their own bodies for signs of abnormality against a body image that may, in essence, be unrealistic. This dissertation concludes that the phenomenon of 'Hypermuscular Sensitivity and Hypersensitive Machoism' may be considered a new myth that is currently being constructed, which may nonetheless generate new transgressive bodies, and therefore, subject any consumer of media texts to even further surveillance, under a new guise.

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Introduction

As twenty-first century Western society and its consumeristic goals overwhelms us with a constant flux of carefully crafted images that circulate on various media platforms, '[w]e engage in practices of looking to communicate, to influence and be influenced,'¹ and are becoming ever so adept in such practices. These images construct a very particular representation of reality and mirror back desirable lifestyles and picture-perfect bodies that are designed to sell the same lifestyles and bodies they feature.

Over the years, feminist theory has gone to great lengths and depths in identifying how women are oppressed in a patriarchal society and how representations of femininity and of the female body in lifestyle magazines, advertisements, television, film and music videos and other entertainment media, are based on notions of sexual objectification, commodification and unrealistic standards of beauty and body maintenance, proving to be detrimental to women's social, psychological, emotional and physical wellbeing.²

Representations of masculinity and the male body have now followed suit as the commercialisation of the beauty industry now also targets men. Men seem to have also surrendered to notions of consumption, idealisation and fetishisation of their bodies and have started to participate in this culture. We are constantly bombarded with perfectly touched up images of men who sport hyper-athletic bodies, heads with voluminous hair, V-shaped silky-smooth torsos, boulder-shoulders that taper to minute waists and chiselled washboard abs, yet are simultaneously told that we should love our bodies for whatever they may look like – hairy, fat, bald, short, skinny, manboobs, flabby, toned, beer belly. How can a dad-bod³ be acceptable in a fat-shaming mediated world? These paradoxical representations and metamessages are not only contradictory but also perhaps mutually exclusive. Over the past few decades, masculinity has been subject to drastic changes in business, politics, sport, education, relations

¹ Maria Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, 2nd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 10.

² See, for example, Rosalind Gill's *Gender and the Media* and David Gauntlett's *Media, Gender and Identity: An Introduction*

³ 'Dad bod' is a term in popular culture that refers to the body shape that is often associated with middle-aged men who had previously had a sculpted body but have lost it after having found a mate and fathered a child.

and parenting⁴ (as will be discussed in greater depth particularly in Chapter 2), but, when compared to the study of feminism, femininity and the female body, as Alan Peterson argues,

there has been relatively little analysis of how different male bodies have been constructed in discourse and how differences between men and women, and between men, have come to be seen as natural differences.⁵

Peterson argues that the social constructions of masculinity and the male body, and the power relations involved, should be critically examined and analysed:

Masculinity scholars could take their cue ... to reveal the ways in which the male body has been posited as both object and site for the exercise of power and to explore the implications of this for the subjectivities of men.⁶

With this in mind, the purpose of this dissertation is to explore to what extent the rhetoric of masculinity and the male body in contemporary culture may potentially serve as an agency of domination and a mechanism of control in disciplining men, and other media consumers too, to construct their body image in the Western hegemonic mediated ideals of masculinity. It will be argued that the rhetoric in the discursive constructions of representations of masculinity in selected examples of twenty-first century contemporary film and television series and programmes, men's lifestyle magazines and websites, and advertising media in print and in film, serves to propagate a system of surveillance and assessment that governs and disciplines men to behave in culturally prescribed ways, compelling them into constructing their male body image in the light of mediated hegemonic ideals, as well as their transgressions, as perpetuated by, and in, the media.

In considering the use of the mediated representations of the male body and masculinity in these popular culture texts as instruments of coercion, this dissertation primarily concerns itself with the concept of power and the way in which it is manifested in these texts. It is for this reason that this present study seeks to primarily draw onto Michel Foucault's conceptualisation of power as well as his understanding of discipline, the gaze, surveillance and Panopticism,

⁴ Jack Myers, *The Future of Men: Masculinity in the Twenty-First Century*, (California, Inkshares, Inc., 2016).

⁵ Alan Petersen, 'Research on Men and Masculinities: Some implications of recent theory for future work', *Men and Masculinities*,6 (2003), 54-69, p.65.

⁶ *ibid.*

which will be integral in examining the rhetoric of masculinity in the media as an embodied phenomenon, as discussed further on in this chapter.

Prior to drawing on such texts to examine these discursive constructions and how the subject positioning of the male body may coerce men into consuming behavioural expectations instigated by the governing gaze of the men in the media, which will be the scope of subsequent chapters, this chapter strives to provide a conceptual framework of the key concepts that are closely associated with power. Chapter 1 will then address the conceptualisation of the male body and contemporary masculinity by drawing on the contributions of prominent social theorists (namely R.W. Connell and Judith Butler) to the social construction of gender. This will pave the way to explore, in Chapter 2, the ways in which the convergence between consumer culture, consumption and masculinity have turned the male body into a commodity fetishism. Debord, who develops Marx's understanding of the term 'commodity', defines 'commodity' in society as 'spectacle' and as a 'social relation between people that is mediated by images'.⁷ It will be argued that images of the male body in the media are more than a mere object, but instead, a process whereby objects are ascribed a value that surpasses their actual properties to make themselves 'regarded as the epitome of reality',⁸ Even though Foucault's work does not show much interest in either gender/masculinity issues or media-related references,⁹ the predominantly Foucauldian theorising aims to address this study's questions, which will be the focus of Chapter 3, including: How does the male body potentially serve as the panopticon? In what way does the government of the male body through self-discipline and surveillance urge men to frequent gyms and construct the docile body in the light of images propagated by the media?

A Foucauldian Toolbox

Foucault's oeuvre has been described as 'a historical analysis of social conditions',¹⁰ that concern themselves with the way power manifests and operates through institutions and social bodies in societies, and include an investigation into the subjectifying processes involved when the status quo of conceptual frameworks in such societies is established. In a 1982 essay

⁷ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Ken Knabb (London: Rebel Press, 2000), p. 7.

⁸ Debord, p. 17.

⁹ Angela King, 'The Prisoner of Gender: Foucault and the Disciplining of the Female Body', *Journal of International Studies*, 5(2004), 29-39.

¹⁰ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 1.

published two years before his death, 'The Subject and Power', Foucault claims that the ultimate goal of his work of the preceding 20 years had essentially 'not been to analyse the phenomena of power' but 'to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects'¹². This dissertation will thus examine the embodiment of power by exploring the subjectification of the male body in contemporary culture by closely referring to advertising and entertainment media texts. Moreover, as a historian of thought, Foucault provides a historicist view of the subject, and investigates problems rather than subjects by tracing and analysing the conceptions of power, its embodiment and regulation in society. This dissertation will explore and comment on the relatively new academic field of Men and Masculinity Studies by drawing on Foucault's critical analysis.

Writing about Foucault's genealogical ideas and how subjectivity in Foucault's view is a complex product, Foucauldian scholar C.G. Prado states that Foucault

thinks that the most important philosophical projects have to do with understanding how and why we hold some things true, how and why we deem some things knowledge, and how and why we consider some procedures rational and others not.¹³

Thus, in *Madness and Civilization* (1964), Foucault does not only investigate and analyse madness and reason, but also the way society thinks and speaks about sanity and insanity, and its endeavour to retain this conceptual distinction. Similarly, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) is not merely a historical consideration of the way Western penal systems became more 'humanitarian' and 'dignified' in the modern age, but essentially about

the production of compliant subjects through the imposition of disciplines. It is about how constant observation, assessment, and regimentation manufacture new subjects. It is about how persons are reshaped and reoriented with management techniques that intrude into and govern every aspect of their lives.¹⁴

In *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* (1977), Foucault discusses how power relations permeate through the discourse of sex as an object of knowledge, and how sexuality is ultimately yet another disciplinary technique that regulates human behaviour. Foucault urges us to contest all forms of knowledge that may otherwise be considered to be common sense in society, in order to decipher the workings of power and forms of social control in social structures and

¹² Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (1982), 777-795 (p. 777).

¹³ C.G. Prado, *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy*, 2nd edn, (Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 9-10.

¹⁴ Prado, p. 53.

institutions. This is in fact the aim of the dissertation: to explore to what extent, and in what ways, Western hegemonic representations of masculinity in selected examples of contemporary entertainment and advertising media texts, hence cultural products of society, may potentially be considered as agents of disciplinary practice in twenty-first century Western society.

In Foucault's major genealogical works (*Discipline and Punish*, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*), Foucault shifts his emphasis from his archeological method onto the way discourse actually coerces human beings to police themselves and has the potential to mould their behaviour, central to this dissertation's research question. Keeping David Gauntlett's suggestion in mind that '[i]t is therefore better to understand [Foucault's] ideas as different (but related) bodies of thought associated with each of [Foucault's] different major publications,'¹⁵ this present study will primarily draw onto Foucault's theorisation of key concepts of power, discipline and surveillance in the two key genealogical texts, *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, a conceptualisation of which will be explored further on in this chapter.

The Conceptualisation of Power

Scholars contend that Foucault's contribution to the understanding of the operation of power in society has not just been innovative, but simultaneously controversial and enigmatic.¹⁶ Writing in the 1960s and 1970s, at a time when the critical discourses of Marxism, Enlightenment philosophy, hermeneutics and structural linguistics were being impugned in a post-World-War-II era,¹⁷ Foucault's non-normative approach to power sets into opposition the circumscribed conceptualisation of power, rejecting the widely accepted belief of power being perceived as a possession and as simply oppressive, and thus in terms of the power that a powerful agent exerts exclusively onto a powerless and yielding individual, or group of people, who are wrested into obeying to comply with those in power. In Foucault's own words, 'power is not to be taken to be a phenomenon of one individual's consolidated and homogeneous

¹⁵ David Gauntlett, *Media, Gender and Identity: An introduction*, 2nd edn, (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 125.

¹⁶ Jon Simmons, 'Power, Resistance and Freedom, in *A Companion to Foucault*, ed. by Christopher Falzon, Timothy O'Leary and Jana Sawicki (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 301-309 (p. 301).

¹⁷ Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse Power and the Subject* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993).

domination over others, or that of one group or class over others.’¹⁸ Furthermore, in an interview entitled ‘Truth and Power’, Foucault states:

On the Right, [power] was posed only in terms of constitution, sovereignty, etc. that is, in juridical terms; on the Marxist side, it was posed only in terms of the State apparatus. The way power was exercised – concretely and in detail – with its specificity, its techniques and tactics, was something that no one attempted to ascertain; they contented themselves with denouncing it in a polemical and global fashion as it existed among the ‘others’, in the adversary camp.¹⁹

Foucault’s dialectic decentralises the position of power, denouncing, for example, Soviet socialist power and its adversaries’ conception of totalitarianism, and rebutting Marxist’s identification of power as class domination in Western capitalist society. In emphasising how ‘the mechanics of power in themselves were never analysed,’²⁰ Foucault laments that daily power struggles in society have been under-examined, and extends the analysis of power beyond its State existence in writings like *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, exposing how ‘individuals are the vehicle of power, not its point of application.’²¹ In the second of a two-part lecture in 1976 about his genealogical investigative approach to the ‘how’ of power, Foucault discloses his primary concern in revealing ‘the mechanisms of power’, ‘the effects of truth’, ‘the rules of power’, and ‘the powers of true discourses’ in a bid to identify the multiple ways in which our bodies are subjugated, our gestures governed, and our behaviours dictated.²²

Foucault’s critical investigation into the thematics of power in his later years, specifically in his 1982 essay ‘The Subject and Power’, urges us to avoid simply asking ‘What is power?’ or ‘Where does power come from?’ but instead ‘by what means [power] is exercised’ and ‘what happens when individuals exert ... power over others’.²³ Foucault states that power, ‘with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, ‘Two Lectures’, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp.78-108 (p.98).

¹⁹ Alessandro Fontana, Pasquale Pasquino and Michel Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp.109-133 (pp. 115-116).

²⁰ Alessandro Fontana, Pasquale Pasquino and Michel Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp.109-133 (pp. 115-116).

²¹ Foucault, ‘Two Lectures’, p.100.

²² ‘Two Lectures’, p.96.

²³ Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power’, p. 786.

form, does not exist'.²⁴ Foucault's bottom-up conceptualisation of power is rooted upon omnipresent power relations that exist in society's social networks, unlike Marxists' top-down theorisation of power in considering the State sovereignty and Capitalist ideology as being the embodiment of power.²⁵ According to Foucault, although power is relational, neither is it merely a matter of relationships between individuals or groups of people nor 'a renunciation of freedom, a transference of rights, the power of each and all delegated to a few'.²⁶ Although violence and coercion may indeed be integral in the exercise of power, Foucault asserts that violence per se is not power. Moreover, power's existence is dependent on a set of actions that are performed onto an acting free subject's actions, thus modifying, and governing, these free subjects' actions and conduct in the process:

It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely.²⁷

Power is neither oppressive nor repressive. Conversely, Foucault accentuates the positive effects of power by arguing that it manufactures individuals: 'power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.'²⁸

In fact, it is through the forms of resistance against forms of power, which Foucault calls an 'antagonism of strategies', that power relations and the techniques of power may be analysed. Foucault describes this resistance as functioning as a 'chemical catalyst' in exposing power relations, localising their position and deconstructing the mechanisms of power.²⁹ Thus, Foucault draws onto a series of oppositions such as sanity/insanity or legality/illegality and examines his contemporary 'anti-authority struggles' which he identifies as the submissiveness of women to men's power, children's to their parents, or psychiatry's power over the mentally ill.

²⁴ 'The Subject and Power', p. 788.

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality An Introduction: Volume 1*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 94.

²⁶ 'The Subject and Power', p. 788.

²⁷ 'The Subject and Power', p. 789.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1991) p. 194.

²⁹ 'The Subject and Power'.

In identifying the rhetoric of masculinity and of the male body in selected examples of contemporary entertainment and advertising media texts and examining the ways in which it may potentially be considered to serve as agencies of domination in governing men to construct their masculinity and male body image in the mediated mirror of image of Western hegemonic masculinity, this dissertation will consider the ‘transversal struggle’ of Western hegemonic forms of masculinity and its ‘régime du savoir’ as exercising an uncontrolled power over men’s bodies, their health and their lifestyle, and the subordinate forms of Western hegemonic ideals of masculinity as an ‘anti-authority struggle’. In Foucauldian terms, Western hegemonic forms of masculinity present struggles against the ‘government of individualisation’ that attack everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself, and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way’ all while asserting one’s right to be different and underlining ‘everything which makes individuals truly individual’.³¹

Technologies of Dominance: Disciplinary Power

This chapter has so far strived to provide a brief contextualisation of this present study’s research question, encompassing the scope, rationale and critical relevance of focussing on the conceptualisation and retheorisation of Michel Foucault’s examination of the concept of power and its embodiment in society as the conceptual backbone of this dissertation. What follows is an examination of the development of Foucault’s dialectic about the technologies of power and their coercive mechanisms, hence the ways and processes in which power manifests in society that ultimately serve to shape the subject’s conduct and behaviour. Therefore, in considering Foucault’s critical inquiry to the way power manifests through what he calls a ‘disciplinary society’, this introduction will now turn to a discussion of the key concepts of ‘disciplinary power’, surveillance, Panopticism and the ‘gaze’, and ‘governmentality’, by predominantly drawing on two of his publications: *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality Volume I*. Reference will also be made to other works (such as interviews, lectures and essays) where he considers the concepts in question hereunder in retrospect.

³¹ ‘The Subject and Power’, p. 781.

The Disciplining of the Body in a Disciplinary Society

Foucault's oeuvre conducts an archaeological investigation into the notion of power in order to reveal the various mechanisms, hence technologies of power, which have operated in society over the centuries to gain control over one's body, discipline it and punish it accordingly should it contravene. Nevertheless, effective self-discipline aims to prevent any possible infringement in the first place. In Foucault's account, power manifests itself through technologies of power that have developed throughout centuries from the modalities of power in the monarchic and feudal rule of early modern society (pre-18th century) and its development into democratic society, constituting an interplay of sovereign power, pastoral power, disciplinary power and bio-power that have all had a hold on the disciplining of the body. Although Foucault considers disciplinary power to be one of the 'great inventions' of bourgeois society,³² he resists the Marxist view that posits that economic factors are the driving forces that actually discipline and produce an alienated body that is rendered highly employable in a capitalist workforce. Moreover, the omnipresent nature of power entails that '[o]ne needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society.'³³

Human beings are thus surrounded by and immersed in 'régimes of truth', bodies of knowledge or truth games that ultimately serve as apparatus (dispositif) to understand themselves and consequently maintain the exercise of power in the social body. In recognising that the body is both a productive and subjected body as power relations are performed on the body, and discipline it in the process, Foucault contends that it is imperative that one identifies and scrutinises such technologies in a bid to examine the actual 'techniques and tactics of domination'³⁴ and operation of power in society. Foucault outlines four types of technologies in *Technologies of the Self*, maintaining that the latter two (technologies of power and of the self) had been of primary concern and interest in his work, particularly in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*:

1. technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things;

³² Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, p. 105.

³³ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality An Introduction: Volume 1*, p. 93.

³⁴ 'Two Lectures', p.102.

2. technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification;
3. technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivising of the subject;
4. technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect their own means with the help of others a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.³⁵

Thus, technologies of power and of the self, which are central aspects of a disciplinary society, are wielded onto a body, that is ‘directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it; mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.’³⁶

Sovereign power, whose power comprises a king, a priest or father, or even a politician, involves the governance of its people by exerting its dominance and authority via its physical (and violent) hold on the body, namely through modes of power of the carceral system (laws, the police force, judges and prison). In both *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, however, Foucault argues that the disciplining of subjects in a disciplinary society is not exclusively limited to the legal enforcement of the law by the police onto civilians as part of a carceral state. Domination is not ‘that solid and global kind of domination that one person exercises over others, or one group over another, but the manifold forms of domination that can be exercised within society.’³⁷ Conversely, ‘[o]ne should try to locate power at the extreme of its exercise, where it is always less legal in character.’³⁸ The body in a disciplinary society is governed by and through dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics and techniques as enforced by and in other disciplinary institutions such as hospitals, asylums, schools and army barracks where the pivotal coercive mechanism is based on the premise of observation and surveillance. Central to this thesis in *Discipline and Punish* is that we live in a ‘carceral archipelago’ as individuals become more and more subjectified by disciplining themselves in all areas of their life.³⁹ The enforcement of disciplinary power thus becomes highly contingent not only on our knowledge of social

³⁵ Michel Foucault, ‘Technologies of the Self’, in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. by Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (London: Tavistock Publications, 1988), pp. 16-49 (p. 18).

³⁶ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 25.

³⁷ *The History of Sexuality*, p. 96.

³⁸ *The History of Sexuality*, p. 97.

³⁹ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 298.

norms and mores but especially on the abidance and obedience of such discourse in the formation and maintenance of one's conduct.

Foucault highlights the dual meaning of the word 'conduct' – 'to lead others according to strict mechanisms of coercion and also a way in which one can behave'⁴⁰ – which is closely associated with his notion of governmentality of the self that he develops in the later years of his life during his lectures at the Collège de France.⁴¹ Foucault carefully distinguishes the definition of the term 'government', whose meaning goes beyond the governance and management of political structures and into the realm of 'the development of a whole complex of savoirs.'⁴² Therefore, the government of the self 'designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed'⁴³ by technologies of disciplinary power that produce desired effects and avert undesired ones. Thus, the disciplining of the body in a disciplinary society 'implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals not in the obvious sense of acquiring skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes.'⁴⁴ Both *Discipline and Punish* and *History of Sexuality Volume 1* contain Foucault's genealogical illustration of the ways in which people govern themselves and learn how to behave and discipline 'by means of surveillance'⁴⁵ even in the absence of threats and punishments from the juridical system, a discussion of which will now follow.

The Docile Body in a Disciplinary Society

Foucault's genealogical analysis of disciplinary punishment in *Discipline and Punish* traces the development of the way the body has been disciplined and punished in order to govern it, from the eighteenth century to modern times, and examines new techniques of social control that have since been administered to turn the tortured body into a 'docile' and well-disciplined body. In the opening pages of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes two distinct penal styles that are separated by less than a century to illustrate how the tortured body of the

⁴⁰ 'The Subject and Power', p. 789.

⁴¹ Colin Gordon, 'Governmental Rationality: An Introduction', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality with two lectures by and an interview with Michel Foucault*, ed. by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 1-52.

⁴² Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality with two lectures by and an interview with Michel Foucault*, ed. by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 87-104, (pp. 102-103).

⁴³ 'The Subject and Power', pp. 789-790.

⁴⁴ Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', p. 18.

⁴⁵ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 104.

condemned in the 1700s was the target of oppression in the public spectacle of the scaffold and how this abated with the introduction of less violent and more humane ways of punishing. Thus, Foucault writes about the public execution of Robert-François Damiens, a French domestic servant, who was condemned on 1st March 1757 for committing attempted regicide. Foucault explains how Damiens was first carted off to the scaffold, wearing nothing but a shirt, holding a torch of burning wax before having the flesh of his chest, arms, thighs and calves torn off with red-hot pincers, followed by the castigation of his right hand (that committed the attempted parricide) burned with sulphur, molten lead, boiling oil, burning resin, and wax. This preceded his body being drawn and quartered by four horses and the cremation of his limbs, whose ‘ashes were then thrown to the winds’.⁴⁶ Foucault then moves on to a number of rules that were used eighty years later for the inmates at the ‘House of Young Prisoners in Paris’, which includes a series of scheduled activities that prisoners at the house of correction were subjected to.

Foucault suggests that ‘the disappearance of the tortured, dismembered, amputated body, symbolically branded on face or shoulder, exposed alive or dead to public view’⁴⁷ and the commencement of new legal and administrative practices in society (hence the development of democratic societies) configured, in essence, the emergence of disciplinary power. Nevertheless, Foucault emphasises how the regimented routine clearly does not only exemplify a more humane form of punishment, but essentially, the reconfiguration of power being exercised in different forms. The mechanisms of discipline in society were designed ‘not to punish less, but to punish better’.⁴⁸ In doing so, the body might have been liberated in terms of physical violence but its soul became subject to insidious control. In examining the body of the condemned as the target of repression in the public spectacle of the scaffold and tracing the development of the political economy of the body that was borne out of the docility of the body-punishment, Foucault argues that ‘the soul is the prison of the body’⁴⁹ and therefore *Discipline and Punish* is not just about the birth of the prison, but ‘a genealogy of the modern soul’.⁵⁰ The technologies of power which stem from the carceral system objectify the body and lead on to the embodiment of the technologies of the self. This conceptualisation will be essential to address this dissertation’s research question; a closer consideration of this and its

⁴⁶ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 1.

⁴⁷ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 8.

⁴⁸ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 82.

⁴⁹ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 30.

⁵⁰ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 29.

relevance to contemporary entertainment and advertising media will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Over the years, Foucault traces the body's objectification as being subject to a tripartite scheme. Thus, in order to subjugate the criminal in the age of terror and torture, the scaffold was used to demonstrate the dominant power of the sovereign by marking the body in a public ceremony that aimed to instil fear, awe and simultaneous entertainment to the audience. This was soon replaced by a more 'gentle way in punishment' at the end of the eighteenth century, where the condemned man's body was no longer considered to be the king's property, but as belonging to society. In what Foucault calls 'the punitive city', Foucault claims that one is punished through signs, hence the semiotics of punishment that turns the object into a juridical subject, and aims to educate and reform the criminal rather than turning their punishment into a festival. Punishment is therefore didactic and unlike torture, '[i]t is no longer the symmetry of violence, but the transparency of the sign to that which it signifies'.⁵¹ The semiotic representation of punishment functions such that the punishment to the crime is arbitrary as it deviates the criminal's urge to commit the crime by instilling a fear towards the crime's penalty: 'Against a bad passion, a good habit: against a force, another force, but it must be the force of sensibility and passion, not that of armed power'.⁵² An economy of punishment endeavours to transform and modify the penalty through signs (such as printing legal codes) and parades (e.g. criminal cleaning the streets tied with a ball and chain), reminding the wider population not to do the crime if they cannot do the time.

In the modern age of discipline, punishment is not only didactic per se, but moreover, the body (and its behaviour) is deemed as a coerced subject that can be trained, through particular techniques, and corrected. The 'punitive city' has turned into the 'coercive institution', and punishment has become a political tactic. The body is a field of power, invested by power relations, such that the individualisation of punishment, hence the docility and productivity of the human body, gives rise to a new political anatomy that encompasses a system of representation in terms of social space, time and movement that ultimately discipline one's body by targeting one's soul. As a result, '[d]iscipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience).'⁵³

⁵¹ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 106.

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 138.

The disciplinary management of prisoners in the age of modernity operates through the conceptualisation of ‘docile bodies’, hence ‘a body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces’,⁵⁴ a representation of which is constructed upon the image of the soldier and his body as a machine. Foucault draws onto the late eighteenth century representation of the soldier as ‘a formless clay, an inapt body’,⁵⁵ a machine that can be constructed as required where ‘posture is gradually corrected, a calculated constraints runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit’.⁵⁶ In Foucault’s account, the ‘air of a peasant’ can eventually be turned into the ‘air of a soldier’, and therefore, the docility of the body does not merely take place through punishment of the soul in prison by isolating the prisoner, and correcting their demeanour, but also, the corpus of methods and knowledge, descriptions, plans and date infiltrate through various social bodies, machining the body also in schools, hospitals and factories. Nevertheless, the docile body is made to be productive and subjected through a combination of four techniques that aim to manipulate the body to ‘not only do what we want but to do it precisely in the way we want’,⁵⁷ which he classifies in terms of ‘the art of distribution (the manipulation of space and architecture), ‘the control of activities’ (related to organic control), ‘the organisation of genesis’ (the administration of time) and ‘the composition of forces’ (a combination of tactics that targets social institutions).

‘The arts of distributions’ refer to the way docile bodily subjects are primarily controlled and disciplined through a process of distribution and enclosure within geographical and architectural spaces that facilitate disciplinary monotony. Based on models such as the monastery, army barracks and schools where subjects are located under the same roof, it is essential that disciplinary sites are functional, utilitarian architectural spaces. In classifying subjects into a hierarchy and enclosing them within a confined and highly structured controlled space by means of partitioning (thus dividing subjects from each other in cells and bringing the community together during meals, activities, work, as necessary), the spatial distribution allows for a ‘cellular’ micro-physics of power which is exercised through ‘hierarchal observation’. The arts of distributions turns the space into a disciplinary apparatus, ‘a perfect

⁵⁴ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 136.

⁵⁵ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 135.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 138.

eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned'.⁵⁸

A heavily structured space requires a temporal manipulation of subjects' acts by painstakingly extracting time and labour from their bodies; this is what Foucault calls 'the control of activities'. Like the arts of distributions, the disciplinary technique of the control of activities is also based on the monastic community model and requires a scheduled routine, a timetable which involves cycles of repetition (as in schools, workshops and hospitals). Docile bodies become disciplined through the manipulation of their time, and as Foucault explains, '[t]ime penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power'⁵⁹ by imposing a particular set of prescribed gestures to the body, their duration and according succession. Foucault emphasises how the body is not merely a machine, but in essence, the apparatus of production. Time is therefore not exploited exhaustively to avoid idleness but actually to use time effectively and constructively in the training and cultivating of the body. This disciplinary technique is exercised through a 'normalising judgement', which involves a process of comparing the subject's performance/behaviour to the rest of the group whilst simultaneously differentiating each subject. Subjects are then hierarchised and their body homogenises (i.e. measured in terms of its binary value) and perhaps excludes.

The third disciplinary technique, 'the organisation of genesis', concerns the configuration of the different stages of training and manipulating the body that stem from the military and involve pedagogical practices and methodology. Thus, the duration of each of the segments of training must be organised carefully so that time is allocated for training and practice, the sequence of the segments must be organised in terms of difficulty, starting from simple instructions and leading onto the more complex and challenging. The subjects' performance in these segments must be evaluated in order to ensure whether the efficacy and success of the learning process. Therefore, a hierarchical examination coalesces 'hierarchical observation' and 'normalising judgements' to serve as what Foucault calls 'a normalising gaze' that qualifies, classifies and punishes. This compels the visibility of power to be more potent: 'the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification'.⁶⁰ Consequently, as the body is invested in power relations and functions vis-à-vis other bodies, '[t]he chief function of the disciplinary power is to 'train', rather than to select and to levy; or

⁵⁸ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 176

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 162.

no doubt, to train in order to levy and select all the more.’⁶¹

Panopticism, Surveillance, the Gaze

Foucault posits that modern disciplinary power in society is embodied through Jeremy Bentham’s conceptualisation of the Panopticon, whose architectural form authorises hierarchical observation and normalising judgement to take place. Foucault describes the Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish* as follows:

In the Panopticon each inmate is in a separate cell, separated from and invisible to all the others. Further, the cells are distributed in a circle around a central tower from which a monitor can look into any cell at any given time. The principle of control is not the fact but the possibility of observation. The monitor will actually look into a given cell only occasionally. But the inmates have no way of knowing when these occasions will arise and so must always assume that they are being observed.⁶²

Disciplinary power is generated by making inmates self-aware of their behaviour, and therefore, a supervisory gaze leads onto the self-gaze inducing inmates in ‘a state of consciousness’, prompting the desired conduct and averting the unwanted one.

Modern Western society has been characterised by dominant systems of social control where coercive mechanisms in institutions such as the army, court-room, school, family, hospital, prison or asylum function as a network of control in inducing self-discipline in individuals. In a bid to fabricate the specific bodies modern industrial society requires, the manifestation of biopower in society transpires via the body as it becomes a site of subjugation when self-disciplinary techniques are adopted on the body bodies and conformity to cultural norms is self-imposed through processes of self-surveillance and self-disciplinary practices that regulate one’s behaviour. Writing in the twentieth century, Foucault states: ‘Our society is not one of spectacle but of surveillance’.⁶³ Moreover, keeping one’s behaviour under systematic review, maintaining regular surveillance over our bodies and the process of closely observing or monitoring ourselves and others in the twenty-first century seems to be generating unstoppable speed and control as institutions that keep tabs on individuals (such as the police and prison, the health care or school system) are truly infiltrating through different nodes and extending its grip through the construction of wider networks in society.

⁶¹ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 162.

⁶² *Discipline & Punish*, p. 201.

⁶³ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 217.

Foucault develops his understanding of the construction of power in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, published just a few years after *Discipline and Punish*, where he extends his conceptualisation of disciplinary power from analysing crime and delinquency in society to examining the way power operates in society through the objectivisation of sexuality as a discursive formation. Thus, Foucault articulates his view that discourses of sex had increasingly become repressed and prohibited and common parlance limited to utilitarian and fertile discursive formation, tolerated in the parents' bedroom and in terms of biopower in the control of populations' life, death and health conditions through 'the emergence of 'population' as an economic and political problem'.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, secluded spaces such as the brothel and mental hospital tolerated 'the Other Victorians' (hence the prostitute, client, pimp, psychiatrist and hysteric) but words and gestures related to sex were taboo elsewhere and were enforced through Puritan silence, and later the Christian pastoral.

Foucault argues:

But more important was the multiplication of discourses concerning sex in the field of exercise of power itself: an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause it to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail.⁶⁵

Foucault thus contends that the repression of sex in society simultaneously gave rise to its transgression; the more sex was oppressed, the more it was actually spoken about. Mechanisms of knowledge and power were proliferating in society through the hysterisation of women's bodies, a pedagogisation of children's sex, a socialisation of procreative behaviour, a psychiatrisation of perverse pleasure, and surveillance served as a coercive technique to exercise this power. *Scientia Sexualis* was fortified through self-surveillance – knowledge and power was fused together and subjects were to divert the gaze at themselves, tell the truth about oneself and of their inner desires through the confessional and in doing so, free their soul.

Foucault explains:

The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile;

⁶⁴ *The History of Sexuality An Introduction*, p. 25.

⁶⁵ *The History of Sexuality*, p. 18.

a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation.⁶⁶

The ‘gaze’ or the ‘look’, stemming from film theory in the 1970s, is now also being applied by media theorists to the act of viewers voyeuristically looking at a visual text, or to the subjects’ looks depicted within the visual medium. Although Foucault does not refer to the rise of the media in his analysis of power and surveillance in *Discipline and Punish*, but alludes to it briefly in *History of Sexuality Volume 1* when he refers to the myths generated through advertising media,⁶⁷ contemporary technological evolution and advancement is evidence that Panopticism is pervading the ‘entire social body’.⁶⁸ Our bodies seem to have truly become subjugated as our every move may potentially be viewed, traced and followed through 24/7 Internet connections on our smart phones, our online history relocated, the cameras of laptop, mobile and CCTV watching our every move. Foucault’s contention has never been more relevant as we live ‘in the panoptical machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are a part of its mechanism’.⁶⁹ We are never truly alone; when we are not observing the world around us, we are introspectively looking into our souls, disciplining it accordingly.

As will be discussed in the final chapter of this dissertation, Foucault’s Panoptic Gaze may thus be said to be alive in contemporary culture through the semi-nude coquettish mesomorphic bodies of men that are all around us, staring at us from billboards, screens, magazines and mannequins to advertise salad dressings, protein bulk powder, underwear, deodorant, perfumes, air fresheners or to feature as the hero who combats twenty-first century adversity and dangers in contemporary entertainment media. A central question that will be addressed in this dissertation is thus: How does the myth of the hypermuscular male ideal in popular culture texts, through the commodification and objectification of the male body in its ‘perfect’ form, invite its viewers to look, simultaneously summoning the female gaze and the inversion of the male gaze, and entice men, and possibly women too, to look back at them and return a gaze, thus shaping society’s conceptualisation of masculinity? A Foucauldian conceptualisation of

⁶⁶ *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 61-62.

⁶⁷ *The History of Sexuality*, p. 57

⁶⁸ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 298.

⁶⁹ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 217.

disciplinary power as an instrument of coercion and Foucault's understanding of the construction of the subject, of surveillance and of the Panoptic Gaze will inform this dissertation's discussion about how the sexually objectified and commodified male body may potentially be functioning as the embodiment of Panopticism and the carceral archipelago's mechanisms of control that govern the male body and their masculinity in a disciplinary society, heavily defined by surveillance and monitoring.

This dissertation will therefore seek to explore in what ways, and to what extent, the rhetorical tropes of masculinity in selected examples of entertainment and advertising media in contemporary culture may be constructing representations of the mesomorphic body as a rhetorical figure (hence a sexually objectified male subject) featuring chiselled muscles, hair depilation, full heads of hair, glossy and smooth skin, accentuated v-shaped torsos, well-defined legs, large arms with emphasised biceps and triceps in a formation of confident poses, coupled with the necessary editing and lighting techniques to ensure perfection. A closer examination of such a representation of the hypermuscular body will be central to the following chapter's discussion, which aims to synthesise theoretical approaches to gender and masculinity in order to explore what is understood by masculinity, the male ideal, and the construction of normative masculinity in society and discuss, in terms of Foucault's discourse of power, the hegemonic and dominant forms of masculinity amidst the diversity of becoming male in twenty-first century society.

Chapter 1 – Masculinity and the Male Body

Foucault & Masculinity

The primary interest of this dissertation lies in critically analysing the ways in which media texts in contemporary culture position the male body as a subject, and how this subject positioning may possibly coerce men into working on their body and lifestyles, as governed by the mediated ideals of masculinity. It must be stated that in essence, as Stuart Hall posits, although a media text is encoded with dominant ideologies and thus positions audiences to decode its ‘dominant’ or ‘preferred’ reading, texts are ultimately polysemic, positioning audiences to construct a ‘negotiated’ reading (where the reader of the text somewhat modifies the preferred reading) or ‘oppositional’ reading (where the reader of the text rejects the dominant reading).¹ Nevertheless, as will be discussed more closely in Chapter 3, sufficient scholarly work has proven that men are increasingly positioning themselves with the ‘dominant’ reading of media texts that feature representations of the hypermuscular male body and its perfectibility.²

The introductory movement of this dissertation has thus endeavoured to provide a Foucauldian conceptualisation of the construction of the subject, discourse and power and its exercise and hold on the body, which will ultimately serve as the conceptual backbone underlying this dissertation. Whilst drawing on Foucault’s contention that the body is the principle site of subjugation in modern society and that power operates in, on and through individuals’ bodies, owing to the fact that Foucault seldom addresses gender issues, it is essential to consider the contribution of scholars within Feminism, as well as its progression into Queer Theory and Masculinity Studies, whose preoccupation with power and its effects on the body, like Foucault, also identify the body as a site of power in their understanding of gender as a social construct. Foucault’s genealogical investigations about madness, psychiatry, medicine, punishment, delinquency and sexuality have often been criticised for ‘gloss[ing] over the gender configurations of power’,³ for neglecting the gendered differences that exist in ‘gesture,

¹ Stuart Hall, ‘Encoding, Decoding’ in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Simon During (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 507-517.

² See, for example, Sherlock, Freeman and Dunne’s paper *Masculinity in the Making: Men’s Increased Consumption of Strength Training*, Schroeder and Zwick’s work on the role of consumption in the construction, maintenance, and representation of male bodies, as well as Patterson and Elliot’s theorisation of the ‘inversion of the male gaze’.

³ Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, *Feminism & Foucault: reflections on resistance* (Boston: Northeastern University press, 1988) p. xiv.

posture, movement, and general bodily comportment',⁴ and thus treating the body as if there were no biological or gender distinction. In an essay about Foucault's gendered blindness and how disciplinary power in modern society manipulates, trains and marks the female body, Angela King remarks:

For someone whose project was to elaborate on how power produces subjectivity by focussing on the ways it invests the body, his accounts are curiously gender-neutral and he has been roundly criticised for failing to address or perhaps even to recognise the significance of gender in the play of power.⁵

Foucault's work has nevertheless been extremely influential and instrumental, and has been considered as a precursor to theorists of gender, queer and masculinity like Judith Butler and R.W. Connell, who have strived to expand on his genealogical approach and power relations to problematise the construction of gender binary discourse,⁶ hence man versus woman, male versus female, femininity versus masculinity, which Foucault does not do.

This chapter will thus address two fundamental concepts that are integral to this dissertation, namely 'masculinity' and 'the male body', each of which necessitates a closer examination in order to understand what has developed into the widespread diversification of masculinity and 'being a man' in the twenty-first century Western hemisphere. The conceptualisation of 'masculinity' and of the 'male body' will be explored by synthesising theoretical approaches of gender and masculinity (and their discursive constructions) from a social constructionist perspective, whose theorisation essentially emanates from Feminist and Queer Theory scholarship. As the body is a socially produced being within power-knowledge discourse, and thus the locus of cultural control, a genealogical approach aims to question the historical construction of naturalised and predefined sex and gender norms in society. Butler and Connell's conceptualisation of gender has become somewhat canonical, and therefore, each of their theories of the body will be considered. Connell's conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity and the rise of pluralistic styles of masculinities in society, and Butler's theorising of gender performativity and of the body within a heterosexual matrix will serve to identify the male body as the site of power and the conceptualisation of masculinity (or masculinities, as

⁴ Sandra Lee Bartky, 'Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power', in *The Politics of Women's Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior*, ed. by Rose Weitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 25-45, p. 29.

⁵ King, 'The Prisoner of Gender: Foucault and the Disciplining of the Female Body'.

⁶ David Buchbinder, *Studying Men and Masculinities* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 50.

will be discussed later) as an embodied phenomenon. Selected examples of contemporary entertainment and advertising media texts from contemporary culture will lead the discussion about what is understood by ‘masculinity’, ‘the male ideal’ and the construction of normative masculinity in a twenty-first century Western society from a social constructionist perspective.

Scientia Masculinum

Gender theorist R.W. Connell states that both the concept of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ ‘prove remarkably elusive and difficult to define’ as gender itself is not only subject to historical and political change, but it is also fraught with conflicting discourses and systems of knowledge that render a basic and unequivocal definition for ‘masculinity’ impossible.⁷ Moreover, as Butler posits in *Gender Trouble*, although ‘sex’ may denote biological distinction between men and women and ‘gender’ is contingent on one’s (cultural) socialisation, she argues that in essence, neither sex nor gender can ever be non-ideological:

If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.⁸

In the wake of another school shooting by a male nineteen-year-old on February 14th 2018 in Florida (US), American comedian Michael Ian Black used Twitter as a platform to voice his concerns about the conceptualisation of masculinity in the twenty-first century and the detrimental effects it has had, claiming that gun violence in the US and ‘toxic masculinity’⁹ are inextricably linked together. It is neither the space or the scope of this dissertation to explore the veracity of this claim, yet what is of particular interest is the discourse Black uses to identify and refer to a facet of contemporary masculinity, ‘toxic masculinity’, and how twenty-first century society ought to reconfigure its perilous perception of gender roles. Each of Black’s tweets (a selection of which have been reproduced below in Figure 1) contain references to ‘masculinity’, ‘boys’ and ‘men’, but nowhere does he specifically define what he understands

⁷ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd edn (Berkeley; Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2005), p. 3.

⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 10-11.

⁹ ‘Toxic masculinity’ refers to traditional stereotypical behaviour associated with being male, hence being dominant, devaluing women, suppressing emotions, exerting physical violence and aggressive behaviour. This is considered to be one of the ways in which Patriarchy is harmful to men. A more detailed consideration of the term will be explored below when discussing male role theory.

by the term, and neither can it be assumed that other Twitter users know exactly what he means by 'masculinity' either.

Thus, as a product of social conditioning, gender (and sex assignment) is discursively constructed and somewhat oppressive as it ideologically reproduces heteronormativity. Black's discourse does not only demonstrate how 'masculinity' has become central to public discussion but it also draws attention to a number of questions related to the normative nature of 'masculinity' and how it is perceived today:

1. 'If you want to hurt a man, the first thing you do is attack his masculinity'– Is 'masculinity' man's most prized possession? Is 'masculinity' all a man has? Is this the truth about 'masculinity'?
2. Why are boys broken? Why do men need to be fixed? Is 'masculinity' so resilient yet simultaneously so fragile?
3. As women have been taught 'they can be anything' since the rise of Feminism, have men been inhabiting a false consciousness that they are 'everything'?
4. How can men be freed from the 'outdated model of masculinity'? What is this model of masculinity based on? Will the 'outdated model of masculinity' be replaced by another model that can be 'outdated' once again?
5. Why do men not have the language to understand masculinity? Why does such 'language' not exist? What language for modes of expression ought to exist?
6. Why are men afraid 'to step outside those norms' of traditional standards of masculinity? Where have these norms come from? Who has set these norms?

 **Michael Ian Black** ✓
@michaelianblack

Replying to @michaelianblack

The last 50 years redefined womanhood: women were taught they can be anything. No commensurate movement for men who are still generally locked into the same rigid, outdated model of masculinity and it's killing us.

2:27 AM - Feb 15, 2018

♡ 13.9K 💬 2,740 people are talking about this

 **Michael Ian Black** ✓
@michaelianblack

Replying to @michaelianblack

If you want to hurt a man, the first thing you do is attack his masculinity. Men don't have the language to understand masculinity as anything other than some version of a caveman because no language exists.

2:29 AM - Feb 15, 2018

♡ 10.6K 💬 1,592 people are talking about this

 **Michael Ian Black** ✓
@michaelianblack

Replying to @michaelianblack

So men (and boys before that) don't have language for modes of expression that don't readily conform to traditional standards. To step outside those norms is to take a risk most of us are afraid to take. As a result, a lot of guys spend their lives terrified.

2:34 AM - Feb 15, 2018

♡ 8,200 💬 1,087 people are talking about this

Figure 1 Michael Ian Black's Tweets in response to the school shooting by a male 19-year-old on February 14th 2018 in Florida (US)

Yet above all, what is actually meant by the phrase to ‘be a man’ and what is understood by ‘masculinity’? This reiterates Connell’s inquiry and ‘raise[s] the question of what, precisely, knowledge about masculinity is knowledge of’.¹⁰ Over the years, the conceptualisation of ‘masculinity’ and ‘the male body’ seems to have become a policing matter, as Western society has developed an entire system for producing the ‘uniform truth’ of masculinity ‘in an ordered system of knowledge’¹¹ and has thus associated stereotypical behaviour, gestures, norms and attitudes with either the male or female sexed body. Connell’s claim in 1995 that masculinity at the time had ‘suffered from deep conceptual confusions about gender’¹² seems to have remained relevant, even two decades into the twenty-first century.

Nevertheless, the attempt to unearth the ‘truth’ about contemporary masculinity may be traversed by considering Foucault’s genealogical investigation surrounding the discourse of sexuality. In *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, Foucault contends that new discourses of sex and sexuality emerged in the Western world in the nineteenth century under the guise of what he calls *Scientia Sexualis*, hence the scientific study of sex that constructed ‘truths’ in society that ultimately served ‘to transform the sexual conduct of couples into a concerted economic and political behaviour’.¹³ Foucault explores the discursive social construction of the notion of sexuality that emerged with the profusion of scientific discourse related to sex through the fields of psychiatry, psychoanalysis and biology, which essentially defined heteronormative sexuality and marked its ‘perverse’, immoral and abnormal forms, such as ‘the ‘species’ of homosexuality [that] soon became a problem and a pathology in nineteenth century medicine, psychoanalysis, and other discourses’.¹⁴ Sex, whose concept had consequently been internalised by individuals as the core of their identity and thus, the ‘truth’ about themselves, started being treated as a matter of knowledge, and not just morality. The knowledge of sexuality in society aimed to mask the truth of sex, even if discourses to channel a conversation about it had become possible through the Christian confessional: ‘Between each of us and our sex, the West has placed a never-ending demand for truth: it is up to us to extract the truth of sex, since this truth is beyond its grasp; it is up to sex to tell us our truth, since sex is what holds it in darkness.’¹⁵ Human subjectivity, and thus our masculinity or femininity, has been

¹⁰ Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 7.

¹¹ *The History of Sexuality*, p. 69

¹² *Masculinities*, p. xii.

¹³ *The History of Sexuality*, p. 26.

¹⁴ *The History of Sexuality*, p. 43.

¹⁵ *The History of Sexuality*, p. 77

contingent on Western science's understanding of our sexual identity and its privileged relation to truth. Like Foucault's understanding of *Scientia Sexualis*, scientific discourse has also articulated its own power-knowledge about masculinity, and a *Scientia Masculinum* may be said to have developed in a bid to reveal the 'truth' about it.

A *Scientia Masculinum*, hence 'Masculine Knowledge' (or 'Science of Masculinity') may be said to amass the three main scientific developments in the conceptualisation of masculinity which Connell identifies in *Masculinities*, namely clinical knowledge, social psychology and thirdly, theoretical developments in anthropology, history and society; the advent of new sciences (such as medicine, criminology and sexology) and its forms of social control (clinics, prisons, factories, psychotherapy) has also left its mark on Western society's understanding of masculinity. According to Connell, a comprehensive conceptualisation of masculinity requires a consideration of the diverse systems of knowledge of gender (thus of masculinity and of femininity too) in Western society that have largely been embedded not just in the psychological or scientific understanding of gender, but what has also led to presumptuous commonsensical apperceptions of it. Connell dates the scientific account of masculinity to Freud's psychoanalytical inquiry at the turn of the twentieth century,¹⁶ recognising that 'masculinity had to be a complex, and in some ways precarious construction'¹⁷ and that '[e]ach personality is a shade-filled, complex structure, not a transparent unit.'¹⁸ In the mid-twentieth century, a social science of masculinity had started to develop around the idea of 'sex roles', postulating that male or female biological sex difference accounted for specific social behaviours, and thus for men and women to enact 'a general set of expectations which are attached to one's sex'.¹⁹ It was argued that innate sex difference and their internalised sex roles bolstered social harmony, stable mental health and the optimal performance of social functions. Today's toxic masculinity seems to derive from this approach to masculinity, and in spite of the manifold developments in contemporary gender politics, conformity to heteronormative masculinity still seems to have taken social control over many men who fear violating traditional masculine stereotypical behaviour.

¹⁶ cf. R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd edn, (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 8-15, and also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990) for a comprehensive examination of Freud's psychoanalytical account of gender (and masculinity).

¹⁷ *Masculinities*, p. 9.

¹⁸ *Masculinities*, p. 10.

¹⁹ *Masculinities*, p. 22.

Sociological research has contributed largely to the modern conceptualisation of gender, which, unlike the passively internalised and enacted pre-existing norms in the sex role framework, 'is not fixed in advance of social interaction, but is constructed in interaction'.²⁰ A social constructionist concept thus challenges sex-role theory's categorical models of patriarchy and normative heterosexuality, proposing that gender identity is neither physiological, fixed, nor innate, but based on "a complex set of cultural constructions"²¹ that acculturate an individual to behave in culturally gendered appropriate ways. Ed Madden encapsulates a social constructionist perspective of 'masculinity' thus:

Becoming a man isn't the result, necessarily, of genitals, chromosomes, or hormones – though testosterone and chromosomes play their part. We learn to become men through the conscious and unconscious expectations of those around us, as well as through the social and cultural gender norms inculcated in us from childhood.²²

As will be explored more closely further on, Butler holds that gender is 'performative', and is thus 'learned' through gender-coded norms that culturally instruct individuals how to walk, talk, dress, and so on. Gender is therefore 'in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constructed in time – an instituted through through a stylised repetition of [habitual] acts'.²³ Madden's words seem to coalesce the biological sciences' knowledge of masculinity together with that of the humanities and social sciences' discourse of 'sex roles', 'gender relations', and of masculinity and femininity as 'socially constructed' or 'constructed in discourse'.²⁴ A social constructionist theorisation of gender recognises the dynamism of masculinity and femininity, and, as Connell argues, a coherent and comprehensive science of masculinity cannot be produced because 'masculinity' is not a coherent object; in Connell's view, 'masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in-relation'.²⁵

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the fact that '[m]asculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, which have meaning in relation to each other, as a social demarcation and

²⁰ *Masculinities*, p. 35.

²¹ John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002), p. viii.

²² Ed Madden, 'Introduction: The Emergence of Man into the 21st Century', in *The Emergence of Man into the 21st Century*, ed. by Patricia L. Munhall, Ed Madden, and Virginia Macken Fitzsimons, pp. xxvii-xxviii, p. xxvii.

²³ Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal*, 40 (1988), 519-531, p. 519.

²⁴ *Masculinities*, pp. 4-5.

²⁵ *Masculinities*, p. 44

a cultural opposition’,²⁶ Connell recognises that there exists a plurality of masculinities and gender politics within these masculinities, whose relations are based on dominance, allegiance, subordination and marginalisation. Connell’s single conceptual framework of masculinity not ‘as an isolated object, but as an aspect of a larger structure’²⁷ is embedded in a social theory of gender and theorises the gendered power relations among men that are ‘always interpolated by cultural, historical and geographical location.’²⁸ Although society has constructed the prototypical, archetypical, and stereotypical male sex role and its associated heteronormative behaviour which has thrived even in representations of masculinity and of the male body in the media, the female body and femininity is not entirely the antithesis of the male body and masculinity. ‘While all men have the male body in common, although even that comes in a variety of shapes and sizes and appearances, there are numerous forms and expressions of gender – of “being masculine/feminine”’,²⁹ and it is precisely the ‘forms’ and ‘expressions’ that designate the exaltation of one type of masculinity over an other in Western culture.

Drawing on Gramscian cultural hegemony, the structure of Connell’s hegemonic framework of masculinity legitimises how culturally accepted, ‘most honoured’ ways of ‘being a man’, at a specific time and place, tyrannise those men, or masculinities, that do not adhere to the dominant masculine script, as other masculine styles (including class, race and ability) are rendered inadequate or inferior;³⁰ her theory comprises four particular relations that may be said to exist among multiple masculinities namely ‘hegemony’, ‘subordination’, ‘complicity’ and ‘marginalisation’.³¹ Hegemonic masculinity sustains its leading position in social life by configuring itself as the culturally prestigious and venerable form, and thus categorically subordinates and oppresses other masculinities that do not conform to the hegemonic conventions. Connell identifies the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men as the most prominent form of hegemonic and subordinate and marginalised masculinities. However, it may be argued that in a media-saturated world characterised by a visual culture and the negative portrayal of masculinity, representations of masculinity that verge onto the eroticised and commodified male body, the inversion of the male gaze,³² and

²⁶ *Masculinities*, p. 43.

²⁷ *Masculinities*, p. 26.

²⁸ Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture*, p. 1.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, ‘Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept’, *Gender and Society*, 19 (2005), 829-859, p. 832.

³¹ *Masculinities*, p. 76.

³² Richard Elliot and Maurice Patterson, ‘Negotiating Masculinities: Advertising and the Inversion of the Male Gaze’, *Consumption Markets and Culture*, 5 (2002), 231-249.

the hypermuscular ideals in advertisements and celebrity culture, skinny or fat, hairy or bald, untoned and unathletic straight men may indeed be subordinated. Negative discourse on men and male identity has given rise to male body issues (consider, for instance, the concern with muscle dysmorphia,³³ or the Adonis complex³⁴) as well as the increase in male suicide ideation where young men are nowadays becoming more disaffected than ever.³⁵ Consequently, men are in a state of crisis as they try to construct their gender identity within a society that is constantly subject to the unstable labour market, the backlash of feminism, amongst other ideological, economic, social and technological changes.

In a bid to release themselves from subordination, men may go to the gym to sculpt their bodies and participate in ‘The Fitness Movement’,³⁶ be more fashion savvy, and work on their bodies to participate in a ‘to-be-looked-at’ culture, hence exemplifying Connell’s ‘complicity’ form of masculinity. Yet, in essence, only a few can actually embody normative hegemonic masculinity albeit men’s countless attempts to rigorously practice the hegemonic pattern. Nonetheless, a ‘meta-interest in transformations of gender’³⁷ has appeared in contemporary Western society, and the ‘invention of new character types is endemic (the alpha male, the sensitive new-age guy, the hairy man, the new lad, the rat boy, etc.)’.³⁸ The second chapter of this dissertation will specifically focus on this matter. The conceptualisation of masculinity is not characterised by uniformity per se, but by relational diversity and fragmentation, leading Beynon to contend that contemporary society has developed into somewhat embracing a ‘bricolage’ masculinity, hence kaleidoscopic variants of hegemonic traditional masculinity.³⁹

(Re)defining Masculinity

In a YouTube video uploaded by the channel ‘CUT’ in July 2015, males aged 5 to 50 were invited to participate in a word association experiment and were told to explain what the phrase

³³ Richard A. Leit, James J. Gray and Harrison G. Pope, ‘The media’s representation of the ideal male body: a cause for muscle dysmorphia?’, *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 31 (2002), 334-338.

³⁴ Harrison G. Pope, Roberto Olivardia, Amanda Gruber et al, ‘Evolving ideals of male body image as seen through action toys’, *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 26 (1999), 65-72.

³⁵ Rajeev Syal, *British male identity crisis ‘spurring machismo and heartlessness’*, <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/may/14/male-identity-crisis-machismo-abbott>> [accessed 23 January 2018].

³⁶ Marc Stern, ‘The Fitness movement and Fitness Center Industry, 1960-2000’, *Business and Economic History*, 6(2008) <http://www.thebhc.org/sites/default/files/stern_0.pdf> [accessed 20 February 2018].

³⁷ Rosalind Gill, *Gender and the Media* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 32.

³⁸ Connell and Messerschmidt, p. 840.

³⁹ *Masculinities and Culture*, p. 6.

‘be a man’ means to them on camera.⁴⁰ Each of their responses reveals how there is no universal meaning to ‘being a man’ and invokes comedian Michael Ian Black’s reference to masculinity (discussed earlier) and Jonathan Wells’ (journalist for ‘Telegraph Men’) understanding of the phrase ‘man up’:

The phrase 'man up' is simply too ambiguous, too obscure to be vaguely constructive. Even the word 'man' has too many different definitions and linguistic applications. Are we talking about the concept of masculinity, the biological category of male, or society's perpetuated expectations of those of us lucky enough to possess a Y chromosome?⁴¹

Connell identifies four main strategies that Western society has applied to define the concept of masculinity (which dates back to a few centuries at most), namely ‘essentialist’, ‘positive’, ‘normative’ and ‘semiotic’ definitions. In the ‘CUT’ video, ‘being a man’ for a five-year-old connotes acting tough, for the seven-year-old being unafraid, and the eight-year-old being strong, hence an ‘essentialist’ definition as these children draw onto the essence of masculinity in their view. Some other men seem to allocate a normative definition to being a man by expressing ‘being responsible’, ‘taking ownership’ and ‘taking care of themselves’ as integral characteristics. For one man, ‘being a man’ suggests not being a woman, thus a ‘semiotic’ view which considers masculinity as the unmarked term and the feminine variant as the symbolic lack. The six-year-old has a blank face and does not know what ‘being a man’ means, while it is simultaneously described as ‘such a vague term’, ‘overrated’ and ‘relative’ by other men. In a similar video of the same series, men aged 5-50 were asked to say the first word that comes to their mind for ‘father’, a more specific role of ‘being a man’.⁴² Interestingly, although the overwhelming majority of the adjectives that are associated with ‘father’ essentially evoke extremely positive connotations (patient, kind, love, awesome, caring, nice, funny, cool, sincere, honest, neat, protective, strong, loving, trusting, supportive), responses were far from homogeneous. The plurality of meanings associated with the terms ‘be a man’ and ‘father’ thus seem to demonstrate how the conceptualisation of masculinity may not be easily defined. Whether the definitions in these YouTube videos were based on an essentialist or normative

⁴⁰ CUT, Be a Man | Men | One Word | Cut, 2015, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYvWhzSKoc4>> [accessed 19th February 2018].

⁴¹ Jonathan Wells, *Is ‘man up’ the most destructive phrase in modern culture?*, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/11724215/Is-man-up-the-most-destructive-phrase-in-modern-culture.html>> [accessed 17 February 2018].

⁴² CUT, *Father | Men | One Word | Cut*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xtn3AIOL__A> [accessed 19th February 2018].

understanding of the term, this only further confirms Connell's contention that 'the definition of the basic term in the discussion [on masculinity]' has never been wonderfully clear.⁴³

The politics of masculinity and masculine identity in the capitalistic western world has conceptualised gender normative behaviour within the realms of a heterosexual matrix and the dichotomous gender binary of 'man/woman' 'masculine/feminine' and 'male/female', where patriarchal society has traditionally ascribed the phallic with assumed uncontested power and 'woman', 'femininity', 'female' and the 'feminine counterpart' as 'the second sex',⁴⁴ the other, oppressed, and subjected to man.⁴⁵ In simple terms, up until the 1960s, prior to the rise of feminism, the changing workforce and the proliferation of gay subculture,⁴⁶ conventional representations of masculinity in the media centered around clearly defined 'sex roles' and 'sex categories'. Being a man or woman followed the 'logical explanation' that is based on the assumption that when a man is 'masculine', it was often said to involve men, hence male bodies, being 'manly', doing 'masculine things' avoiding being 'girly' and 'feminine', and not being a 'woman'. 'Masculine' men were not interested in fashion, they drank beer, they did not groom (save for the maintenance of facial hair), they might have gone to the gym, and were likely to have had a passion for football, or some other 'manly' sport. Men went to work, they did not do the shopping and only submitted to their wife and daughters to raise the children and take care care of other domestic matters. This 'stereotyping meant that men and women were homogenized, considered not as individuals but as types',⁴⁷ and therefore, 'being a man' was largely understood in terms of the male body being 'strong', 'hard', 'brave' and 'in control' coupled with an aversion for the undesirable, effeminate variants which involved beauty, submissiveness, nurturance and cooperation.

However, although toxic masculinity seems to have suddenly occupied a rampant place in the media in the wake of the #MeToo movement and the publicising of physical, sexual and psychological aggression towards women, homosexuals and transgender people, the construction of gender identity and masculinity ideology has undergone a radical overhaul over the past fifty years in particular, as theorists and critics, cultural commentators, and popular

⁴³ *Masculinities*, p. 67.

⁴⁴ Simone Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Bantam, 1952).

⁴⁵ *Masculinities*.

⁴⁶ *Masculinities and Culture*, p. 15.

⁴⁷ George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 6.

culture aficionados have defined, and redefined, the male Western imaginary and projection of what it means to 'be a man' in a post-modern world. Western society's narrative has therefore generated, reproduced and fortified its own normative facticity for the concepts of 'masculinity', 'maleness', 'manliness', as well as their synonyms, through the diverse products and forms of media culture like television, film, lifestyle magazines (online and in print), popular music, the Internet and social networking. These media texts have channelled images and stories with carefully devised symbols and myths that construct our perception of the world and its social norms, values and mores, and in doing so, have served a pedagogical function as they forge our identities and conceptions of selfhood, gender, class, ethnicity, race, nationality, sexuality and the 'division of the world into categories of *us* and *them*'.⁴⁸ Media culture scholar Douglas Kellner states:

Media spectacles demonstrate who has power and who is powerless, who is allowed to exercise force and violence and who is not. They dramatize and legitimate the power of the forces that be and show the powerless that they must stay in their places or be oppressed.⁴⁹

In Foucauldian terms, the media dispels a very carefully crafted rhetoric of the image of 'being masculine' and what it means to 'be a man' by generating distinct representations of 'masculine stereotypes', hence masculine power-knowledge and 'régimes of truth' that serve as mechanisms of control in ultimately defining and naturalising the worldview of masculinity.

In January 2018, Lebanese photographer and visual artist Eli Rezkallah recreated a series of fictional images (Figures 2-4) from real mid-twentieth century adverts from the Mad Men era after having overheard his uncles' sexist conversation about how women are better off fulfilling 'their womanly duties'.⁵⁰ Rezkallah's reworking of vintage adverts,⁵¹ 'where roles are inverted and men are given a taste of their own sexist poison',⁵² draw attention to two of the most popular conceptualisations of gender, hence 'sex roles' and 'sex categories'. Each of the

⁴⁸ Douglas Kellner, 'Chapter 1: 'Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture', in *Gender, race, and class in media: a text-reader*, ed. by Gail Dines and Jean McMahon Humez (California: Sage, 1995), pp. 7-19, p. 7.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Eli Rezkallah, *In a Parallel Universe* <<http://www.elirezkallah.com/inaparalleluniverse/>> [Accessed 15 February 2018].

⁵¹ Only a selection of the images has been reproduced here. The entire collection may be accessed at: <<http://www.elirezkallah.com/inaparalleluniverse/>>

⁵² Rezkallah, *In a Parallel Universe*.

advertises from the 40s, 50s and 60s in their original form clearly illustrates the perception of gender roles in the mid-20th century, corroborating Ian Craib's survey of literature on masculinity, male roles and identity and his conclusion that the male is associated with being the breadwinner, provider, worker, aggressive, rational, independent, task-oriented, invulnerable and successful.⁵³ However, while Rezkallah's remastering of the sexist adverts does effectively invert the traditional gender roles by positioning the male body in domestic and submissive roles, and thus highlight John MacInnes' assertion in *The End of Masculinity* that '[t]erms such as hard, aggressive, strong, dominant, remote, powerful, fearful of intimacy, rational, unemotional, competitive, sexist and their synonyms crop up regularly'⁵⁴ when attempting to define the concept of masculinity, the visual rhetoric of Rezkallah's adverts does not necessarily entirely resonate negatively among Millennial's understanding of masculinity, especially from a social constructionist perspective.



Figure 2 Brand: Van Heusen, Origin: USA, Decade: 1940s, Image type: Magazine Advert

⁵³ Ian Craib, 'Masculinity and Male Dominance', *The Sociological Review*, 35(1987), 721-743, pp. 723-724.

⁵⁴ John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity: The Confusion of Sexual Genesis and Sexual Difference in Modern Society* (Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1988), p. 14.



Figure 3 Brand: Hardee's, Origin: USA, Decade: 1940s, Image type: Magazine Advert



Figure 4 Brand: Chemstrand Nylon, Origin: USA, Decade: 1940s, Image type: Magazine Advert

The subject positioning of the male body in Rezkallah's edited mid-twentieth century adverts does not entirely seem discordant with early twenty-first century discourses of men and masculinity that have become more fluid and have blurred society's former strict dichotomous gender role behaviour divide. Thus, men wearing pastel colours and delicate fabrics like silk, stay-at-home dads, men in aprons washing the dishes or preparing the family meal, and even men in leotards or in a Christmas patterned suit are all potentially part of the contemporary masculine gender script. As will be illustrated further in Chapter 2, representations of the ideal male body have also given rise to a shift in the representation of men's behaviour too, as in Figures 7 to 13. Beynon's assertion that traditional masculinity's 'neuro-muscular armour' has

now been withdrawn as men are more in touch with their feminine side⁵⁵ is easily displayed by leafing through any contemporary men's lifestyle magazines (such as *Men's Health* or *GQ*) and its print advertisements, men's lifestyle websites (www.fatherly.com, www.modernman.com, or www.esquire.com), or programmes on Netflix (*Jane the Virgin*, Figure 5; *Queer Eye*, Figure 6). Discourses of masculinity have seemed to soften as the male body in the media has become more culturally effeminised, glamourised and beautified, though this will be discussed in greater length and depth in the following chapter.

Doing Masculinity

Each of the selected examples of media texts below, ranging from Kraft's 'sexy Zesty Ad' (Figures 7 and 8) for Italian salad dressing featuring a heavily-edited muscular male body, exposed male torsos chiselled to the likes of Davide's Michelangelo to advertise products like perfume, cosmetics, garments, or fitness supplements, men's lifestyle magazines with semi-nude hypermuscular male bodies clad in ripped upper bodies and reminiscent to Spartan warriors (Figures 9-13), to television programmes like the *Jane The Virgin* TV series advert (Figure 5) with clothed males and females or the photograph featuring the five gay men who host Netflix's relaunched *Queer Eye* (Figure 6) in February 2018, clearly demonstrates that the cultural interpretation of gender is highly dependent on the physicality of maleness (or femaleness), regardless of the subject positioning of the male or female body or the myths that are constructed. In *Masculinities*, Connell explores three conceptions of the body and their relation to masculinity, namely discourses related to either the biological science of the body (nature), the body as 'tabula rasa' which is 'an object of social practice'⁵⁶ and imprinted with culture's social symbolism (nurture), and the 'nature-nurture' debate, but argues that the consideration of the body and masculinity in each of these ways is potentially mistaken. Nevertheless, Connell states that although mass culture seems to have produced a fixed and true masculinity which always emanates from the male body, in its adult or child form, the body is, in essence, 'inescapable'⁵⁷ in the construction of masculinity, and not fixed.

⁵⁵ *Masculinities and Culture*, p. 15.

⁵⁶ Michael Messner, *Out of Play: Critical Essays on Gender and Sport* (New York: State University of New York, 2007), p. 104.

⁵⁷ *Masculinities*, 51.



Figure 5 Promotion for 'Jane The Virgin' American television series (2014-), featuring Jane (centre, baby on her lap), a young devout Catholic, who gets artificially inseminated accidentally.



Figure 6 Promotion for American Reality TV 'Queer Eye' show on Netflix, featuring the 'Fab Five', described on IMDb website thus: A new Fab Five set out to Atlanta to help the city's straight men refine their wardrobes, grooming, diet, cultural pursuits, and home décor

Simone de Beauvoir, a pioneer in feminist studies, declares that '[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'⁵⁸; similarly, it may be argued that one is not born a man, but becomes a man. 'Masculine gender is (among other things) a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex'⁵⁹ and therefore, with reference to Judith Butler's theorisation of the body, masculinity (like femininity) is a bodily performance. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler revolutionises the conceptualisation of gender through dramaturgical allegory, positing that gender is performative, in that it produces a succession of effects as an individual acts their gender by enacting a series of bodily gestures, movements and enactments that society has normalised as feats of masculinity and femininity. In this way, gender's discursive construction is bodily and nonverbal, and the construction of the body is a subject-in-process, and thus, constructed in discourse by the acts the body performs, masculinity or femininity is a constant process of 'becoming'.⁶⁰ Connell concludes that 'the performance is symbolic and kinetic, social and body, at one and the same time, and these aspects depend on each other';⁶¹ we are born biologically male or female, but not masculine or feminine – a male body is not necessarily naturally 'masculine', just as a female body is not automatically 'feminine'.

The myth of the traditional male imaginary can thus be understood as the performativity of a 'stylised performance of repetitive acts',⁶² dominated by the machismo stereotypes of hegemonic masculinity, synonymous with patriarchal social power, heterosexuality, virility, sexual prowess, suppression of emotion bar aggression. Moreover, the performativity of masculinity, as evidenced ubiquitously in each of the media texts below, seems to exalt and take delight in 'the Physical Elite', contemporary society's new found social elitism that had formerly been associated with class, occupation, age, gender and race)⁶³ and thus, the fit body comprises the intertwining of Bourdieu's embodied, objectified and institutionalised concept of cultural capital. Central to Butler's theory is that the performativity of gender becomes 'a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief.'⁶⁴ The body goes through processes of enculturation and is encoded, inscribed with gender, thus

⁵⁸ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 249.

⁵⁹ *Masculinities*, p. 52.

⁶⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

⁶¹ *Masculinities*, p. 55.

⁶² *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 140.

⁶³ Stern, p. 1.

⁶⁴ *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

becoming part of a relational network of cultural hegemony. Consequently, the body is not just a subject of gender, but moreover, a gendered subject of culture. Therefore, each of the media texts exemplifies a matrix of gender relations, not just in terms of male or female bodies, but also in the fusion of masculinity and femininity that emanates from male bodies, hence Connell's plural masculinities. The subject positioning of the male bodies, through its visual and textual discourse, in terms of their body type, build, physical appearance, gestures, actions, relations with other subjects amongst others, constructs the dominant conventions of gender becomes the 'stylised' script to be performed by social members. Nevertheless, in an interview, Butler asserts that '[g]ender is an impersonation ... [and] becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits';⁶⁵ even if the actors or models embody these scripts in their real lives, the representations of the male body in its hypermuscular or queer form in the selected examples of texts below, gender is ultimately a 'regulatory fiction', a 'dramaturgical accomplishment' that the media seems to normalise and regulate.

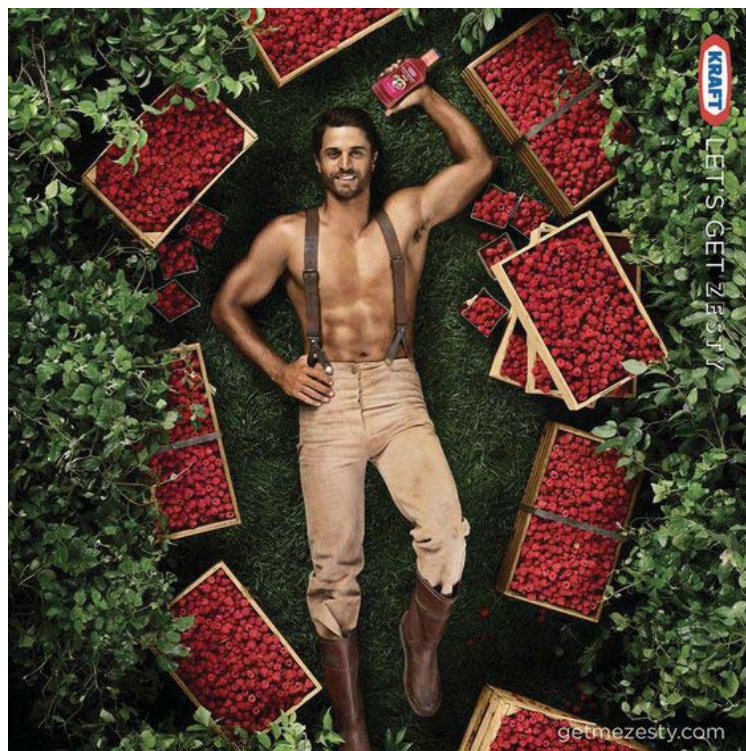


Figure 7 Brand: Kraft Zesty Dressing Ad, Year: 2013, Image type: Print Ad

⁶⁵ Liz Kotz, *The body you want: Liz Kotz interviews Judith Butler*, 1992, <<http://faculty.ucr.edu/~ewkotz/texts/Kotz-1992-Artforum-BulterInt.pdf>> [accessed 22 February 2018].



Figure 8 Brand: Kraft Zesty Dressing, Year: 2013, Image type: Print Ad (videos featuring this imagery was also included in the company's advertising campaign).



Figure 9 Brand: Maximuscle Maxi-Milk, Year: 2012, Image Ad: Print Ad



Figure 10 Brand: Old Spice, Year: 2010, Image Type: Print Ad (videos featuring this imagery was also included in the company's advertising campaign).



Figure 11 (Brand: Dove MEN+CARE, Year: 2015-present, Image Type: Print Ad (video adverts also accompanied the print ad in Dove's advertising campaigns))



Figure 12 Brand: Joop! Homme, Year:2011, Image Type: Print Ad



Figure 13 Two covers of Men's Lifestyle Magazines

This dissertation has so far explored Foucault's understanding of 'disciplinary power', Panopticism and surveillance and his contention that 'discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart',⁶⁶ as well as the conceptualisation of contemporary masculinity and the male body from a social constructionist approach by drawing on gender theorists Connell and Butler's revolutionary conceptualisation of gender. The following chapter will now direct its attention to the relation between consumer culture, consumption and masculinity by focussing on the representations of masculinity and the male body in contemporary Western entertainment and advertising media. Some of the questions to be addressed are: How are the mediated images of pluralistic masculinity in the media constructed? What 'stylised' 'régimes of truth' does the media circulate? In what way has the masculinisation of consumption converged with the feminisation of the representation of the male body? How has the male body become commodity fetishism? In what way do representations of masculinity in film, TV, adverts and general interest men's lifestyle magazines potentially contribute to the selling of fitness and of fit bodies?

⁶⁶ *The History of Sexuality* pp. 100-101.

Chapter 2 – Consuming Masculinity

Masculine Mythscapes

Ahead of summer in 2010, Gillette turned grass fields, outdoor swimming pools, bathing lakes and parks in Germany into public advertising spaces by placing towels which had holes in areas where body hair is usually found to bring the topic of body depilation to the centre of conversation. Gillette's 'Away with the Winter Fur' (Figure 14) campaign for men and women suggests how body grooming and hair depilation is no longer a women's preoccupation, but has entered into men's realm of bodily concerns, and consumption culture is capitalising upon it. In the past, men's body hair went untouched, and men were categorised as effeminate and homosexual if they groomed anything more than the hair from the neck up in the form of moustaches, beards, and after-five shadows. However, manscaping today has become common practice, and it pays for the media to circulate the idea that being hairless from neck to toe is not only more hygienic, but also more sexually desirable and luring.



Figure 14 Gillette's 'Away with the Winter Fur' marketing campaign ahead of summer 2010

With each passing day, more products seem to have magically appeared: Gillette Body, Nair Men, Veet for Men, King of Shaves, Harry's, as well as the plethora of body grooming stylers, trimmers, shavers and edgers. Gillette has also produced 'How To' videos on YouTube to teach the average man how to shave their facial hair, armpits, their groin, their back, chest, legs, and the nether regions, and it is not surprising that men's lifestyle magazines have capitalised on this phenomenon by publishing articles about manscaping too: '7 Manscaping Tricks Every Guy Should Know'¹ or 'How to Manscape Your Body Hair'.² According to a range of YouTube videos on manscaping, when shaving any of their body parts, men are instructed to hydrate their skin first, then wash their face (or body part) to remove dead skin and dirt, use shaving gel, cream or foam, ensure that razor blades are sharp and lubricated, and then moisturise. Each of the steps requires a different product: moisturisers, hydrators, facial/body washes, toners, sleeping masks, eye creams, etc. Essentially, advertisers create consumers after having identified and fashioned their needs and desires.

In *Rhetoric of the Image*, Barthes states:

Because in advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional; the signifieds of the advertising image are formed a priori by certain attributes of the product and these signifieds have to be transmitted as clearly as possible. If the image contains signs, we can be sure than in advertising these signs are full, formed with a view to the optimum reading: the advertising image is frank, or at least emphatic.³

The constructed mythscapes in advertising fuel men's pressures to invest in their appearances, to construct their body image ideals, and identify the premium of physical attractiveness in society, as in the advertisements related to grooming below. In Myer's words, '[w]hether it's on TV, in a magazine, or popping up on a computer screen or mobile device, advertising also sells and promotes gender roles, stereotypes, labels, and cultural norms.'⁴ Each of the images below (Figures 15 and 16) illustrates an obsessive preoccupation with the body that lies at the heart of the convergence of visual, physical, fitness and consumption culture today, and demonstrates what Sut Jhally calls an 'image-saturated society',⁵ where consumer culture has

¹ Gillian Francella, *7 Manscaping Tricks Every Guy Should Know* <<https://www.menshealth.com/style/g19547093/7-must-follow-manscaping-tricks/>> [accessed 24 March 2018].

² Adam Fox, *How to Manscape your Body Hair* <<https://uk.askmen.com/fashion/manscaping.html>> [accessed 24 March 2018].

³ Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. By Stephen Heath (London, Fontana Press, 1977), p. 33.

⁴ Myers, p. 123.

⁵ Sut Jhally, 'Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture', in *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (London, Sage Publications, 2005) pp. 199-204, (p. 200).

capitalised on the carefully crafted display of men's bodies in the media, that, in the course of a decade, has suddenly surged from near invisibility to hypervisibility.⁶ The male torso comprises boulder shoulders that taper to a minute waist, a pair of chiselled pectorals, rippled washboard and V-cut abdominal muscles that come in packs of six or eight, bulging biceps, and coveted horseshoe triceps, and in the lower body, sculpted massive quads, equally balanced hamstrings, and rock-hard calves; a hairless body, from neck to toe, and a single digit body fat percentage guarantees protruding veins and emphasised tendons. Therefore, just as the pasta, a tin, a sachet, tomatoes, onions, peppers, and other signs connote the myth of 'Italianicity' in Barthes's analysis of the rhetoric of a Panzani advertisement, the hypermuscular male body is mythified by the contemporary advertisement for grooming products and is 'imbued with euphoric values'.⁷ These painstakingly developed body parts have culturally developed connotations that have ideologically transgressed their purely biological and anatomical function and value. In Barthesian terms, this 'perfected' image of the mesomorphic male body may be read or deciphered in terms of its signifier and signified values as a symbol of ornamental display.⁸ The commodified male body is not only who the products are being designed for, but moreover, there exists the additional signified of 'the perfectibility of the male body through consumption'.

⁶ Rosalind Gill, Karen Henwood and Carl Mclean, 'Body Projects and the Regulation of Normative Masculinity', *LSE Research Articles Online* 1(2005) <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/371/1/Body_Projects_final.pdf> [accessed 24 February 2018] (pp.37-62).

⁷ Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, p. 36.

⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984).

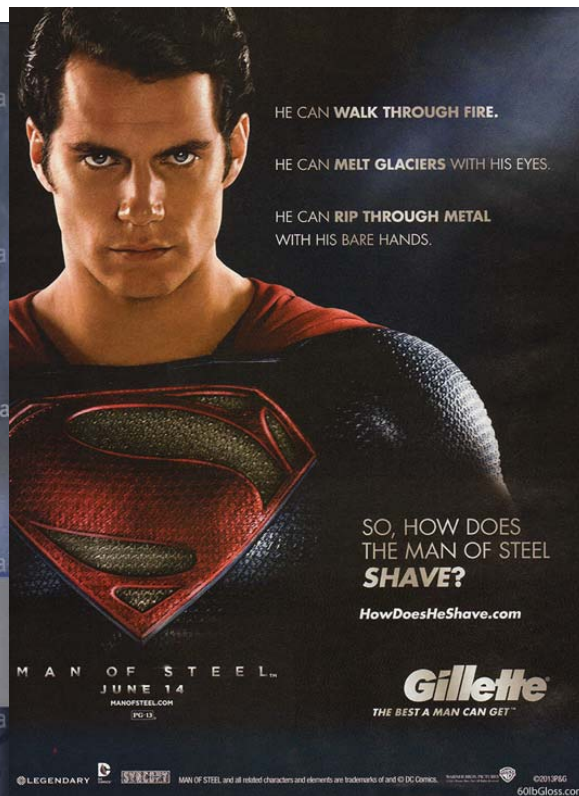
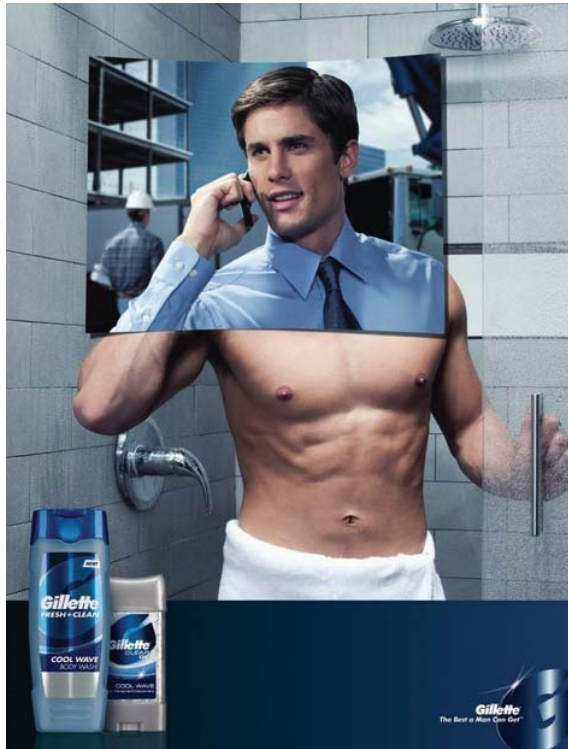


Figure 15 'Gillette' and 'Nivea' adverts (print) in the 21st century, demonstrating the myth of the hypermuscular ideal as propagated in the media

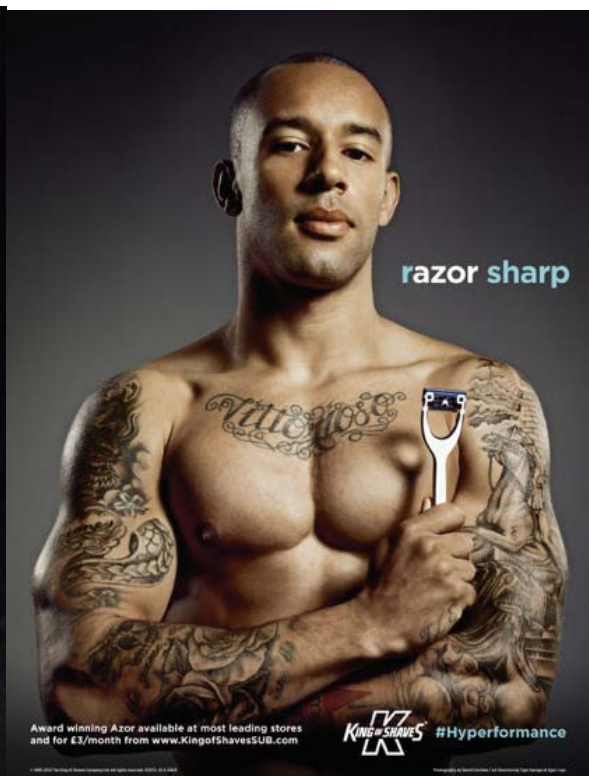
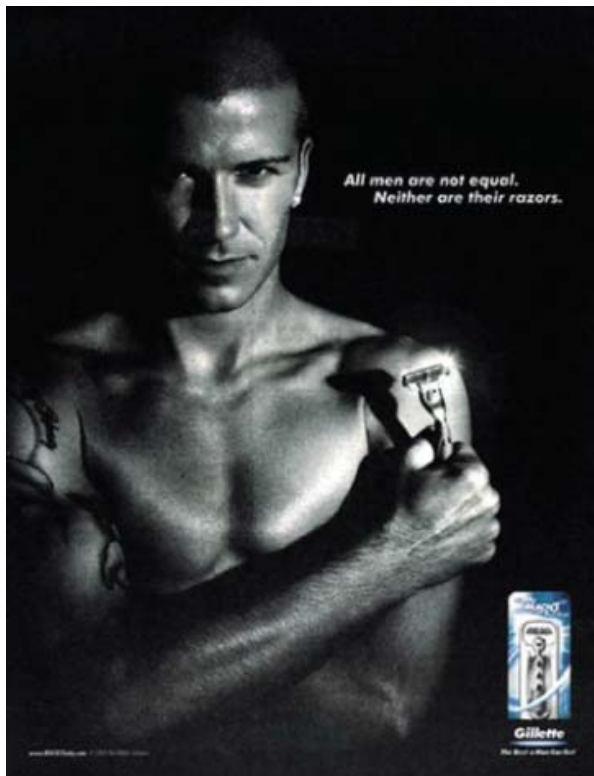
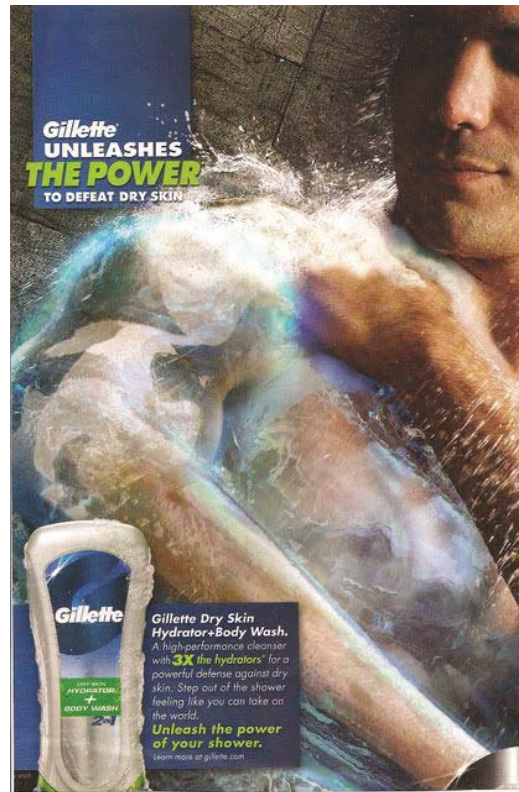
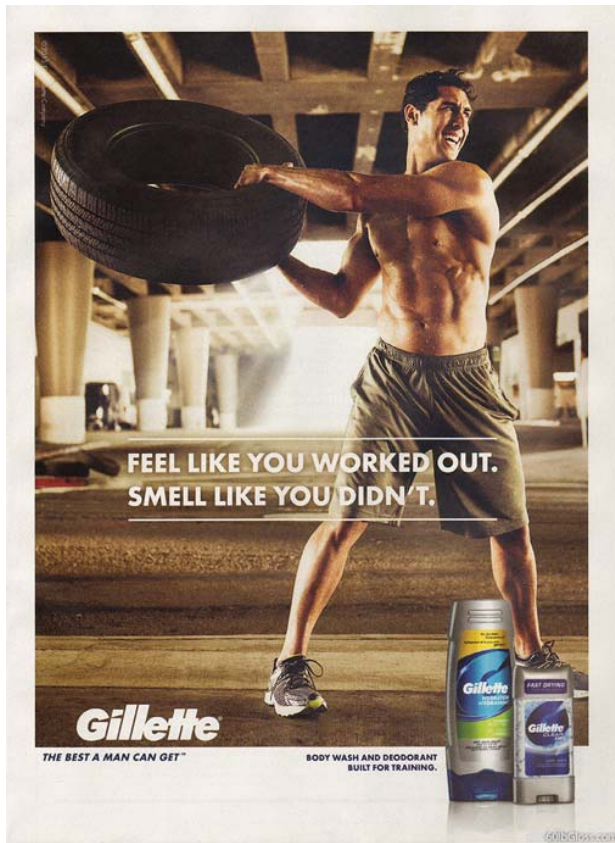


Figure 16 'Gillette' and 'King of Shaves' in the 21st century

According to Featherstone, ‘the logic of consumer culture depends upon the cultivation of an insatiable appetite to consume images’⁹ that is heavily based on the ‘unashamed display of the human body’.¹⁰ Therefore, in an age which many scholars and practitioners are calling a ‘crisis of obesity’ or ‘obesity epidemic’, when western capitalist society prizes physical attractiveness, and where consumer culture is the driving force behind the aversion to ‘being fat’ and consequently to one’s continual dissatisfaction with one’s body and physical appearance,¹¹ an inundation of beautiful images of men in the media aims to funnel men’s compulsion to invest in consumerist excesses to compensate for their physical lack. As men’s bodies and their physical appearance become rising targets, and fitness has developed to be a consumer lifestyle, a dramatically increasing number of men are spending their income, time and energy on fitness and exercise.¹² Capitalism depends on a desire that can never be really fulfilled, and thus, the ‘looking good and feeling great’ message is an extremely saleable commodity¹³ that constructs a perpetual dissatisfaction with oneself. As consumption culture creates the demand to perfect one’s body, there seems to be even more books, magazines, television shows and internet sites that provide accessible ways to shape one’s appearance in the light of Michelangelo’s Davide or a twenty-first century Adonis.

Admittedly, not all men may be affected by the mediated image of the ideal man, and they may not necessarily yearn to be a ‘David Gandy’, a ‘David Beckham’, a ‘Zac Efron’, a ‘Cristiano Ronaldo’ or a ‘Chris Hemsworth’; in essence, a plurality of masculinities can cohabit peacefully. However, ‘the commodity image-system’ of consumer society still ‘provides a particular vision of the world – a particular mode of self-validation that is integrally connected with what one has rather with what one is’.¹⁴ Thus, as Featherstone claims: ‘Images invite comparison, they are constant reminders of what we are and might with effort yet become’.¹⁵ Whether contemporary man succumbs to the rhetorical tropes of the myth of the perfect mesomorphic body type or not, the circulation of the mediated images of the hypermuscular

⁹ Mike Featherstone, ‘The body in consumer culture’, in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner (London; Newbury Park; New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), pp. 170-196 (p. 178).

¹⁰ Featherstone, p. 177.

¹¹ Shari L. Dworkin and Faye Linda Wachs, *Body Panic: Gender, Health, and the Selling of Fitness* (New York, London: New York University Press, 2009).

¹² Mark Simpson, *Metrosexy: A 21st Century Self Love Story* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011).

¹³ Dworkin and Wachs.

¹⁴ Jhally, p. 200.

¹⁵ Featherstone, p. 178.

male ideal through the commodification and objectification of the male body seems to prevail, even if, as will be discussed below, alternative discourses of masculinity continue to surface.

Figurations of Masculinity

As explored in Chapter 1, the conceptualisation of western masculinity in the twenty-first century from a social constructionist perspective eschews mere biological denotative meanings of the term ‘masculinity’ and proffers a culturally-defined understanding of gender that varies according to societal and temporal contexts.¹⁶ Connell’s theorisation of masculinity dismisses the unified traditional stereotype of male sex roles according to which an individual guards one definitive gender position, positing instead that there exist a plurality of masculinities in Western society that are, in essence, ‘varied, open, relative, contradictory and fluid’, and ‘from moment to moment, forces redictate, replace, and reimagine its reconstructing.’¹⁸ This notwithstanding, the iconography of contemporary hegemonic masculinity in the twenty-first century features the dramatic rise in the visibility of the strong, lean and hypermuscular idealised male body rife with hypersexualised and eroticised imagery that is shamelessly on display in the media and in popular culture as never before.¹⁹ On the covers of men’s lifestyle magazines like *Men’s Health*, *Men’s Fitness*, *GQ* or *Esquire* (cf. images in Chapter 1) on newsstands, on screen in Hollywood blockbusters or on Instagram, in marketing campaigns for products like protein powder, underwear, or perfume, or even action heroes in children’s toyshops, mediated images of modern-day Adonises reign unscrupulously and incessantly in contemporary consumer culture.

¹⁶ Allan J. Kimmel and Elisabeth Tissier-Desbordes, ‘Males, Masculinity, and Consumption: an Exploratory Investigation’, *E-European Advances in Consumer Research*, 4 (1999) 243-251, <<http://www.acrwebsite.org/search/view-conference-proceedings.aspx?Id=11390>> [accessed 26 February 2018].

¹⁸ Marc E. Shaw and Elwood Watson, ‘Introduction: From Seinfeld to Obama: Millennial Masculinities in Contemporary American Culture’, in *Performing American Masculinities: The 21st-Century Men in Popular Culture*, ed. by Mark E. Shaw and Elwood Watson (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), pp. 1-9, (p. 1).

¹⁹ Gill, Henwood and Mclean, pp.37-62.



Figure 17 David Gandy, M&S Swimwear, June 2015



Figure 18 David Gandy for D&G fragrance 'Light Blue' in 2007



Figure 19 #RevealYourself 2015 Bulk Powder Campaign

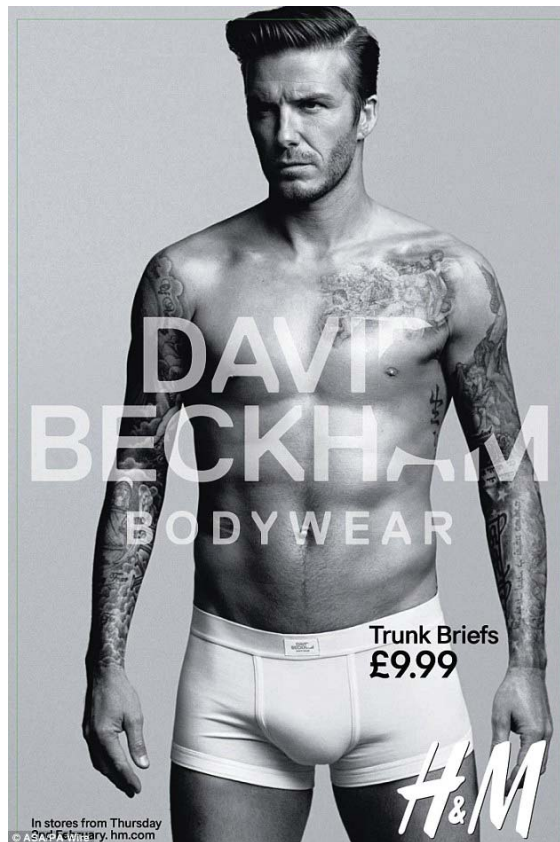


Figure 20 David Beckham Bodywear print advert for H&M



Figure 21 King of Instagram Dan Bilzerian, 37 years old in 2018



Figure 22 Italian entrepreneur Gianluca Vacchi, 50 years old in 2018



Figure 23 Social media sensation, Shammi

According to masculinity scholar Michael Kimmel, '[m]asculinity is a homosocial enactment',²⁰ and since time immemorial men have been pressured to perform their manhood accurately, and in it, in a hopeful bid to seek and warrant other men's cultural and societal acceptance. 'Plagued by chronic anxiety that [men's] masculinity is constantly being tested,' Kimmel argues, 'American men have raided that cultural treasure chest for symbolic objects

²⁰ Michael Kimmel, 'Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity, in *Research on men and masculinities series: Theorizing Masculinities*, ed. by Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1994), pp.119-141.

that might restore this lost manhood.’²¹ Kimmel’s contention simultaneously highlights both Butler’s and Connell’s claim that gender as a social construct is based on relationships between the self and social practices. Butler posits that gender refers to socially created roles, attitudes, and behaviours within a heterodichotomous matrix that a male/female is expected to enact. According to Butler, the heterodichotomous matrix marginalises those who do not endorse the heteronormative acts, and in Connell’s terms, plural masculinities exist simultaneously, positioning men in a gender order of power relations in society.²² ‘There are male and female versions of masculinity and, equally, female and male versions of femininity – there’s the butch, as opposed to femme lesbian’²³ and it is a culture’s gender ideological discourse that defines an individual, even in utero, as male or female, and imposes hegemonic masculinity (a culturally dominant form of masculinity), as the ‘regulatory practice’²⁴ in relation to what Cornwall and Lindsfarne term ‘subordinate variants’ of masculinity²⁵. Drawing on Gramscian cultural hegemony, Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity explains how culturally accepted, ‘most honoured’ ways of ‘being a man’, at a specific time and place, tyrannise those men, or masculinities, that do not adhere to the dominant masculine script, while other masculine styles (including class, race and ability) are rendered inadequate and inferior.²⁶

The changing tides of capitalism, the economic explosions and recessions, the feminist emancipation in western consumer society since the 1980s and the dawn of a third Industrial Revolution have triggered noticeable shifts in the mediated representations of hegemonic masculinity²⁷ and have forged the emergence of new figurations of masculinity, that have equally enjoyed their fair share of cultural hegemony - the New Man, New Lad, the Metrosexual, the Spornosexual, the Ubersexual, the Retrosexual, among so many others. Beynon argues that traditional masculinity’s ‘neuro-muscular armour’ has now been withdrawn as men are more in touch with their feminine side.²⁸ Men’s corporeal gestures,

²¹ Michael Kimmel, *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), p. 37.

²² Connell and Messerschmidt, p. 830.

²³ Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindsfarne, ‘Dislocating masculinity: gender, power and anthropology’, in *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*, ed. by Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindsfarne (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 11-47.

²⁴ Debby A. Phillips, ‘Masculinity, Male Development, Gender, and Identity: Modern and Post-Modern Meanings’, *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 27 (2006), 403-423.

²⁵ Cornwall and Lindsfarne, pp. 11-47.

²⁶ Connell and Messerschmidt, p. 832.

²⁷ C. Wesley Buerkle, ‘Masters of their Domain: Seinfeld and the Discipline of Mediated Men’s Sexual Economy’, in *Performing American Masculinities*, ed. by Elwood Watson and Marc E. Shaw (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), pp. 9-36 (p. 12).

²⁸ *Masculinities and Culture*, p. 15.

movements and behaviours can also encompass tenderness, emotion, and signs of vulnerability, without being subject to subordination or marginalisation. Nevertheless, Madden asserts that the media constructs ‘stock figures’ of masculinity, ranging from the cowboy, soldier, capitalist, good father, ‘images that are compelling but not always compatible’.²⁹ Traditional representations of masculinity³⁰ in the media thus seem to have shattered as the image of hegemonic masculinity is no longer necessarily equated with a ‘stylised performance of repetitive acts’;³¹ dominated by the machismo stereotypes synonymous with patriarchal social power, heterosexuality, virility, chauvinism, sexual prowess, suppression of emotion and aggression. Instead, ever since the birth, and rise, of ‘Marketplace Manhood’ in the Industrial Revolution, which brought with it a rupture in the ideology of manhood of the time, a new cultural pressure among men based on the consumption of products and capitalist ideology emerged, and masculine accomplishment started to be synonymous with ‘his accumulated wealth, power, and capital.’³²

From the moment ‘[c]onsumer culture [...] discovered and begun to develop the untapped resources of the male body’,³³ ‘a new kind of representational practice’³⁴ emerged, and the ideal male body in the media became feminised, glamorised and sexualised.³⁵ According to Sean Nixon, a 1985-6 television advert seems to have conceived the ‘New Man’ figure, as model Nick Kamen strips down into his white boxers and socks and puts his Levi’s 501 Fit-to-Shrink jeans in the washer-dryer, and sits himself down among other launderette users, in front of the revelling women’s eyes as well as men who are waiting for their own washing to get done.³⁶ Steering away from the more traditional figuration of masculinity in the media (as in the sexist adverts in Chapter 1), masculinity started being displayed with ‘a marked softness and sensuality connoted through [Kamen’s] soft lips, eyes and skin-tone’³⁷ as the viewer’s eyes

²⁹ Madden, ‘Introduction’, p. xxxi.

³⁰ The more traditional figuration of masculinity in the media may be understood in terms of social psychologist Robert Brannon’s conceptualisation of traditional American manhood, which he conceived in the 1970s (Robert Brannon, *The Forty-nine percent majority: the male sex role* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1976), comprising four dimensions of masculinity (‘No Sissy Stuff!’, ‘The Big Wheel’, ‘The Sturdy Oak’, ‘Give ‘Em Hell’). Each of these dimensions refer to the traditional qualities of masculinity.

³¹ *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 140.

³² Kimmel, *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities*, p. 38.

³³ Susan Bordo, *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), p. 18.

³⁴ Gill, Henwood and Mclean, p. 38.

³⁵ Bordo, *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public*, pp. 168-205.

³⁶ Levi’s 501 commercial with Nick Kamen (Laudrette) (1985) [Youtube Video], 12 August 2008 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q56M5OZS1A8>> [accessed 25 March 2018]

³⁷ Sean Nixon, *Hard Looks: Masculinities, Spectatorship & Contemporary Consumption*, (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1996) p. 2.

are clearly guided towards the model's face, chest, arms, thighs and backside. The ascent of the 'New Man' imagery in the 1980s marked the sudden shift in masculine scripts and in individual male consumption in commercial culture through the sexualised and commodified representation of the male body in television advertising, press advertising, menswear shops and popular magazines for men.³⁸ Not only were men doing the washing in the Launderette, but the model had the audacity to expose his body for all and feel self-gratified for his actions; albeit avant-garde in the Eighties, this is the norm today.

Figure 24 Nick Kamen in Levi's 501 1985 adverts



Beynon identifies two strands within the 1980s' 'New Man' mediated discourse: the 'New Man-as-Nurturer' (the anti-sexist, emotionally-literate man who is in touch with his 'feminine-side') and the 'New Man-as-Narcissist'³⁹ (consumerist, muscular, technology and fashion savvy/obsessed, philanderer).⁴⁰ Mort posits that the 'New Man' was composed of antagonistic

³⁸ Nixon, *Hard Looks: Masculinities, Spectatorship & Contemporary Consumption*, p. 4.

³⁹ *Masculinities and Culture*.

⁴⁰ cf. Michael Kimmel, *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005) to explore Kimmel's discussion about two models of masculinity that prevailed at the turn of the 19th century, namely 'The Genteel Patriarch' ("the manhood of the landed gentry: refined, elegant, and given to casual sensuousness, he was a devoted father who spent his time on his estate with his family") and 'The Heroic Artisan' ("Urban craftsmen and shopkeepers ... who embodied the

'hybrid scripts' that oscillated between the nurturer and narcissist.⁴¹ Furthermore, Nixon states that male fashion retail outlets, creative advertising on TV and in print, as well as style magazines for men commercialised masculinity like never before. The politics of looking had changed, and as will be illustrated in Chapter 3, the 'male-on-male' gaze became more socially acceptable to gain control over men and urge them to be 'driven by an excessive desire to spend money. Whether it was property, cars, clothes or personal artefacts.'⁴² As a clear reaction to the 'new man' culture, the anti-feminist 'new lad' appeared on the scene drinking excessive amounts of alcohol, being violent and utterly sexist. As Edwards argues in *Men in the Mirror*: 'If the 'new man' sold muscles and scent, Armani and Calvin Klein, the 'new lad' sells t-shirts and trainers, Hugo by Hugo Boss and Prada ... the style may have altered, yet the drive to consume remains the same ... 'new lads' are just as much a phoney marketing phenomenon as 'new men'.'⁴³

Over the past two decades, representations of the 'New Man' in the media made way for new varieties of masculinities, a discussion of which will now follow. In *Male Impersonators*, British journalist Mark Simpson explores how the 1990s' entertainment and advertising media exploited and capitalised upon the 'voyeuristic virility'⁴⁴ of 'unmanly' passions like homoeroticism, male narcissism and male masochism in the representations of masculinity that were circulated in popular culture (namely movies, adverts, magazines, male stripping, music and comedy).⁴⁵ In 1994, Simpson described the metrosexual in *The Independent* thus:

Metrosexual man, the single young man with a high disposable income, living or working in the city (because that's where all the best shops are), is perhaps the most promising consumer market of the decade. In the Eighties he was only to be found inside fashion magazines such as GQ, in television advertisements for Levis jeans or in gay bars. In the Nineties, he's everywhere and he's going shopping.

Metrosexual man wears Davidoff 'Cool Water' aftershave (the one with the naked bodybuilder on the beach), Paul Smith jackets (Ryan Giggs wears them), corduroy shirts (Elvis wore them), chinos (Steve McQueen wore them), motorcycle boots (Marlon Brando wore them), Calvin Klein underwear (Marky Mark wears nothing

physical strength and republican virtue of the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer and independent artisan" may in essence be predecessors of the 'new man' imagery of the 1980s.

⁴¹ Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁴² Mort, p. 172.

⁴³ Tim Edwards, *Men in the Mirror: Men's Fashion, Masculinity and Consumer Society* (Cassell: London, 1997) p. 83.

⁴⁴ Mark Simpson, *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity* (Cassell: London, 1994).

⁴⁵ Simpson, *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity*.

else). Metrosexual man is a commodity fetishist: a collector of fantasies about the male sold to him by advertising.⁴⁷

However, it was only eight years after, in 2002, that Simpson's term 'metrosexual' actually went viral, when he published an article in lifestyle magazine *Salon*: 'Meet the metrosexual: He's well dressed, narcissistic and obsessed with butts. But don't call him gay', referring to David Beckham, the metrosexual embodiment of this figuration. Simpson claims that whether the metrosexual was gay, straight, or bi did not matter: 'this is utterly immaterial because he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference.'⁴⁹ Unlike the 'retrosexual' (a man who does not pluck their eyebrows, use cosmetics, does not take an interest in fashion and definitely does not manscape), metrosexuals (the 'men in the mirror', in Edwards' terms) had populated consumer society. Men's lifestyle magazines such as *GQ*, *Esquire* and *Arena* were largely responsible as they 'filled their magazines with images of narcissistic young men sporting fashionable clothes and accessories. And they persuaded other young men to study them with a mixture of envy and desire'.⁵⁰ In 2005, Salzman et al identified a transgressed variant of the metrosexual, which they called the 'Ubersexual'. Even though the Ubersexual is interested in cosmetics, fashion and himself, the Ubersexual is the man 'that combines the best of traditional manliness (strength, honor, character) with positive traits traditionally associated with females (nurturance, communicativeness, cooperation).'⁵¹

Two decades after cultural commentator Simpson coined the term 'metrosexual' to categorise a heterosexual male who meticulously invests great effort in his grooming habits and personal physical appearance, a new sexualised and corporeal fetishisation of this masculinity surfaced. Hakim explains that the term 'spornosexual' is a portmanteau of 'sportsman' and 'porn star' referring to the construction of a young man who conceitedly displays faintly sexualised images of his muscular body on social network sites to gain likes, shares, tweets and comments.⁵² Simpson explains:

With their painstakingly pumped and chiselled bodies, muscle-enhancing tattoos, piercings, adorable beards and plunging necklines it's eye-catchingly clear that second-generation metrosexuality is less about clothes than it was for the first.

⁴⁷ Simpson, *Metrosexy: A 21st Century Self Love*, pp. 2-4.

⁴⁹ Mark Simpson, 'Meet the Metrosexual', *Salon*, 22 July 2002, <<https://www.salon.com/2002/07/22/metrosexual/>> [accessed 24 March 2018].

⁵⁰ Simpson, *Metrosexy: A 21st Century Self Love Story*, p. 3.

⁵¹ Marian Salzman, Ira Matathia, and Ann O'Reilly, *The Future of Men: The Rise of the Übersexual and What He Means for Marketing Today* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁵² Jamie Hakim, 'Fit is the New Rich: Male Embodiment in the Age of Austerity', *Soundings*, 61 (2015), 84-94.

Eagerly self-objectifying, second generation metrosexuality is totally tarty. Their own bodies (more than clobber and product) have become the ultimate accessories, fashioning them at the gym into a hot commodity – one that they share and compare in an online marketplace.⁵³

As the body and one's sexuality become sites of cultural meaning and social control, Simpson's definition of spornosexuality seems to reify the post-modern self that comprises constructed identities and lifestyles based not merely on media consumption, but also on its production. The spornosexual body can thus be considered within Bourdieu's parameters of cultural capital which can exist in the embodied state (relating to the mind and body), objectified state (relating to the ownership of cultural goods), and the institutionalised state (related to institutional recognition through qualifications).⁵⁴ Bourdieu is concerned with the reproduction of society and conservation of hegemonic positions in society and the use of cultural capital, through habitus, that becomes the way in which individuals assert their positions. Bourdieu defines habitus as being socially constructed and reproduced, assuming the physical embodiment of cultural capital.⁵⁵ Therefore, *Men's Health* magazines, for example, become the habitus as readers decode the representations, internalise and normalise the magazine's discourse, and attempt to embody the spornosexual ideal it disseminates. Like Marx, Bourdieu asserts that the more capital one has, the more powerful one is. In this view, our body becomes capital, in that one invests a great amount of time and energy into constructing the embodied ideal that has been objectified as it becomes a cultural good, a 'qualification' and hegemonic position.

In his paper 'Fit is the New Rich', which was based on study of an ethnographic nature of six British men who identify with the spornosexual ideal, Hakim asserts that his subjects consider working on their body as a laborious process, and an extension to the workday.⁵⁶ Their leisure activity coupled with strict nutrition regimes become characterised by the ethic of capitalist production as they exercise self-austerity measures to rigorously follow their workout programmes and diets. These men do not only consume media representations of ideal men, but produce them, as they reproduce 'glossy magazine' images via their smart phones and upload them to social media sites and are thus governed by the hypermuscular mythscape as

⁵³ Mark Simpson, 'The Metrosexual is Dead – Long Live the Spornosexual', *The Telegraph*, 10 June 2014, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/fashion-and-style/10881682/The-metrosexual-is-dead.-Long-live-the-spornosexual.html>> [accessed 24 January 2016].

⁵⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital' in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Capital*, ed. by John Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 241-58 (p.241).

⁵⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984).

⁵⁶ Hakim, 'Fit is the New Rich: Male Embodiment in the Age of Austerity'.

constructed in the media as they discipline their bodies with rigorous exercise and follow stringent diets. A Foucauldian consideration of this will be explored in Chapter 3.

The Mediated Image of the Male Ideal

Over the past few years in particular, a number of surveys, polls and studies in popular culture, and in academia too, have endeavoured to explore men and women's perception of the ideal size and shape of the 'culturally perfect' male/female body, which are then often published in several men's lifestyle magazines. In Featherstone's words, 'the body is charged as a vehicle of self-expression, reinforced by consumerism. Body projects are attempts to construct and maintain a coherent and viable sense of self-identity through attention to the body, particularly the body's surface.'⁵⁷ Thus, for example, in August 2017, *Men's Health* UK posted an article on its website with the title 'This is what the ideal male body type looks like', publishing the findings of a survey that asked 1000 Americans to identify the most attractive body types based on the gender they are most attracted to, which were then used to create 3D models of the perfect male/female bodies. Although the 3D models (Figure 25) do not do as much justice to the aesthetic cultural glorification that a photographic image of the perfect male body would, the dimensions and measurements of the transcendent constructed bodies, which seems to exemplify Barthes' understanding of myth through 'phraseology, a corpus of of phrases (of stereotypes)',⁵⁸ do not only demonstrate how Wienke's claim 20 years ago in 1998 that the muscular body represents the dominant cultural ideal is still prevalent today, but it also seems to emphasise the ease with which men or women can identify the highly esteemed perfect body and its parts in consumer culture (Figure 26).⁵⁹ The participants' ability to identify and construct the most attractive body in their view clearly manifests Barthes' contention that 'myth consists in turning culture into nature, or at least turning the social, the cultural, the ideological, the historical into the 'natural'.⁶⁰ This is also resonant to Foucault' conceptualisation of 'régimes of truth' and normalising judgement.

⁵⁷ Featherstone, pp. 170-196.

⁵⁸ Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, trans. By Richard Howard, (California: University of California Press, 1986), p. 65.

⁵⁹ Chris Wienke, 'Negotiating the Male Body: Men, Masculinity, and Cultural Ideals, *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 3(1998), 255-282.

⁶⁰ Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, p. 65.

Furthermore, it also corroborates a scientific study by Crossley et al in 2012⁶¹ in which the male participants' version of the attractive body is constructed as so muscular that the ideal male body's weight would theoretically fall into the 'normal' to 'overweight' categories of the BMI scale. Nonetheless, as the ideal male body is lean with high muscle definition (which requires a body fat percentage of below 9-12%), and that additional muscle weighs more than fat, this would account for such a heavy weight. Moreover, as long as the ideal men in the 3D images eat healthily, with exercise ranging from 6-8 hours per week, it would be likely that the ideal men, whether for Millennials, Gen Xers or Baby Boomers, are toned and in shape. The article's subheading dispels any of the reader's hope that he may actually sport the perfect body, and thus, adds to the cultural myth that the perfect body is desirable but unattainable: 'Sorry but this story is probably going to make you feel distinctly average'.⁶² In doing so, the *Men's Health* author also draws attention to the hypermuscular mediated images of men that circulate in the media, comparing the average 'perfect man' to celebrities like Bradley Cooper, Channing Tatum or Gerard Butler, all of whom have graced the covers of the magazine, and who also have the temporal and financial capabilities, and incentives, to sculpt such a physique. The magazine's dose of fitness consumption appears at the end of the article, where readers are assured that *Men's Health* can 'certainly help add inches to your chest, bulk up your butt, and even make you taller,'⁶³ by clicking on the hyperlink to read more about how to enlarge different body parts. Of course, readers would still need to go to the gym or work out at home using the appropriate equipment and follow a rigorous diet.

⁶¹ Kara L. Crossley, Piers L. Cornelissen, Martin J. Tovée, 'What Is an Attractive Body? Using an Interactive 3D Program to Create the Ideal Body for You and Your Partner' < <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0050601> > [accessed 2 March 2018].

⁶² Men's Health, 'This is what the ideal male body type looks like', *Men's Health*, 23 August 2017, <<http://www.menshealth.co.uk/fitness/this-is-what-the-ideal-male-body-type-looks-like>> [accessed 16 March 2018].

⁶³ Men's Health, 'This is what the ideal male body type looks like'.



Figure 25 The Ideal Male body according to three generations, according to the study published in Men's Health in 2017

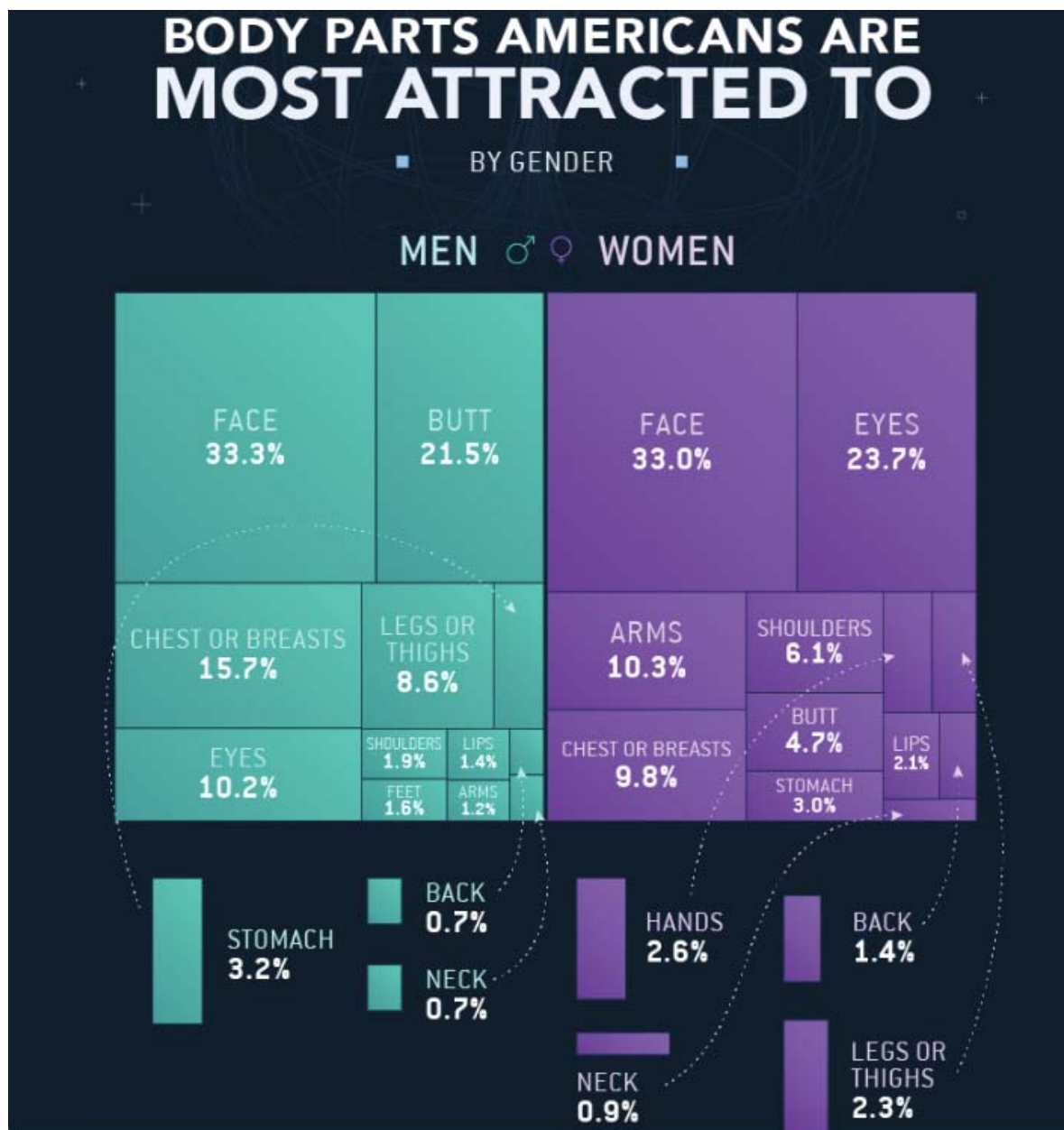


Figure 26 Body parts that Americans are most attracted to, according to the study published in *Men's Health* in 2017

MAXIM, another men's lifestyle magazine, published an article online in January 2018 of a different poll of 500 men and 500 women that had originally taken place in 2014 by lingerie company Bluebella in which participants had identified 'the perfect male/female' body by selecting different celebrity body parts.⁶⁴ The poll's conclusions are indeed four years old, yet

⁶⁴Zeynep Yenisey, 'Men and women view the 'perfect body' totally differently, *Maxim*, 23 January 2018, <<https://www.maxim.com/maxim-man/perfect-body-shapes-according-to-men-and-women-2018-1>> [accessed 18 March 2018].

MAXIM's decision to recirculate these images of the 'perfect man' through its magazine at the start of 2018 draws attention to Featherstone's contention:

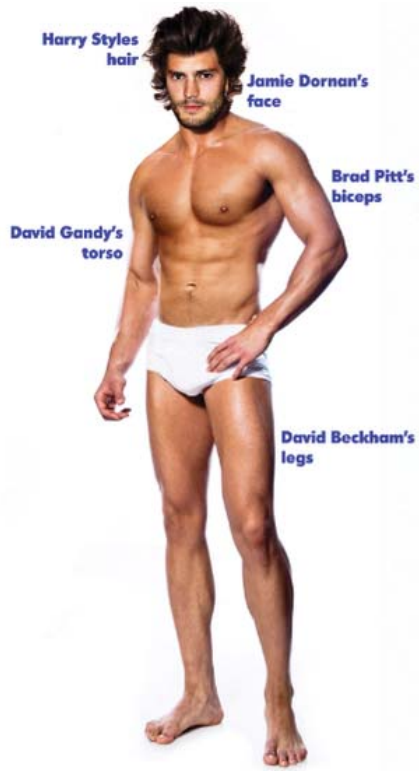
Within consumer culture the body is proclaimed as a vehicle of pleasure: it is desirable and desiring and the closer the actual body approximates to the idealised images of youth, health, fitness and beauty the higher its exchange-value.⁶⁵

Although the magazine claims that 'men and women view the 'perfect body' totally differently' (Figure 27), in essence, the only visible difference in men's and women's views of the ideal male mesomorphic body is its muscular breadth, exemplifying Pope et al's empirical conclusion about men's ever-growing dissatisfaction with their body image, and how men in modern western societies yearn for a body that is much more muscular and leaner than they actually have or perceive they have.⁶⁶ As with women, the ideal male body type is also significantly discrepant from that of the average male body size,⁶⁷ and thus, in Featherstone's terms, more and more men in consumer society seem to recognise the social and cultural worth a body that rivals that of the rhetorical figures of men in magazines, adverts and film has, featuring chiselled muscles, accentuated v-shaped torsos, well-defined legs, large arms with emphasised biceps and triceps, full heads of hair, and glossy smooth skin. The mythical, culturally desirable, prestigious and perfect body has been naturalised, and this myth has sunken deep into the pores of contemporary society's epidermis.

⁶⁵ Featherstone, pp. 170-196.

⁶⁶ HG. Jr. Pope et al, 'Body image perception among men in three countries', *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 157 (2000), 1297-1301.

⁶⁷ Marita P. McCabe, Kelly Butler and Chrstina Watt, 'Media Influences on Attitudes and Perceptions Toward the Body Among Adult Men ad Women', *Journal of Applied Biobehavioural Research*, 12 (2007), 101-118.



The Perfect Male Body...According To Women



The Perfect Male Body...According To Men

Figure 27 The Perfect Male Body According to (top) Women, (bottom) Men

Two decades into the twenty-first century, not only has the human body retained a vital place in consumer society in western modernity but scholars have suggested that more males are increasingly defining their sense of self through their bodies⁶⁸ and more so by conforming to commercialised representations of '[m]asculine ideologies [that] are circulated in books, films, newspapers, TV programs, and music, including fiction, current events, advertisements, and journalists' coverage of celebrities and business and political leaders.'⁶⁹ There once was a time when men's highly developed muscles were directly relational to a specific class connotation and a cultural indication of one's participation in manual labour. However, Henwood, Gill and Mclean argue that 'we are witnessing an extraordinary fetishisation of muscles and muscularity in young men at precisely the moment that fewer traditionally male manual jobs exist, and those that do require less physical strength than before',⁷⁰ and therefore, in Bourdieu's terms, the body is nowadays a form of symbolic capital as society venerates it based on how it looks, rather than simply what it can do. As will be explored further on, the media has advocated men's intense desire for heavy investment in body-related products and services like fashion, perfume and grooming to look good and feel culturally rich. In fact, Lasch claimed that rewards for constant, disciplined work on the body in consumer society is no longer spiritual or physical in nature, but essentially, based on an enhanced, more marketable appearance.⁷¹ Although Lasch's view dates back to the 1970s, his words could easily refer to society today, therefore exemplifying how this myth has truly become ingrained into society, thus how 'myths also function as a way to make certain forms of masculinity seem eternal and unchanging, not open to change or variation.'⁷²

Similarly, according to media scholar Jamie Hakim, whose most recent research has included an examination of the male body in digital culture, in the age of austerity, 'investing in the perfect body is hard work and very little pay',⁷³ and therefore, 'fit is the new rich'. As clothes are stripped off the body and the semi-naked male buff body takes precedence, however, what is now fashionable and culturally desirable is the actual sculpting of the body itself and the self-gratification for attaining such fitness goals and embodying such a marketable appearance.

⁶⁸ Gill, Karen and Mclean, pp.37-62.

⁶⁹ Douglas B. Holt and Craig J. Thompson, 'Man-of-Action Heroes: The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (2004), 425-440, (p. 427).

⁷⁰ Gill, Henwood and Mclean, p. 40.

⁷¹ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979).

⁷² Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), p. 22.

⁷³ Hakim, 'Fit is the New Rich: Male Embodiment in the Age of Austerity'.

Writing for *GQ* magazine in a February 2018 article, Clay Skipper reacts to Zac Efron's hypermuscular physique in his performance of Matt Brody in *Baywatch* (2017) alongside semi-retired professional wrestler Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson as Mitch Buchannon (Figure 28), highlighting the extent to which contemporary film has morphed and transfigured the male body:

Efron looked like one of those preserved human torsos on display in *Bodies...The Exhibition*. He looked like Tyler Durden if Tyler Durden had put on a trash bag and trugged across the Sahara for a week. Was this what I was supposed to look like? I have fibrous muscle tissue, too, you know.⁷⁴



Figure 28 Zac Efron (left) and Dwayne Johnson (right) in *Baywatch* 2017

⁷⁴ Clay Skipper, 'What the Perfect Male Body Looks Like Now', *GQ*, 25 February 2018. <<https://www.gq.com/story/no-country-for-swole-men>> [accessed 25 March 2018].

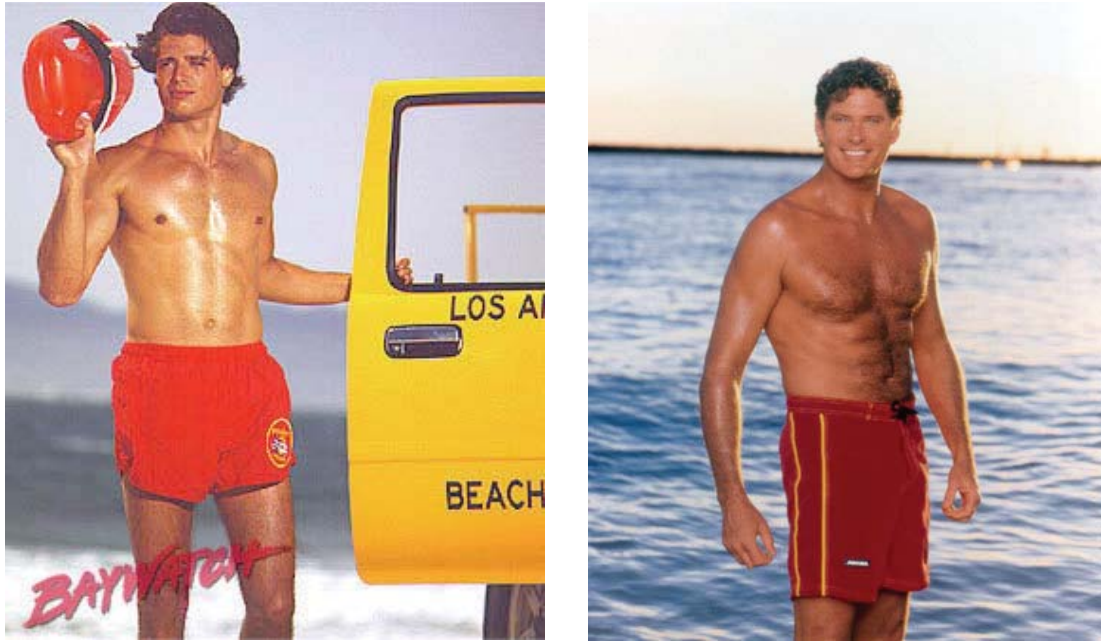


Figure 29 David Charvet (left) and David Hasselhoff (right) in the original Baywatch series

Not only is the 2017 representation of the male body with all its sinews even more muscular than David Charvet's casting as Matt and David Hasselhoff as Mitch in the TV series of *Baywatch* which ran for 8 series between 1989 and 2001 (Figure 29), but Zac Efron's body personified the eulogised male body in several men's lifestyle magazines featuring his workouts for the average man to follow:

- The Zac Efron workout to get a beach-ready 'Baywatch' body⁷⁵
- Patrick Murphy details the diet and training regimen that got Zac Efron absolutely shredded for 'Baywatch'⁷⁶
- Zac Efron Reveals How He Got Jacked for 'Baywatch' Scenes⁷⁷
- THE ZAC EFRON WORKOUT TO GET A 'BAYWATCH' BODY⁷⁸

Gunnar Peterson, a personal trainer for Hollywood bodies states: 'Unless you are independently wealthy and have no job and can devote everything you have to preparing—and

⁷⁵ Sean Hyson, 'The Zac Efron workout to get a beach-ready 'Baywatch' Body', *Men's Fitness*, 11 April 2017. <<https://www.mensfitness.com/training/workout-routines/zac-efron-workout-baywatch-body-program>> [accessed 20 March 2018].

⁷⁶ Dylan White, Patrick Murphy details the diet and training regimen that got Zac Efron absolutely shredded for 'Baywatch', *Men's Fitness*, 30 August 2017. <<https://www.mensfitness.com/life/entertainment/patrick-murphy-details-diet-and-training-regimen-got-zac-efron-absolutely>> [accessed 20 March 2018].

⁷⁷ Korin Millin, 'Zac Efron Reveals How He Got Jacked for 'Baywatch' Scenes', *Men's Health*, 23 May 2017. <<https://www.menshealth.com/fitness/zac-efron-baywatch-workout-muscles>> [accessed 20 March 2018].

⁷⁸ Muscle & Fitness, 'The Zac Efron Workout to get a 'Baywatch' Body'. <<https://www.muscleandfitness.com/workouts/workout-routines/zac-efron-workout-get-baywatch-body?day=1>> [accessed 20 March 2018].

you are a genetic freak—there is a very, very slim chance that you will ever look like that’.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Hugo Boss capitalised on Zac Efron’s good looks by appointing him the face of their brand for 2017, and though he was clothed in the perfume’s marketing campaign, Zac Efron’s body has become a key source for images of the dominant script of masculinity in society. In his *GQ* article, Skipper laments: ‘No matter how I reason with myself about attainability or wellness, I’m served a constant diet of dudes on impossible diets,’⁸⁰ emphasising the mythic and mythological status of the hypermuscular body.

Hollywood’s growing concern with men’s physique is demonstrated in representations of the male body in James Bond movies from different eras as illustrated in Figure 30 (Sean Connery in the 60s and 70s, Pierce Brosnan in the 1990s and turn of the 21st century, Daniel Craig from 2005 till the present day), as James Bond’s body seems to have become fitter, hairless and more muscular as years have gone by, thus reflecting consumer society’s values and attitudes towards the perfect physique.

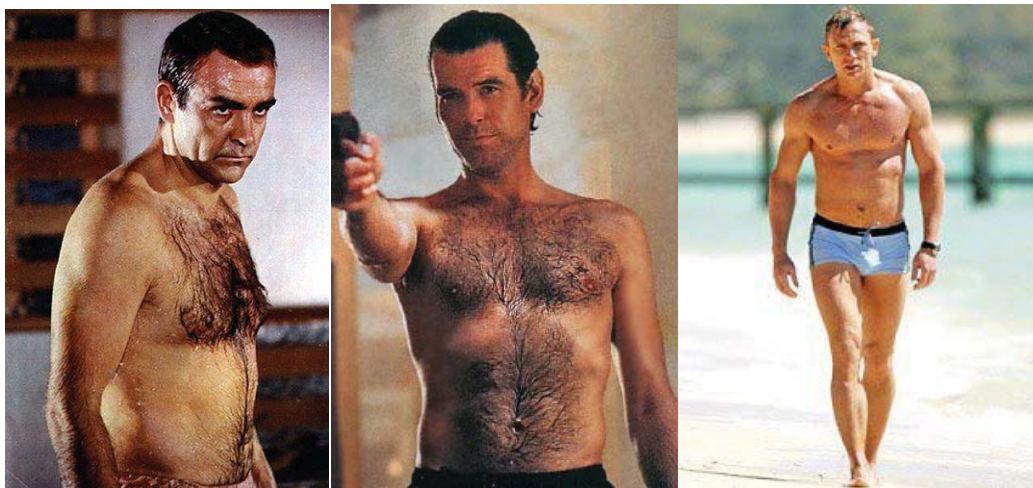


Figure 30 Sean Connery (left), Pierce Brosnan (centre) and Daniel Craig (right) as James Bond

⁷⁹ Skipper.

⁸⁰ Skipper.

Hollywood's red carpet seems to be a conveyor belt for mass producing men within a hypermuscular mythscape for the average media consumer to covet and idolise, illustrating a claim made by cultural theorist Tim Edwards – whose scholarship has converged masculinity, sexuality, fashion, consumer culture within the realms of social and cultural theory – that '[m]asculinity is at once everywhere and yet nowhere, known and yet unknowable, had and yet un-have-able.'⁸¹ Chris Hemsworth, Hugh Jackman, Ryan Reynolds, Kevin Hart, Cristiano Ronaldo, Theo James, Channing Tatum, Jason Momoa, Michael B. Jordan, the men on the American reality television dating game show *The Bachelorette* or on *Jersey Shore*, or social media stars Shammi or the other King of Instagram Dan Bilzerian; the same hypermuscular body prevails and 'a common visual vocabulary' exists.⁸² Similarly, even twenty-first century representations of superheros like Batman (Figure 31), Superman (Figure 32), Spiderman and more recently, Black Panther too, seem to have been injected with an extra dose of muscle-boosting testosterone. 'Images can be turned into myths when they become so widespread that culture takes them for granted as a narrative of masculinity. When such images are so widespread, they are taken as universal and, on a cultural level, come to appear as mythological.'⁸³



Figure 31 Batman action figure; vintage (left), modern-day (right)

⁸¹ Edwards, pg. 1.

⁸² Anthea Cullen, 'Ideal Masculinities: An Anatomy of Power', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Nicholas Mirzoeff, (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 603-616 (p. 603).

⁸³ Reeser, p. 22.



Figure 32 (left) Christopher Reeve (1978); (centre) Brendan Routh (2006); (right) Henry Cavill (2013)

Now that the rhetoric of masculinity and of the male body in selected examples of contemporary entertainment and advertising media has been identified and discussed in sufficient depth, the next chapter will explore the underlying concern of this dissertation: In what way does the male body potentially serve as the panopticon? In what way does the government of the male body through self-discipline and surveillance urge men to frequent gyms and construct a Foucauldian conceptualisation of the docile body in the light of images propagated in the media? Is a confidence culture being constructed in response to the images of hunkvertising and the fit body? Chapter 3 will turn to an analysis of Foucauldian power relations, masculinity and the body by addressing in what way the rhetoric of masculinity/male body in contemporary culture may potentially be considered to serve as an agency of domination in governing men to construct their masculinity and male body image in the mediated mirror image of western hegemonic masculinity.

Chapter 3 – The Governing Gaze

Looking at the Perfect Body of Man

Prussian-born acrobat, weightlifter and strongman Eugen Sandow (1867-1925) burst onto the scene in late Victorian and Edwardian popular culture as ‘the epitome of masculine beauty’¹ throughout the British Empire and North America by putting his sculpted body on spectacular display in outrageous feats of strength for audiences to marvel at.² Sandow painstakingly studied the human body by taking anatomy classes, and historians claim that he even frequented museums to measure and gain knowledge of the structure and muscle ramification of the human figure in statues and artefacts of Classical Antiquity. Dressed in the contemporary attire of a gentlemen of the time, Sandow was neither tall nor beefy but proportionally built, and at the outset appeared to be an ordinary man of the late 19th century. As soon as he removed his clothes, however, very little was left to the imagination as he wore nothing more than an artificial fig leaf and gladiator sandals, skin-coloured tights or a pair of leopard-skin trunks, and in one shot, his glutes are shamelessly exposed, at a time when women were disgraced if their ankles were even revealed. As illustrated in the images below, Sandow’s ripped, rippling muscular body exposed the ‘literal embodiment of masculine perfection’³ as his near-naked poses reawakened life, breath and movement into the marble male figures of Classical Antiquity, just as today’s celebrities do, as discussed in Chapter 2.

¹ David L. Chapman, *Sandow the Magnificent: Eugen Sandow and the Beginnings of Bodybuilding* (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. xi.

² For a more comprehensive consideration of Eugen Sandow’s life and influence, refer to David Chapman’s *Sandow the Magnificent: Eugen Sandow and the Beginnings of Bodybuilding* and David Waller’s *The Perfect Man: The Muscular Life and Times of Eugen Sandow Victorian Strongman*.

³ David Waller, *The Perfect Man: The Muscular Life and Times of Eugen Sandow Victorian Strongman* (Brighton: Victorian Secrets Limited, 2011), p. 8.

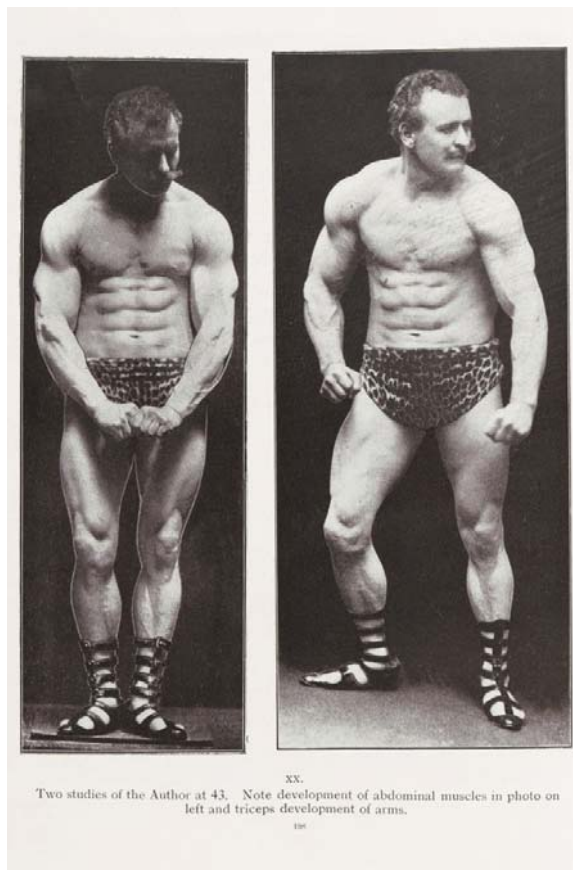
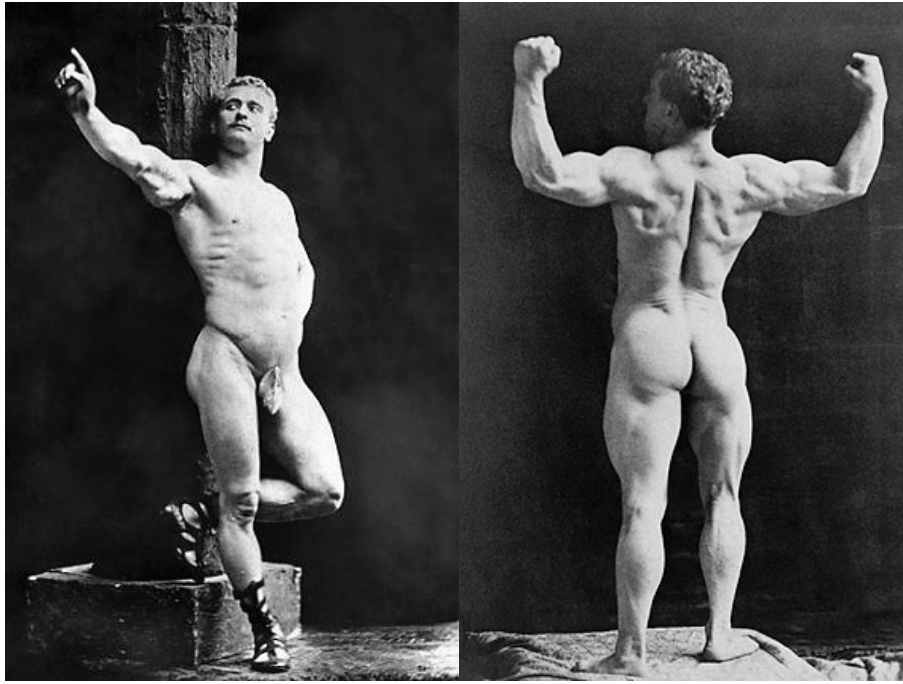


Figure 33 Eugen Sandow's poses that marked the start of bodybuilding culture

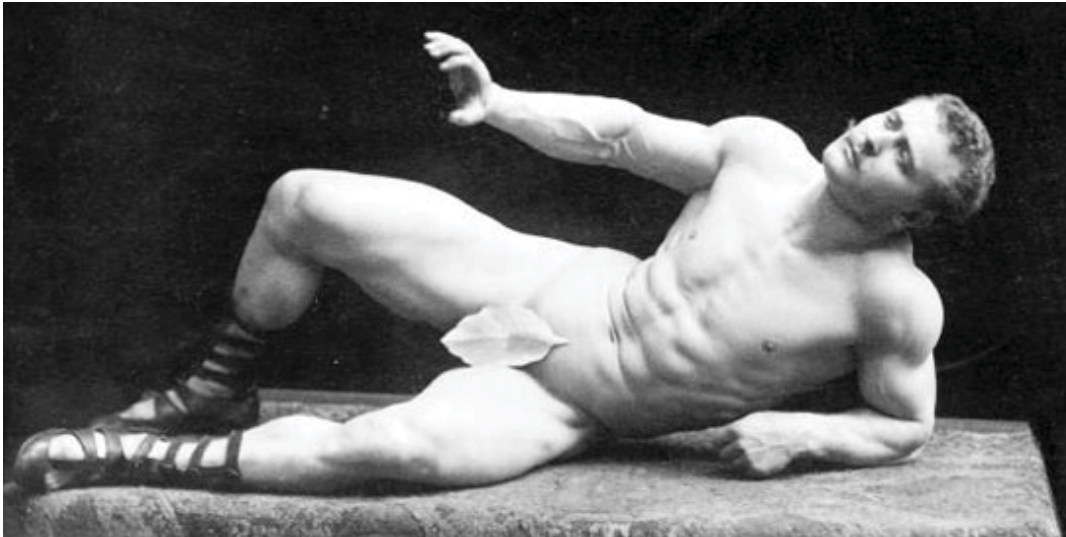


Figure 34 Eugen Sandow models the statue 'The Dying Gaul', embodying the Grecian ideals of the male body

Sandow became what Waller has described as 'an emblem of masculinity and a symbol of human perfectibility',⁴ as he trained himself to 'the utmost pitch of perfection',⁵ transfixed Victorian and Edwardian contemporaries to gaze at his idiosyncratic physique in all of its harmonic proportion and glory, and proselytised the creation of the perfect body through disciplined exercise, diet and willpower. Although health, fitness, muscular and ideal hypermasculine discourses may be considered to be a recent phenomenon, in essence, it is Sandow, who faded into obscurity soon after his death, who pioneered today's fitness industry and its eternal presence in the media by branding and marketing his body, shifting health and fitness to the realm of consumerism by founding Sandow's *Magazine of Physical Culture* in 1899; producing illustrated charts of home exercises, initiatory courses that accompanied 'Sandow's Spring-Grip Dumb-Bells'; publishing his own books like *Sandow's System of Physical Training* (1894) and *Strength and How to Obtain It* (1897); opening a chain of licenced fitness training schools; and also establishing the *Institute of Physical Culture* in London in 1897. Writer David L. Chapman, who has written prolifically on male photography and bodybuilding, states:

⁴ Waller, p. 11.

⁵ Waller, p. 21.

Under Eugen Sandow's influence, countless men and boys proudly inflated their chests and flexed their biceps in front of bathroom mirrors, infused with the desire to become as mighty as the great strongman himself.⁶

Sandow's muscular physique (with impressive 19.5-inch biceps, eight-pack abs, 48-inch chest that could be flexed to 62 inches and tree-trunk legs) became the ideal that men, including followers like James Joyce,⁷ William Butler Yeats and the Royal Family lusted over.⁸ A culture of looking had been conceived and the hypermuscular hard body had absorbed a culturally-rich exchange value. As 'the perfect specimen of male beauty',⁹ Sandow was elevated onto a cultural pedestal and late Victorian and Edwardian society looked up to him, and at him, as he made his physique attainable for any man to achieve. By developing a scientific 'self-improvement system' of bodily movements using dumbbells coupled with a rigorous diet plan 'to transform weaklings into paragons of health and strength',¹⁰ more and more men (and women too) were carefully observing and disciplining their bodies and lifestyles in a bid to not just be like Eugen Sandow, but moreover, to forge a body like that of Eugen Sandow's.

In 1894, Eugen Sandow and venerated inventor of his time, Thomas Edison, contrived the historic moment where the display of Sandow's judiciously flexed muscles were captured on Edison's Kinetograph, grainy footage of which is available on YouTube.¹¹ As Sandow stands semi-naked on a light box to accentuate his celestial body, he is simultaneously objectified and subjectified as viewers voyeuristically gaze at his semi-naked body and watch his flexed and taut muscles moving harmoniously from one pose to another, somewhat reminiscent of Channing Tatum's performance of a male stripper in *Magic Mike* (2012) and *Magic Mike XXL* (2015). Edison's footage raises the following questions: Who is gazing at whom? Is it Sandow at the viewer? The viewer at Sandow? Or perhaps Edison who actually recorded the footage? How does power manifest? In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger discusses the significance of 'the surveyor' and 'the surveyed' by referring to gender ideologies in the processes of looking, arguing that men act and women appear. In his view, '[m]en look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at ... [and] the surveyor of woman in herself is male'.¹² However, as

⁶ Chapman, p. xi.

⁷ In *The Perfect Man*, Waller documents how fictional hero Leopold Bloom, in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, takes up Sandow's 15-minute indoor exercises, as prescribed by Sandow in *Physical Strength and How to Obtain It*.

⁸ Waller.

⁹ Waller, p. 9.

¹⁰ Waller, p. 10.

¹¹ *Sandow in 1894 by Thomas Edison* [YouTube video] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agvQxm_nPIw> [accessed 4 March 2018].

¹² John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1973), pp. 46-47.

men themselves desired to embody Sandow's physique in the early 1900s, and men today likewise seek to achieve a hypermuscular similar to Sandow's because of its cultural prestige, Berger's position may be reworded thus: men also watch themselves being looked at and the surveyor of man in himself is male.



Figure 35 Channing Tatum as a male stripper in 'Magic Mike' (2012)

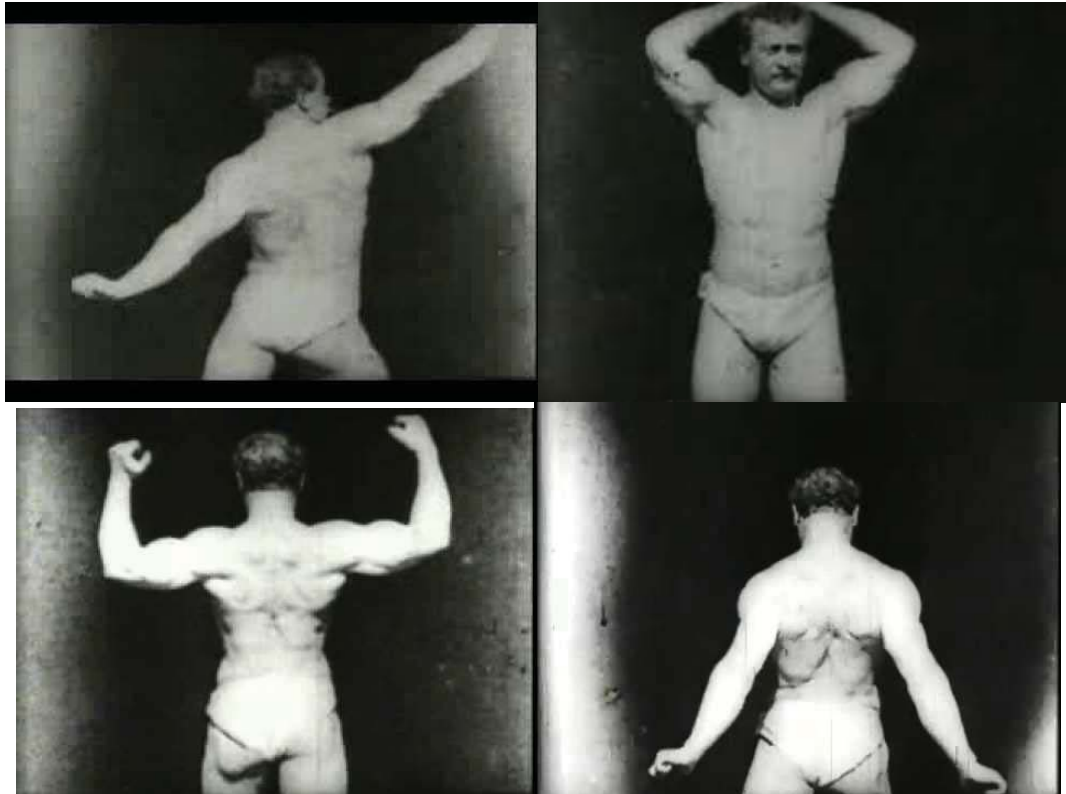


Figure 36 Snapshots of Eugen Sandow's poses from Thomas Edison's footage (*Sandow in 1894 by Thomas Edison* [YouTube video])

Edison's 43-second-long footage of a semi-naked muscular Sandow posing in front of a camera at the end of the nineteenth century seems to predate critical inquiry into the question of looking and the gaze in patriarchal society, which saw its inception with Laura Mulvey's influential essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. In this essay, by drawing on Hollywood narrative cinema as her primary investigation, Mulvey argues that the nature of looking in patriarchal society is 'split between active/male and passive/female'¹³ where women are used on screen to provide a pleasurable visual experience for men. Mulvey posits:

In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong, visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. Women displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease ... she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire.¹⁴

However, it may be argued that Sandow himself connotes a 'to-be-looked-at-ness' as he hails viewers to gaze at his body and demands a 'strong, visual and erotic impact' as viewers stare

¹³ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 833-44 (p. 837).

¹⁴ Mulvey, p. 837.

at him in a scopophilic manner, as he shows off his body, his graceful movements and chiselled muscles. The fact that Sandow takes pleasure in being looked at adds a further layer to both Mulvey's and Burger's position that the gaze has a masculine character. It is not only man who gazes at a sexually objectified woman, but also man who gazes at a man with a muscular male body and desires to attain the corporal ideals of male perfection; Patterson and Elliott refer to this occurrence as 'the Inversion of the Male Gaze'.¹⁵

In 2002, professors of psychiatry, Dr Harrison G. Pope and Dr Katharine Phillips, together with clinical research fellow, Dr Roberto Olivardia, identified 'The Adonis Complex', a body obsession in men and boys, stating that:

Men of all ages, in unprecedented numbers, are preoccupied with the appearance of their bodies. They almost never talk openly about this problem, because in our society, men have been taught that they aren't supposed to be hung up about how they look.¹⁶

In their publication, which carries the same name as the psychological syndrome (which is not an official medical term to date), Pope et al refer to the hazardous effects that an inundation of perfectly crafted images of perfectly sculpted men in the media have on man's self-image. As will be discussed more closely below, contemporary entertainment and advertising media may thus be considered to serve as agencies of domination in governing men to construct their masculinity and male body image in the mediated mirror image of western hegemonic masculinity. Just as men in Sandow's heyday attempted to emulate him whilst being mesmerised by his body image, lifestyle, and cultural capital exchange-value, so do men today, as Pope et al claim based on their clinical studies as well as so many other scholars who have recently started investigating this issue more profoundly. Pope et al identify compulsive exercise, financial investment in food supplements and aids, use of anabolic steroids and other black-market drugs, compulsive binge eating, dieting and exercise rituals, and body dysmorphic disorders where constant worries about hair loss, breast fat and small penis size as central preoccupations that may verge onto obsession among men. Therefore, '[l]ooking is not indifferent. There can never be any question of 'just looking''.¹⁷

¹⁵ Elliot and Patterson, 231-249.

¹⁶ Harrison G. Pope, Katharine A. Phillips, and Roberto Olivardia, *The Adonis Complex: How to Identify, Treat and Prevent Obsession in Men and Boys* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), p. xiii.

¹⁷ Victor Burgin, *Thinking Photography*. (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 188.

In Foucault's view, individuals are classified, disciplined and normalised through social processes he refers to as 'technologies of power', that is, specific social practices that 'determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination'.¹⁸ Man becomes subject and subjected to the images he consumes, being urged to construct his own body image in the light of the muscular gaze and body positioning in the hunkvertisements, but equally 'to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge'.¹⁹ Under the regime of the media's hypermuscular gaze, the power effect of this objectification subjects man to being classified as fat, fit, overweight, as having a dad bod, mesomorphic, ectomorphic or endomorphic body, being a metrosexual, spornosexual, alpha male, beta male, zeta male, and the plethora of different labels associated with masculine ideals. Foucault's conceptualisation of power is omnipresent and manifests within a capillary-like network, 'forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localised in them'.²⁰

¹⁸ 'Technologies of the Self', p. 18.

¹⁹ 'The Subject and Power', p. 781.

²⁰ *The History of Sexuality*, p. 96.

The Hunkvertising Panopticon

In July 2017, Fashion House *Paco Rabanne* released its 51-second video advert for its latest fragrance PURE XS,²¹ featuring 22-year-old model Francisco Henriques. The advert starts with a live gold serpent against a black background, suggesting luxury, sensuality, temptation and sexuality, superimposed with the perfume's name 'PURE XS' in white, evidently contrasting the impurity of the serpent. Amid a modern remix of Bizet's Habanera and set in a lavish bathroom, Henriques, dressed in nothing more than a lush velvet oxblood-coloured blazer and a pair of dark trousers, strips down in front of a number of ogling women who are voyeuristically gazing at him behind a one-way mirror. In the opening close-up shot, viewers meet Henriques face-to-face, his Mona Lisa smile and gaze hailing them to look on; his curls, shape of his face and build reminiscent of Michelangelo's *David*. As he moves forward, closer to the viewer, the subsequent long shot moves the camera's gaze behind him to locate the setting of the bathroom, and then quickly to a mid-long shot which allows the viewer to see Henriques looking at (perhaps admiring) a painting of a naked woman posing on her side and holding a snake that stares back at Henriques. The viewers embody the painting's gaze, and Henriques strips. The eyes of the woman in the painting are alive; women are peeping through the painting's eyes and the bookshelves. Henriques' skin is moist, smooth and hairless as he runs the water from the golden tap for a bath and then looks into the one-way mirror. He has become the subjectified object of these women's erotic gaze. The women look on, excited. Henriques zips down his trousers, pushes them down, and stands full-frontal in the mirror, to the pairs of eyes voyeuristically gazing. Has he been gazing at these women after all, albeit not being able to physically see them? With a smug grin, he sprays his fragrance onto his genital area, and the women behind the mirror faint. The final close-up shot captures Henriques quickly raising his eyebrows and stealing another self-satisfied smirk.

²¹ Paco Rabanne, *PURE XS / TV Spot 50s UK / Paco Rabanne* [YouTube video], 14 July 2017 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPWwiXAg40M>> [accessed 4 May 2018].

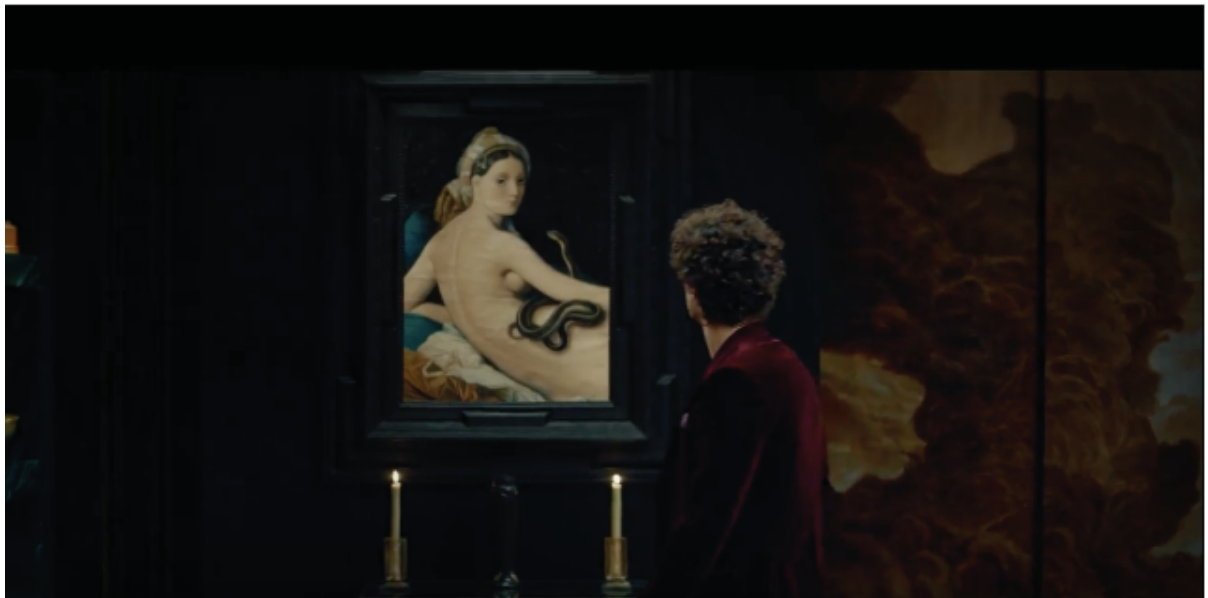


Figure 37 Snapshots of Paco Rabanne's 'PURE XS' 2017 video advert



Figure 38 More snapshots of Paco Rabanne's 'PURE XS' 2017 video advert

Schroeder claims that '[g]azing signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze',¹ yet who 'the gazer' and 'object of the gaze' in *Paco Rabanne's* advert are is questionable. As in Sandow's video (mentioned earlier), viewers themselves also assume the role of a gazer, and thus, as the rhetorical figure is encoded with ideology and positioned within the advert in strategic poses and gazes, it is not only a female

¹ Jonathan E. Schroeder, 'Consuming representation: A visual approach to consumer research', in *Representing consumers: Voices, views and visions*, ed. by Barbara B. Stern (London; New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 193-230 (p. 208).

viewers' attention that is captured, but a male one too. The 'see/being seen' dyad in this video truly exemplifies Foucault's reference to Panopticism:

[The Panopticon] is an important mechanism, for it automatizes and disindividualises power. Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up.²

Henriques seems to exemplify the Panopticon most clearly. As Foucault argues:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles: he becomes the principle of his own subjection.³

As man looks at these adverts of semi-nude men and experiences the inversion of the male gaze, man enters a power struggle, a 'staring' contest with the subjects in the ads. His eyes look for other eyes in the adverts to start a relationship based on the ideological discourse encoded within the adverts. In the process, the male viewer deconstructs the adverts limb by limb, being guided by the constructed lighting effects to accentuate the perfect bodies. This use of eye work is vital; 'a man in a very suggestive pose, or a man who is physically fit ... could easily do the trick'.⁴ Essentially, the 'trick' is required to ultimately urge men to purchase the product being advertised. However, men are being tricked into feeling insecure with their own bodies based on the representations of muscular perfection in the adverts by ideologically promoting the idea of self-engineering and investing time, money and effort on one's body.

The 'gaze' or the 'look', has extended its usage from film theory in the 1970s to the act of viewers voyeuristically looking at a visual text, or to the subjects' looks depicted within the visual medium. Nixon states that gaze is dependent on the choice of models (in terms of their physical look) and the codes associated with dress and grooming, expression, posture (and gaze), lighting and settings.⁵ The series of gazes created in the adverts serve as a power struggle and as an agency of domination by exploiting the use of pathos in advertising. Thus, male viewers look at the representations of muscular ideals in hunkvertising (ripped muscles,

² *Discipline & Punish*, p. 201.

³ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 202.

⁴ *Telegraph Men*, 'Why this topless picture of Justin Bieber makes you want to spend more', 18 March 2018 < <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/11479628/Why-this-topless-picture-of-Justin-Bieber-makes-you-want-to-spend-more.html> > [accessed 4 May 2018].

⁵ Nixon

gleaming muscles, perfect teeth, etc.) and become subjects themselves as they decode the ad's ideologies and become affected by it. Althusser refers to this as 'interpellation', a process where individuals acknowledge and respond to ideologies, recognising themselves as subjects.⁶ Men look at these images, and do not only voyeuristically take pleasure in looking and feeling in awe at the perfection, but they want to be the representation. They are invited to construct their body image in the light of the gaze and body positioning in the adverts. 'With advertising increasingly promoting hyper-athletic bodies as a symbol of modern masculinity, men are feeling under pressure to emulate the physiques they see on screen'⁷ Jack Duckett states. Men in the real world possibly want to feel sexually attractive and be gazed at, just as the men in the adverts are gazed at. Advertising images provide partial answers to the question 'What does it mean to be a man?'. Therefore, as men look at hunkvertisements, they are immediately hailed into assuming that the representation of masculinity and muscularity in the advert is the ideal.

Mark Simpson argues that we live in 'the age of the naked salesman',⁸ where men have become 'the new glamour models'.⁹ 'Hunkvertising' refers to the portmanteau of 'hunk' and 'advertising' and was coined in 2013 by writer and editor of *Adweek*, David Gianatasio, in an article where he analysed the sudden rise of objectification of the male body.¹⁰ Also known as 'beefcake advertising' or 'manvertising', hunkvertising involves a look that is predominantly constructed upon sexual attraction. The following 'hunk qualities' are the rhetorical tropes of hunkvertising as used in contemporary advertising to construct the rhetorical figure: an athletic body, pumped muscles, explicit muscle contours, a v-shaped torso, a six-pack, and body hair that is only limited to a full head of hair or perhaps an 'after-5-shadow' or other facial hair. The ways the figure of the body becomes rhetorical is twofold. On one hand, the image of the male body as seen in advertising aims to urge men to discipline themselves and persuade them

⁶ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. By Ben Brewster (New York, London: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

⁷ Mintel Press Office, 'Over one quarter of males agree that men are sexualised in adverts just as much as women' January 27 2016 < <http://www.mintel.com/press-centre/social-and-lifestyle/over-one-quarter-of-males-agree-that-men-are-sexualised-in-adverts-just-as-much-as-women> > [accessed 4 May 2018].

⁸ Mark Simpson, *How men became the new glamour models*, 23 March 2015, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/11485427/How-men-became-the-new-glamour-models.html>> [accessed 3 May 2018].

⁹ Simpson, *How men became the new glamour models*.

¹⁰ David Gianatasio, 'Hunkvertising: The Objectification of Men in Advertising', 7 October 2013 < <http://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/hunkvertising-objectification-men-advertising-152925/>> [accessed 4 May 2018].

to invest in the products being advertising. On the other, the body in itself becomes rhetorical, as the image of man turns the ideological into the naturalised.

The A-list of men who sport this body is endless, ranging from models like David Gandy, athletes and sports stars such as David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo or Tom Daley, actors Zak Efron, Chris Hemsworth, Ryan Reynolds, Channing Tatum, Milo Ventimiglia, and the list goes on and on. Moreover, it is no surprise that in the age of Instagram and Snapchat, every Tom, Dick and Harry has now also started mastering the art of the perfectibility of the muscular body as a quick search on Google with the keyword ‘Spornosexual’ or #spornosexual on Instagram will reveal. The rhetoric of hunkvertising embodies the myth of the hypermuscular male ideal through the commodification and objectification of the male body in its ‘perfect’ form, and invites its viewers to look, simultaneously summoning the female gaze, and enticing men to look back at them and return a gaze. These are the models, in more sense than one. Writing about the eroticised male body namely in contemporary advertising, Bordo argues:

The most compelling images are suffused with “subjectivity” – they speak to us, they seduce us. Unlike other kinds of “objects” (chairs and tables, for example), they don’t let us use them in any way we like. In fact, they exert considerable power over us – over our psyches, our desires, our self-image.¹¹

¹¹ Bordo, p. 186.

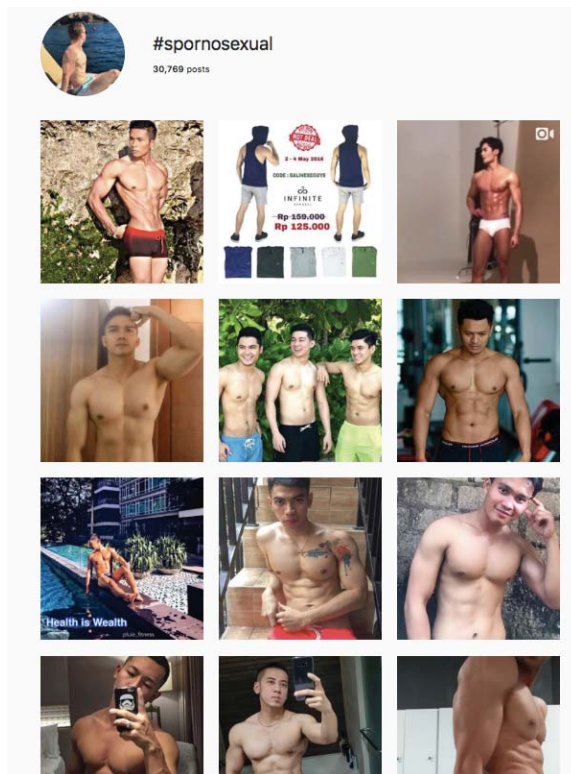


Figure 39 Images under the #spornosexual tag on Instagram in May 2018

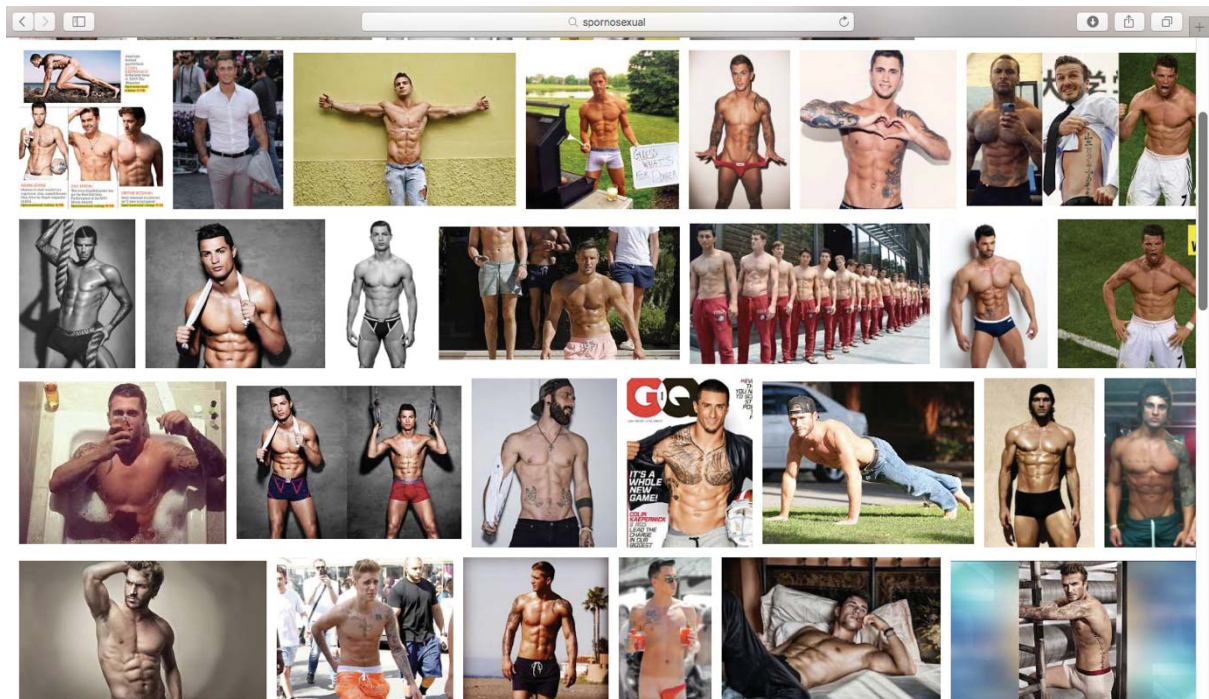


Figure 40 Screenshot of a 'Spornosexual' search on Google in May 2018

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault draws onto Jeremy Bentham's architectural representation of the 'Panopticon', a structure which creates and sustains power relations that are simultaneously visible and unverifiable, and based on 'the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal',¹² as outlined in the opening chapter of this dissertation. Foucault describes the Panopticon as a 'marvellous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogenous effects of power'.¹³ The visual rhetoric in representations of the hypermuscular male body discussed in Chapter 2 and its embodiment in Michelangelo's *David* of our time in celebrities such as David Gandy, David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Chris Hemsworth in the media texts of popular culture they feature in, as well as the 'Average' Spornosexual Joe on social media (in gyms, beaches, and on the streets too), construct power relations that 'function in a diffused, multiple, polyvalent way throughout the whole social body'.¹⁴ As these images inhabit man's mind through a normalising gaze and become established as regimes of truth, in turn, man inspects his own body vis-à-vis the mediated images of the perfect hypermuscular man, and realises that he may not be as muscular or as fit as the images looking back at him. As he transforms his body into a Panopticon itself and continues observing and supervising his own body, he attempts to resort to a range of disciplinary techniques available in a network society through fitness manuals, fitness magazines, exercise videos on YouTube and perhaps hires a personal trainer to be guided accordingly to discipline his body accordingly.

In Manuel Castells' view, capitalism is no longer centred on the production of material goods but on the reproduction of information and knowledge.¹⁵ Images of hypermuscular men and the different texts in popular culture that feature these representations and 'how-to-get-the-perfect-body' may be said to form part of the different nodes of the network society, where they hypermuscular gaze seems to be at the heart of the network society. Just as models, like Henriques in the *Paco Rabanne* mentioned above, coalesce a formation of confident poses, coupled with the necessary editing and lighting techniques to ensure perfection, the amateur spornosexual selfie is constructed in a similar manner, and designed not just to be looked at, but to incite one's feelings of affect. In *Body Panic*, Wachs and Dworkin note that 'fat is a powerfully feared cultural transgression for both women and men'.¹⁶ Therefore, carefully

¹² *Discipline & Punish*, p. 199.

¹³ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 202.

¹⁴ *Discipline & Punish*, pp. 208-209.

¹⁵ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

¹⁶ Dworkin, Shari L., and Faye Linda Wachs, *Body Panic: Gender, Health, and the Selling of Fitness* (New

crafted selfies are a mediation of turning one's body into a virtual workspace, boasting to the real world, and its virtual counterpart, the perfectibility of the male body. As selfies circulate, aim to gain likes and shares, and they become more widespread in the virtual world, pressure for men to become like representations of the hypermuscular male body increases and becomes more immediate. The hypermuscular man who once lived in the world of entertainment and advertising media on screens, in magazines, in print and on billboards now actually walks among the public in the spornosexual form; he takes selfies, circulates them online, and desires others' gazes. Jamie Hakim observes empirically a steady rise since 2008 of more young British men who share images of their bodies following a work-out on social media platforms.¹⁷ The network society has truly facilitated the circulation of images of perfect hypermuscular men as regimes of truth, consequently coercing men into constructing their male body image (in real life and in photographs too) in the light of the mediated hegemonic ideals as perpetuated by and in the contemporary entertainment and advertising media.

Hunkvertising thus seems to attempt to make men dissatisfied with their own bodies, creating consumer anxieties, emphasising the perfect body in a fat-shaming culture, and totally rejecting any alternate body type. The product being sold is the solution to the anxiety created by the media itself. Viewers are asked to transfer meaning from the look of the people in the ad – their image, lifestyle, and physical appearance – onto the product via a gaze of self-inspection and surveillance¹⁸. In Althusserian terms, men look at the adverts featuring the semi-nude male body as they are hailed into the ideology. They internalise the flawless body representations, and are thus made to believe, willingly, that their lives would be extremely better if their own body was fashioned in the light of the mediated representation of the muscular gaze.

The culture of lack that is produced through these adverts is twofold. Essentially, these adverts are selling products (perfume, underwear, protein shake powder) and interpellate men to believe that their bodies would be enhanced, and perhaps get a chance at being the male subject in the advert themselves. The hunkvertising panoptic Gaze is used as a selling point where male viewers could stand a chance at becoming David Beckham, the former professional rugby league footballer, Nick Youngquest or even perhaps the otherwise unpopular male models.

York, London: New York University Press, 2009), p. 34.

¹⁷ Jamie Hakim, 'The Spornosexual': the affective contradictions of male body-work in neoliberal digital culture', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 27(2018), 231-241.

¹⁸ Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisement: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978).

Perfume, protein shake powder, and underwear become fashionable accessories to the body, especially when adverts strip the male body's clothing to its bare essentials. Man's muscles and skin become the garments to wear and therefore, these adverts are selling an ideal mesomorphic body prototype, and the social prestige associated with it. Male viewers are granted the opportunity to assume that they can be voyeuristically gazed upon in the real world, envied, and, as they become an object of desire, prized with social and cultural esteem, self-worth and capital. Consumed by the images of men in the media, '[i]nspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere'.¹⁹

Disciplining the Docile Hypermuscular Body

In tracing the technologies of power that are exerted on the docile body in a disciplinary society, Foucault notes that in the seventeenth century, men who were suited to be soldiers were instantly recognisable due to the way the particular way that these men carried themselves. Foucault identifies 'a lively, alert manner, an erect head, a taut stomach, broad shoulder, long arms, strong fingers, a small belly, thick thighs, slender legs and dry feet, because a man of such a figure could not fail to be agile and strong'.²⁰ However, a century later, Foucault states that in a disciplinary society, the body undergoes 'projects of docility', where the manipulable body 'may be subjected, used, transformed and improved', and therefore, this 'air of a soldier' could be constructed as men became observed, disciplined, moulded and shaped to get 'rid of the peasant'.²² A key technique of power is that 'of exercising upon [the body] a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself – movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body'.²³ The male body in the twenty-first century is also subject to 'a political anatomy' in which the gaze in contemporary entertainment and advertising media through the muscular ideals of masculinity that it propagates is circulated. Its 'mechanics of power' attempt to seize a hold on men's bodies in a bid to shape their body image and lifestyle in the eyes of consumeristic muscular gaze, as has been discussed.

¹⁹ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 195.

²⁰ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 135

²² *Discipline & Punish*, p. 136.

²³ *ibid.*

In her scholarly work on gyms and the commercialisation of discipline, Roberta Sassatelli argues:

In Western modernity, the human body has been invested with instrumental rationality, being disciplined as an instrument for work and labour, a utility, a function, while continuing to operate as the paramount symbol for the subject to demonstrate his or her being self-possessed, civilised or otherwise valuable.²⁴

In a consumeristic society, the sculpting of the body becomes fashionable as the naked body is revealed and given more sensual and cultural prominence. As '[t]he fit body appears to reconcile both instrumental and ceremonial values, ready to be dressed up or shown, it displays vitality and control, power and utility',²⁵ fitness gyms and health centres have developed to become the commercialised site where 'a whole set of techniques, a whole corpus of methods and knowledge, descriptions, plans and data'²⁶ are exerted onto the docile body. Whereas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the body was disciplined and coerced through techniques of power to maintain its economic utility and political terms of obedience, the body in twenty-first century Western consumerist society is commercialised as a project, where men are hailed to consume not just the images of perfect hypermuscular men in adverts and lifestyle magazines but simultaneously to invest time, money and energy in purchasing products and lifestyles to become the mediated man. The mesomorphic body is the new economy, fit is the new rich,²⁷ and Bourdieu's symbolic capital that can be exchanged for social worth and esteem. Men go to the gym and engineer their bodies by following rigorous workouts, follow somewhat extreme diets, disciplining themselves accordingly trying to become the representations in the adverts. Readers decode the messages provided by the texts as they learn self-surveillance vis-à-vis the ideology encoded in the text. The subjects in the adverts are selling fitness lifestyles and stating what is socially acceptable. The body becomes a symbol of individual status²⁸ as the use of the male body in advertising has shifted from being fully clothed to the idea of skin, bulging muscles, abs, a v-shaped torso being used as a garment. Every man can experience the muscular gaze themselves by engineering their bodies to turn into the mesomorphic prototype, investing time, money, energy and effort to be looked at by other men and women.

²⁴ Roberta Sassatelli, *Fitness Culture: Gyms and the Commercialisation of Discipline and Fun* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 1.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 141.

²⁷ Hakim, 'The Spornosexual': the affective contradictions of male body-work in neoliberal digital culture'.

²⁸ Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', pp. 241-258.

Men's Health is the world's largest magazine brand, boasting 35 editions in just under 60 countries worldwide and the best-selling monthly magazine in the UK and the US. According to Google Analytics in January 2018, *Men's Health* online has 45 million page views, 14.8 million social followers and 5.8 average minutes per user.²⁹ It may therefore be argued that the *Men's Health* brand may itself be considered an apparatus of power due to its Panoptic nature and thus a mechanism that coerces men by means of observation. *Men's Health* is described as 'the 24/7 companion for guys' and 'the premier digital destination for active, successful, professional men who want greater control over their physical, mental and emotional lives'.³⁰ The brand reaches more than 36 million men across digital and social platforms and gives them information and tips on fitness, health, career, relationships, nutrition, recipes, weight-loss and muscle-building. By providing men with 'the tools they need to make their lives better',³¹ in a system of discipline, *Men's Health* categorises the ideal man it promotes through its brand and exerts its normalising judgement through hierarchical observation and corrective disciplinary 'punishment'.

Like Sandow's System of Physical Training or Strength and How to Obtain It, *Men's Health* features 'the meticulous control of the operations of the body'³² through its 'how-to' articles such as 'The secret behind Tyson Fury's seven stone weight loss', '5 habits that add 12 years to your life', 'The top 10 TRX exercises' 'This guy dropped nearly 10% fat in 12-weeks. Here's How'. Coupled with the visual rhetoric of the image, the texts' discourses also serve as 'coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviours'.³³ *Men's Health* refers men to the gym, fitness centres or suggests working out at home or in a hotel room as the spatial locations where men can work on their bodies using the advice and tips given in the magazines (or online), conveying Foucault's 'art of distributions' in disciplining the body. In Foucault's terms, although the gym or the fitness centre is not necessarily cellular as is the monastic cell, the functional role of the gym or fitness centre codes a space that distributes men (and women too) to work out on their bodies. Discipline 'individualises bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network in relations'.³⁴ The distribution of ranks in the Men's

²⁹ Men's Health Media Kit, *In Demand Digital Properties* <<https://www.menshealthmediakit.com/digital>> [accessed 3 May 2018].

³⁰ Men's Health Media Kit.

³¹ Men's Health Media Kit.

³² *Discipline & Punish*, p. 136.

³³ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 138

³⁴ *Discipline & Punish*, pp. 145-146

Health brand is evident, from highest to lowest, through the role of the contributors of the magazine, its models that sport the perfect physique, and its millions of followers. Similarly, this may then be extended to the gym and fitness centres in terms of gym attendants, personal trainers, and those men who work out. Men who frequent the gym seem to follow the ‘the three great methods of monastic communities – establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, regulate the cycles of repetition’.³⁵

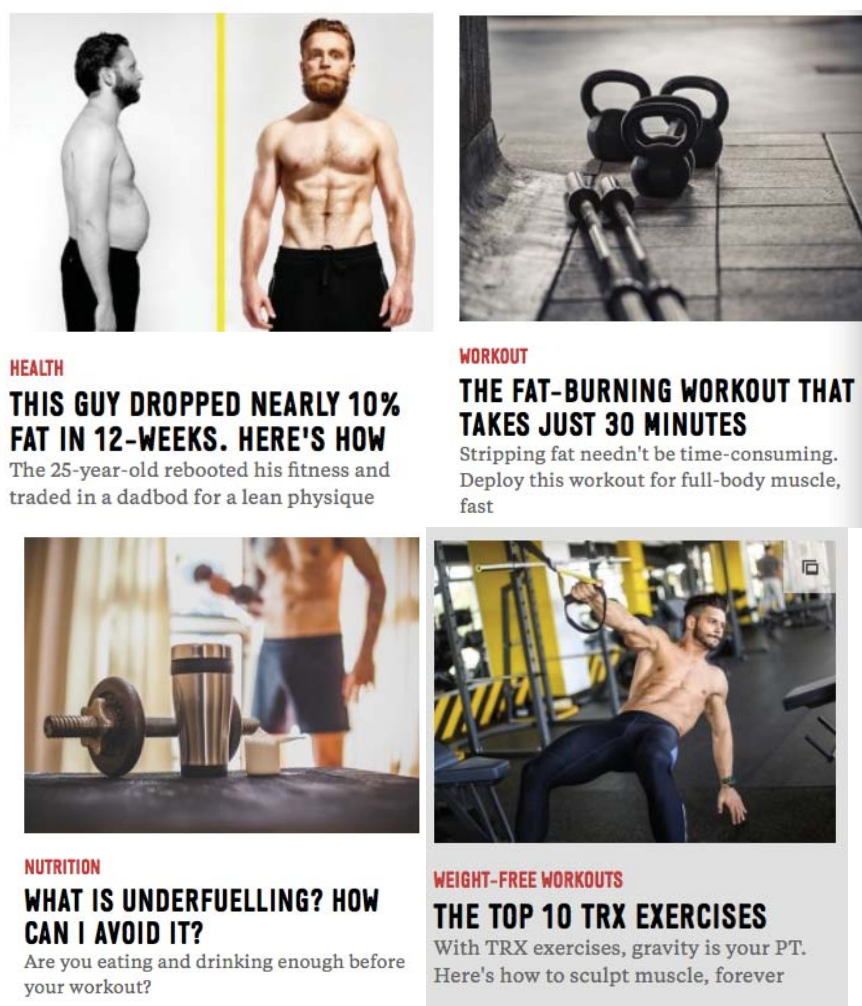


Figure 41 Thumbnails from Men's Health UK website, May 2018

³⁵ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 149.



01

Barbell deadlift

Sets: 10 / **Reps:** 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1 / **Rest:** No rest

Squat down and grasp a barbell with your hands roughly shoulder-width apart. Keep your chest up, pull your shoulders back and look straight ahead as you lift the bar. Focus on taking the weight back onto your heels and keep the bar as close as possible to your body at all times. Lift to thigh level, pause, then return under control to the start position.



02

Kettlebell swings

Sets: 10 / **Reps:** 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1 / **Rest:** No rest

Place a kettlebell a couple of feet in front of you. Stand with your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart and bend your knees to lean forward and grab the handle with both hands. With your back flat, engage your lats to pull the weight between your legs (be careful with how deep you swing) then drive your hips forward and explosively pull the kettlebell up to shoulder height with your arms straight in front of you. Return to the start position and repeat without pauses.



05

Barbell bent over row

Sets: 10 / **Reps:** 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1 / **Rest:** No more than 90 seconds rest, before starting the next round.

Grab a barbell with an overhand grip, hands slightly wider than shoulder width apart. With your legs slightly bent, keep your back perfectly straight and bend your upper body forward until it's almost perpendicular to the floor. From here row the weight upwards into the lower part of your chest. Pause. And return under control to the start position.

Figure 42 A selection of exercises available from Men's Health UK website

For anyone who follows a healthy lifestyle or is dieting to lose weight, gain muscle, or do both simultaneously, self-regulation via a timetable is of utmost importance. Not only are meals weighed in terms of their nutritional value and timed and spread throughout the day, but moreover, just as Foucault explains that soldiers marched to the rhythm of the drum, men who workout as *Men's Health* advocates would follow a 'temporal elaboration of the acts' by first positioning the body in the correct way, then moving the limbs appropriated and, as Foucault states, 'to each movement are assigned a direction, an aptitude, a duration; their order of succession is prescribed'.³⁶ The magazine's instructive discourse is reminiscent of Foucault's description of the rigid timetable that he writes about in *Discipline and Punish*, containing a 'whole set of assessing, diagnostic, prognostic, normative judgements concerning the criminal [that] have become lodged in the framework of penal judgement.'³⁷ The timetable chronicles prisoners' daily schedule from sunrise to bedtime, charting their detailed movements, some of which include:

- Art. 19. The prayers are conducted by the chaplain and followed by a moral or religious reading. This exercise must not last more than half an hour.
- Art. 20. Work. At a quarter to six in the summer, a quarter to seven in winter, the prisoners go down into the courtyard where they must wash their hands and faces, and receive their first ration of bread. Immediately afterwards, they form into work-teams and go off to work, which must begin at six in summer and seven in winter.
- Art. 22. School. At twenty minutes to eleven, at the drum-roll, the prisoners form into ranks, and proceed in divisions to the school. The class lasts two hours and consists alternately of reading, writing, drawing and arithmetic.
- Art. 28. At half-past seven in summer, half-past eight in winter, the prisoners must be back in their cells after the washing of hands and the inspection of clothes in the courtyard; at the first drum-roll, they must undress, and at the second get into bed. The cell doors are closed and the supervisors go the rounds in the corridors, to ensure order and silence³⁸

Men's Health magazine seems to discipline men in a similar way. Thus, for example, in the Barbell deadlift exercise in the workout below, the man exercising performs the exercise ten times, repeats it for another ten times, without resting the body in between. The disciplining of the body is closely correlated to the gestures it enacts. In the Barbell bent over row exercise, a rest that lasts not longer than 90 seconds is permitted. Each suggested workout in *Men's Health* magazine in print, online or their other publications which focus on exercises and workout programmes for specific muscles' development draws together what Foucault identifies as 'the

³⁶ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 152.

³⁷ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 19.

³⁸ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 82.

organisation of geneses', as temporal segments of disciplining the body are brought together successfully.

Foucault states that:

The individual body becomes an element that may be placed, moved, articulated on others. Its bravery or its strength are no longer the principle variables that define it; but the place it occupies, the interval it occupies, the interval it covers, the regularity, the good order according to which it operates its movements.³⁹

The hypermuscular body is the 'efficient machine' that men are hailed to aspire to, and therefore, the chief function of disciplinary power by 'means of correct training' is to train men by amalgamating 'simple instruments': 'hierarchical observation', 'normalising judgement' and their coalescing via 'the examination'. In Foucault's words, '[d]iscipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise.'⁴⁰

³⁹ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 164.

⁴⁰ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 174.

Conclusion: Hypermuscular Sensitivity, Hypersensitive Machoism

This dissertation has adopted a critical perspective by drawing on a Foucauldian conceptualisation of the construction of the subject, of disciplinary power, of surveillance, and of the Panoptic Gaze, in a bid to seek to explore to what extent, and in what ways, the rhetoric (in the Barthesian sense) of representations of masculinity and of the male body in selected examples of contemporary entertainment and advertising media texts in twenty-first century Western popular culture may potentially be considered to serve as an agency of domination. This dissertation has argued that contemporary entertainment and advertising media texts serve as Foucault's 'régimes of truth' and strive to persuade men into consuming more than a just a product, but moreover, an ideology. Bordo argues that consumer culture 'depends on the continual creation and proliferation of 'defect', that is always making us feel bad about ourselves [and] at the same time [...] pumps us up with excitement over our own 'agency'.'¹ Men are presented with images of the perfectibility of the male body that become mechanisms of disciplinary power; men consume the representations of idealised and idolised hypermuscular men, and in doing so increasingly become compelled to gaze at their own bodies, mirror the masculinity as represented in the media, and consequently self-engineer themselves.

The introductory movement of this dissertation first aimed to provide an exploration of Foucault's understanding of power and its manifestation in society in order to discuss the way in which each of the carefully selected examples of film, adverts, actors, models, and lifestyle magazines, amongst others, positions the male body as a subject, and how this subject positioning may possibly coerce men into working on their body and lifestyles. The fundamental concepts and construction of normative 'masculinity' and 'the male ideal' from a social constructionist perspective were then addressed in Chapter 1. The following chapter directed its attention to the way in which the rhetoric of representations of masculinity in film and TV, adverts and general interest men's lifestyle magazines become engines of consumption and contribute to the selling of fitness and of fit hypermuscular bodies by constructing masculine mythscapes and instilling a desire to sculpt a body like those in the representations in the media. As discussed in Chapter 3, men are interpellated to embody the hunkvertising

¹ Bordo, p. 21.

panopticon by becoming caught up in a ‘circuit of representation, vanity and consumption’², and become subject to and subjected by the normalising judgement of the models or actors in adverts, films and lifestyle magazines.

Schroeder and Zwick’s claim that gender lies at the heart of the world of advertising and consumption³ may indeed be extended to the entire ‘universe’ of contemporary entertainment too. The observation Bordo made two decades ago that ‘we do not yet live in a post-gender age’⁴ may still apply today. Furthermore, Schroeder and Zwick argue that contemporary entertainment and advertising media market consumer lifestyles to reproduce the status quo of society,

endlessly reflecting consumer visions, perpetually displacing resolution, and continuously referring back on themselves in a parable of the consumption spectacle. In this way, the act of looking— looking at products, others, oneself, ads, and images— reconfigures the subject of consumption.⁵

In fact, as has been discussed and illustrated throughout this dissertation, consumer culture and acts of consumption have been pivotal in the conceptualisation of masculinity and of the male body as represented in the media. Thus, the New Man in the 1980s, the Metrosexual in the 1990s, and the Spornosexual and the Ubersexual in the wake of the twenty-first century, have all served as Panoptic mechanisms that urge men to internalise self-surveillance and turn men into exhibited objects for visual consumption under and through the normalising judgement of the media.

At the time of writing this conclusion, the conceptualisation of masculinity in Western consumer society is currently experiencing a self-conscious reconfiguration and seems to be at a crossroads, as a meta-awareness about what it means to be man, manly and masculine has resurfaced in the discursive representations of masculinity and of the male body in contemporary entertainment and advertising media. The year 2018 seems to be the dawn of what will be referred to here as ‘Hypermuscular Sensitivity and Hypersensitive Machoism’. Embodied Adonis-Narcissus reincarnations, hence men who are narcissistically obsessed with their beautiful and beautified bodies, physical appearance and grooming, do not only exist in

² Jonathan E. Schroeder and Detlev Zwick, ‘Mirrors of Masculinity: Representation and Identity in Advertising Images’, *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 7 (2004), 21-52 (p. 46).

³ Schroeder and Zwick.

⁴ Bordo, p. 150.

⁵ Schroeder and Zwick, p. 46.

the virtual world. Mediated figurations of masculinity that are based on representations of the self-objectified hypermuscular male who sports '[l]ovingly, painstakingly sculpted, shaved muscles decorated with those elaborate designer tattoos'⁶ are being produced in the real world and circulated through social media. Moreover, the launch of the #AskMoreofHim campaign by the men in Hollywood that followed suit the #MeToo campaign and its fight against women's sexual harassment in society, seems to have urged more male celebrities to speak out against sexism, and to also renounce the sexual objectification of the female body particularly in advertising media that has contributed abundantly in the proliferation of toxic masculinity. The men, whose perfect bodies are used in the media, are now appearing in real life and across media platforms to challenge normative hypermasculinity and the damaging effects it may have.

In a TEDTalk entitled 'Why I'm done trying to be man enough' published on YouTube in January 2018, actor, filmmaker, husband, father and social entrepreneur Justin Baldoni expresses his desire to start a dialogue with men about redefining the concept of masculinity. Wearing an extremely fitted blue top that hugs his hypermuscular physique, Baldoni's opening lines in his talk are reminiscent of gender theorist Judith Butler's words: 'As an actor, I get scripts, and it's my task to stay on script and say my lines and bring to life a character that someone else wrote.' Baldoni, who seems to be a clothed Adonis, admits rather sarcastically that in the course of his career he has played several shirtless roles that range from a male escort, a photographer date rapist, a shirtless medical student, shirtless steroid-using conman, and most recently, a reformed playboy in *Jane the Virgin* who falls for a virgin, who has been artificially inseminated with his sperm sample. Baldoni states that all these characters 'ooze machismo, charisma and power' and that when he looks in the mirror, these representations are not his own, but Hollywood's.

⁶ Mark Simpson, *So, men are obsessed with their bodies. Is that so bad?*, 31 January 2012, <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/31/men-obsessed-bodies-male-objectification?newsfeed=true>> [accessed 2 May 2018].



Figure 43 Justin Baldoni at the TEDWomen 2017 conference

He goes on to express how exhausted he is trying to perform a model of masculinity that has been handed down from one generation to the next and admits how he himself has succumbed to body dysmorphia as well as the psychological and physical repercussions of always trying to have a perfect body, and of course, the cultural prestige attributed to it. However, this is not what the mediated images that belong to consumer culture want men to see or hear. Baldoni explains how he has attempted to target more men himself through social media by initially posting stereotypically masculine activities like intense workouts, meal plans, video-blogs of himself going through the healing process after injury, to try and get more men on board. Men's lifestyle magazine *Men's Journal* named Baldoni as a 'game changer', to urge more men to speak about being brave and strong enough to be vulnerable and sensitive, even though it may make men look weak. Although this 'Hypermuscular Sensitivity and Hypersensitive Machoism' variant of masculinity that has recently risen has stemmed from the desire to condemn sexual misconduct against women and become allies in the movement for equality, it may be argued that consumer society may indeed capitalise upon this new-and-coming discursive figuration that has recently emerged and use Baldoni's discourse to sell not just a body type but a behaviour, an attitude towards and of masculinity as well as societal and cultural norms and values related to masculinity.

As explored in greater depth in the opening chapter of this dissertation, Foucault dismisses the conceptualisation of power as a theory per se, but instead, argues that its conceptualisation and analysis is ongoing and in a continuous state of becoming. Moreover, Foucault explains that:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain... Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organisation ... Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application.⁷

Furthermore, Foucault highlights how power can in itself be positive, and not merely oppressive or repressive, and therefore, the mechanics of disciplinary power may yield a number of antagonisms or ‘struggles’ that may give rise to new techniques and forms of power, as discussed in more detail in the opening chapter of this dissertation. The current phenomenon of what this dissertation has named ‘Hypermuscular Sensitivity and Hypersensitive Machoism’ in society today may be said to be an antagonism to the governing gaze of the media that had previously exercised an uncontrolled power over people’s bodies, lifestyles and consumption practices through the rhetoric of hunkvertising. As Baldoni and his other actor/model ambassadors and associates in Hollywood question the status of the individual in contemporary society through the effect that the Panoptic Gaze of mediated images of masculinity has on men, these celebrity Adonises seem to be challenging society’s own régime du savoir. As more men start questioning the mechanisms of disciplinary power of the ‘Hunkvertising Panopticon’, the positive effects of power produce a new reality which in turn ‘produces [new] domains of objects and rituals of truth’.⁸

In Foucault’s view, ‘truth’ refers to what individuals in society believe to be true, yet it is disciplinary power and its disciplinary techniques that shape this truth and thus, ‘certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals’.⁹ Contemporary advertising and entertainment media texts construct power relations among a multitude of bodies, categorising, amongst so many other types, the beautiful, overweight, underweight, healthy, fit, unfit, muscular, and emasculated, by normalising the desire to own the precious hypermuscular physique it promotes.

The Panoptic Gaze has encouraged men to survey their own bodies for signs of abnormality against a body image that may, in essence, be unrealistic. It may be argued that the phenomenon

⁷ ‘Two Lectures’, p.98.

⁸ *Discipline & Punish*, p. 194.

⁹ *The History of Sexuality*, p.98.

of ‘Hypermuscular Sensitivity and Hypersensitive Machoism’ may be considered a new truth that is currently being constructed, which may nonetheless generate new transgressive bodies, and therefore, subject men to further surveillance under a new guise. According to Foucault, ‘[w]e have to know the historical conditions which motivate our conceptualisation. We need a historical awareness of our present circumstance’.¹⁰ For this reason, it is important take a step back and observe current practices from a temporal distance. As the antagonism against the ‘Hunkvertising Panopticon’ is still in its early days, the extent to which ‘Hypermuscular Sensitivity and Hypersensitive Machoism’ as the new form of Scientia Masculinum in twenty-first century society will catch on is yet to be investigated, and could be the focus for future studies. However, it is essential for a historical formation of ‘Hypermuscular Sensitivity and Hypersensitive Machoism’ to develop and thus, for a researcher to detach themselves from the subject being investigated prior to being able to understand the workings of power, Nevertheless, in essence, no matter what shape or form western hegemonic ideals of masculinity may take and dominate the Western social hemisphere, and thus, regardless of which masculine ideals they propagate, the governing gaze of the rhetoric of masculinity in contemporary entertainment and advertising media is likely to serve as an agency of domination for men or women of any gender. The mechanisms of surveillance and control that construct our conceptualisations of masculinity or femininity may therefore influence anyone who consumes these texts, as long as these media consumers remain subject and subjected to the governing of the mediated texts of contemporary culture.

¹⁰ ‘The Subject and Power’, p. 778.

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