

“GENTLEMEN, THE LUNCHBOX HAS LANDED”

Representations of Masculinities and Men's Bodies in the Popular Media

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Muscles are the sign of masculinity.

—Glassner (1988, p. 168)

In an article titled “Invisible Masculinity,” Kimmel (1993) made the seemingly contradictory comment that men had no history. Kimmel was referring to the paradoxical situation whereby (hegemonic) men have been conspicuous as athletes, politicians, scientists, and soldiers but largely indiscernible *as men*. As Kimmel (1993) noted, this veiled status is one of the principal ingredients of men's power and privilege:

The very processes that confer privilege to one group and not to another are often invisible to those upon whom that privilege is conferred . . . men have come to think of themselves as genderless, in

part because they can afford the luxury of ignoring the centrality of gender. . . . Invisibility reproduces inequality. And the invisibility of gender to those privileged by it reproduces the inequalities that are circumscribed by gender. (p. 30)

Men's concealed and privileged status is particularly evident with respect to research on representations of men's bodies in the media. For instance, Witz (2000, p. 11) maintains that in sociological research, men's bodies have inhabited an “ambiguous” and “liminal space,” [a] “borderland between female corporeality and male sociality that, for a fleeting conceptual moment, male bodies appear, only to disappear

immediately.” Witz argues that sociologists have constructed men as inherently social and women as essentially corporeal/natural, thus granting men the status of what Shilling (1993) terms the “absent-presence.” However, sociologists are not the only scholars who have been implicated in disassembling research on men’s bodies. Until fairly recently, intellectuals in the humanities and social sciences in general have been reluctant to engage with such an apparently biological phenomenon as men’s bodies. Representations of men’s bodies have also received little attention from some intellectuals because of their disdain for popular cultural forms, such as magazines, film, TV, and sport. A related version of this “opiate of the masses” thesis is the belief by some scholars that studying discursive phenomena deflects our attention away from the material inequalities of gender relations.

In addition to being marginalized by academics, hegemonic men’s bodies have been positioned by the discourse of “compulsory heterosexuality” that governs the media. Whereas the passive, seminude, and naked bodies of heterosexual women have been constructed as objects for the pleasurable gaze of heterosexual male viewers, there has been a strong taboo against portraying men’s bodies in similar ways, as this would pose a threat to the visual power of heterosexual men. This dichotomy is evident in a scene from the popular film *The Full Monty*, from which we have

taken the title of this chapter. Early in the narrative, Guy, who is auditioning for a part in a male striptease ensemble, is chosen after dropping his trousers and revealing his large penis to the selection panel. However, we never actually *see* Guy’s penis; we are privy only to the astonished reactions of the judges, followed by their leader Gaz’s pronouncement, “Gentlemen, the lunchbox has landed.”

These factors have meant that research on representations of men’s bodies has received significantly less attention from scholars than topics such as sexuality, violence, work, family life, education, and health. For example, it is rare for material on either men’s bodies or men and the mass media to appear in some of the widely used academic texts on men and masculinities (see Table 16.1) or the two leading men’s studies journals (see Table 16.2). Moreover, most analyses in these forums have either approached the media atheoretically or simplistically via topics such as role models or the effects of consuming the mass media on violent behavior; in the same way, most treatments of men’s bodies have been perfunctory. The specialist journal *Body & Society* has published very few articles on either men’s bodies or men and the media (see Table 16.3), and just one article on men’s bodies and two on masculinities have been published in recent volumes of the prestigious *Media, Culture & Society* (see Table 16.4).

Table 16.1 Coverage of Men’s Bodies and the Mass Media in Some Widely Used Academic Texts on Masculinity and Men’s Studies

| <i>Text</i> | <i>Entry for Bodies in Index?</i> | <i>Separate Chapter on Men’s Bodies?</i> | <i>Entry for Mass Media in Index?</i> | <i>Separate Chapter on the Mass Media?</i> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Kilmartin (2000) | No | No | Yes | No |
| Clatterbaugh (1997) | No | No | Yes | No |
| Hearn (1992) | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Seidler (1991) | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Hearn and Morgan (1990) | Yes | No | No | No |
| Doyle (1995) | No | No | Yes | No |
| Connell (1983) | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| Kimmel and Messner (1995) | No index | Yes | No index | Yes |

Table 16.2 Number of Articles in *Journal of Men's Studies* and *Men and Masculinities* With Media-Related^a and Body-Related^b Terms in the Title, Abstract, or Key Words

| <i>Journal</i> | <i>Total Articles</i> | <i>Body-Related Term</i> | <i>Media-Related Term</i> | <i>Both Body- and Media-Related Terms</i> |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| <i>Men and Masculinities</i> (1998–2001) | 57 | 5 | 9 | 1 |
| <i>Journal of Men's Studies</i> (1997–2001) | 94 | 4 | 12 | 0 |

a. Includes film, magazine, and Internet.

b. Includes body, bodies, embodiment, and physical.

Table 16.3 Number of Articles Published in *Body & Society* That Included Media-Related and Masculinity-Related Terms as Key Words or in the Title

| <i>Total Number of Articles Published in Body & Society (1997–2001)</i> | <i>Number of Articles That Included a Media-Related Term</i> | <i>Number of Articles That Included a Masculinity-Related Term</i> | <i>Number of Articles That Included Both Body- and Media-Related Terms</i> |
|---|--|--|--|
| 94 | 9 | 3 | 0 |

Table 16.4 Number of Articles Recently Published in *Media, Culture & Society* That Included Body-Related and Masculinity-Related Terms as Key Words or in the Title

| <i>Total Number of Articles Published in Media, Culture & Society (1997–2001)</i> | <i>Number of Articles That Included a Body-Related Term</i> | <i>Number of Articles That Included a Masculinity-Related Term</i> | <i>Number of Articles That Included Both Body- and Media-Related Terms</i> |
|---|---|--|--|
| 141 | 1 | 2 | 0 |

A SELECTIVE OVERVIEW OF RECENT RESEARCH ON THE MASS MEDIA AND MEN'S BODIES

Although a few items on men and the mass media were published in the 1980s (Dyer, 1982, 1986; Fiske, 1987; Neale, 1983), the first substantial collection of research did not appear until Craig's volume in 1992. Craig's social constructionist framework posed a challenge to the psychologically reductionist, static, and sometimes apolitical aspects of research on men that had resulted from a miscellany of functionalist sociology, psychoanalysis, sex-role socialization theory, content analysis, and "media effects"

research. Likewise, although some seminal pieces on men's bodies appeared in the 1980s and early 1990s (Connell, 1983, 1991; Fiske, 1987; Messner, 1990; Neale, 1983; Theweleit, 1987), Goldstein's (1994) book was the first extensive compilation of research on this topic.

Despite this traditional lack of scholarly enthusiasm for analyzing relationships between men's bodies and the mass media, a sizable amount of research has started to appear in recent years. In reviewing this research, we need to issue the usual caveat that we had to be selective in our analysis. In sketching a general overview of this literature, we focused on the substantive topics that have been studied and the theoretical and methodological perspectives

Table 16.5 Number of Articles Retrieved From a Search of *Sociological Abstracts* and *Humanities Index Abstract of Journal Articles*, 1999-2001, Containing Terms Relevant to the Media and Men's Bodies

| Search Terms (Boolean) | Results |
|--|---------|
| (men or male or masculine or masculinity or masculinities) and (body or bodies or corporeal) and media | 19 |
| (men or male or masculine or masculinity or masculinities) and media | 145 |
| (men or male or masculine or masculinity or masculinities) and (body or bodies or corporeal) | 190 |

that have been employed. In order to keep our synopsis manageable, we concentrated on articles that were published in major academic journals over the past 3 years. Our rationale is that these outlets serve as the most up-to-date forum for research. By using a combination of terms that included variations on the descriptors "men," "male," "masculinity," "masculinities," "body," "bodies," "corporeal," and "media," we conducted searches of two major databases in the humanities and social sciences: *Sociological Abstracts* (which covers approximately 2,500 journals) and *Humanities Index* (which includes 345 journals). We are aware that these databases do not exhaust the literature and also contain a strong Eurocentric bias. However, they have the advantage of sensitizing us to some general trends in the most recent publications.

The results of these searches appear in Table 16.5. However, the figures are inflated, because a search under a term like "body" occasionally yielded irrelevant "hits" such as "body of literature" or "organizational body." Our searches yielded a kaleidoscope of disciplines, theories, and methods across a variety of (mainly Western) national contexts: psychoanalysis, textual analysis, semiotics, surveys, interviews, discourse analysis, content analysis, queer theory, Foucauldian analysis, genealogy, history, communication studies, men's studies, women's studies, gender studies, cultural studies, post-structuralism, postcolonialism, and postmodernism. Indeed, simply categorizing the articles into topics, disciplines, and methods presented us with the difficult task of multidirectional and occasionally arbitrary cross-referencing. Perhaps this complex scenario is to be expected in an era that is frequently understood through the lenses

of hybridity, bricolage, intertextuality, liminality, postcolonialism, and postmodernism. Despite the diverse and fragmented nature of the research, we were able to discern some dominant features. For example, there was a distinct theoretical divide between psychoanalysts and social constructionists, and textual analysis was the most widely used method. The topics ranged through alcohol, commodification, health, men's movements, the "new man," pornography, rurality, sport, sexuality, race, ethnicity, disability, violence, and myriad forms of electronic and print media. Because an exhaustive overview of the articles is impossible, we will now provide a brief and selective account of some of the more easily categorized ones. For analytical purposes, we have divided our analysis according to whether an article was *predominantly* either on the media or men's bodies, even though it was not always easy to make this distinction.

MEN AND THE MASS MEDIA

Researchers who have studied men and the mass media have used a variety of methodological and theoretical frameworks to explore masculinity in TV, advertising, magazines, comics, and film. One of the foremost perspectives is social constructionism, in which popular texts and images are seen to be closely connected with wider relations of domination and subordination both among men and between men and women. We now turn to a selective overview of two of the substantive topics that typify this social constructionist approach: sexuality and race.

Sexuality

Dworkin and Wachs (1998) analyzed how American newspapers covered the disclosures by multiple-Olympic champion diver Greg Louganis (an out gay man), professional basketball superstar Magic Johnson, and professional boxer Tommy Morrison (the latter both self-avowed straight men) that they were HIV-positive. Using a combination of Foucault's model of the confessional and a sin-and-redemption narrative framework, they reported that the three athletes were constructed in markedly different ways. Johnson was hailed for his sporting achievements, cast sympathetically for allegedly being infected by one of the legion of sexually predatory women whom he had unselfishly "accommodated," and lionized for accepting his HIV-positive status so graciously and raising public awareness about AIDS, especially among African American men. Thus, Johnson was redeemed as an "undeserving victim" of HIV/AIDS and seldom criticized for his sexually "promiscuous" behavior. Morrison also was depicted as a tragic victim of sexually voracious women. Louganis, by contrast, received little recognition for his athletic accomplishments and was positioned as an irresponsible "carrier" who posed a risk to heterosexuals. Dworkin and Wachs also illustrated how the three men were positioned by their ethnic, racial, and social class backgrounds.

King (2000) analyzed media coverage of Canadian male figure skaters who died of AIDS-related illnesses, in the context of health policy in Canada. King maintained that although compassion and tolerance toward the skaters was evident, this response also reinscribed commonsense ideas about "at-risk" populations by enabling the public to identify with the skaters' families rather than the athletes themselves. According to King, the media's reaction could be read as an attempt to construct Canada as a more compassionate and tolerant nation than the United States. King also argued that the media coverage exonerated the Canadian government's abysmal response to people living with HIV/AIDS.

McKee (2000) conducted semistructured interviews with a small group of gay Australian men in order to investigate their memories of TV representations. Although most of the interviewees recalled seeing only a few gay men

on screen, they reported that these instances generated strongly positive feelings about themselves. McKee concluded that TV programming can be important in overcoming gay men's sense of isolation and promoting their self-esteem, thereby contributing to a decrease in the disproportionately high rates of suicide and attempted suicide among young gay men. Brickell (2000) analyzed electronic and print media coverage of gay and lesbian pride parades and reported that a "discursive inversion" constructed gays and lesbians as invaders of unmarked, heterosexual public space.

Race

Coltrane and Messineo (2000) conducted a content analysis of nearly 1,700 commercials on American TV during 1992-1994. They found that despite commonsense notions that market segmentation and narrowcasting have made TV more inclusive, racist and sexist stereotypes persisted: Whites were shown more frequently than African Americans, Asians, and Latino/as; whites were shown more frequently than people of color in authoritative occupations; women were much more likely than men to be depicted as sex objects; African American men tended to be depicted as aggressive and menacing; and Latinos were virtually nonexistent. Coltrane and Messineo argued that rather than portraying the diversity of American society, the "fantasy" of TV advertising served to essentialize gender and racial differences.

Brown (1999) outlined how racist discourses that construct Africans as having bodies but not minds have had specific consequences for African American men who have been constituted as physical and sexual threats, despite being denied access to patriarchal power under slavery and also locked out of the white power structure. This paradoxical status of being emasculated but also feared, while living in cultures that value them primarily for their physical prowess, has resulted in African American men being channeled into the sport and entertainment industries. Brown noted that as a response to this racist regime, African American men have often adopted hypermasculine practices that unintentionally reinforce the very racist stereotypes that oppress them. Brown used semiotic analysis and opportunistic interviews

with fans to investigate how masculinity was represented in comic books that feature African American male superheroes. This is an interesting question, given that "superhero comics are one of our culture's clearest illustrations of hypermasculinity and male duality premised on the fear of the unmasculine" (Brown, 1999, p.31). Brown disagrees with the common criticism that the comics simply articulate a "chocolate-dip Superman." Although Brown recognized that any superhero comic book will contain elements of hegemonic masculinity, he also argued that the narratives constituted an alternative to African American hypermasculinity, in that they "put the mind back in the body" (Brown, 1999, p. 35) by depicting African American male heroes as valuing intelligence.

Adams (1999) examined the white "soft" masculine body in the American film *Copland* by locating the white male body in a nexus of race, politics, and masculinity. Adams also explored aspects of spatial and racial segregation in the film: the black city versus the white suburbs, with the borders of the white suburbs (and thus the white male body) always being open to infiltration. She argued that the politics of former U.S. president Bill Clinton (friendly, diplomatic, and thus a shift from the "hard body" and brute force of the Reagan era) were reflected in the soft white body of the film's male star, Sylvester Stallone. Although the film did not explicitly valorize the male body, Adams noted that we still see a white man whose masculinity is restored through the search for justice. She concluded that "new" forms of masculinity (as typified by Clinton) are not necessarily progressive, as they do not automatically entail *institutional* shifts. Thus, Adams argued that masculinity is pliable and changes in ways that reinforce the status quo.

MEN'S BODIES

The bulk of the research on men's bodies, especially the body image literature, tends to be theoretically unsophisticated, uncritical, and essentialist, using frameworks such as sex role "theory" and role models or explaining the effects of the media on men's attitudes and behavior in crude ways. The literature on bodies and technology is more sophisticated and

critical, even though it tends to ignore the important feminist work on posthuman bodies and cyborgs (Hables Gray, Figueroa-Sarriera, Mentor, & Haraway, 1996; Haraway, 1997; Kirkup, Janes, & Woodward, 1999; Willis, 1997). We now examine two of the topics in this area: body image and technology.

Body Image

Using a combination of Barthes's concept of myth and postmodern feminism, Pinfold (2000) argued that both the gay and feminist movements have destabilized the traditional function of facial hair as a signifier of masculinity. Wienke (1998) discussed the centrality of muscularity in defining hegemonic masculinity in American popular culture. Wienke used a narrative interpretation and conducted in-depth interviews with 20 young American men in order to investigate how they viewed their bodies in relation to this muscular ideal. Wienke reported that almost all of his participants desired a mesomorphic body type. Within this overall context, the men had organized their bodily practices in three main ways: reliance, reformulation, and rejection. The majority of the respondents had adopted a strategy of reliance, meaning that they identified with and attempted to attain the active, muscular, and powerful bodies associated with hegemonic masculinity. The reformulators also identified with the hegemonic male body but realized they could not achieve it, so developed alternative practices that enabled them to embody authority, strength, and self-control. Some men had rejected the muscular ideal of masculinity, seeing it as driven by unrealistic or outdated expectations.

Leit, Pope, and Gray (2001) analyzed depictions of male models' bodies in *Playgirl* magazine between 1973 and 1997. Using height and weight information in the magazines, the authors found that norms of the ideal male body had placed increasing emphasis on muscularity. Milkin, Wornian, and Chrisler (1999) examined the covers of 21 women's and men's magazines and reported that the former focused on improving physical appearance, whereas the latter emphasized entertainment, expanding knowledge, and hobbies. Demarest and Allen (2000) surveyed 120 male and female college students in order to ascertain which types of bodies were perceived to be the most attractive. Men and women

misjudged which shapes the opposite sex rated as most attractive. African American women had the most accurate perceptions of what men found to be attractive, whereas Caucasian women had particularly distorted views. Men also predicted that women would prefer bulkier shapes than they actually did. The authors argued that these findings had implications for the lower incidence of eating disorders among African American women compared with their Caucasian counterparts. Strong, Singh, and Randall (2000) surveyed an ethnically diverse group of homosexual and heterosexual men and reported that gay males had a lower level of satisfaction with their bodies. They suggested that gay men's childhood socialization practices contributed to dissatisfactions with their bodies in adulthood. Oberg and Tornstam (1999) surveyed more than 2,000 Swedes aged 15 to 95 years about body image and found that some assumptions about aging and bodies that pervade consumer culture were not matched by people's individual experiences of their own bodies.

Technology

Clarsen (2000) analyzed relationships among gender, bodies, and technology in early-20th-century popular narratives of automobiles in Australia and the United States. She argued that although some narratives certainly could be read as articulating sexual difference, for example, by using images of Samson and Tarzan delivering technological benefits to incompetent women drivers, they also contained elements of (middle-class) female technical competence. Clarsen also demonstrated how relations among gender, bodies, and technology intersected with divisions of race and social class.

Poggi (1997) analyzed representations of men's and women's bodies in the sculptures, paintings, novels and poems of early-20th-century, male Italian futurists. Poggi argued that the aesthetics of this avant-garde group displayed a "system of oppositions and substitutions," with men's bodies envisioned in Nietzschean-like ways—as omnipotent, passionless, militaristic cyborgs that conquer nature—and women's bodies positioned by maternal, misogynistic, and erotic motifs. Poggi also drew some parallels with Theweleit's (1987) classic work on the psychological and corporeal boundaries of Fascist German soldiers.

McCormack (1999) applied a blend of cultural geography, Foucault's concept of governmentality, and the insights of post-modern feminists to analyze the representational politics of fitness associated with NordicTrack, an American-manufactured home fitness machine that is targeted at the affluent segment of the market. McCormack showed that among a welter of discourses—biomedical, scientific, and engineering expertise; consumerism; sexual difference; occupational flexibilization; self-discipline; and individuation—the NordicTrack aesthetic constructed a cyborg that was located within a "white, masculinist myth of the Nordic superman." Like Poggi, McCormack alluded to the Nietzschean themes that pervaded the NordicTrack text. A useful aspect of McCormack's conclusion is that the "geography of fitness" connected with NordicTrack both destabilizes *and* rescripts conventional dualisms such as male/female, nature/culture, and human/nonhuman.

UNDERSTUDIED AND NEGLECTED TOPICS

We noticed that many topics had been understudied or neglected. Again, we have only enough space to single out a few topics for special attention.

Cyberbodies in Cyberspace

The exponential spread of new global communication technologies, with features such as "bodyless selves" and "cybersex" (Stratton, 1997, pp. 30-32), has been the focus of some fascinating studies of bodies and the media. Kibby and Costello (1999) found that heterosexual adult video conferencing partially destabilized conventional discourses of sexual display and voyeurism by allowing women to watch erotic images of men engaging in sexual exhibitionism. Nevertheless, some dominant codes still prevailed: Men generally were depicted in active roles, rarely showed their faces and genitals concurrently, and used nicknames that conveyed archetypal phallic size and power. Similar themes emerged in Slater's (1999) ethnography of how "sexpics" were traded on heterosexual Internet Relay Chat (IRC). Despite appearing to be transgressive and

libertarian, exchanges on the sites followed traditional heterosexual and homophobic scripts. Despite the disembodied context of IRC, real bodies still needed to be authenticated by people who used the sites for various purposes:

[The IRC] world looks post-war rather than post-human, with constant talk of fidelity and cheating, true love, and American high school romance language of dating and going steady. . . . One suspects that the IRC sexpics scene is a strange halfway house, a place where anything is possible but little is realized because, although the malleability of the body allows any identity to be performed, no identity can be taken seriously, trusted or even properly inhabited without the ethical weight—persistence in time over time and location in space—that dependable bodies are believed to provide. (Slater, 1999, p. 116)

Further research like this is required because both academic and popular claims about the alleged revolutionary effects of new communication technologies usually neglect how they are usually embedded in established gender tropes.

Subordinated and Marginalized Masculinities

Some scholars have conducted insightful research by analyzing interactions among hegemonic, subordinated, marginalized, and complicit masculinities in several contexts. Turning first to studies of rural masculinities, Bell (2000) argued that films such as *Deliverance* and *Pulp Fiction* construct a binary divide between fashionable “metrosexuality” and unsophisticated rural homosexuality. Homosexual acts by the protagonists in these films fetishize the “rustic sodomite,” presenting rural men as sexually driven and socially primitive. Rural men—“hard hitting, hard riding ranchmen, cattle men, prospectors, lumbermen”—have been represented as being interested in sex without affection or affectation, with such displays associated with “sissy” urban gay men (Bell, 2000, p. 551). In this context, sex between men has been represented as a senseless and perfunctory act.

Brandt and Haugen (2000) tracked changes in the representation of masculinities in the Norwegian forestry press over a 20-year period and observed a shift away from the traditional “macho man” toward the technically and

professionally proficient “organizational” or “management man.” They noted that despite this change, conventional signifiers of “real” masculinity, such as physical competence, strength, and toughness, remained: “the most respected men seemed to be the ones who can display masculinities at both the forestry and managerial sites, men for whom both the power-saw and the time manager are important symbols” (Brandt & Haugen, 2000, p. 352). Liepins (2000) used Foucauldian insights to study rural masculinities in Australia and New Zealand. Like Brandt and Haugen, Liepins found that the “organizational man” had emerged in recent years. The media produced by farming organizations in these two countries valorized elements of strength and struggle against both nature and the organizational and political hierarchies that regulated rural industries: the rugged and active man with muscles and testosterone who could “carry the fight” to make a “better deal for farmers” represented the “true” farmer. Contributions like these are important on two counts: First, they challenge the implicit naturalization of urbanized masculinities as the norm; second, they provide useful examples of the importance of spatial and cultural contexts in understanding gender relations. More research like this is needed in order to understand constructions of rural and urban masculinities, particularly in nations with rich frontier mythologies like Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States.

Regarding masculinities in urban contexts, both Farrell (2003) and Pearce (2000) argued that *The Full Monty* begins by embodying the gendered economy of deindustrializing societies, with the marginal working-class men unable to cope with unemployment and disenfranchisement and the women responding in a resilient manner. However, they also claimed that the film ends by reasserting the status quo: “Masculinity has been shored up once more, to the exclusion of the women, who have been returned to their proper place. . . . Men are once more the powerful sex, their bodies once more the (albeit unlikely) instruments of this power” (Pearce, 2000, p. 235). Farrell (2003) and Goddard (2000) maintained that the alleged “reversal” in the film actually reinforces hegemonic gender relations, and Farrell also showed how issues of social class were omitted from the script. These investigations show

how even subordinated and marginalized masculinities can reinforce hegemonic representations of gender and conceal exploitative class relations among men.

At the other end of the social class spectrum, Kendall (1999) drew on Connell's concepts of hegemonic, subordinated, marginalized, and complicit masculinities to analyze representations of "nerds" in American films, magazines, and newspapers, and on the Internet. She found that depictions of this once "liminal masculine identity" had been partially incorporated into hegemonic masculinity and also served to perpetuate racial stereotypes. A valuable aspect of Kendall's investigation was that she located her texts in the economic processes by which global capitalism has reconstituted the cultural and economic capital associated with information technology work. Chan (2000) also employed the concepts of hegemonic, complicit, subordinated, and marginalized masculinities to explore Chinese American masculinity in Bruce Lee films. Chan argued that Asian American men generally are excluded, stereotyped, and desexualized in the media.

Non-Western Contexts

Chan's work reminds us that most of the research on the media and men's bodies relates to advanced capitalist societies. A notable exception is Derne's (1999) examination of Hindi films and their audiences via a combination of content analysis, participant observation, and interviews. Derne argued that the eroticization of violence against women by male heroes in the films facilitated both the creation of unfriendly social spaces for women—the cinema halls—and a broader culture of harassment and violence. Although Derne expressed reservations about a cause-and-effect relationship between the films and wider patterns of violence, the extreme popularity of the films is compelling (some unmarried men attend the cinema 20-30 times a month). Further studies of this type are needed in other non-Western contexts in order to shed light on the relationships among gender, the media, and bodies.

Local/Global Articulations

Although the above studies have provided valuable insights about men and masculinities at

numerous micro levels, Connell (2000, pp. 8-9, 39) has noted that it is vital to connect local circumstances with global processes. The media are fertile sites for studying local/global links because their images and texts circulate within the global "traffic" of cultural commodities. However, except for sex tourism (Altman, 2001; Clift & Carter, 2000; Kempadoo, 1999; Ryan & Hall, 2001), most of the literature we examined showed little sensitivity to articulations between local and global situations. Consequently, insufficient attention has been paid to the important issue of global ownership and control of the media, at a time when some of the biggest financial transactions in history have occurred via corporate mergers among multinational media conglomerates. Virtually all the moguls who have signed these deals and consequently exert enormous power over the global media industries are privileged, able-bodied, and white middle-aged men. At the level of production, we suggest that researchers should be interrogating the interests of this narrow group of men who own and control the global media industries. It is imperative to emphasize that this is not simply an "economic" question. As du Gay (1997, p. 4) argued, "The economic . . . too is thoroughly saturated with culture . . . [and] . . . 'Economic' practices and processes . . . depend on meaning for their effects and particular 'conditions of existence.'" So rather than seeing "economic processes and practices as 'things in themselves,'" we should be analyzing the "'cultural' dimensions of economic activities—the meanings and values these activities hold for people" (du Gay, 1997, p. 3). We will revisit these links between cultural and economic processes later in our analysis of magazines.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Our selective overview shows that research across a range of disciplines and topics is a strong point of research on both the media and men's bodies. It also is clear that research has been fragmented and that there has been little cross-fertilization among scholars working in different paradigms. Thus, analyses of the specific articulations among masculinities, media, and men's bodies are extremely rare. On the few occasions that dialogues do occur, they either tend to be confined to the theoretical

level or rely on a restricted theoretical and/or methodological perspective. An example of the former is Hanke's (1998) excellent overview of some of the major developments in research on the relationships among bodies, masculinity, and the mass media. An illustration of the latter is the research on film and TV that has analyzed many important topics but has done so mainly through the perspective of psychoanalytic theory and the method of textual analysis (Bell, 2000; MacMurrough-Kavanagh, 1999; McEachern, 1999; Reiser, 2001; Thomas, 1999). It worth noting that we found only three articles that either mentioned both the mass media and men's bodies in the title, abstract, or key words and/or included them in the research design (Adams, 1999; Grindstaff & McCaughey, 1998; Krenske & McKay, 2000). We now suggest a framework that we believe might help scholars to study representations of men's bodies in a more nuanced way.

Methods

As noted, most studies of men and the mass media have relied heavily on content analysis or semiotics. Although these techniques will continue to be indispensable for research in the area, they fail to account for how audiences decode discourses about masculinity. Since publication of the highly influential work of Hall (1980) on encoding-decoding practices and Morley (1980) on audience receptions, it has been axiomatic in the field of media studies that although messages are always relatively "fixed," consumers can interpret them in ways that were unintended during the encoding process. Hence, there has been a plethora of intriguing studies showing how audiences "read" messages differently on the basis of gender, race, and social class (Ruddock, 2001). Thus, Ang (1996, p. 110), one of the most influential exponents of audience ethnographies, has correctly called for research that writes men, and especially gender as a relational phenomenon, back into studies of the mass media. Pertinent to our interest is the research that has demonstrated how women readers of women's magazines and romance novels use these texts in a multiplicity of ways that were unintended by the authors and editors (Hermes, 1995; McCracken, 1993; Radway, 1984; Sheridan, 1995). This "ethnographic turn," however, seems to have bypassed

researchers who have analyzed men and the media. For instance, we found only six journal articles that used audiences in their research design (Derne, 1999; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Hetsroni, 2000; May, 1999; Rutherford, 1999). Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks's (2001) use of focus groups with men who read men's magazines is a welcome step in this direction; their industry-text-audience nexus is also a useful template, although they did not focus specifically on bodies.

Theory

Male bodies are there if we look for them.

—Witz (2000, p. 19)

At an abstract level, we propose that research on representations of men's bodies could be analyzed much more productively through the cultural studies model proposed by du Gay and his colleagues (du Gay, 1997; du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997; Hall, 1997). Du Gay et al. (1997) view culture as a *circuit* of meaning-making that "does not end at a pre-ordained place" (p. 185). According to du Gay, the key recursive and interrelated social practices through which meanings are constructed are

- *Production*: how cultural objects are "encoded" from both technical and cultural viewpoints
- *Representation*: the signs and symbols that selectively construct commonsense meanings about cultural objects
- *Identification*: the emotional investments that consumers have in cultural artifacts
- *Consumption*: the diverse ways in which people actually use cultural objects
- *Regulation*: the cultural, economic, and social technologies that determine how cultural objects are both created and transformed

Although these elements can be separated into discrete entities for analytical purposes, "in the real world they continually overlap and intertwine in complex and contingent ways" (du Gay et al., 1997, p. 4). So, even though it is often useful to isolate a single component, the others all inform one another—often in contradictory ways. We will return to this abstract framework with a concrete example of "men's magazines" below.

In approaching bodies through this model, we need to “look” for male bodies—to make them *visible*. Therefore, studies of men’s bodies have much to learn from the “corporeal turn” in women’s studies. The task here, as Witz (2000) noted, is to write men *in* without writing women *out*. Drawing on the work of Shilling (1993), Witz suggested that by asking “Whose body?,” researchers can focus on how men’s and women’s bodies are differently stigmatized, celebrated, and ignored. We suggest that Fiske’s (1987) idea of *inscription/exscription* and Barthes’s (1973) concept of *exnomination* are particularly useful in this regard, at least at the textual level of analysis. Both of these terms refer to how the power of hegemonic groups is mythologized and naturalized, on one hand, and the wants and needs of subaltern groups are marginalized and pathologized, on the other. For example, in a case study of Australian sport, McKay and Middlemiss (1995) used a relational perspective to show how a constellation of media metaphors, metonyms, and images simultaneously exnominated and valorized men’s bodies according to scripts associated with hegemonic masculinity, while inscribing women’s bodies in terms of the passive, supportive, and sexually objectified tropes of emphasized femininity. In a similar way, Rowe, McKay, and Miller (2000) highlighted how the media glorified men’s bodies and pathologized those of women in “body panics” surrounding HIV/AIDS in sport.

AN APPLICATION: MEN’S BODIES/“MEN’S MAGAZINES”

In order to illustrate how this “circuit of culture” paradigm can be applied to a concrete context, we now analyze how the bodies of the “new man” and the “new lad” have been constructed in popular “men’s magazines.” Magazines serve as both reflectors and shapers of social relations, and they “demonstrate the potential for significant change in gender relations and identities, while simultaneously reinscribing traditional forms of masculinity” (Jackson et al., 2001, p. 157). Because these publications are driven by the advertising imperatives of keeping up with both shifting marketing trends and social tastes, a comparison between “new man” and “new lad” magazines illustrates the complex

and contradictory ways in which the media both stabilize and disrupt representations of men’s bodies. The five elements of the “circuit of culture” come into play here as we touch upon the interrelated vectors of production, consumption, regulation, representation, and identity.

MEN’S BODIES IN POSTMODERN CULTURE

Traditionally, the imperative of “compulsory heterosexuality” has compelled media personnel to differentiate men from women by showing the former with bodies that are authoritative and powerful in the public sphere, and portraying the latter with bodies that denote nurturance, domesticity, passivity, narcissism, and sexual pleasure for male onlookers. Any hint that this binary code has been breached still invokes homophobic or misogynist moral panics in the media (Miller, McKay, & Martin, 1999). However, in postmodern contexts human bodies have become an increasingly visible locus of the highly personal needs and desires that have accompanied the institutionalization of consumer capitalism. For instance, Featherstone (1982, p. 27) posited that traditionally ascribed body characteristics have become more malleable and “a new relationship between body and self has developed”: the “performing self” has emerged, “which places greater emphasis on ‘appearance, display and the management of impressions.’” Featherstone (1982, p. 18) asserted that our inner and outer bodies are, in fact, “conjoined” in consumer culture, with the aim of inner body maintenance being the improvement of outer body appearance and the cultivation of “a more marketable self.” Thus, bodies now have an important exchange value: high if they signify ideals associated with youth, health, fitness, and beauty; low if they denote lack of control or laziness (Featherstone, 1982, pp. 23-24). Featherstone (1982) suggested that the body has been redefined as “a vehicle of pleasure and self-expression” (p. 18) and is “the passport to all that is good in life” (p. 26). Moreover, men increasingly have been regulated by this emphasis on corporeal presentation and monitoring (Nixon, 1996, 2000). However, as Wernick (1991, p. 66) warned over a decade ago, the interpellation of man-as-narcissist by the mass media merely signals that the archetypal “possessive individual,” who was at the

center of early capitalism and liberal contract theory, has metamorphosed into the “promotional individual”:

The equalization of gender status which is beginning to occur in the sphere of consumption is not in the least the equality we might dream of: the equality of free and self-determining beings in a free and self-determining association with another. It is the equality, rather, of self-absorbed, and emotionally anxious, personalities for sale. With the makeup mirror dangled invitingly before them, men, like women, are being encouraged to focus their energies not on realizing themselves as self-activating subjects, but on realizing themselves as circulating tokens of exchange. (Wernick, 1991, p. 66)

Constructing the “New Man”

In this postmodern scenario, the mass media are faced with the problem of how to sell “soft” products and lifestyles to men without simultaneously threatening the traditional bases of hegemonic masculinity. One archetype the media created in order to solve this conundrum was the “new man,” which was framed in terms of classic postmodern motifs (e.g., sensitivity, self-care), as well as by essentialist messages about needing to “get in touch with his inner self.” Thus, during the 1990s, films, TV, and magazines were replete with images of men cuddling their babies, playing with their children, grooming themselves, exercising their bodies, and embracing other (heterosexual) men during “weekend warrior” retreats. Mort (1996) noted that the British (and we would argue the Australian) conceptions of the “new man” were different from the American one, as the latter market responded to the women’s movement, whereas the former did not. This was due to the British publishers’ perception that the women’s movement was not interested in the operations of the marketplace and “in contrast [to the United States], the project for masculinity championed in [magazines] was overwhelmingly commercial” (Mort, 1996, p. 44). The emergence of the “new man” coincided with a shift toward lifestyle advertising with its attendant techniques of market research (Chapman, 1988, p. 229). Thus, men were increasingly being sold images (of fashion, health, fatherhood) by which they were “stimulated to look at themselves—and other men—as objects of consumer desire” (Mort, 1988, p. 194).

Lifestyle magazines targeted at men have functions similar to those of long-established women’s magazines, in that masculinity is framed as a problem (sometimes even depicted as being “in crisis”) that requires self-regulation and improvement. Thus, these magazines include instructions on how to exercise, groom, buy clothes, and perform sex. One outcome of heterosexual men increasingly coming under the gaze was a qualitative change in how their bodies were framed, often represented passively, a pose that is very different from traditional representations of the “active man.” The shift to grooming and health also disrupted the image of the conventional “breadwinner” image. An important precursor to this discourse was *Playboy*, which advocated a hedonistic lifestyle that was free from marriage and children, and also made the personal consumption of mass-produced commodities legitimate for men (Conekin, 2001; Osgerby, 2001). However, as McMahon (1999, p. 110) pointed out, amid this ostensible feminization of masculinity in consumer culture, the media still have to find ways of maintaining sexual difference. In advertising, this frequently is achieved by encoding commodities such as fragrances with terms such as “strong,” “powerful,” or “bold” and in “masculine” colors like gray or blue. Another way sexual convergence is nullified is through the marketing of technological products such as computers and DVDs that rarely appear in comparable women’s magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*.

Some critics dismissed the “new man” as an insincere “yuppie” who simply knew how to appear to be sensitive (Jackson et al., 2001, p. 35). McMahon (1999) argued that the “new man” was an artifact of the media, and despite all the focus on “sensitive” masculinity, men’s self-interests were still being served via the sexual division of domestic labor. As Moore (1989) wryly put it, “Did anyone seriously think that a few skincare products were going to cause the collapse of patriarchy?” (p. 47). Moreover, representations of this “new masculinity” were overwhelmingly restricted to affluent, white, able-bodied heterosexual men and underpinned by essentialist discourses about gender identities and relations (McKay & Ogilvie, 1999). Thus, this allegedly “new man” constituted no real threat to the traditional gender order:

[I]mages of the "New Man" in the media and advertising suggest men can be caring and sensitive without "losing" their masculinity. But far from reversing institutionalized male domination in marriage and the household, these "new" ideas can be seen as facilitating the conditions within which individual men can come to acquire a few more masculine "brownie points" in the struggle to differentiate themselves from other men, and from women. Rather than overturning the unequal power relations between the sexes in relation to domestic work or childcare, the New Man image arguably opens up legitimate space for the colonization and appropriation of those aspects of childcare, which are the most rewarding and which offer immediate creative statement, couched in the language of enhancing men's masculinity and social prowess. (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993, p. 669)

Jackson et al. (2001, p.12) pointed out, however, that a rather judgmental tone is apparent in the research and critiques of the new forms of masculinity, much of which views the "new man" as purely marketing hype or blatant pretence. They concur with Mort (1988, pp.218-219) that there are some positive outcomes of these representations, especially the differing profiles of masculinity, with various outcomes reflecting and constituting new identities. Young men are now carving out new spaces, representing themselves in different ways and living out fractured identities. In any event, just as the "new man" had become the flavor of the month, editors and journalists turned their attention to the "new lad."

MEN BEHAVING BADLY: CONSTRUCTING THE "NEW LAD"

When fears over male narcissism and incorporation of the feminine had receded, the media began to reinscribe conventional modes of masculinity (McMahon, 1999, p.119). This move was enhanced by the criticism that the "new man" was dishonest and hypocritical. Thus, by the mid-1990s, the Australian and British media had switched their attention to the "new lad," who unapologetically symbolized the traits associated with hegemonic masculinity: drinking with his mates, taking risks, telling dirty jokes, and, most of all, looking at skimpily dressed women. Nixon (1996) argued that "new

lad" magazines marked a return to established masculine heterosexual scripts (of the "hard" sexist "traditional man") that were located in soft pornography magazines during the 1970s. This was because no new masculine repertoires were articulated in representations in the "new man" magazines, so there was the opportunity for traditional tropes to reemerge. Magazines like *Loaded* (U.K.), *Ralph* (Australia), and *FHM* (For Him Magazine, Australia), which targeted young, heterosexual men, epitomized this "new laddism." This genre of masculinity was based on biological assumptions (nurturing is for women/risk-taking is for men) and also enunciated what it meant to be an "authentic" male (Jackson et al., 2001, p. 85), which was not to be intimidated by other men or, especially, by women.

The "men's magazine" market, especially in Australia, has always been highly contested, as manifested in the demise of publications like *Max* and *GQ*. The two most successful "men's magazines" in the Australian market are *FHM* and *Ralph*. (Two homologous sport-related publications, *Inside Sport* and *Tracks*, are also popular; see Jefferson Lenskyj, 1998, and Henderson, 1999.) The "new lad" magazines are more akin to a male version of *Cosmopolitan* than a soft-core pornography magazine such as *Playboy* (Mikosza, 2003, p. 135). In fact, the Australian version of *Playboy* has folded due to falling circulation and advertisers shifting to the "new lad" magazines (Dale, 2000). The traditional meaning of soft-core pornography magazines for men has been reinscribed by the meanings and images associated with the "new lad" in these magazines, which are highly desirable to advertisers, with their mixture of sex, sport, alcohol, the public world, and "carefully managed" fashion for a heterosexual male readership (Bonner, 2002, p. 194). If meanings are "always made in usage" (du Gay et al., 1997, p. 85), then these magazines have come to signify hedonism, risk-taking, consumerism, and voyeurism, as well as what it is to be a young man in Australian culture.

In terms of form and content, the glossy "new lad" magazines usually are classified as either "men's interests" or "general lifestyle," even though they almost always have a woman in a bikini on the cover and *FHM* contains elements that are commonly found in soft porn publications. They are, however, also given a

"G" (general) rating and are policed through the appropriate national censor. They are also regulated in the community: Some issues of *FHM* have been banned from sale in local supermarket chains for being too sexually explicit. However, cultural regulation of the magazines also exists at the level of production and consumption, with the editors self-censoring/regulating in different ways. An example is the exclusion of sexually explicit information on the cover that women's magazines often incorporate. To a lesser degree, readers also write letters to the editors about their likes and dislikes of the magazines, which occasionally affect subsequent content.

The content of these magazines ranges through health, grooming, exercise, alcohol, "boys' toys," advertisements for myriad commodities, and, most prominent, images of women, who are there to be looked at even if the copy also subjects men to the gaze. The magazines sell products similar to those in "new men" magazines while adroitly distancing themselves from the feminine and preempting criticism by invoking an ironic, self-deprecating, and tongue-in-cheek style of humor. Hence, Schirato and Yell (1999) noted that the editors and journalists of these magazines appeal to media-savvy readers' "knowing sexism"—an awareness of feminism and gay rights that is fused with an enjoyment of conventional representations of women in revealing swimsuits. (*Loaded* carries the sardonic subtitle "For guys who should know better.") Schirato and Yell claimed that women are active in the magazines and not simply there to display their passive bodies for men to look at. For example, *Ralph* magazine has a two- or three-page photo and text spread titled "Babes behaving badly," in which three or more women discuss their likes and dislikes regarding men and sex; thus, these women are "in on the joke" about men. Using Butler's concept of gender performance, Schirato and Yell analyzed a story from *Ralph* magazine and concluded that the enactment of "stereotypical" masculinity in the magazines was a "self-conscious" act that recognized that sexist masculinity was obsolete. We argue, however, that the representations continue to be defined quite rigidly by conventional gender dualisms, with women mainly contained in passive settings. So, when women are depicted as "agents," as in the story above, they are invariably young, single, and positioned as providers

of tips to men on how to pick up women. The bodies of the women are also posed in similar ways to the bikini shots in other parts of the magazine. These representations are in line with the magazines' general narratives, which are informed by an appeal to voracious male heterosexuality.

Men's bodies are present in various guises in "new lad" magazines, usually in a muscular form. Whereas the eponymous *Men's Health* focuses on improving men's well-being (Toerien & Durrheim, 2001), *FHM* and *Ralph* concentrate on risk-taking behavior. Although these magazines do construct men in "feminized" ways (e.g., via male models or images of men exercising or grooming their bodies), predictable masculine discourses also are present. For instance, men's bodies are almost always depicted as active, and even when posed in fashion shoots, are in some way involved in a bonding activity with other men (e.g., playing sports or doing business), or positioned with women in ways that assure the (assumed male heterosexual) readers of their heterosexuality.

Men's bodies are also constructed in "new lad" magazines as instruments that need to be managed through contradictory regimes of exercise, sex, and sometimes-dangerous practices (e.g., drinking, driving fast cars). Jackson et al. (2001, p. 94) argued that the function of health advice sections in these magazines is to prevent anxiety and insecurity surrounding the declining and aging male body. Thus, magazines such as *FHM* also have sections on bodily care, health, and grooming. So, in a similar way to the contradictory nature of women's magazines (with stories on being happy about your body shape positioned next to a feature on a new diet), the magazine constructs a paradoxical framework of men's interests. In summary, the media, and especially "men's magazines," position themselves for various audiences; as Gauntlett (2002, p. 255) notes, the media

are far more interested in generating "surprise" than in maintaining coherence and consistency. Contradictions are an inevitable by-product of the drive for multiple points of excitement, so they rarely bother today's media makers, or indeed their audiences.

We are not suggesting that this circuit-of-culture model can or should be applied

mechanistically to every research site. We argue, however, that it is a useful theoretical and methodological "toolbox" for conducting research on the links between men's bodies and the media. First, it alerts us to the fact that the media both reinforce *and* destabilize everyday understandings of men's bodies in multifarious and paradoxical ways. Thus, the media can create contradictory images about "lads" while simultaneously breathing new life into the "new man." The most recent rearticulation of the latter archetype is the "metrosexual," epitomized by soccer player David Beckham, whose status as a globally recognized sports star traditionally has been associated with "the frontline troops of patriarchy" (Connell, 1995, p. 79) rather than the "new man" (Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Simpson, 2002; Whannel, 2001). Second, it sensitizes us to the close connections among gender and the *cultural economy* of the global entertainment, advertising, and marketing industries. For instance, *FHM* can now be purchased in 16 countries, meaning that it is important to investigate how local practices articulate with the generic formula (e.g., in some countries, women's nipples are not allowed to be shown through swimsuits, so are airbrushed out). Third, it underscores the need for *relational* research on gender. For instance, the magazines we analyzed ostensibly are *about* and *for* men, but women also are involved as executives, producers, photographers, journalists, and consumers, and little is known about their roles in this gender regime. Moreover, there are several admirable analyses of men's *or* women's magazines, but no one has conducted a comparative study of men's *and* women's magazines. Finally, it allows researchers to study the various "moments" of the circuit of meaning-making, as well as illuminating how production, consumption, regulation, representation, and identity are mutually constitutive of one another.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Whatever happened to Gary Cooper, the strong, silent type? That was an American. He wasn't in touch with his feelings. He just did what he had to do. See, what they didn't know is that once they got Gary Cooper in touch with his

feelings, they couldn't get him to shut up. It's dysfunction this, dysfunction that.

—Mafia boss Tony Soprano to his female psychiatrist in the first episode of the critically acclaimed *The Sopranos*

Heterosexuality and homophobia are the bedrock of hegemonic masculinity.

—Donaldson (1993, p. 645)

The politics surrounding representations of men's bodies is of particular importance to gender studies scholars and activists because the media are deeply implicated in literally embodying hegemonic forms of masculinity, albeit in selective, uneven, and contradictory ways. At the beginning of a new millennium, the intricate nexus of desires, pleasures, and power surrounding men's bodies in the mass media is undoubtedly much more intricate than, say, in the 1950s, when, as Pomerance (2001, p. 7) put it, Hollywood films did "describe and reflect the social world" in a relatively seamless fashion. As the spectacle of a corpulent mob boss in therapy on a popular TV program indicates, the sheer plurality of representations of men's bodies that circulate in the contemporary mass media means that hegemonic masculinity is less culturally secure than hitherto. Nevertheless, it is important not to overemphasize or romanticize the subversive potential of alternative representations, on one hand, and to underestimate the resilience of hegemonic modes of masculinity, on the other. As Hall (1985) emphasized, social texts, identities, and practices are always relatively anchored. In the case of gender, we argue that although hegemonic masculinity is not as rigid as it once was, given the fragmented and contradictory representations of masculinities in the contemporary media, it remains powerful (both materially and symbolically) through the interdependent and mutually reinforcing structures of heterosexism and homophobia alluded to above by Donaldson. Tony Soprano might be a caring family man who is in therapy, but reminiscent of how the hypermasculine Arnold Schwarzenegger was reconstituted in *Terminator 2*, he also is "softened and sensitized into a man who can both kill *and* care" (Pfeil, 1995, p. 53).

Thus, at one level, we would agree with both Bordo (1998) and Pearce (2000) that *The Full Monty* destabilizes the stereotypical

mise-en-scène whereby women take off their clothes for the pleasure of heterosexual male viewers, as well as posing an alternative to the violent, spectacular, and mesomorphic bodies of Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Lee, and Wesley Snipes that traditionally have been valorized in the cinema. After all, who can forget the film's denouement, where Gaz and his troupe of embattled working class men with mainly unimposing bodies throw their hats into the audience, thereby appearing fully naked? Yet, in keeping with the strong taboo on exposing the penis that was also evident in the scene with Guy we alluded to earlier, it is instructive to note that we see their naked bodies only from *behind*. As film historian Peter Lehman commented on the film, "It is still a moment of shockingly great significance when they show the penis. They can't just show it in a casual manner, and that is still quite different from the manner in which the female body is commonly shown" (quoted in Lehigh, 2000, p. 13S). In summary, the time when we see a front-on pan of a row of "full Monties" in the popular media is still some way off.

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