Making over masculinity: the metrosexual and the rise of the style-conscious male

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the figure of the metrosexual, a contemporary archetype of stylish masculinity that has received considerable attention in the global media. It traces the development of a style-conscious and consuming masculinity in the West since the eighteenth century, through the figures of the dandy, the playboy and the new man. It also traces the discourse that has emerged in relation to metrosexuality in the Western media, from its first mention to the present. The metrosexual represents a significant departure from the norms of Western masculinity, most notably in his relationship to the homosexual and homoerotic. This thesis considers the implications of such a version of masculinity as they relate to women, gay men and theories of masculine subjectivity.

Ce mémoire examine le métrosexuel, un archétype contemporain de masculinité stylisée qui a reçu une attention considérable dans les médias. Il retrace le développement d'une masculinité stylisée et consommatrice en Occident depuis le 18^{e} siècle, à travers les figures du dandy, du playboy et du «new man». Il retrace aussi le discours qui a émergé en lien avec la métrosexualité dans les médias occidentaux, depuis sa première mention jusqu'à maintenant. Le métrosexuel représente un changement significatif dans les normes de la masculinité occidentale, plus particulièrement dans sa relation avec l'homosexuel et l'homo-érotique. Ce mémoire examine les implications d'une telle version de la masculinité sur les femmes, les hommes gais et les théories de subjectivité masculine.

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INTRODUCTION
Making Over Masculinity

Style is the man himself.
Comte de Buffon (1707-1788)

Men are cleaning up their image, or so it would appear. The past twenty years have seen a considerable shift in Western men's relationship with their bodies, fashion and personal style. The male body is showing up just about everywhere, and being used to sell underwear, colognes, Diet Coke and even cars. Men are looking better and smelling better, and even have their very own reality TV series devoted to making them over, should they require some assistance. Looking good has never been easier, with the help of men's magazines filled with health and fashion tips, sizable expansions in men's clothing lines, and cosmetics that have been tailored specifically for men. Marketers and the media have taken great interest in the aesthetic inclinations of contemporary men. Whether in magazines and newspapers or at the cinema and on TV, the Western media has been flooded with reports of a new stylish masculinity.

The past two years have seen the meteoric rise of a male archetype that embodies these new ideals of masculine style and beauty. The term 'metrosexual' has been widely accepted to describe a new breed of straight-identifying men who possess a heightened aesthetic sense. Metrosexuals are characterized by a penchant for fashionable clothing, the use of high-end products for body and hair, and an interest in so-called 'feminine' activities, such as shopping and the arts. The metrosexual endeavours to be an object of desire for others, welcoming attention from women, as well as other men. Although metrosexuality is especially prevalent amongst male celebrities, the term is being used to describe the growing segment of style-conscious men in urban centres around the world.

The style-conscious 'feminized' version of masculinity represented in the metrosexual is a significant departure from the norms of masculinity that have dominated Western society over the last two centuries.

Since the mid-eighteenth century, beauty and style have been almost exclusively associated with the feminine, and the majority of men have maintained an alienated relationship with style. Men retreated from the gaze of others, and the erotic potential of the male body was strictly disavowed. Mainstream men's fashion remained quite stagnant, undergoing little variation over time. While the metrosexual represents a rather extreme reconfiguration of normative masculinity, previous archetypes of masculinity have also demonstrated style-consciousness. The nineteenth-century dandy, the 1950s playboy and the 1980s new man allowed men of their respective eras to reconcile masculinity with a stylish sensibility.

As style-conscious masculinity requires the adoption of traits that have been coded as feminine, male figures such as the metrosexual have often been portrayed in the media as representing a softer, profeminist version of masculinity. The metrosexual's stylish flair is said to be accompanied by a greater sensitivity and respect towards women. The metrosexual's heightened aestheticism and flirtatious nature may have positive implications for the antagonistic relationship with homosexuality that has long characterized Western masculinity. Is the style-conscious masculinity of the metrosexual indicative of broader shifts in hegemonic masculinity? Is the metrosexual's makeover of masculinity only skin-deep or does it penetrate to the root of the patriarchal structures that have dominated Western society?

This thesis is premised on a perspective similar to that of Giannino Malossi, which he expresses in *Material Man*, a collection of photographs and essays reflecting on men's changing relationship with style:

> Fashion, along with advertising and popular entertainment, are specific expressions of the surface layers of culture, but they deal with material that originates at a far deeper level. (2000: 27)

The objective of this thesis is to review and analyze the discourse that has emerged concerning the figure of the metrosexual in the Western media, in order to consider possible implications for progressive advances in the norms of hegemonic masculinity. By progressive, I mean advances that would erode the inequitable distributions of social power that have resulted from patriarchal structures, and thus diminish the oppression experienced by women and gay men. I will trace the development of a style-conscious and consuming masculinity since the nineteenth century, which has culminated in the contemporary figure of the metrosexual. I will also consider the implications of metrosexuality on the manner in which masculine subjectivity has been theorized.

I will begin in chapter one with a review of masculinity-studies literature, followed by a review of theories of the male body and the gaze, drawn from film studies. My review of masculinity studies will accord particular attention to the turn to queer studies by many theorists within the field over the past decade. They argue that homophobia, and thus the homosexual subject, is inextricably implicated in the formation of hegemonic masculinity. In chapter two, I will consider intersections between masculinity and style since the Industrial Revolution, by tracing the emergence of a Western manhood that is increasingly based on style and consumption rather than production. I will focus on how the figures of the dandy, the playboy and the new man

served to reconcile a stylish sensibility with hegemonic masculinity over the past two centuries. Chapter three will consider the phenomenon of metrosexuality, from the first usage of the term to the widespread attention the metrosexual is receiving in the global media at present. I am particularly interested in the manner in which the metrosexual has been positioned vis-à-vis the homosexual male. The fourth, and final, chapter will consider the implications of the style-conscious version of masculinity represented in the figure of the metrosexual. I will discuss the potential implications of metrosexuality, and the discourse associated with it, for gay men, masculinity studies and women.

Although I have taken up 'Western masculinity' as my area of interrogation, I realize that such a category is not entirely unproblematic. While there may be great diversity in masculinities between Eastern and Western parts of the globe, there is also great diversity between and within the large number of countries amassed under the categorical title of 'Western'. As the United States and Britain have been at the forefront in research and writing on masculinity, most of the masculinity literature originates from these two countries. The influence of the American media on a global scale has been significant, and continuing advances in media technologies have only served to intensify the media presence of the US. As one of their closest neighbours, the influence of the American media has been especially profound for Canadians. I am specifically interested in the version of Western masculinity that has originated in the US, while taking into consideration the experiences and academic contributions of other Western nations. I want to consider the manner in which the hegemonic version of masculinity reflected and constructed through the American media has been positioned in relation to style. I recognize that hegemonic masculinity, in its very definition, is not representative of all men; however, as hegemonic masculinity has been the primary source of oppression

faced by women, non-white men and non-heterosexual men, it remains an essential site of analysis for effecting progressive change.

CHAPTER ONE
Establishing Concepts

The discussion in this chapter is divided between two sections, with the intention of establishing the concepts and frameworks that will guide the discussion in the following chapters. The first, and most substantial, section of this chapter considers the notion of 'masculinity' through a review of masculinity-studies literature. The manner in which scholars have taken up the category of masculinity has varied over time and across disciplines. While the development of the field of masculinity studies has faced numerous obstacles, masculinity remains an important site of analysis for those concerned with redressing the inequities between and within genders.

The second section of this chapter considers gendered notions of the gaze as it has been theorized in film-studies literature. The manner in which men have related to the gaze plays an important role in their relationship with fashion and style.

Considering Masculinity

The latter half of the twentieth century witnessed the development of an increasingly critical mass of research and authorship directed towards the study of men and masculinity. Masculinity studies has drawn from a rich lineage of feminist studies, gender studies and gay male studies. The field emerged out of, and as a reaction to, these other disciplines, brushing up against, blurring, and at times clashing loudly with their respective boundaries. In their introduction to one of the first readers wholly devoted to masculinity studies, Rachel Adams and David Savran attempt to define the still-emerging field:

> [M]asculinity studies is...dedicated to analyzing what has often seemed to be an implicit fact, that the vast majority of societies are patriarchal and that men have historically enjoyed more than their share of power, resources, and cultural authority. (2002: 2)

Adams and Savran are forthright about the difficulties in compiling a coherent overview of a field that they consider "theoretically and methodologically diverse", conceding that "there is no consensus about masculinity studies' object of inquiry" (ibid.). While masculinity has been receiving increased attention within the academy and popular culture, the field of masculinity studies struggles to establish both a unified purpose and institutional status.[1]

The authors offer a historical account of the field's development, largely locating its genealogical roots in feminism and European continental philosophy. In their efforts to describe the development of the so-called men's movement, the authors adopt 'wave' terminology, in what is perhaps an unfortunate attempt to parallel feminist movements. They suggest that the first wave of the men's movement featured consciousness-raising groups that endeavoured to forge non-sexist masculinities in the late 1970s. They attribute the second wave to the rise of the mythopoetic men's movement during the 1980s, perhaps best captured in the infamous text *Iron John* by Robert Bly (1990). The mythopoetic movement endeavoured to retrieve a lost and threatened sense of manhood for the North American male, often through weekend wilderness retreats that focused on spirituality and male bonding. Describing these radically distinct groups of men as different 'waves' within the same men's movement is rather awkward, if not totally inappropriate. The political goals of these groups of men not only differed; they were

[1] Adams and Savran note that no departments, programs or jobs have been created exclusively for masculinity scholars.

diametrically opposed. The 'first wave' men were unabashedly profeminist, while the 'second wave' men were unabashedly anti-feminist.

The divergent goals of the 'men's movement' are evidence of the unique challenge faced by masculinity-studies scholars. One of the crucial distinctions between masculinity studies and the disciplines it has been influenced by, such as feminism and gay studies, is that the group under consideration is dominant and oppressive rather than marginalized and oppressed. Embedded within Adams and Savran's understanding of masculinity studies is a call for the relinquishment of power by men, and no such concession comes easily. Women, gay men and non-white men have approached scholarship devoted to men and masculinity with a certain wariness, as a result of the dominant, privileged and normative position awarded to white heterosexual males through patriarchy. Faced with these impediments, the field of masculinity studies has developed rather unevenly, lacking the elements of coherence, cohesion and coordination that may be found within other disciplines.

The pursuit of research and writing on men and masculinity has proven to be a contentious and snare-laden endeavour, especially for heterosexual male scholars. One difficulty faced by masculinity-studies scholars is that 'man' has been the subject of the majority of scholarly works, causing many to question any calls for additional analysis. In his defence of men's studies, Harry Brod argues that "traditional scholarship's treatment of generic man as the human norm in fact systematically excludes from consideration what is unique to men *qua* men" (1987: 40). He suggests that men's studies is a necessary complement to, and extension of, women's studies. Brod claims that there is a need for projects such as the development of a social history of 'men as men' that would acknowledge the diversity of men and reject the nostalgic mythology of stable male

identity in the past.[2] Such (re)considerations of men are always precarious, however, as a result of the privileged social and cultural position that has been, and remains, ascribed to the white heterosexual male.

Heterosexual men pursuing scholarship on masculinity are faced with the significant challenge of analyzing patriarchy from the position of heterosexual male privilege and power. Essential to any consideration of the gendered subject, and especially that of the male gendered subject, is an acknowledgement of, and an engagement with, the imbalance of power that characterizes gender relations in Western society. Some scholars have met with greater success in addressing such issues of power than others. In "The Secrets of Men's History" (1987), Peter Filene endeavours to rewrite American history by focusing on men's roles and activities in the semi-public and private realms, as opposed to the extraordinary achievements of men in the public realm. In attempting to right the wrong of a history that has been written as non-gendered, Filene would rewrite a men's history that is strictly heterosexual, privileging the social institution of the heterosexual family unit throughout his discussion. He fails to problematize patriarchy, and his accounts of loving fathers excluded from family life create a portrait of men as misunderstood victims. While it is possible that there is some truth to be found in Filene's rose-coloured portraits of these (exceptional) men, such histories are inherently exclusionary and continue to privilege a dominant version of masculinity that has suffered from no lack of attention.

In *Manhood in America* (1996), Michael Kimmel endeavours to write a history of American manhood and explore the gendered nature of American history, making the

[2] Scholars such as James Doyle (1983), Peter Filene (1987) and Michael Kimmel (1996) have endeavoured to formulate such alternate social histories that would engender men.

deliberately provocative statement that "American men have no history" (1). He argues that the archetype of the 'Self-Made Man' has dominated the American definition of manhood. Measuring his manhood by success in the marketplace, the Self-Made Man is characterized by economic autonomy, individual achievement, mobility, wealth and insecurity. According to this model of manhood, men must constantly prove their manhood in the eyes of other men. Kimmel suggests that it is this theme of proving manhood that has been, and remains, central for American men. Kimmel creates a portrait of a nation of men anxious and insecure in their masculinity, who must reject this model and embrace an alternate 'democratic manhood'.

One of the resounding themes to be found within the literature on masculinity is that of masculinity in crisis.[3] In a 1987 article, Kimmel defines gender crises as "moments of gender confusion and the vigorous reassertion of traditional gender roles against serious challenges to inherited configurations" (123). Kimmel repeatedly resorts to such rhetoric in *Manhood in America* and in his other writings concerning masculinity. In the same 1987 article, Kimmel argues that historical and social changes create the conditions for gender crises. He suggests that American men in the late 1980s were experiencing a crisis regarding their masculinity that was comparable to crises of masculinity in Restoration England (1688-1714) and the fin-de-siècle United States (1880-1914). In another article that he co-authored, the rise of the mythopoetic men's movement is framed as a symptom of a crisis in contemporary masculinity (Kimmel & Kaufman, 1994). Although the authors clearly communicate their disapproval of the mythopoetic

[3] See Roger Horrocks' *Masculinity in Crisis* (1994) and Susan Faludi's *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* (1999) for two archetypal considerations of 'crisis-ridden masculinity'.

movement, they contend that men must find alternate means to reconcile themselves to their 'crisis-ridden masculinity'.

One of the consequences of engaging the rhetoric of masculinity in crisis is the inherent implication that such historical moments are contrasted with periods of stability and uniformity in a singular definition of masculinity. According to Kimmel's relational model, however, masculinity and femininity are complexly negotiated relations in a constant state of renegotiation (1987). Based upon such an understanding of gender, one may well argue that masculinity is perpetually in a state of crisis—ever-contested and ever-evolving.

In his insightful and cautionary review of American masculinity studies, Bryce Traister also expresses concern regarding the adoption of the rhetoric of masculinity in crisis. He suggests that there is a danger to be found in arguments that would claim contemporary men are in an anxious state of crisis vis-à-vis a normative, essentialized and unattainable hard masculinity. He finds the erasure of the 'real men' who commit countless racist, misogynist and homophobic acts of violence as problematic:

> I just do not know whether the vicious masculinity behind these crimes is enduring a "crisis" in any way comparable to that of their victims, or instead if we are dealing with a manhood smoothly coherent, frighteningly competent, and alarmingly tranquil[.] (292-293)

Traister also criticizes the 'critical pioneer' mentality adopted by scholars such as Kimmel and Brod who contend that men have lacked consideration historically. According to Traister, histories of masculinity have existed for some time:

> Not only do American men not lack a history of "men as men," they are awash in a rising sea of masculinity studies whose various theoretical,

> historical, and textual enterprises constitute an increasingly rich historiography of American men and their masculinities. (282)

Traister concurs with Adams and Savran that the central objective of masculinity studies must be problematizing patriarchy and its consequences. The straight male subject must be analyzed, however, this analysis must be directed by a concern for female, homosexual and non-white others. Traister questions the benefits to be found by displacing notions of transcendental masculinity with notions of a manhood that is marked by instability and historical incoherence. He sees such shifts as having little relevance in terms of eroding the powers of patriarchy.

While some scholars have attempted to look to the history of men, others have turned their analysis towards the very notion of masculinity. Joseph Pleck's *The Myth of Masculinity* (1981) is considered one of the precursors of the social constructionist perspective on masculinity. In this text, Pleck considers the psychology of masculinity that has dominated the social sciences since the 1930s. He systematically critiques the pervasiveness of the male sex role identity (MSRI) paradigm that has been so influential in shaping Western culture's view of the male role. According to the MSRI paradigm, sex roles are developed from within, as opposed to being arbitrarily imposed from without, and are necessary for good psychological adjustment. Pleck offers the sex role strain (SRS) paradigm as an alternative approach to conceptualizing sex roles. This paradigm sees sex roles as limiting and constricting, and as defined by stereotypes and norms. He argues that when these imposed sex roles are violated, there are negative psychological consequences for men. Although Pleck's work offered an alternate manner in which to conceptualize masculinity, other theorists have been critical of sex-role theory.

Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee (1987) reject sex-role frameworks, arguing that they are neither conceptually stable nor empirically adequate as a basis for analyzing masculinity. They suggest that sex roles require generalizations, focus on differences rather than relations between the sexes, and inadequately address power. Instead of the 'male role', the authors encourage the adoption of the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', which they define as "a particular variety of masculinity to which others—among them young and effeminate as well as homosexual men—are subordinated" (86). They see hegemonic masculinity as a central component in the institutionalization of men's dominance over women, even if the model of hegemonic masculinity only corresponds to a nominal portion of men. The authors suggest that the history of male homosexuality must form an integral part of any theory of masculinity, as it provides vital insight into the construction of masculinity. They do not see masculinity as static or specific, but rather "as being constantly constructed within the history of an evolving social structure, a structure of sexual power relations" (89). The authors proffer an understanding of gender that rejects masculinity as biological essence, reframing it as a complex and dynamic social construction.

One of the ways to conceptualize the individual lived experience of socially constructed gender is as a kind of performance. Performativity theory has had a significant impact upon feminist studies, gender studies and masculinity studies, through the reconfiguration of gender as historically contingent and performative. Judith Butler's highly lauded and much-referenced *Gender Trouble* (1990) is one of the seminal texts of performativity theory. She argues that gender is an active process rather than a static identity:

> Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. (43-44)

The performance of gender is a compulsory performance, as it is through this very performance that the subject is constituted. Butler not only sees the category of gender as constructed; she also challenges traditional frameworks that posit sex and the body as invariant and natural through the reconfiguration of these categories as gendered, constructed, and in service to the economic needs of heterosexuality. Butler rejects any notion of heterosexuality as an original or coherent identity, contending instead that it is an imitation without an origin. Like Carrigan, Connell and Lee, Butler sees the current organization of heterosexuality as one of the fundamental factors contributing to the imbalance of power that characterizes gender relations.

Butler engages the concept of drag to describe the assumption of gender identity, suggesting that "[d]rag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done" (1991: 21). Gender is configured as a denaturalized imitation of a phantasmatic ideal of heterosexual identity. Butler disputes any sense of gender that is 'proper' to a given sex, but sees all gendering as "a kind of impersonation and approximation" (ibid.). She argues that through subversive repetition, the notion of an original or primary gender identity is parodied, thereby exposing the imitative structure of gender, and undoing the hegemonic hold of heterosexuality. There is no escaping the repetitive performance of gender, however:

> The task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to *displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself. (1990: 189, her emphasis)

Butler looks to gay and lesbian sexualities, and the queen, butch or femme identities often associated with them, as one means of engaging in subversive repetition. Butler's theories have been very influential for masculinity scholars, in the development of notions of masculinity as de-naturalized, performative and historically contingent.

While many scholars have been quick to embrace Butler's concepts, Traister is critical of the manner in which performativity theory has been taken up by masculinity-studies scholars. He contends that by configuring all genders and sexualities as equally constructed, there is the potential to blur politically vital distinctions. Such formulations fail to adequately address the fact that not all genders and sexualities equally share political and social power. Traister expresses discomfort with how all versions of masculinity—whether soft or hard, profeminist or misogynist, violent or pacifist—are configured as equally anxious, incoherent and incomplete within the domain of American masculinity studies. While Traister does not deny the constructed nature of masculinity, he recommends moving beyond such conclusions to address the oppressive tendencies of patriarchy. In the end, Traister sees the constructed nature of masculinity as rather irrelevant:

> While heteromasculinity may well imply a gender that is performative and constructed, it also recalls an historical gender that was anything but hobbled by its constructed status[.] (299)

Without question, Butler's intent in theorizing gender in this manner was for the undoing of patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality. Traister does not challenge Butler's theory, but rather the manner in which masculinity scholars have appropriated her ideas. Butler's performativity theory remains pertinent for considerations of masculinity, but as Traister expresses so convincingly, any such consideration must be

coloured by an acute awareness of the inequitable distributions of power between and within genders.

David Buchbinder argues that masculinity is an unnatural and constructed category whose repetitive citation reinforces patriarchal, phallocentric structures (1998). He contends that while masculinity is a performative category, an integral component of masculinity is the invisibility of this performative nature. The male and the masculine are constructed as the norm, thus "*men are in a special sense gender-less*" (122, his emphasis). Another integral component of Western masculinity is that it is defined through difference. Buchbinder maintains that Western masculinity is defined in opposition to both sex and sexuality. Thus, the masculine is negatively defined as not female and, since the emergence of homosexuality as a category of identity, not homosexual. The distinction between masculinity and these other categories must be rigorously enforced and defended. Buchbinder sees this need for distinction as one of the defining forces of masculinity:

> [M]isogyny and homophobia are the twin motors which drive the patriarchal machine, distancing the disturbing categories of the feminine and the homosexual from the masculine[.] (128)

He suggests that several strategies are deployed in order to preserve masculinity's independence as a category. The feminine is resisted through misogyny and through the encouragement of male homosocial bonds, linking men with each other emotionally and psychologically. The homosexual is distanced through homophobia and through the privileging of heterosexual desire. Buchbinder sees male homosociality as forever haunted by the spectre of the homoerotic, so that masculinity "relies on a simultaneous recognition and disavowal, via the homosocial, of the homoerotic and the homosexual"

(ibid.). Masculinity becomes inextricably entangled with the homosexual, dependant upon the category for its very definition, yet needing to constantly, and often violently, defend itself from the threat of the collapse of both categories, one into the other.

Gregory Herek also argues that the phenomenon of homophobia plays an integral role in the cultural construction of masculinity, boldly asserting that "to be 'a man' in contemporary American society is to be homophobic" (1987: 68). Herek sees the manifestation of homophobia, on an individual and institutional level, as functional in nature rather than stemming from irrational fear. Like Buchbinder, Herek argues that masculinity is largely defined by what it is not. He suggests that heterosexual men reaffirm their own male identity by attacking gay men, with their attitudes and actions. In Western cultures, sexual behaviour has been translated into supposedly unambiguous social identities, resulting in the mutually exclusive socioerotic identities of heterosexual and homosexual. These identities are posited against one another, with the former representing all that is masculine and natural and the latter representing all that is un-masculine and unnatural. Herek suggests that the social and political emergence of lesbians and gays has resulted in heterosexuality becoming a more salient component of normative masculinity. He sees homophobia as especially tenacious with heterosexual men because it serves functional purposes, which include distancing oneself from homosexuality, defining group boundaries and expressing a morality-based worldview. Herek contends that any progressive changes to hegemonic masculinity must involve an undoing of the homophobia that is inherent in its construction.

In her landmark text *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick considers the essential yet problematic bonds between heterosexual men that structure

masculinity. She argues that the effective analysis of masculinity, or most anything else, must take into consideration the homosexual subject:

> [A]n understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition[.] (1)

Like Buchbinder and Herek, Sedgwick sees the homosexual subject and homophobia as integral components in the formation of the heterosexual male subject. She bases her arguments upon a framework that defines culture in terms of an exchange between men, wherein women are one of the objects of this exchange.[4] Patriarchy finds its roots in this system of relations between men, characterized by a hierarchy of interdependence and solidarity, to the exclusion of women. Sedgwick argues that in order for heterosexual men to access the entitlement awarded to males through patriarchy, they must develop intense homosocial bonds. She suggests that relationships such as male friendship, mentorship, business partnership or bureaucratic subordination force men to enter into the precarious realm of male homosocial desire. Intense relationships between heterosexual men are "at once the most compulsory and the most prohibited of social bonds" (187), as they are virtually indistinguishable from homosexual male bonds. Male homosocial bonds are thus structured by homophobia, resulting in the condition that Sedgwick terms 'male homosexual panic'. She contends that this state of panic has become the normal condition of male heterosexual entitlement. Sedgwick suggests that two features of masculinity result from this homosocial/homosexual tension: the acute manipulability of men through fear of their own homosexuality and a reservoir of potential for violence caused by self-

[4] Sedgwick developed this concept more fully in her previous work *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985).

ignorance. While Buchbinder underlines the importance of homophobia to the self-definition of masculinity, Sedgwick illustrates how homophobia is also intrinsic to any attempt to access the entitlement awarded to heterosexual males through patriarchy.

In turning to gay and queer studies, these scholars establish a theoretical framework that provides the opportunity for alternate conceptions of masculinity and the broad field of forces within which it is constructed. Masculinity-studies scholars including Sedgwick, Herek, Buchbinder, Traister, and Carrigan, Connell and Lee all concur that the homosexual subject is an essential and inseparable component of any consideration of contemporary Western masculinity.

Although masculinity may be conceptualized as a performance, defined in opposition to the feminine and the homosexual, it has deftly succeeded in maintaining and enforcing the prescripts and privileges of patriarchy. Hegemonic masculinity has been constructed and positioned in a defensive manner. As a result of the defensive posturing inherent to hegemonic masculinity, and its lack of coherent or original identity, the repetition of the performance of masculinity must be strictly regulated. Boys learn very early which behaviours are not appropriate or 'manly', as "acting out of line with heterosexual norms brings with it ostracism, punishment, and violence" (Butler, 1991: 24). The norms of hegemonic masculinity are both reflected and constructed in the cultural representations of masculinity found within the popular media.

Considering Men and the Gaze

For most of the twentieth century, cultural representations of masculinity differed from representations of femininity in that images of the male body did not share the objectified, sexualized and passive position that the female body was subjected to in the

popular media. Theories of spectatorship and the gaze consider how the right to look or to be looked at is deeply embedded in notions of masculinity and femininity. The discipline of film studies has made significant contributions towards theorizing the gendered nature of the gaze. Film theorists, especially those working from a feminist perspective, have devoted a great deal of consideration to representations of women and their bodies in film, in an effort, amongst others, to expose the patriarchal ideology that has dominated mainstream film. Their work provides valuable insight into a cultural politics of looking, which extends well beyond the domain of film.

In a 1975 issue of *Screen*, a short article published by Laura Mulvey entitled "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema" proved highly influential for the discipline of film studies. By drawing from Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Mulvey endeavoured to demonstrate "the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (6). She argued that mainstream cinema had relied on the manipulation of visual pleasure, which was "split between active/male and passive/female" (11). Thus, images of women inhabited the passive position of object in the erotic and determining gaze of the men onscreen and in the cinematic audience. According to Mulvey, the cinema offers the male spectator two possible positions for looking: scopophilic voyeurism—the objectification of women in an erotic gaze—or a narcissistic identification with the male image on the screen. While the adoption of psychoanalytic concepts did not occur without contest, [5] Mulvey's framework was widely accepted and has become a foundational text for theorizing the gendered nature of spectatorship.

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[5] See Julia Lesage's emotionally charged polemic against the use of psychoanalysis in film theory, "The Human Subject—You, He, or Me? (Or the Case of the Missing Penis)" (1975).

Although one cannot deny the significance of Mulvey's text, her analysis can be viewed as insufficient in several capacities. These insufficiencies include her denial of female spectatorship by positing the spectator as uniquely male and her denial of the possibility for the male image to be positioned as erotic object within the gaze of the other. Mulvey makes this last point quite expressly:

> According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like. [...] A male movie star's glamorous characteristics are thus not those of the erotic object of the gaze, but those of the more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror. (12)

According to Mulvey, the norms of hegemonic masculinity prevent men from being objectified within the erotic gaze of women or other men. Men inhabit the active subject position rather than the passive objectified one; they must adopt the role of 'gazer' rather than 'gazed at'.

In his consideration of male cinematic images and the male spectator, Steve Neale (1983) takes up Mulvey's argument that men cannot occupy the position of the erotic object of the gaze. He argues that the concept of identification is shifting and mobile for the spectator, making a simple and unproblematic identification with the ideal ego impossible. The male spectator may feel inadequate in relation to the ideal on screen, and rather than identify with the image, he objectifies it. Neale suggests that film narratives that are structured around the look at the male figure invoke a pleasure that is founded upon a repressed homosexual voyeurism. He contends that if the male body is marked as the erotic object of another man's look, "that look must be motivated in some other way;

its erotic component repressed" (8). According to Neale, one of the common ways this repression occurs is through sado-masochistic scenes of violence and combat in which male struggle becomes pure spectacle. The pleasure of the display of the male body is thus displaced and located instead "in the overall components of a highly ritualized scene" (12). Action films, war movies and westerns often rely on excessive phallic posturing and violence to justify the excessive attention awarded to the male body. The erotic potential of the male body must be denied:

> We are offered the spectacle of male bodies, but bodies unmarked as objects of erotic display. There is no trace of an acknowledgement or recognition of those bodies as displayed solely for the gaze of the spectator. (14)

It is the refusal to acknowledge or make explicit an eroticism of the body that has differentiated cinematic representations of men from those of women.

Richard Dyer (1982) examines the display of the male body through the more explicitly erotic medium of the male pin-up. Dyer suggests that man offered as sexual spectacle "does violence to codes of who looks and who is looked at (and how), and some attempt is instinctively made to counteract this violation" (63). The male pin-up model often looks at the viewer in a manner that denies that he is being looked at. Dyer sees these castrating or penetrating gazes as directed towards other heterosexual men and the threat of male anal eroticism, rather than the female viewer. He argues that men must engage in a disavowal of the element of passivity involved in the display of their bodies. Dyer concurs with Neale in his observation that this disavowal often occurs through images of men engaged in activity, or images that promise activity through the manner in which the body is posed. The male body on display endeavours to resist the objectification that is found within the gaze of the other, seeking out a contradictory

position of *active passivity*. Neale recognizes the tenuousness of such an arrangement: "male homosexuality is constantly present as an undercurrent, as a potentially troubling aspect of many films and genres" (15). As with homosocial relations between men, the male body as erotic object must contend with the ever-looming threat of the homoerotic.

Despite the conventions of mainstream film that may disavow the erotic potential of the male body, and film theorists who argue that this is the case, male images can never be fully unambiguous or shielded from variable readings. In *Spectacular Passions*, Brett Farmer explores the category of gay spectators and their relation to the cinema, including figures of masculinity. He argues that there are no guarantees in mainstream cinema:

> Even in those films in which the eroticism of the male image is seemingly refused, the act of textual and libidinal repression required to produce such a refusal inevitably creates a dynamic of tension within the text that can work against the dominant processes of male phallic support and protection. (211)

Any filmic image is open to multiple readings by spectators, meaning that there is always the potential for the male image to be reconstructed as a site of erotic investment. Farmer contends that rather than narcissistic identification, gay spectators are more likely to engage with cinematic representations of masculinity through erotic objectification. He sees phallic masculinity as being "cast contradictorily in male homosexuality as both an object of desire and an object of denigration" (201). Farmer draws from the Freudian notion that anality is one of the central elements of the homosexual subject. He claims that by embracing anality, gay men assume a passive maternal position that subverts received images of masculinity as active, impenetrable and phallocentric. The gaze of the gay spectator can have a castrating effect, repudiating the idealized phallic agency

associated with male images. According to Farmer, gay spectators of mainstream films can, and do, appropriate the images of the male body for their own spectatorial pleasures.

Following from the manner in which Mulvey frames her argument, the structures found in mainstream film may be read as representative of the 'unconscious of patriarchal society'. Although film theory addresses cinematic representations specifically, it can also be applied in a broader context. For the majority of the last century, the male body has evaded the eroticized gaze of the other, whether on the cinema screen or the streets of downtown. The estranged relationship that men have maintained with the gaze has also problematized men's relationship with style and fashion. Male beauty- and body-consciousness have been largely excluded from hegemonic definitions of Western masculinity. As these theorists argue, the passive and objectified position of the erotic gaze clashed loudly with the norms of hegemonic masculinity. The passivity inherent to putting oneself on display was associated with femininity, homosexuality and anality, and thus needed to be forcefully disavowed. As Farmer illustrates, such disavowals may be problematized by the appropriation of images of the male body by others, such as gay spectators.

While the analysis of Mulvey, Neale and Dyer still remains informative today, over twenty years have passed since their articles were first published. In that time, there have been some dramatic shifts in the nature of representations of men and men's relationship to the gaze. Calvin Klein underwear ads, Brad Pitt's abs and an explosion of men's health and lifestyle magazines all suggest that there may indeed be some historical specificity to the arguments of these theorists. Despite the norms of hegemonic masculinity, there have also been historical versions of masculinity that have allowed men a certain style-consciousness. The following chapter will consider how a gaze-inviting sense of style

has been reconciled with the masculine in certain versions of masculinity over the last century.

The field of masculinity studies has faced an uneven development, despite the increasing amount of attention that has been awarded to men and masculinities in recent years. Any analysis that considers masculinity must maintain an acute awareness of the privileged position heterosexual men have held in Western society. After reviewing and critiquing some of the significant works of the field, we emerge with a notion of masculinity as a category that is socially constructed, performative and defined in opposition to the feminine and the homosexual. As masculinity is not a static construct but one that's perpetually being redefined, the rhetoric of 'masculinity in crisis' is somewhat redundant, and serves to obscure the oppressive nature of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is the version of masculinity that reflects the dominant masculine norms for a given culture at a given time. The distancing of the homosexual through homophobia has been an essential component of hegemonic masculinity, in both homosocial relations and in the display of the male body. While traditionally Western men have resisted the erotic gaze of the other, recent history suggests that there may have been some shifts in men's relation to the gaze. A closer examination of men's relationship with style may challenge a binary-opposed notion of the gendered structure of the gaze.

CHAPTER TWO
Masculinity & Style

Over the past two centuries, hegemonic Western masculinity has been characterized by an alienated relationship to fashion and style. Male stylishness was primarily associated with gay men or the subordinated masculinities of certain ethnic groups, such as Mediterranean, Latino and Black men. Despite the disavowal of style from hegemonic masculinity, mainstream male archetypes have emerged that have been characterized by style-consciousness. These archetypes served to redefine masculine norms, allowing style and consumption to become an increasingly important component of contemporary masculinity.

This chapter begins by considering the relation between fashion and the construction of gender. The discussion continues with a brief historical overview of men's relationship with fashion, and then gives specific consideration to the male archetypes of the dandy, the playboy and the new man.

Fashion as a Performance of Gender

In his in-depth consideration of men's fashion and consumer society, Tim Edwards argues that men's fashion provides important insight into masculinity:

> [T]he study of fashion often highlights the very artificial or constructed—as opposed to natural or essential—nature of masculinity itself, for in fashion, masculinity, like clothes and accessories, is put on, swapped around and played with, like costumes at a masquerade or in the theatre. (1997: 4)

Edwards rejects both economic and psychological perspectives on fashion, arguing that they are implicitly deterministic, with the former configuring fashion as wholly utilitarian and the latter configuring fashion as wholly expressive or communicative. He advocates a more open perspective on fashion influenced by postmodern thought, which emphasizes the significance of consumerism, commodification and signification. Edwards' perspective on fashion and masculinity recalls Butler's formulation of gender, with fashion serving as an apt metaphor for the drag-like performative nature of masculinity.

Fashion and personal style play an integral role in the construction of gendered identities. Butler sees the performance of gender as composed of a wide range of externalities:

> [G]ender is a performance that *produces* the illusion of an inner sex or essence or psychic gender core; it *produces* on the skin, through the gesture, the move, the gait (that array of corporeal theatrics understood as gender presentation), the illusion of inner depth. (1991: 28, her emphasis)

A gendered notion of self is constituted through an elaborate performance that includes the production of gender 'on the skin'. The manner in which we negotiate embodiment, our relationship with our bodies and the bodies of others, as well as the way we dress and decorate our bodies can be understood as methods of producing gender on the skin. As most people in Western nations clothe the majority of their bodies, clothing becomes an important element in the construction and display of the body. Clothing can thus be configured as an extension of the skin, or as an extension of the body. Kaja Silverman stresses the significance of the clothes we wear:

> Dress is one of the most important cultural implements for articulating and territorializing human corporeality—for mapping its erotogenic zones and for affixing a sexual identity. (1986: 146)

Personal style expressed through clothing and grooming is an integral component of gender presentation, and the relationship men have with their extended bodies is deeply intertwined with the norms of masculinity.

Men as Consumers of Style

Western men have had a varied relationship with style throughout the centuries. In the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, male fashion was extremely ornate, and was often more elaborate than female fashion. Silverman notes that such fanciful dress was an important marker of class, and a symbol of aristocratic power and privilege. The eighteenth century saw a drastic shift in men's fashion, which has been attributed to the emergence of the middle class and the rise of industry. Men's fashion became characterized by modesty and sobriety, while the clothing of women remained extravagant, as a demonstration of their husband's wealth. J.C. Flugel refers to this shift as the 'Great Masculine Renunciation', arguing that men's fashion ceased to distinguish between men and began to integrate male members of different classes (1930). Silverman argues that after the Great Masculine Renunciation of the eighteenth century, gender came to replace class as the distinguishing marker within clothing:

> Sexual difference has become the primary marker of power, privilege and authority, closing the specular gap between men of different classes, and placing men and women on opposite sides of the great visual divide. (147)

Style, fashion and attracting the gaze of the other were coded as feminine and distanced from the norms of hegemonic masculinity. Silverman argues that the exhibitionistic and narcissistic tendencies men demonstrated historically were 'renounced' or disavowed rather than abolished. In the final decades of the twentieth century, a gradual yet

purposeful shift in the norms of hegemonic masculinity may have served to reconcile Western men with their exhibitionist tendencies.

Frank Mort argues that the relationship British masculinity holds with fashion and style has undergone a significant transformation since the 1980s (1996). Like Silverman, Mort sees the Industrial Revolution as having a major impact upon Western notions of masculinity and femininity. He suggests that men's renunciation of fashion occurred as a result of the association of masculinity with production and femininity with consumption. Mort contends that contemporary British masculinity has been reconstructed through a gradual shift in emphasis from production to consumption. He argues that the socioeconomic climate in 1980s Britain brought about commercial transformations in the marketing of men's fashion that altered the relationship men held with consumption. An interrelationship between consumption and male identity developed, which resulted in "the expanding number of social identities offered to young men" (205) in contemporary society.

Edwards concurs with Mort that recent expansions in men's fashion are the outcome of wider developments in consumer society. While some theorists attribute men's increased style-consciousness to sexual politics or crisis-ridden masculinity, Edwards contends that it is more likely a symptom of "the increasing social significance of patterns of consumption, self-presentation and lifestyle as constitutive of identity" (133). He suggests that there was a marked shift in marketing and advertising during the 1980s that saw the representational value of goods take precedence over the utility value of goods. Mort also acknowledges the influence of this form of marketing, which came to be known as 'lifestyle advertising'. He suggests that lifestyle advertising distinguished itself with an approach that would "suggest philosophies of living and styles of behaviour,

rather than simply pushing the product" (97). Both authors concur that these developments resulted in the reconfiguration of hegemonic masculinity, which would see it increasingly defined by consumption, image and lifestyle. According to Edwards, this reconfiguration allowed for an increase in the concept and practice of men's fashion, which was characterized by the development of style magazines aimed at style-conscious men, the sophisticated use of advertising and marketing segmentation, an increase in the use of images of masculinity to sell a vast range of products, an increase in the sexual objectification of men in the media, and significant growth in the market of men's fashion, accessories and cosmetics (5).

Although both Mort and Edwards' analysis provides useful insight into Western notions of masculinity, their discussion remains largely British-centred. Both authors suggest that, in Britain, masculine consumerism emerged in a significant way in the late twentieth century; however, in the United States, men's relationship to consumerism did not develop in the same manner. In his comprehensive review of men and leisure-style in America, Bill Osgerby argues that in contrast to Britain, "in the US consuming males first emerged in the late nineteenth century...becoming increasingly pervasive amid the consumer boom of the 1950s and 1960s" (2001: x). Osgerby suggests that the leisure-oriented consumer ethos propagated by American capitalism provided the necessary conditions for men to explore their roles as consumers. Although the consuming male may have emerged earlier in the US, it wasn't until the end of the twentieth century that both Britain and the US would witness the unprecedented proliferation of eroticized images of men throughout the mainstream media.

Edwards suggests that in addition to men's roles being transformed from producers to consumers, marked increases in images of masculinity in the media

problematized the traditional arrangement of male as spectator and female as spectacle discussed in the last chapter. Since the 1980s, the male image has come to be eroticized and objectified in a manner that radically challenges Mulvey's framework of the gendered gaze. Increasingly sexualized representations of men in the mainstream media in more recent years have also brought into question Neale and Dyer's notions of the disavowal of passivity in male images. Masculine representations have traditionally featured men in activity or implied activity through their attire, such as work clothes or the ultimate male uniform, the business suit. Today, advertising campaigns for men's underwear fill city billboards with scantily clad young men reclining languorously, without the slightest hint of activity. A recent television commercial for a car company features a man lying naked but for a towel, in the midst of a full-body massage. The camera lingers over his well-toned chest, beckoning the gaze of the viewer to his eroticized, passive form. Such images of men, positioned as eroticized object in the gaze of the other, represent a dramatic shift in the politics of looking in Western society. As discussed in chapter one, the femininity, homosexuality and anality that are associated with putting oneself on display do not correspond with traditional heterosexual masculinity. The explicitly erotic display of the male body seriously troubles the disavowal of homoeroticism that has characterized representations of hegemonic masculinity. The eroticized, consuming male has necessitated the adaptation and renegotiation of the terms of masculinity for Western men.

While it is nearly impossible to ignore the dramatic shifts in increased male beauty-consciousness that have taken place over the past two decades, these developments did not occur instantaneously, but rather are the culmination of previous incarnations of style-conscious versions of masculinity. These versions of masculinity

allowed men to actively engage with a fashionable sensibility, and included the figures of the dandy, the playboy and the new man.

The Dandy

The figure of the dandy is, perhaps, one of the archetypical versions of style-conscious masculinity. In contemporary culture, dandyism is commonly associated with men who pay elaborate attention to their appearance in a fop-like manner, with the person of Oscar Wilde upheld as the dandy extraordinaire. Although later versions of dandyism may have reflected such ideals, dandyism in its original form, while always style-conscious, was much more politically motivated.

The dandy pose has been assumed in various forms throughout history, but dandyism saw its first occurrences in the early nineteenth century. Thorsten Botz-Bornstein provides a highly specific classification of the dandy, claiming that the only three genuine dandies that have ever existed were George Brummell, Charles Baudelaire, and Barbey d'Aurevilly (1995). Botz-Bornstein views all other dandies, such as Wilde, as mere imitators of a dandy-like lifestyle. Despite the dandy's emphasis on appearance, he contends that the dandy is more than someone who merely wears his clothes well. He suggests that the dandy was defined by an identity based on personal style rather than rules, describing the dandy as "a man whose actions can be summed up in nothing other than in a 'way of life'" (286). Dandyism provided a means of overcoming the highly structured class systems of the nineteenth century, allowing the dandy to interact in elite aristocratic circles, while playfully refusing to follow the rules of high society. Botz-Bornstein sees this playful refusal as key to the pose of the dandy:

> The essence of dandyism is a ruleless style which comes into being in the moment one sees the whole rule-loaded world as a game whose rules should be followed and at the same time not be followed. (289)

The dandy's 'following and not following' of rules is enacted through a form of disciplined play, characterized by stylish indifference and irony. The dandy did not attempt to overturn the rules of decadent aristocracy, but instead 'played at' following the rules in his own distinct style.

One of the more celebrated of the original dandies was George "Beau" Brummell. Thomas Spence Smith argues that "[t]he dandy's style of life—his 'code'—was indebted to the model Beau Brummell established" (1974: 727). George Bryan Brummell was born in 1778 into what was known as the upper-servant class. Brummell employed his charm, remarkable social talent and personal style to advance his social standing to the level of London's leading society. Described as "handsome, impeccably mannered, and well dressed" (728), Brummell created a lifestyle out of sociability, choosing as his vocation a devotion to his social life and an aesthetic mission of good taste. Smith writes, "he contrived to waste life in such a way as to be respected, feared and admired" (727). Beau Brummell was treated with a fascination and delight by the rest of his society, who would defer to him for answers to questions of taste, fashion and propriety. The length of time that Brummell spent on his personal grooming each day was considered highly lavish for men of this period. His wardrobe was meticulously chosen, and was not characterized by extravagance, but simple perfection, found in details such as the tying of his cravat. Brummell lived his life in the constant attention of the public, in a constant pose, as if his life was permanently on display. Smith argues that Brummell's focus on external perfection extended beyond that of his clothes:

> He was a creature entirely devoted to the management of impressions, and the perfection of every aspect of his behavior was a device for evoking and controlling the effects he made on others and benefiting from them. (730)

Brummell had a keen understanding of the systems and structures that governed high society, but by privileging nothing but his sense of style and playing at following the rules, he manipulated these structures to his personal advantage.

The lifestyle, or life as style, of the early nineteenth-century dandy provided an alternate mode of functioning amongst the rigid social structures of the epoch. Michael Bronski describes Beau Brummell as representing "a triumph of style and imagination over class structures and social restrictions" (1984: 57). Through a privileging of style, Brummell was able to elevate his social ranking to that of high society, which included becoming an intimate companion to the Prince of Wales. As Botz-Bornstein argues, the original dandy pose involved much more than an inordinate amount of time spent in one's toilet. The ruleless style of the dandy served as a means of individual empowerment, altering one's relation to broader social arrangements.

Botz-Bornstein is quite emphatic in differentiating his definition of the dandy from the more decadent variations of the dandy that were to follow. Smith, however, views these variations as a natural progression from the original dandies such as Beau Brummell. Although Brummell and his contemporaries did indeed set the model for subsequent dandies, the specific characteristics of the early nineteenth-century dandies were spatially and temporally specific. As the nineteenth century progressed, significant shifts in socioeconomic factors rendered the dandy an anachronism. These shifts included a rising middle class, industrialization and a declining monarchy (Bronski). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, it was the decadent dandy that emerged as the prototype for

dandyism, and it was this version of dandyism that would leave a lasting impression on popular cultural memory. Where earlier versions of dandyism were characterized by restraint and simple elegance, later versions of dandyism were characterized by a flamboyant style and over-emphasis on appearance. Smith suggests that the dandies at the end of the nineteenth century demonstrated a "more advanced, radical aestheticism in which matters of style almost completely displace[d] conventional morality as regulators of personal behavior" (741).

Amongst the numerous social, cultural and economic transformations that occurred during the fin de siècle in the West, homosexuality emerged as a category of identity. Homosexuals came to be seen as an identifiable group, and the dandy became strongly associated with the homosexual, most famously through Irish-born author and playwright Oscar Wilde. The pose of the dandy, and its emphasis on style rather than content, would prove appealing to many homosexual men in their efforts to gain acceptance into mainstream culture. It may indeed have been the dandy's transformation into the queer, however, that marked the ultimate demise of dandyism. With style and fashion linked to the homosexual, the spectre of homosexuality would haunt any future incarnations of style-conscious masculinity.

Although the dandy was primarily a European figure, Osgerby suggests that an American equivalent could be found in the figure of 'the dude'. He describes the dude as "a young man, upwardly mobile and debonair" (26) who possessed a "style-conscious élan" (27). Initially, the American dude was a negative stereotype that was considered ridiculous and effeminate; however, with the rise of commercialism and commodity consumption, his style-conscious ways came to be viewed less critically.

The code of dandyism that was established by Beau Brummell in the early 1800s may have limited relevance in contemporary society; however, the figure of the dandy provided an important model for style-conscious masculinity and laid the foundations for men to assume their roles as consumers.[1] While the era of dandyism may have come to an end, the style-conscious spirit of the dandy would live on in bachelor cultures and the playboy lifestyle of the US.

The Playboy

The archetype of the 'playboy', or the 'swinging bachelor', secured a dominant position in the cultural imaginary of the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Osgerby suggests that after World War II, an American culture increasingly oriented around commodity consumption required the adaptation of traditional notions of masculinity that were based upon hard work, thrift and puritanical conservatism. A leisure-oriented consumer ethos developed, which privileged the ideals of youth, masculinity and hedonistic consumption. These ideals were best represented through the figure of the young man of style and affluence that came to be known as the playboy:

> Combining the vivacious energy of youth with the footloose independence of the man-about-town, the figure of the 1950s playboy was the apotheosis of the 'ethic of fun' championed by the new bourgeoisie. (124)

The playboy was characterized by a stylish panache and was devoted to the pursuit of pleasure through fashionable consumption. Osgerby suggests that the playboy came to be celebrated as a desirable masculine ideal for a new era of consumer capitalism.

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[1] The figure of the dandy is still commonly invoked in men's fashion spreads. See the feature article "The New Dandy" in the Style section of the *Globe and Mail* for one such example (Bailey, 2003).

The archetype of the playboy may have derived some of its qualities from the tango pirates of the early twentieth century. The term 'tango pirate' was used to describe lower-class men, typically of Hispanic or Mediterranean descent, who frequented the cafés and cabarets of New York and other major US cities. Tango pirates were hired as dance escorts by wealthy women, who were seduced by their fashionable clothes and manners, as well as their mastery of "such passion-inducing dances as the tango and one-step" (Erenberg, 1981: 83). The tango pirate was most famously represented in the person of Rudolph Valentino, an Italian-born actor who rose to stardom in the 1920s as a romantic leading man in American silent films. Tango pirates received much attention in newspapers and magazines of the day, in accounts that discredited their sensual and stylish masculinity as effeminate and inferior.

Marta E. Savigliano argues that Hispanic masculinity has long operated as a virile and macho 'wrong' kind of maleness in the West (1995). Although hegemonic masculinity has been defined in opposition to non-white masculinities, the influence Hispanic and Mediterranean men have had on masculine style has been considerable. The 1950s playboy may well represent an Anglo-Saxon variation of the ill-reputed tango pirate. In a similar manner, mainstream men's fashion has frequently appropriated styles and trends from gay male subculture. The reconfiguration of masculine norms to allow for style-consciousness rendered hegemonic masculinity reliant on the very categories that it defined itself against. Style-conscious male figures that emerged during the twentieth century in the West, such as the playboy, would be haunted by associations with the homosexual, as well as associations with a 'wrong' kind of Latin masculinity.

The image of the playboy and the playboy ethic or lifestyle that accompanied it were most famously and most effectively represented in *Playboy* magazine and its

commercial empire. *Playboy* magazine was launched in November 1953 by Hugh Hefner, with the descriptive tag line "entertainment for men." While *Playboy* is most commonly associated with the photo spreads of nude women that make up a primary component of the magazine, Osgerby suggests that equally important in the 1950s and 1960s was the magazine's focus on men's style and leisure. The magazine ran regular features on fashion, cooking, decorating and other aspects of the playboy lifestyle. Osgerby sees the female centrefolds as performing the dual function of neutralizing the feminine associations attached to such interests and activities, and clearly identifying *Playboy* as a heterosexual text. Both the female and the homosexual are deliberately distanced from the version of masculinity articulated by the magazine. With its privileging of stylistic pleasure and commodity consumerism, *Playboy* "offered men an 'acceptable' avenue into the domain of self-conscious consumption" (5). At the same time as the magazine offered men the opportunity to ogle images of women, it exposed these same men to images of a consuming and narcissistic manhood.

Although the style-conscious figure of the playboy was prevalent in *Playboy* and other cultural representations in the 1950s and 1960s, such as film and television, Osgerby contends that few men could actually attain such a lifestyle. He suggests that the image of the debonair playboy was largely mythical, serving as a vehicle for the aspirational fantasies of men. Despite the absence of actual living and breathing playboys, the 'playboy ethic' had a considerable influence on the configuration of hegemonic masculinity:

> [I]ts significance lay in its capacity to function as an 'imagined identity'—a set of aspirational codes, attitudes and desires that offered men a meaningful

> way of constructing their identities in relation to the proliferating world of commodity consumerism. (124)

The glamorous lifestyle of the playboy may have been largely inaccessible to the *Playboy* reader, but the swinging bachelor served as an important model of style-conscious male consumption. The imagined identity of the playboy articulated a version of masculinity that incorporated the 'feminine' domains of style and fashion in a manner that American men had not experienced previously.

Osgerby argues that the emergence of the playboy in America in the mid-twentieth century represented a salient shift in traditional codes of hegemonic masculinity; however, he does not necessarily consider these shifts to have been progressive. The playboy left behind traditional masculine values such as restraint, denial of pleasure and hard work for an 'ethic of fun' that was realized through hedonistic consumption. Osgerby suggests that the figure of the playboy was not indicative of any significant restructuring of social power relations, but rather an adaptation to the existing social order:

> [T]here evolved in the figure of the 'swinging bachelor' a form of masculine identity more appropriate to the demands of a society grounded on consumption and more at ease with the expanding vistas of commercial leisure and entertainment. (145)

Despite the libertine tendencies of the fashion-savvy 'swinging bachelor', the playboy persona was firmly confined to the realms of heterosexual pleasures. In addition to a sexual orientation that was decidedly heterosexual, the playboy's attitude toward women was far from progressive. In the masculine world of the playboy, women were configured as passive objects of the sexualized male gaze and as subordinate accessories to high-living men. Osgerby sees the playboy's ultimate role as facilitating the transformation of

men into consumers, suggesting that "a large part of *Playboy*'s rationale was to 'colonize' the traditionally 'feminine' spaces of commodity consumption on behalf of men" (129). The codes of masculinity may have adapted to incorporate a style-conscious, consuming manhood; however, the inequities of patriarchy remained largely in place.

While Osgerby argues that the most important difference in the version of masculinity articulated through the playboy was the reconfiguration of men as consumers, he also recognizes that the playboy's emphasis on display and performance had additional implications for masculinity. The style-conscious pose of the playboy repositioned the male figure so that it was on display and objectified in the gaze of the other. The playboy not only represented a consuming male, but also a male who was the object of others' consumption. In the fashion features of *Playboy* magazine, and the narcissistic masculinity promoted through the playboy lifestyle, "masculinity was increasingly positioned as the object of a scrutinizing gaze" (162). Amidst female centrefolds and Playboy Bunnies, the playboy disavowed the potential homoeroticism in his style-conscious display; however, there was little he could do to prevent this display from being appropriated by the erotic gaze of others, including gay males. The conspicuous display of the male figure reconfigured masculinity as spectacle, problematizing traditional gendered structures of the gaze. The suave, well-dressed, womanizing playboy also had to contend with the passivity, femininity and homoeroticism associated with drawing the gaze of others. Although the figure of the playboy may have represented an adaptation to consumerism rather than a challenge to patriarchal arrangements, it also afforded the possibility for troubling traditional notions of the gendered structure of the gaze.

While *Playboy* magazine continues to be published at present, the life of the stylish playboy was much more ephemeral. According to Osgerby, the mid-1970s saw the financial downturn of the Playboy empire, in a time when "the image and ethos of the 'swinging bachelor' looked sadly outdated and outmoded" (193). Following the lead of its competitors, *Playboy* increased its sexual content and diminished its emphasis on lifestyle matters. Despite the demise of the playboy, the codes of youthful hedonism and conspicuous consumption promoted through the playboy ethic would have a lasting influence on subsequent definitions of masculinity.

The New Man

The 1980s and 1990s would see the emergence of yet another model of masculinity characterized by attention to personal style and beauty, in the figure of the 'new man'. While the new man received significant popular and academic attention in Britain during this period,[2] it did not attain the same level of cultural resonance in the United States. Osgerby argues that the adoption of consumerism by men occurred earlier in the US than in Britain, through the ideal of the playboy discussed in the last section. The substantial resonance that the new man had in Britain at the end of the twentieth century could thus be seen as the result of the novelty of the British consuming male. Nonetheless, cultural representations of masculinity in North America reflected many of the qualities of the new man, and the contributions British scholars have made toward contemporary considerations of Western men, their bodies and fashion have been considerable.

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[2] Perhaps most notably in the collection of essays released in 1988 entitled *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity* (Chapman and Rutherford, eds.).

The rise of the new man in the 1980s was heralded by many as a positive outcome of the advances made by feminist causes and the critiques of traditional masculinity put forth by many women and some men. Rowena Chapman suggests that the new man acted as "[a] potent symbol for men and women searching for new images and visions of masculinity in the wake of feminism and the men's movement" (1988: 226). She suggests that the figure of the new man developed as a reaction to traditional notions of macho hardline masculinity and a breadwinner ethic. The new man was characterized by "his enthusiastic embrace of female roles and qualities" (227), which included being emotionally aware, playing an active role in family life and awarding a significant amount of attention to his appearance. Media representations of men were dominated by this new idealized version of soft masculinity, replete with images of devoted fathers, loving partners and handsome narcissists. Such images were accompanied by the proliferation of erotic nude and semi-nude images of men (235). Mainstream magazines and newspapers took up the rhetoric of the new man as well, devoting copy space to the celebration of this new masculine ideal.

Chapman suggests that the figure of the new man was initially represented in two lights, as nurturer and narcissist. The new man as nurturer placed an emphasis on self-development and his relationships with others. The new man as narcissist emphasized hedonistic consumption and style-consciousness. Chapman sees both variations of the new man as a form of rebellion against traditional masculine ideals. She also frames the US playboy in terms of a rebellion, in his revolt against the traditional breadwinner ethic of the 1950s. In this light, she sees the playboy as an important model for the new man, suggesting that "the 80s new man is a direct descendant of the 50s Playboy" (234). Chapman argues that it was the new man as narcissist that came to dominate cultural

perceptions, as it was this interpretation that could be most easily and effectively assimilated into a culture that was increasingly consumer driven. The narcissistic new man's obsession with image and style made him ideally suited as a model for consuming manhood.

In the end, Chapman sees the new man as ultimately serving much the same purpose as the American playboy. Through his style-conscious example, the figure of the new man facilitated the reconfiguration of British men into active consumers. The new man offered men an alternate to traditional masculine ideals, while doing little to challenge patriarchal distributions of power. Many had hoped that the new man represented progressive changes in hegemonic notions of masculinity, but Chapman suggests that instead, "the new man has served consumer capitalism very well" (235). Rather than a rebellion against traditional hard masculinity, the new man was an adaptation to consumerism that allowed heterosexual men to maintain their claim to power and control. Chapman notes how both textual and visual representations of the new man were consistently framed in a heterosexual context, in an effort to disavow the potential for homoeroticism. She also argues that the cultural texts that took up the rhetoric of the new man reinforced and extended, rather than eroded, men's privileged status in the gender order. The figure of the new man may have allowed men to reconcile themselves with a commodity-based culture; however, this version of masculinity continued to be defined in opposition to the feminine and the homosexual.

While the phenomenon of the new man may have had a limited effect on patriarchal arrangements, it did represent a further progression in men's relationship with the gaze. The 1980s and 1990s saw mainstream representations of men that eroticized the male body in an unprecedented manner. Where the playboy had suavely ushered the male

figure into the gaze of the other, the new man shamelessly peeled off his clothing to expose his (well-toned) body to women, and other men. Advertising campaigns in magazines and on television that featured shirtless, or otherwise exposed, male bodies became increasingly common. Frank Mort suggests that new man advertising 'broke the rules' through "the fracturing and sexualisation of the male body" and through "fetishised and narcissistic display" that was centred on the commodity (1988: 201). Chapman recounts the sudden influx of cards, calendars and posters featuring erotic representations of the male body that entered the mainstream market in the 1980s. The explicit eroticism of such representations made it increasingly difficult to contain and control the homoerotic potential in the display of the male body. Despite efforts to assert the heterosexuality of male images, which included macho posturing or the incorporation of female images, the exposed male body was exceedingly vulnerable to the objectifying gaze of both women and other men.

The ambiguity and passivity of the male body on display effectively troubles notions of traditional masculinity, which, as Mark Simpson argues, is a cause of concern for some:

> Men's bodies are on display everywhere but the grounds of men's anxiety is not just that they are being exposed and commodified but that their bodies are placed in such a way as to passively invite a gaze that is *undifferentiated*: it might be female *or* male, hetero *or* homo. Traditional male heterosexuality, which insists that it is always active, sadistic and desiring, is now inundated with images of men's bodies as passive, masochistic and desired. (1994: 4, his emphasis)

The ever-so essential distinction between the homosocial and homoerotic that has characterized heterosexual masculinity, as noted by Sedgwick, becomes problematized

with the reconfiguration of men as style-conscious consumers. The circulation of images of the eroticized male body in mainstream culture has securely positioned men within the gaze of the other. Models of masculinity, such as the new man, have made it socially acceptable for men "to look at themselves and other men as objects of desire to be bought and sold or imitated and copied" (Edwards, 73). As men are exposed to the objectifying gaze of the other, the rigid distinctions between heterosexuality and homosexuality become blurred, with the categories threatening to implode one into the other. The blurring of these categories problematizes hegemonic definitions of masculinity that are based upon the homophobic distancing of homosexual men.

While Edwards, Mort, Osgerby and Chapman recognize that style-conscious male figures have allowed for expanded notions of acceptable masculinity, they all remain critical of the ultimate effect of such expansions. Edwards suggests that the reconstructions of masculinity in 1980s Britain demonstrated "very few signs of post-feminist consciousness" (51). Chapman argues that the expansion of the terms of masculinity ultimately results in nothing more than "an extension of its power over women and deviant men" (247). Each of the authors interprets the shifts in masculinity as primarily benefiting consumer capitalism rather than eroding the privileged position of heterosexual males.

Western men have had to become increasingly accustomed to being construed as objects of the gaze, and there is no doubt that their body-consciousness has benefited consumer society. A fashion and beauty industry that had largely catered to women had a vested interest in encouraging the development of a stylish, consuming manhood. The past twenty years have seen the introduction of diverse lines of clothing; colognes; hair creams, pastes and gels; skin-care products; hair dyes and even makeup, all specifically

tailored to the male consumer. Although the group of writers discussed in this chapter does not consider style-conscious masculinity particularly progressive, the queering of male heterosexuality that has accompanied men's exposure to the gaze is noteworthy. The blurring of the categories of the heterosexual and homosexual may have significant implications for masculinity studies, whether through the reconfiguration of the norms of hegemonic masculinity or through the radical reconfiguration of how masculinity and patriarchy has been theorized.

The late 1990s and the first few years of the new millennium have augmented the degree of exposure men and their bodies have received in the mainstream media. As discussed earlier, contemporary mainstream representations of men have displayed male bodies in increasingly eroticized and sexualized ways. Whereas the new man made desperate attempts to assert his heterosexuality despite his exposed body, contemporary men on display appear to have abandoned all defences. Mainstream advertisers make use of eroticized male images that are purposefully ambiguous and that allow for multiple readings. The gay spectator is less frequently required to appropriate images that exclude him as an audience, as mainstream representations of men are increasingly directed at women and men. The blurring of heterosexuality and homosexuality in contemporary masculinity has, perhaps, most definitively been realized in the figure of the metrosexual. The current phenomenon of the metrosexual, which has seized the widespread attention of the media, will be considered in the next chapter.

In Western consumerist cultures, the relationship men maintain with style and their bodies plays an essential role in cultural configurations of hegemonic masculinity. From the nineteenth-century dandy to the new man of the 1980s, Western men have cultivated a relationship with style despite its associations with the feminine, the

homosexual and subordinate masculinities. The Great Masculine Renunciation of the mid-eighteenth century saw a turn away from male stylishness. The figure of the dandy re-established the terms for a style-conscious masculinity in the West. The dandy engaged style as a means of circumventing the rigid social structures of his time. A culmination of the ideals of youth, masculinity and hedonistic consumption, the 1950s playboy served as an aspirational ideal for men in the US. The style-conscious playboy promoted an 'ethic of fun' rather than traditional masculine roles of hard work and restraint. The British new man represented a softer version of masculinity, with the shared qualities of nurturer and narcissist. The new man helped to usher men and the male body into the eroticized gaze of the other. Style-conscious figures of masculinity have been an integral component of the transformation of men into consumers. Style-conscious masculinity necessitated the disavowal of the femininity and homosexuality associated with configuring oneself as a desirable object. The continued and escalated erotic display of men and their bodies, in combination with the emergence of the figure of the metrosexual, may problematize many of the assumptions that have been made concerning the construction of contemporary masculinity.

CHAPTER THREE
The Rise of the Metrosexual

The figures of the playboy and the new man facilitated the reconfiguration of Western men as consumers in the twentieth century. A new archetype of the style-conscious consuming male has emerged in the twenty-first century, and is pushing the limits of traditional masculinity even further than his predecessors. This chapter considers the figure of the metrosexual, who has received considerable attention from the mainstream media on an international level. The chapter will begin by tracing the development of the concept of metrosexuality in the media from its first usage to the present. The discussion will continue by considering two metrosexual texts: the men's magazine *Details*, which has been dubbed the quintessential metrosexual publication, and a metrosexual style manual that has recently been released. The final section will consider some of the critiques that have been brought against the metrosexual within the mainstream media.

Birth of the Metrosexual

In November 1994, British writer and cultural commentator Mark Simpson wrote an article entitled "Here Come the Mirror Men," in the UK newspaper the *Independent*. In this article, he made reference to a growing segment of style-conscious young men being targeted by men's fashion magazines. Simpson, somewhat facetiously, coined the term 'metrosexual' to describe these "narcissistic young men sporting fashionable clothes and accessories." The term found little currency over the next few years; however, the trend

towards heightened male style-consciousness, which Simpson had noted, continued to escalate.

It wasn't until July 2002, when Simpson reintroduced this male persona in a Salon.com article aptly entitled "Meet the Metrosexual," that the term would receive international attention. Simpson's article expressed his concern and amusement with a masculinity that was increasingly image-conscious and consumption-based. In what he himself later described as "cheeky satire, but also as sober social observation" (2004), Simpson 'outed' this new breed of young, style-conscious men, including David Beckham and Brad Pitt, as metrosexuals. He provided the following description of the metrosexual, which has been frequently cited since the article was posted:

> The typical metrosexual is a young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis—because that's where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are. He might be officially gay, straight or bisexual, but this is utterly immaterial because he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference. Particular professions, such as modeling, waiting tables, media, pop music and, nowadays, sport, seem to attract them but, truth be told, like male vanity products and herpes, they're pretty much everywhere. (2002)

Simpson offers David Beckham, the British soccer player married to ex-Spice Girl Victoria, as the quintessential example of the metrosexual. Beckham is as notorious for his extravagant attention to his aesthetic image as he is for his sporting abilities. In addition to his reputation for wearing highly fashionable men's clothing and accessories, Beckham has gained attention "for wearing sarongs and pink nail polish and panties belonging to his wife" (ibid.). His love of the spotlight combined with his strong fashion sense has made him a popular choice amongst marketers seeking product endorsements

for male fashion accessories. Beckham has been featured on city billboards, in newspapers and men's magazines, and has recently released his autobiography.[1] Simpson categorizes Beckham as "an international-standard narcissist" (ibid.), suggesting that he represents a new version of manhood, one that adores looking good and being looked at by others.

One of the characteristics that differentiates Beckham, and thus the metrosexual, from previous incarnations of style-conscious masculinity is that he actively seeks out a gaze that is undifferentiated. A photo spread and interview featuring Beckham appeared in the British gay magazine *Attitude* in 2002. Simpson notes that in the interview Beckham confirms that he is straight, but also expresses how he is pleased to be considered a gay icon. Simpson paraphrases Beckham, "he likes to be admired, he says, and doesn't care whether the admiring is done by women or by men" (ibid.). Simpson argues that what was remarkable about Beckham's appearance in *Attitude*, in addition to a major sports figure being featured in a gay magazine, was how little controversy it caused. He contends that the gaze-adoring Beckham and other heterosexual men like him represent a significant shift in contemporary norms of masculinity.

While Simpson's initial mention of the metrosexual in 1994 may have been somewhat premature, his 2002 article arrived at a moment when the media, and marketers, were eager to find a term to describe a consuming and image-conscious version of masculinity that was becoming increasingly coherent and prevalent. What began as a satirical characterization of "a new, narcissistic, media-saturated, self-conscious kind of masculinity" (Simpson, 2004) was transformed into a potent marketing

[1] *Beckham: Both Feet on the Ground: An Autobiography*, co-authored by Beckham and Tom Watt, had its North American release in October 2003.

tool and an all-out media sensation. In the year and a half since the 2002 Salon.com article was published, the metrosexual and his consuming lifestyle have received widespread media attention. The metrosexual male has been featured on television programs and in magazines and dailies across the globe, including India, Australia, France, Canada and the US. The metrosexual broke away from his somewhat derogatory origins, and was refashioned as a sympathetic, perhaps even desirable, archetype of masculinity for the contemporary male.

The Word Spy, a website that traces the development of new terms used in the media, reflects the shift in the definition of metrosexuality subsequent to the attention it has received in the mainstream media. In September 2002, shortly after Simpson first published his article, the Word Spy provided the following definition of the metrosexual:

> A dandyish narcissist in love with not only himself, but also his urban lifestyle.

By January 2004, the Word Spy had altered its definition to the following:

> An urban male with a strong aesthetic sense who spends a great deal of time and money on his appearance and lifestyle.

The two definitions convey rather different interpretations of the metrosexual. The first definition is arguably uncomplimentary, with references to narcissism and self-love—characteristics that are typically not highly regarded in Western culture. The second definition conveys a much more appealing notion of the metrosexual, framing the metrosexual's style-consciousness as a strength. It is the latter definition that best captures the manner in which metrosexuality has been taken up in the mainstream media.

Although Simpson's 2002 article primarily defines the metrosexual as male, he also suggests that the male metrosexual has a female counterpart. He argues that female

metrosexuality is "active where male metrosexuality is passive," and has served to emasculate straight men. Simpson suggests that women are becoming increasingly assertive in the public sphere and are developing more demanding standards for the men that they become involved with. He offers the sexually empowered female characters of the hit TV series *Sex and the City* as examples of female metrosexuality. It is the metrosexual as style- and gaze-obsessed male, however, that has proven to have the greatest cultural resonance. Simpson's notion of female metrosexuality has all but been obliterated in the furor that has accompanied the emergence of the millennial metrosexual male.

Simpson's original definition of the metrosexual, as cited above, also indicates that the sexual orientation of the metrosexual is irrelevant, whether heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. Within the media accounts and marketing literature, however, the metrosexual has consistently been configured as heterosexual. Simpson suggests that it was gay men who provided an early prototype for metrosexuality (2002). Indeed, whereas gay men have long been stereotypically associated with a strong aesthetic sense, it was the relative novelty of the highly style-conscious *heterosexual* male that captured the attention of the media and the public. The metrosexual has thus come to be almost exclusively defined as a heterosexual male, despite Simpson's original criteria.

Rainer Emig argues that since the mid-twentieth century, homosexual men have acted as trendsetters for mainstream men's fashion (2000). Styles and fashions originated by the gay minority have been consistently adopted by the heterosexual majority. He suggests that straight men appropriated gay-coded fashion partly because of the restrictions that traditional masculinity imposed on men's fashion. Simpson argues that metrosexuals no longer rely on the co-optation of gay men's fashion, and have emerged

as fashion leaders who are "better dressed" than homosexuals (2004). He writes, "Urban, fashion-conscious gays accessorizing masculinity and desirability may have provided the prototype for metrosexuality, but they're the discarded, beta version" (ibid.). The ultra-style-conscious metrosexual has displaced the homosexual as the trendsetter for men's fashion, and marketers have taken notice.

While the concept of metrosexuality had its origins in Simpson's online article, an international advertising firm called Euro RSCG played an integral role in securing the interest and enthusiasm with which the metrosexual was received by the world media. In 2003, the firm conducted two separate studies entitled "The Future of Men," in the US and the UK. Each study consisted of an online survey that set out to explore the current state of masculinity by inquiring about men's buying habits, as well as their perspectives regarding themselves and regarding women. The firm then gathered together focus groups of the heterosexual men who had been identified as having metrosexual proclivities, and questioned them further regarding their consumption patterns. As a result of their research, Euro RSCG not only 'confirmed' the existence of metrosexuals, but also reconfigured metrosexuals as a highly profitable demographic of discriminating male consumers. Simpson contends that it was because of this reconfiguration that marketers and the mainstream media seized upon the concept so rapidly, drolly commenting that since his article was published, "the word 'metrosexual' has become almost as ubiquitous as the phenomenon it described" (2004).

The increase in circulation of the term metrosexual can be observed in the amount of coverage it has received in newspaper, magazine and newswires since its first

mention.[2] Between 1994 and 2002, the period between Simpson's initial introduction of metrosexuality and the Salon.com article, only seven articles made reference to metrosexuality. Over the course of 2003, 365 different articles made reference to metrosexuals. In the first six months of 2004, the number of articles that mention metrosexuality is already 284, rapidly approaching the previous year's total.

A *New York Times* article published on June 22, 2003 would serve as the official introduction of the metrosexual to North Americans. In a story featured in the Sunday edition's Style Desk, journalist Warren St. John suggests that "America may be on the verge of a metrosexual moment." The article begins by profiling a young Manhattan professional who has begun to identify as a metrosexual since his participation in the Euro RSCG study. His metrosexual tendencies include using expensive styling and beauty products, wearing Bruno Magli shoes and custom-tailored shirts, and enjoying shopping excursions with female friends. While the article acknowledges Simpson as the originator of the term, it largely focuses on the marketing agents who are endeavouring to capitalize on this segment of big-spending male consumers. Marketers consider metrosexuals as style leaders, who potentially provide important insight into the future developments of normative masculinity. St. John explains how the metrosexual differs from previous instances of sensitive manhood in America:

> [W]hat separates the modern-day metrosexual from his touchy-feely forebears is a care-free attitude toward the inevitable suspicion that a man who dresses well, has good manners, understands thread counts or has opinions on women's fashion is gay.

[2] This data was collected by searching the Factiva electronic database for mentions in the headline or lead paragraph. Factiva provides coverage of over 8,000 global sources from over 118 countries.

The potential of being considered effeminate or homosexual as a result of their heightened stylishness appears to bear little threat for the contemporary metrosexual male. St. John quotes a heterosexual graduate student who insists that he is indifferent to any judgements that others may make regarding his style-consciousness, claiming, "It doesn't bother me at all. Call it homosexual, feminine, hip, not hip—I don't care." The *Times* article presents a version of masculinity that veers significantly from traditional hard masculinity in the US. The introduction that the new figure of the metrosexual received in the *Times* was echoed in the following weeks, as other newspapers carried similar stories, profiling their own local metrosexuals, and making the phenomenon of metrosexuality known in urban centres throughout the US and Canada.

Journalists have most frequently portrayed men's adoption of a heightened aesthetic sense in a favourable light. A headline from Ohio's the *Columbus Dispatch* declares, "'Metrosexuals' Prove that Gay Men Have No Monopoly on Looking Good" (Hood, 2003). An article that appeared in Cleveland's the *Plain Dealer* contends that metrosexuality is bringing about changes in men's style (Colan, 2004). The story profiles three metrosexual men who "willingly discuss the fulfillment they receive from following fashion, from their daily grooming routines and from indulging their 'inner girl' with salon services." One man confesses to owning over 200 pairs of shoes, another recounts how he regularly gives himself facials and receives manicures, and the other tells of how choosing to work in interior design—a very metrosexual profession—made him place greater emphasis on his looks. The shoe owner, who self-identifies as a "shoe-freak", has become accustomed to being mistaken for a gay man, which he finds humorous. The journalist suggests that the men's fashion and beauty industry has experienced growth and expects to see that continue. She writes, "Men, whatever their ethnicity, are the new

women, according to local beauty service providers and national retail chains who want to get a share of the metrosexual dollar." The article frames metrosexuality as an emancipatory movement that allows men access to feminine domains that had previously been considered forbidden or taboo.

A headline from Florida's *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* urges readers to "Make Room for the Metrosexual" (Larsen, 2004). The author asserts that the metrosexual has lost any negative connotations it may have originally held. She attributes the emergence of the metrosexual to changes in the norms of masculinity:

> [M]en today are commonly interested in traditionally feminine pastimes like shopping, cooking and decorating. And certainly women applaud the well-groomed, sensitive, discerning man.

The journalist claims that modern men are devoting greater amounts of time and money to their appearance, including professional skin and teeth care, tailored clothing, speciality cosmetics and plastic surgery. The article suggests that through stylish masculinity, men are provided with "an edge in both personal and business relationships." The benefits of metrosexuality are portrayed as extending to both men and women.

According to a *Boston Herald* headline, "Metrosexuals are the Modern Girl's 'Mister Right'" (Mirchandani, 2004). The female journalist applauds the rise of the metrosexual male with considerable enthusiasm. She lists some of the benefits of having a metrosexual boyfriend:

> This is the man who knows a unibrow is not something he has to live with, a back wax before beach season is just common courtesy and catching a baseball game doesn't mean sitting in some skanky dive bar.

The author clarifies that a man's metrosexual tendencies, such as using an Aveda face wash, do not impinge on his overall 'manliness'. She contends that metrosexuals can be

as tough and athletic as any other men, but they "just do everything with more style and swagger in their step than the schlub shopping at Eddie Bauer." The author credits metrosexuality with allowing men to be stylish, romantic and sensitive to the needs of women, without compromising their own masculinity.

Not all style-conscious men have eagerly embraced the term 'metrosexual' to describe themselves. Some journalists report that although they found men with metrosexual qualities, they refused to be identified as such. A writer for the *Star-Tribune* in Minneapolis explains, "Being a metrosexual isn't a bad thing; being labeled one is, thanks to the pejorative connotations thrust on the word by the anxious anti-progressives" (Tillotson, 2003). Such resistance to being called a 'metrosexual' appears to be particular to smaller cities, rather than major centres, such as New York, which tend to be associated with more liberal values. The continued media exposure of the metrosexual may result in even wider acceptance of the term, but regardless, media reports of men's changing relationship to personal style continue to surface across the globe.

The Metrosexual Bible

With its focus on young men's fashion and hedonistic consumption, the US men's magazine *Details* was quickly linked to the metrosexual phenomenon. In the *New York Times* article, St. John refers to *Details* as "a kind of metrosexual bible." *Details* magazine was launched in the mid-1980s and struggled over the subsequent years to establish its readership, undergoing several changes in style and content. The magazine was relaunched in October 2000 with a new look and attitude, and a shirtless Robert Downey Jr. gracing its cover. In this issue, Editor Dan Peres explained to readers, "*Details* is for a new generation of men, whose lives and sensibilities are decidedly

different from Dad's" (50). The magazine adopted a fashion focus, revealed in its fashion spreads and advertising, and complemented by interviews with metrosexual celebrities, such as Downey, Justin Timberlake and Tom Cruise. Additional advertising and special features focus on high-end products such as automobiles, liquor and technology. The average *Details* reader is a 31-year-old male living in a metropolitan area with a household income of $121,000 (Dobrow, 2003), a profile that corresponds very closely to that of the metrosexual. With the relaunch of their title, *Details* set out to approach their male readers in a manner that was decidedly different from other men's magazines.

Although other men's publications, such as the so-called laddie magazine *Maxim*, have had to adapt to an increasingly style-conscious masculinity, most continue to feature scantily clad women outside and inside the magazine. Even the more distinguished men's style magazine *GQ* regularly showcases the female form on its covers. When *Details* was relaunched in 2000, the magazine made the bold decision to solely feature men on its covers. The cover models, usually male celebrities, are consistently displayed in an eroticized manner, with exposed torsos, greased skin or sultry poses. Inside the magazine, advertising and photo spreads are replete with images of the eroticized, passive male body on display. One of the most remarkable differences between *Details* and other men's magazines is the manner in which the magazine addresses its readership. From their inception, men's style magazines have defensively asserted the heterosexuality of their readers (Edwards, 1997),[3] whether through the gratuitous display of women's bodies, the heterosexual framing of men's bodies on display, or articles and advertising text that exclusively address the reader as heterosexual. In an online interview for the *Washington*

[3] With the exception, of course, of style magazines that specifically target gay males, such as *Attitude* in the UK.

Post in 2003, Dan Peres comments, "as the editor of *Details*, I have been editing this magazine for men—not straight, not gay, but just men—since I took over three years ago."[4] The adoption of such an editorial direction for a men's magazine was quite revolutionary, and was initially received with much scepticism.

In the same interview, Peres recounts how when *Details* was first relaunched media critics labelled it as a gay magazine. *Details* was subjected to scorn and ridicule at the hand of other magazines such as *Stuff* and *Radar.* The crystallization of the concept of metrosexuality in 2003 served as a validation of the editorial and marketing direction that *Details* had been pursuing. *Details* quite willingly embraced the term metrosexual to describe their readership, and with some relish, accepted its nomination as the manual for metrosexuality. A steady circulation of nearly half a million, as well as significant increases in ad revenue and single-copy sales in 2003 (Dobrow), would suggest that *Details'* strategy, in combination with the wider emergence of the metrosexual, has proven quite favourable for the magazine.

Among articles discussing male compulsive-shopping disorder, men in skirts and male erotic dancers, the October 2003 issue included an article entitled "Are Metrosexuals Fake Fags?" by Augusten Burroughs. In this humorous piece, the author mockingly mourns the loss of traditional hard masculinity to the 'fake fag', or metrosexual. Burroughs remarks, "The new generation of hetero men has effectively erased the heretofore obvious boundaries between gay and straight" (104). In his online

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[4] This shift in address can be clearly observed in articles such as "Nocturnal Admissions" by Augusten Burroughs in the September 2003 edition. In the one-page article that discusses how some grown men continue to experience wet dreams beyond puberty, the author writes:

> As most men know, wet dreams are often accompanied by alarming visuals. Family members, members of the same sex (if you're straight), or even animals are likely to appear in a variety of quite appalling scenarios. (125)

The parenthetical qualification allows a space for the non-heterosexual subject that has rarely, if ever, been presented to the reader in men's magazines.

Washington Post interview, Peres suggests that this erasure is one of the primary roles of the metrosexual: "What this word has done is made it easier for people to look at straight men who possess what have traditionally been gay interests without prejudice." Peres sees a certain ambiguity, and the potential of attracting the gaze of both women and men, as essential to the metrosexual sensibility. He expresses this notion in the *New York Times* article: "Wanting them to wonder and having them wonder is a wonderful thing...It gives an air of mystery: Could he be? It makes you stand out" (2003). The unqualified erotic display of the male body combined with a manner of address that is inclusive of non-heterosexual readers has distinguished *Details* from other men's magazines, and rendered it an important medium for reflecting and defining the figure of the metrosexual.

In the fall of 2003, the metrosexual came into even fuller form with the release of US writer Michael Flocker's *The Metrosexual Guide to Style: A Handbook for the Modern Man.* Flocker's "amusing, little handbook" is filled with "selected wisdoms and insightful nuggets" that will provide the necessary means "to become a player in the new era of the modern metrosexual man" (xv). Printed with a simple black font offset by blue-monochrome illustrations, the 170-page manual offers advice on topics that include etiquette, culture, fashion, grooming and decorating. Among the eleven chapters, there are numerous do-and-don't lists, as well as must-have or must-see lists, such as 'Top Ten Metrosexual Destinations', 'Ten Wardrobe Must-Haves' and 'Fifteen Albums You Should Own'. Flocker argues that contemporary men have evolved beyond their forbears to a more desirable form of masculinity:

> The new breed of man is one of style, sophistication and self-awareness. He is just as strong as his predecessor, but far more diverse in his interests, his tastes and most importantly his self-perception. Secure in his masculinity,

> he no longer has to spend his life defending it. He has options. The sexual revolution is old news and the new man is free to enjoy his single life and youthful appeal. (xiii)

Drawing from his savoir-vivre and wit, as well as the degree of hubris necessary for this genre of writing, Flocker sets out the parameters of style for the 'emancipated' metrosexual.

Although in many ways Flocker's handbook does not differ significantly from previous male style guides, there remain some notable distinctions. On the first page of the introduction, Flocker declares, "The once great divide between straight men and gay men has lessened considerably in recent years" (xi). Flocker sees the metrosexual as representative of a blurring of the categories of the heterosexual and homosexual male, suggesting that it is acceptable, and desirable, for a straight man to be mistaken for a gay man. He echoes Peres when he writes, "there is a certain power and mystery in ambiguity" (xii). Flocker encourages aspiring metrosexuals to take pleasure in the undifferentiated gaze of the other. He begins the 'Sex & Romance' section with some advice concerning 'diversity':

> The metrosexual man enjoys positive attention and feels free to flirt *with both women and men* in a light-hearted, fun manner. Flirting is harmless and flattery is just that—flattery. So, lighten up, have fun and be who you want to be. If you're going to make the effort to look your best, you shouldn't freak out when people respond positively. (132, my emphasis)

Flocker not only acknowledges the homoerotic gaze, but also recommends that the metrosexual actively pursue the gaze of other males through flirting. Flocker's version of masculinity represents a radical shift from Mulvey's notion of gaze-evading masculinity put forth in the 1980s. It is the metrosexual's relationship to the homoerotic and the

homosexual that differentiates Flocker's account of 'the new male ideal' from other accounts of style-conscious masculinity.

Voices of Dissent

The meteoric rise of metrosexuality and the extensive exposure it has received in the media has not occurred without the dissent of some. There has been metrosexual backlash from both men and women. A humorous piece that appeared in the *Boston Herald* entitled "Modern Men are from Mars AND Venus" asserts that men should return to 'their side of the closet' (Teitell, 2003). The female journalist argues that women may regret the years of wishing men were more like women. She expresses distress over being involved with a man with whom she must compete for beauty appointments and who is more knowledgeable about fashion than she is. Although light-hearted, the article is critical of men's encroachment on so-called 'feminine' territory. In "Vanity, Thy Name is Metrosexual," a *Washington Post* writer relates her frustration with finding a 'real man' in Washington, D.C. (Hackbarth, 2003). She contends that in an attempt to better themselves, metrosexual men "have swung too far in the opposite direction." A female writer for Ireland's the *Sunday Independent* denounces metrosexuals as "shallow" and "pathologically narcissistic," insisting that "most women don't want men to be objectified" (Halley, 2004). These female journalists call for a return to traditional hard masculinity, creating a portrait of metrosexuals as men who are ultimately threatening or disappointing.

The metrosexual has faced its most tenacious resistance from the media in Australia. Many Australian journalists not only reject the term 'metrosexuality', they also deny that there has been any shift in men's relationship with style. An article entitled

"The Metrosexual Myth" in *Business Review Weekly*, an Australian business magazine, denounces the very notion of the metrosexual, suggesting that it is nothing more than marketing hype (Shoebridge, 2003). The author writes, "[l]ike most buzzwords, this one is over-hyped and hollow," arguing that the only example that has surfaced of an actual metrosexual is David Beckham. The journalist vehemently opposes reports of a growing segment of style-conscious men, punctuating his prose with 'sweeping generalizations' in the very same manner as those whom he is critiquing. He offers the following warning to marketers:

> Any company that develops products or marketing strategies in the belief that the metrosexual category is large and growing is heading for heartache. Yes, many men like clothes, wear fragrances and visit a hairdresser rather than a barber. But they do not represent a large or homogeneous consumer group.

The author dismisses the metrosexual as a short-lived fad that represents an idealized, and misguided, marketing creation rather than an actual category of males.

While less pervasive or vehement than in Australia, a segment of men in the US also feel that the media has exaggerated the metrosexual movement. The *Washington Times* reports that a sportscaster and a men's hair-care company launched a website "in an attempt to 'save' American men from back waxings and pedicures" (Taylor, 2004). Many claim that overexposure in the media has generated a distaste for the metrosexual, as evidenced in an article from the *Globe and Mail* (Clements, 2004). The brief article, bearing the headline "Metrosexual is out faster than you can say bling-bling," provides highlights of additions to the English language in 2003, by Collins dictionaries in the UK, and suggestions for words to be banished, by Lake Superior State University in Michigan. 'Metrosexual' has the dubious honour of appearing on both lists. The author writes,

"Lake Superior gives it pride of place on its list of words to expunge from the language." The attention that the metrosexual has received from the two different groups testifies to the amount of attention the term has been awarded in the media and the mixed reaction it has been met with by the public.

In his retrospective Salon.com article published in January 2004, Simpson himself is wary of the hype surrounding the metrosexual. He refers to the metrosexual as "his impeccably turned-out love-hate child" and his "Frankenstein monster with perfect skin, terrorizing and sashaying the globe." Simpson remarks that since he first introduced the term, the metrosexual has been transformed "into a marketing tool with which to seduce the world media" (ibid.). However, Simpson remains convinced that metrosexuality is a legitimate category that is symptomatic of wider shifts in cultural constructs of masculinity. He argues that while the category of metrosexual is rather ludicrous, it is as real, and as ludicrous, as the categories of 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual'. Simpson suggests that metrosexuality may be even more tangible than identities based on sexuality due to the fact that "[t]he metrosexual is a recognizable species; you can point to one" (ibid.). Indeed, on the streets of an urban centre such as Montreal, it is increasingly difficult to venture out without crossing paths with well-groomed men who match the metrosexual profile, sporting the latest fashions as well as a female romantic interest. Despite harsh criticism from both men and women, and the denial of its very existence, metrosexuality appears to have permeated male celebrity culture and spread into city streets around much of the Western world.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the figure of the 1950s playboy largely represented an imagined identity that served as a vehicle for the aspirational fantasies of men. The figure of the new man in the 1980s was considered by some as an idealized

image that solely existed in the pages of magazines. Although the media has been inextricably connected to the development of metrosexuality, the metrosexual differs from previous archetypes of style-conscious masculinity in its capacity to function as an actual rather than imagined identity. Where the rhetoric concerning the playboy could largely be characterized as 'how to *be like* a playboy', the rhetoric in the media concerning the metrosexual is largely 'how to *identify* a metrosexual'. Many articles in newspapers and on the Internet are accompanied by quizzes that allow male readers to determine whether or not they are indeed metrosexuals. Nevertheless, whether the metrosexual is an actual or imagined identity, or whether the metrosexual's moment will be short-lived or long-lasting, is ultimately irrelevant. The metrosexual is but one way of describing and categorizing the observable shifts that have occurred in contemporary articulations of masculinity. The following chapter will consider various implications resulting from the emergence of the metrosexual's style-conscious masculinity in Western society.

The metrosexual represents a further progression in the style-conscious version of American masculinity that characterized the male archetypes of the playboy and new man in the twentieth century. Initially employed as a satirical term to describe a consuming and image-based masculinity, the metrosexual was taken up by the media and marketers as a legitimate category of identity. The metrosexual is characterized by a heightened sense of personal style, as well as the adoption of traditionally feminine qualities and activities. Although the metrosexual shares the strong aesthetic sense of his predecessors, he differs from the playboy and the new man in his relation with the homosexual and the homoerotic. The men's magazine *Details* has been linked to the phenomenon of metrosexuality, as a result of its focus on fashion and consumption, its eroticization of the

male body and its manner of address that includes the non-heterosexual reader. While the media has generally portrayed the metrosexual as a positive progression for both men and women, some have been critical of the metrosexual. Some women have expressed disappointment with soft masculinity, while others have argued that metrosexuality is nothing more than a marketing creation; however, the cultural resonance that the metrosexual has had on an international level would suggest that the concept of metrosexuality is reflective of the changing norms of hegemonic masculinity in recent years. Although the longevity of the term is yet to be determined, the consuming and image-conscious version of masculinity that metrosexuality represents has most certainly established long-lasting roots in Western culture.

CHAPTER FOUR
Implications of Metrosexuality

As discussed in chapter two, writers such as Edwards, Osgerby and Chapman have considered Western men's negotiation of personal style as a potential locus for progressive reconfigurations of masculinity. These authors looked to previous archetypes of style-conscious masculinity, such as the playboy and the new man, as potentially beneficial for women and non-heterosexual men. Their hope was that the emergence of style-conscious masculinity and the reconfiguration of the male body as a site of erotic display reflected, or accompanied, the emergence of a softer version of masculinity and the relinquishment of patriarchal power and control. However, the authors concur that these figures of style-conscious masculinity have benefited consumer culture by refashioning men as consumers, while doing little to erode the privileged position of heterosexual males. As discussed in the last chapter, the metrosexual has emerged as a new archetype of style-conscious heterosexual masculinity. The present chapter will look to the metrosexual and the rhetoric concerning metrosexuality in the media as a potential locus for progressive shifts in hegemonic masculinity. The first section of the chapter will consider some critiques of consumer capitalism. The following section will discuss how the style-conscious metrosexual represents a reconfiguration of masculinity. The discussion will continue by considering the implications of metrosexuality for gay men, masculinity-studies theory and women.

Lamenting Consumer Capitalism

The various authors engaged in chapters two and three ultimately hold negative or ambivalent views concerning the rise of a consuming, style-conscious Western manhood. Osgerby and Chapman argue that the potential for positive repercussions resulting from the figures of the playboy and new man were trumped by consumer capitalism. Although Simpson was the originator of the term 'metrosexual', his perspective regarding this style-conscious male figure has largely been critical. In his infamous 2002 article, Simpson remarks how the metrosexual "probably represents a more benign or successful adaptation of masculinity to the future, but is a trifle distasteful, not to say occasionally downright nauseating." Much of the literature devoted to men and style appears to be underwritten with a lament for the superficiality of consumer-capitalist society. Style-conscious men are framed pejoratively in terms of 'narcissism', 'style over content' and 'image over reality'. Identities based on style and image are discredited, with what is, perhaps, an implicit appeal to the Enlightenment notion of the true and transcendent self. Without question, the metrosexual, or style-conscious male, is a product of a postmodern consumer-capitalist society, but that does not render such versions of masculinity any more or less legitimate than other equally constructed categories of identity.

Edwards traces the development of men's fashion in late-twentieth century Britain with some enthusiasm, but in the end, he is also critical of consuming manhood. In the final chapter of his book, he emphasizes the inequities to be found within consumer society. He argues that consumption-based manhood privileges young, fit, good-looking white men with discretionary income and excludes elderly, poor, overweight or unattractive men (1997: 127). Edwards is wary of the commodification of identity that

has resulted from the transformation of men into consumers. A consumption-based identity is arguably no more or less exclusive than the production-based identity that was dominant during the early twentieth century. Production-based manhood excluded elderly, unemployed, handicapped, and often, non-white men. While the inequities of consumer capitalism may be significant, it remains the dominant socioeconomic system in effect in most Western nations. Critiques of consumer capitalism are valid and necessary; however, they can be somewhat incongruous in relation to stylish masculinity, as it is a product of this very system.

The metrosexual could not exist outside of the media-saturated consumer-capitalist environment that characterizes contemporary Western society. As a consumption-based identity requires a disposable income, the metrosexual is not a male identity that is accessible to all men.[1] It shares the inequities of the consumer-capitalist society it belongs to, privileging the young, rich and beautiful. Nonetheless, the metrosexual has emerged as an archetype of Western masculinity and represents a significant reconfiguration of the norms of hegemonic masculinity. While not all will have the means or desire to take up the metrosexual lifestyle, few can avoid the attention it has been awarded by the media. Metrosexuality may be rooted in consumer capitalism and driven by marketers, but that does not discredit the repercussions that may stem from the version of masculinity that it represents.

[1] Simpson contends that metrosexuality is not simply a phenomenon of the wealthy or middle class, however. He argues that the majority of metrosexuals in the UK are young working-class men, who tend to have high disposable incomes (2004).

Metrosexual Masculinity

Since the first mention of the metrosexual in the media, the rhetoric associated with this masculine archetype has consistently configured the heterosexual male in a radically different position vis-à-vis the homosexual, which can be considered in two senses. First, the figure of the metrosexual articulates a version of masculinity that is no longer compelled to defend itself from the threat of associations with the homosexual or the feminine. Articles on metrosexuality appearing in mainstream dailies across Canada, the US and the UK, amongst others, included observations similar to the following, describing a Torontonian man: "[He] admits he falls into the category of metrosexual, and he knows some people might initially think he's gay. [...] But it doesn't really get to him" (Gordon, *Toronto Star*, 2003). Once considered the ultimate insult for many men, being mistaken as gay has been refashioned into a compliment for the metrosexual, due to the association gay men have long held with stylishness. The metrosexual's emphasis on externals such as hair, clothing and personal grooming has required the assumption of the passivity and eroticism associated with putting oneself on display. The metrosexual's blasé attitude towards associations with the homosexual would suggest a significant departure from previous configurations of masculinity in the West. Admissions such as the one by the Torontonian man above would have been unheard of in the mainstream media even a few years ago. The metrosexual abolishes the disavowal of the homosexual that has been so inextricably linked to the construction of hegemonic masculinity.

The second sense of how metrosexual masculinity shifts the heterosexual male's relationship with the homosexual is by allowing, and encouraging, the display of the male body for a gaze that is undifferentiated. The style-conscious metrosexual actively seeks

out the gaze of both women and men, no longer resisting the ever-present spectre of the homoerotic. The stylish image presented by the metrosexual is not only consumed by women and gay men; it is also consumed by other straight men. In constructing their own style-conscious identity, metrosexual men consume the images of other men, whether in the pages of *Details* or on the city streets. By positioning himself in the undifferentiated erotic gaze of the other, the metrosexual effectively overturns the traditional gendered structure of the gaze in the West.

Television series such as *Will & Grace*, *Queer as Folk* and *The L Word* are indicative of important cultural shifts in the US and many other Western nations. Over thirty years after the birth of the US gay rights movement at the Stonewall riots in 1969, gays and lesbians have made significant advances in combating discrimination and acquiring legal rights. The past decade has witnessed a remarkable increase in the amount of representation queer men and women have received in the Western mass media. Many mainstream films, reality shows, TV sitcoms and dramatic series have featured sympathetic portrayals of gay and lesbian characters in primary and secondary roles.[2] While queer communities have long created their own subcultural representations through literature, film and other arts, queer representations in the mainstream media have been scarce and typically defamatory.[3] The realization of a queer presence in the mainstream media may well serve to further demystify homosexuality, giving a face and voice to 'the love that dare not speak its name'. Although homophobia in its often-violent forms remains a serious problem in the US, the political, legal and cultural advances made by

[2] It should be noted that these representations still remain unbalanced for the most part, as cultural representations of gay men far outnumber the representations of lesbian women.
[3] See Vito Russo's landmark work *The Celluloid Closet* (1981) for a comprehensive overview of queer representations in film.

the queer community have contributed to bridging the once formidable gap between the heterosexual and homosexual.

Emig argues that there is an "intriguing solidarity between 'straight' and 'gay' men brought about by commodity culture" (2000: 223). He suggests that the transformation of men into consumers has resulted in a new blurred masculinity that is accessible to both gay and straight men. The metrosexual is the embodiment of such a version of masculinity, one that is unfazed by associations with the homosexual and consciously attracts the erotic gaze of other men. The metrosexual may identify as heterosexual in orientation, but as Simpson argues:

> [T]here is nothing 'straight' about metrosexuality. It 'queers' all the codes of official masculinity of the last hundred years or so: It's passive where it should be active, desired where it should always be desiring, looked at where it should always be looking. (2004)

The blurring of the categories of heterosexual and homosexual represented in the figure of the metrosexual has significant implications for both gay men and theories of masculine subjectivity.

The Metrosexual and Gay Men

The decidedly non-homophobic positioning of the metrosexual is revolutionary for a figure of normative masculinity. Since the emergence of homosexuality as a category of identity, gay men have been subjected to homophobic attitudes and acts at the hands of normative masculinity. Homophobia displays itself overtly in negative stereotypes in the media and violent hate crimes such as 'gay bashings', but also more covertly through the marginalization of the homosexual subject in a heterocentric society.

The emergence of the figure of the metrosexual, and the attitudes towards homosexuality associated with the version of masculinity it represents, may prove quite beneficial for homosexual men. By no longer configuring the homoerotic and homosexual as threats to heterosexual masculinity, the metrosexual may bring about a decrease in homophobia amongst Western men. A gay actor quoted in St. John's *New York Times* article notes a difference when making romantic advances on metrosexual men: "Before, you used to get punched. [...] Now, it's all, 'Gee thanks, I'm straight but I'm really flattered'" (2003). The gazes of other men are welcomed and desired, rather than violently resisted.

The blurring of the categories of the heterosexual and homosexual male may also serve to decrease homophobic violence, in that identifying homosexual men is becoming increasingly difficult. Unlike race or gender, sexuality is not a categorization that is unambiguously visible on the body of an individual. A heightened aesthetic sense has been one of the distinguishing features of a large section of gay men throughout the twentieth century. With increasing numbers of heterosexual men devoting greater attention to their appearance, male style-consciousness is no longer the exclusive domain of the homosexual. On crowded downtown streets, it is at times nearly impossible to distinguish between a young gay couple and two straight metrosexuals, loaded down with bags after a day-long shopping spree. Metrosexuality renders stylish gay men less identifiable as a category, and thus less prone as targets of homophobic violence.

The archetype of the metrosexual is among the first articulations of heterosexual masculinity that does not have an antagonistic relationship with the homoerotic and the homosexual. As a result, the emergence of the metrosexual has the potential to drastically alter the relations between straight and gay men.

The Metrosexual and Masculinity Studies

The version of masculinity articulated through the metrosexual has several implications for the manner in which masculinity has been theorized. First, the metrosexual exposes the constructed nature of his own masculinity, and consequently the constructed nature of all masculinities. The metrosexual represents a form of identity that is centred on style and image, rather than a notion of an inner essence or true gender. The metrosexual's identity is characterized by artifice; his body made legible through the commodities with which he clothes and grooms himself. In seeking out the gaze of others through the display of his body, the metrosexual is engaged in a constant performance of his masculinity. The manner in which the metrosexual privileges style in the construction of his gendered identity bears likeness to Butler's notion of the productive and performative assumption of gender. The metrosexual's focus on externals and his relation to the gaze, as well as his prominent place in the media, highlights the constructed nature of his masculinity; however, metrosexual masculinity is no more constructed or performative than other versions of more traditional masculinity, such as the archetype of the self-made man. Metrosexuality puts forth a version of masculinity that emphasizes the de-naturalized, performative and historically contingent nature of gender.

Although the reconfiguration of masculinity as a constructed category is necessary to combat lingering essentialist notions of 'proper' gender roles, such reconfigurations do not alter the dominant and privileged position awarded to men through patriarchy. As discussed in chapter one, theorists such as Traister are wary of accounts of constructed and performative masculinity that would obscure the inequities between and within genders. The constructed status of the metrosexual's masculinity does not constitute a

weakened form of masculinity nor one that is necessarily progressive in terms of patriarchal arrangements, as will be discussed below. Nonetheless, revealing the constructed, and therefore transformable, nature of masculinity remains an important avenue for bringing about progressive changes in contemporary articulations of manhood.

The second implication that metrosexuality may have for theories of masculinity is to challenge the manner in which sexuality has operated as a basis of identity for Western men. As Sedgwick argues, sexuality has been a principal category of identity for the past hundred years:

> What *was* new from the turn of the century was the world-mapping by which every given person, just as he or she was necessarily assignable to a male or a female gender, was now considered necessarily assignable as well to a homo- or a hetero-sexuality, a binarized identity that was full of implications, however confusing, for even the ostensibly least sexual aspects of personal existence. It was this new development that left no space in the culture exempt from the potent incoherences of homo/heterosexual definition. (1990: 2, her emphasis)

Homosexuality and heterosexuality came to be seen as defining features of mutually exclusive identities and personalities. Homosexuality became stigmatized and marginalized in relation to mainstream heterocentric culture. The homosexual subject was relegated outside of the family unit, as well as outside of local and national citizenship.[4] As a result, homosexual subcultures developed in the majority of urban centres in the West, most visibly in the form of gay villages confined within concentrated radiuses. These villages featured gay bookstores, coffee shops, clubs and restaurants, as well as bathhouses and porn shops. A canon of gay film and literature developed, and gay men

[4] See Jyoti Puri's essay "Nationalism Has a Lot to Do with It! Unraveling Questions of Nationalism and Transnationalism in Lesbian/Gay Studies" (2002) for an excellent discussion regarding how the queer subject has been excluded from national citizenship.

came to be seen as fashion leaders, cultivating distinctive gay trends and styles. Mainstream culture became equated with heterosexuality, and masculinity came to be defined in opposition to the homosexual.

The emergence of the metrosexual represents a potentially significant turning point in cultural negotiations of masculinity. As discussed above, metrosexual masculinity no longer insists on a radical distinction between the heterosexual and homosexual male. Rather than disavowing associations with the homosexual, the metrosexual nurtures and revels in the ambiguity resulting from his style-consciousness. According to Simpson, the phenomenon of metrosexuality "represents the beginning of the end of 'sexuality'" (2004). The metrosexual male's identity is no longer centred on his sexuality; instead, his identity is largely based upon lifestyle and consumption. Simpson writes, "The sexual orientation of metrosexuals is obviously important to them and their partners, but their identity is not based on it, and from a cultural-commercial point of view it is almost immaterial" (ibid.). Style and attracting the gaze of others take precedence over defensive assertions of the metrosexual's heterosexuality.

While Simpson admits that there are some similarities between the eighteenth-century dandy and the modern-day metrosexual, he sees each of the archetypes of style as being distinct to its respective era. Whereas the dandy was a pose assumed by an elite group to demonstrate their wealth and refined taste, the metrosexual is a "mainstream, mass-consumer phenomenon" (ibid.). Simpson sees both dandyism and metrosexuality as integrally connected to sexuality: "It was the decidedly middle-class concept of 'sexuality' that killed the dandy. Now, fittingly enough, the metrosexual is killing sexuality" (ibid.). The emergence of homosexuality as a category of identity, and its associations with the decadence of the late-nineteenth century dandies, resulted in the

demise of dandyism. The metrosexual offers contemporary men a version of masculinity that is no longer strictly defined in terms of (hetero)sexuality.

The metrosexual's emphasis on style over sexuality gives reason to reconsider Sedgwick's assertions that identity is always dictated by sexual orientation. If the metrosexual is representative of future articulations of masculinity, theorists may be forced to find alternate frameworks to describe the formation of masculine identities wherein sexuality becomes increasingly redundant.

Although the metrosexual may represent a turning point in male identities strictly based on sexuality, Western societies remain largely structured upon heterocentric systems and values, which are often defined in opposition to the queer subject. As a result of the oppression and marginalization that gay men and women have faced, sexuality often plays a significant role in the formation of their identities. The affirmation and adoption of gay and lesbian identities has constituted an important undertaking, both personally and politically, for many queer individuals. While gays and lesbians have made many advances in recent years, their positioning as subjects in Western society remains precarious and contested. With heated debates on same-sex marriage in Canada and laws against sodomy only recently being repealed in the US,[5] the struggle to obtain equal rights and privileges for queer individuals continues. For those groups that continue to experience orientation-based oppression, there may remain a certain utility in identities based on sexuality, both as a means of support and collective political power.

The third and final implication that metrosexuality may have for masculinity studies also stems from the blurring of heterosexuality and homosexuality that occurs

[5] It wasn't until November 2003 when the US Supreme Court struck down Texas state sodomy laws, and existing sodomy laws in 12 other states, in their ruling on the case of *Lawrence and Garner v. Texas*.

through style-conscious masculinity. With a decreased emphasis on sexuality and the fostering of non-homophobic attitudes, the metrosexual problematizes accounts of masculinity that assert that it is always constructed defensively in opposition to the homosexual.

As discussed in chapter one, many masculinity-studies theorists have convincingly argued that hegemonic masculinity has largely been defined through the disavowal and distancing of the homosexual. Sedgwick contends that masculinity is inextricably, and antagonistically, linked to the homosexual:

> [A]t least since the eighteenth century in England and America, the continuum of male homosocial bonds has been brutally structured by a secularized and psychologized homophobia, which has excluded certain shiftingly and more or less arbitrarily defined segments of the continuum from participating in the overarching male entitlement—in the complex web of male power over the production, reproduction, and exchange of goods, persons, and meanings. I argue that the historically shifting, and precisely the arbitrary and self-contradictory, nature of the way *homosexuality* (along with its predecessor terms) has been defined in relation to the rest of the male homosocial spectrum has been an exceedingly potent and embattled locus of power over the entire range of male bonds, and perhaps especially over those that define themselves, not *as* homosexual, but *as against* the homosexual. (185, her emphasis)

While Sedgwick provides an accurate description of the terms that have long dominated the cultural construction of Western masculinity, her framework is not applicable to contemporary articulations of masculinity, such as the metrosexual. Metrosexuality represents a version of masculinity that is no longer 'brutally structured by homophobia', but instead is characterized by the adoption of qualities that have traditionally been

associated with gay men. Rather than defining his masculinity in opposition to the homosexual, the metrosexual defines his masculinity through his sense of style.

The emergence of the figure of the metrosexual, and a style- and gaze-conscious masculinity, exposes the limits of the binary-opposed framework that many scholars have engaged when considering masculinity. The metrosexual necessitates the development of new terms and frameworks in present-day studies of constructs of masculinity. Metrosexuality offers a version of masculinity that ceases to function as a *negative* construction that must be defensively enforced, and functions instead as a *creative* construction that is based on an aesthetic sense of style. The implications of such a shift are potentially considerable, not only for the manner in which heterosexual men relate to homosexual men, but also the manner in which heterosexual men relate to one another. Male homosocial bonds that are structured by Sedgwick's notion of male homosexual panic are incongruent with the precepts of metrosexual masculinity. The metrosexual's style-based masculinity may result in, and/or be reflective of, a restructuring of male homosocial bonds according to an alternate hierarchy of style and consumption. Although such a restructuring may not necessarily be more equitable—simply exchanging one set of inequities for another—it is arguably much more 'benign' than 'brutal', as it is no longer based on a defensive and oppositional definition of masculinity.

The field of masculinity studies must respond and adapt to the changing configurations of contemporary masculinity as represented in figures such as the metrosexual. The metrosexual represents a style-conscious version of masculinity, which emphasizes the constructed nature of masculinity, and no longer insists upon the disavowal of the homoerotic and the homosexual. By privileging style and encouraging sexual ambiguity, the metrosexual diminishes the importance that has been attributed to

sexuality as a basis of identity. Alternate frameworks must be developed by theorists to conceptualize a masculinity that is no longer defined in opposition to the homosexual. While the emergence of the metrosexual poses new challenges for masculinity-studies scholars and has potentially progressive implications for gay men, the implications of metrosexuality for women and the erosion of patriarchal structures are less certain.

The Metrosexual and Women

While the male body has evaded the erotic gaze until recently, feminist theorists and activists have long criticized how the female body has been objectified, eroticized and subjected to standards of beauty in Western culture.[6] Although the figure of the metrosexual does not prevent the female body from being configured as sexual object, it ensures that the sexualization of the body is no longer confined to only one gender. The style-conscious masculinity of the metrosexual sexualizes the male body by positioning it as erotic object in the gaze of the other.

The movement of the male body into the gaze alters the relationship men have had with their own bodies, obliging them to read their bodies as erotic objects. Idealized images of the male body in the mainstream media have negative ramifications for men just as idealized female images have had negative ramifications for women. The pressure to measure up to cultural standards of beauty may result in feelings of inadequacy and/or destructive behaviours. Media reports on male body-image disorders in recent years, such as anorexia, bulimia and muscle dysmorphia (obsessive dissatisfaction with one's musculature), testify to the impact that the shift in gaze has had on men. While the

[6] See Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* (1991) for her highly influential account of the relationship between beauty and female identity.

negative consequences of the sexualization of the male body are unfortunate, there may be a certain just retribution in the imposition of beauty standards onto men, as men have been so implicated in imposing beauty standards on women. The metrosexual redresses the imbalance that has existed between the genders in the sexualization of the gendered body.

The victimization of men remains a common theme in the mainstream media's treatment of contemporary masculinity and masculine archetypes such as the metrosexual. A feature article appearing in Canada's the *Globe and Mail* (Valpy, 2003) exemplifies the rhetoric of 'men in crisis' that is often an explicit or implicit component of accounts of modern manhood. The majority of the article discusses shifts in cultural understandings of masculinity and the difficulty modern men are having in negotiating their own masculinity. Metrosexuality is recognized as a new masculine archetype, but is referred to derogatively, and rather one-sidedly, as a marketing creation being forced on unsuspecting men. The final section of the article considers how "feminism and the advance of women into the work force over the past half-century have had a deep impact on masculinity." The author cites various sources who argue that men are portrayed as inept fools in advertising campaigns, are being ill-served by the education system, are receiving backlash as active fathers for encroaching on the female realm, are more deeply affected by divorce (which women largely initiate), and are struggling to balance careers and parenting. Feminist advances and the move towards softer versions of masculinity, such as the metrosexual, are portrayed as both confusing and threatening to the modern male. The malaise that underwrites the article is an example of what Traister refers to as the "victimhood of the privileged" (2003: 301). The victimhood of heterosexual males is characterized by the refusal to acknowledge the privilege and power awarded to men

through patriarchy and a firm resistance to any attempts to encroach upon the ambit of men's power. Despite the ever-shifting terms of normative masculinity, and the rhetoric of crisis-ridden masculinity, men have proven extremely adept at maintaining their grasp on patriarchal power.

Along with designer clothing and expensive hair products, the metrosexual is positioned as a progressive figure in terms of gender politics. The media and marketing discourses relating to metrosexuality have been dominated by discussion of men's changing relationship to style, consumption and the gaze of others, but they also make reference to men's changing relationship with women. The metrosexual's adoption of a 'feminine' attention to style and appearance is linked to profeminist values and attitudes. The *New York Times* refers to metrosexual men as 'feminized', 'sensitive' and 'empathetic to the feminist movement' (ibid.). As discussed in the last chapter, the metrosexual may well represent a more attractive, or compatible, version of masculinity for some women, in that metrosexuals are better groomed and dressed than most other men and have a penchant for so-called 'feminine' interests and activities, such as shopping, cooking and the arts. As well, this soft version of masculinity may arguably be more receptive to profeminist values than more traditional hard masculinity. However, there can be no certainty that the metrosexual's 'feminine' interests are indeed accompanied by profeminist sentiments. The progressive nature of the figure of the metrosexual is problematized if we consider 'progressive masculinity' in terms of the relinquishment of patriarchal power. In Simpson's 2002 and 2004 Salon.com articles, he depicts the metrosexual as a style-obsessed emasculated male identity, but makes no mention of the metrosexual's profeminist persuasions. The metrosexual represents a

version of masculinity whose ultimate concern is style and attracting the gaze of others rather than the inequities of gender.

The ideals of the metrosexual share many similarities with the ideals of the 1950s playboy. A modern-day swinging bachelor, the metrosexual is devoted to the pursuit of hedonistic pleasure through fashionable consumption much like his forbear. The playboy blatantly sexualized women as passive objects and accessories to his high-living lifestyle. While the overt sexualization of women may be shunned by the sensitive and evolved metrosexual, women continue to fulfill much the same function as they did for the playboy. Women are configured as an accessory to the metrosexual's stylish masculinity. Flocker's metrosexual guide devotes considerable attention to seduction, romance and dating; however as Simpson argues, the ultimate love object for the metrosexual remains himself (2002). The metrosexual is consistently configured as a bachelor and lover rather than a father, husband or partner. The values of the hedonistic, style-centred metrosexual lifestyle place little emphasis on long-term relationships or parenting. Despite the profeminist rhetoric that has been associated with the metrosexual, this new archetype of masculinity does not represent a significant shift in the structures of gender relations.

Through the appropriation of 'feminine' traits and activities, the metrosexual allows for an expanded notion of masculinity that does not necessitate the relinquishment of patriarchal power. Chapman argues that men's adoption of feminine qualities has served to reinforce the existing gender order rather than allowing for more equitable arrangements between genders. She sees essentialist feminist arguments as one of the catalysts for redefinitions of normative masculinity:

> Essentialist radical feminist arguments erected a moralistic equation around gender: femininity equalled good, masculinity equalled bad. This meant

> that, in order to lay claim to a stance of moral superiority, men were forced to disavow their masculinity, and to take up a feminine subject position. (1988: 247)

Chapman contends that as a result of such moralistic reasoning, the adoption of masculine traits by women has often been framed negatively, while the adoption of feminine traits by men "elevates men because they are moving towards virtue rather than away from it" (248). Metrosexuality offers contemporary men a more sympathetic, and possibly benign, version of masculinity that is more appropriate for a consumerist society; however, the expansion of male behaviours into 'feminine' territory requires few concessions from men and thus has little impact in terms of eroding the privileged position they have held relative to women in Western society.

Chapman argues that the eradication of gender inequalities requires the rejection of binary-opposed gender frameworks. She views the primary gender divide as problematic, suggesting, "If you assert a schematic morality, but don't abandon a cleavage in gender, you merely endlessly reposition men and women around that fissure" (248). The metrosexual may represent a new 'feminized' masculinity, however, it maintains an essential distinction between genders. The metrosexual has contributed to the blurring of the categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality within the category of men; however, it has not had the same effect on the categories of men and women. While the sexuality of the metrosexual may be somewhat ambiguous, he remains decidedly male, with full access to all the rights and privileges accorded through patriarchy.

Although the metrosexual has been positioned as a profeminist figure, a closer examination reveals that the benefits of style-conscious masculinity for women may be quite limited. The metrosexual may perform an equalizing function in terms of the

sexualization of the body. While metrosexuality may represent a more desirable version of masculinity for some women, the ideals of the metrosexual's lifestyle largely serve the interests of men. The adoption of feminine traits by the metrosexual does little to alter men's relationships towards women or to rectify the inequities between genders.

Further Analysis

The metrosexual has emerged as an important archetype of style-conscious masculinity for contemporary Western men; however, alternate archetypes have also emerged that co-exist, influence and compete with the metrosexual. The crossover of hip-hop music from inner-city subcultures to the mainstream has not only popularized a distinctive form of music but also a distinctive sense of style. Male hip-hop artists have gained a reputation for a strong aesthetic sense that places significant emphasis on commodities, brands and labels. With an identity that is centred on style, image and commodity, the male hip-hop archetype bears some resemblance to the metrosexual; however, this alternate version of style-conscious masculinity diverges significantly from the norms of metrosexuality, in its macho posturing and in its attitudes towards women and homosexual men. Hip-hop style is reflective of larger cultural shifts towards consumption-based male identities, as discussed in chapter two, but offers Western men a means other than metrosexuality for negotiating stylish masculinity. Although an in-depth consideration and comparison of alternate style-conscious masculinities is beyond the scope of the present discussion, it would constitute a worthwhile avenue for future analysis.

Also worthy of further consideration is the intensification of the erotic gaze on women that has occurred over the last decade. The hyper-sexualization of women may serve to maintain the inequities of the sexualized gendered body. Films such as the *Charlie's Angels* franchise, magazines such as *Maxim* and artists such as Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera have contributed to the sexualization of the female body in the mainstream media in a manner that is unprecedented. Is this hyper-sexualization of women related to the emergence of the gaze-adoring, sexualized masculinity found in figures such as the metrosexual? Will the male body eventually come to be sexualized in an equally extreme manner? Stylish-masculinity may reconfigure the male body as sexual object; however, the inequities of patriarchy remain deeply and fundamentally entrenched in Western culture.

The rise of the metrosexual is inextricably intertwined with consumer capitalism, and has thus been of considerable interest and benefit to marketers; however, as a masculine archetype that has received extensive media exposure, the metrosexual also serves to reflect and redefine the terms of normative masculinity. The version of masculinity articulated through the metrosexual is characterized by the adoption of feminine-coded interests and qualities, and the rejection of the antagonistic relationship men have held with the homosexual and homoerotic.

The style-conscious masculinity of the metrosexual has significant implications for gay men and masculinity-studies theory. The metrosexual welcomes a gaze that is undifferentiated and blurs the distinction between the heterosexual and homosexual male. The metrosexual may serve to decrease homophobia by no longer positioning the homosexual as a threat and by rendering gay men less identifiable as a category. The style-based identity of the metrosexual exposes the constructed and performative nature

of masculinity. Metrosexuality challenges existing theoretical frameworks that theorists have engaged to account for masculine subjectivity. By fostering ambiguity and an identity that is centred on style and consumption, the metrosexual diminishes the manner in which sexuality has functioned as a basis of identity. Metrosexual masculinity also challenges the manner in which masculinity has been configured as a negative construction, defined in opposition to the homosexual. Instead, style-conscious masculinity represents a creative construction that no longer needs to be defensively enforced. Although metrosexuality offers women a softer version of masculinity that has been associated with profeminist attitudes, its implications are less beneficial for women. Ultimately, the metrosexual does not represent a relinquishment of patriarchal power, but an extension of the terms of masculinity and an adaptation to an increasingly consumption-oriented society. The style-consciousness of the metrosexual reconfigures the male body as sexual object; however, the recent hyper-sexualization of the female body may maintain a certain inequity between genders. Metrosexuality represents a version of masculinity that is feminized, non-homophobic and no longer defined defensively. The implications of such a version of normative masculinity are potentially quite positive, especially for gay men; however, patriarchy remains resilient, and requires the concerted effort of both men and women for its undoing.

CONCLUSION
Making Over Masculinity

The field of masculinity studies brings together an increasingly critical mass of scholarly work that has been devoted to the study of men and masculinity. The development of the field has been problematized by the privileged position that heterosexual men have held in Western society. Any analysis of masculinity must take into account the disparities between and within genders. Gender has been theorized as a complex and dynamic social construction that is de-naturalized and historically contingent. Masculinity has been configured as a negative construct, which has been defined in opposition to the homosexual and the feminine. Hegemonic masculinity has required the disavowal of the homosexual and the homoerotic, rendering sexuality an essential component of masculine identity. Male homosocial bonds have provided the means for men to access the entitlement awarded to them through patriarchy, but these bonds have been structured by brutal homophobia.

The rise of industry in the mid-eighteenth century has been recognized by many as a defining moment in Western society, which has had long-lasting effects on hegemonic norms of gender. The Great Masculine Renunciation saw a drastic shift in men's relationship with fashion and personal grooming. Men distanced themselves from style, and men's dress became characterized by modesty and uniformity. Masculinity became increasingly associated with production, while femininity became increasingly associated with consumption.

Although Western men have maintained an alienated relationship with fashion and style, several male archetypes have emerged that have allowed for a stylish manhood. The

nineteenth-century dandy remains a lasting icon of stylish masculinity. The dandy's privileging of style earned him the admiration of his society and allowed him to circumvent the rigid class structures of his era. The demise of dandyism has been attributed to the emergence of homosexuality as a category of identity. The debonair playboy of the 1950s would introduce American men to a stylish, consuming manhood. The playboy functioned largely as an imagined identity, with his high-living hedonistic lifestyle captured in the pages of *Playboy* magazine. The new man of the 1980s represented a softer, feminized version of masculinity that served to further reconcile men with style and consumption. The emergence of the new man was accompanied by the proliferation of images of men in the mainstream media.

The shifts in men's relationship with style and consumption have been accompanied by shifts in men's relationship with the gaze. For much of the twentieth century, the male figure evaded the eroticizing gaze of the other. When the male body was displayed, it was typically configured in a manner that denied the inherent passivity of being the object of the gaze. The 1980s and 1990s saw an influx of eroticized and sexualized images of the male body in the mainstream media; however, the homoerotic potential of such displays was disavowed. Images of the male body in the contemporary media are increasingly sexualized and ambiguous, directed at a viewer that is undifferentiated.

The emergence of the style-conscious figure of the metrosexual may very well signify the "Great Masculine *Reconciliation*" with fashion. The metrosexual represents a further progression of the style-conscious masculinity of the dandy, playboy and new man. Rather than evading the gaze, the metrosexual actively seeks out the gaze of both men and women. The metrosexual is characterized by a heightened aesthetic sense, as

well as the adoption of feminine-coded interests and qualities. Although it was originally introduced as a satirical term, metrosexuality was adopted by marketers and the mainstream media as a legitimate category of identity. Reports of style-conscious masculinity began to circulate in cities around the globe, as metrosexuality rapidly became an international media phenomenon. A metrosexual handbook was released and the men's fashion magazine *Details* was singled out as the quintessential metrosexual publication. The media became saturated with stories that featured metrosexuals confessing their penchant for designer labels, spa treatments and expensive hair products. While some have been critical of the attention the metrosexual has received or the feminized masculinity he represents, the metrosexual represents a reconfiguration of the norms of masculinity that has potentially significant implications.

The metrosexual distinguishes itself from previous archetypes of style-conscious masculinity in its relation to the homosexual. The metrosexual represents a heterosexual masculine identity that is no longer positioned defensively vis-à-vis the homoerotic and homosexuality. The metrosexual welcomes attention from gay men and is unfazed by the associations with homosexuality that may result from his stylishness. The metrosexual fosters ambiguity, blurring the distinction between heterosexual and homosexual that has been so essential to definitions of Western masculinity. The ideals of non-homophobic masculinity that are being conveyed through the figure of the metrosexual in the mainstream media are unquestionably powerful. The metrosexual may serve to diminish homophobia by no longer positioning the homosexual as a threat to masculinity. The adoption of a heightened style-consciousness by heterosexual men may also render gay men less identifiable as a category.

The metrosexual's emphasis on style, image and display counters the invisibility that has characterized masculinity, exposing it as a category that is constructed and performative. The metrosexual challenges the manner in which masculine subjectivity has been theorized. Metrosexuality displaces sexuality from the prominent position it has occupied in the formation of masculine identities. The identity of the metrosexual male is centred on style and consumption rather than his (hetero)sexuality. The metrosexual also problematizes theoretical frameworks that argue masculinity is strictly defined through the disavowal and distancing of the homosexual. The metrosexual's style-based identity and non-antagonistic relationship with the homosexual necessitate the development of alternate frameworks to describe a masculinity that is no longer defined in opposition to the homosexual. The ramifications of these shifts in masculine subjectivity may be significant, not only for gay men, but also for the manner in which straight men relate to one another.

The metrosexual's devotion to his appearance and his adoption of feminine-coded traits may represent a version of masculinity that is more appealing to many women. The linking of metrosexuality and profeminist attitudes is somewhat dubious, however, as the ideals of the metrosexual lifestyle are concerned with style, consumption and attracting the gaze of others, rather than the inequities between genders. The metrosexual represents an extension of the terms of masculinity that does not necessarily require the relinquishment of patriarchal power. The metrosexual does partially redress one of the inequities between men and women. By reconfiguring the male body as sexual object, the metrosexual ensures that the sexualization of the body is no longer confined to one gender. Although the principles of metrosexuality do not drastically reposition men in relation to women, I would argue that a feminized version of masculinity that is sensitive,

non-defensive and non-homophobic represents an overwhelmingly positive reconfiguration of masculinity that may have future implications that extend even further than those addressed by this author.

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