

Film, Fashion & Consumption
Volume 11 Number 2

© 2022 Intellect Ltd Editorial. English language. https://doi.org/10.1386/ffc_00042_2

EDITORIAL

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ABSTRACT

Welcome to this 'Masculinities on Film' Special Issue. This volume examines how costume is used to construct masculinity across the world. Despite the differing national contexts, the researchers this volume demonstrate how the dressed male body can come to represent both the state and the social expectations within it.

KEYWORDS

film
fashion
costume
masculinity
citizenship
national identity

The inspiration for this issue found its genesis in three television dramas that looked at the real and imagined lives of the British royal family and their fictional counterparts. We were especially intrigued by the way costume was used to denote royal men, both when behaving appropriately and when they became deviant. The use of clothing to both denote status and establish their power has a long history. The oft-quoted Shakespearian character Polonius advised his son Laertes that 'apparel oft proclaims the man', underscoring Lydia Edwards's argument that

[l]ong before the birth of the three piece suit, notions of masculinity were deeply rooted in clothing [...] fashion is one of the most important indicators of how men constructed their own sense of what is meant to be a man.

(Edwards 2020: 8)

Examination of the way masculinity is costumed on-screen provides an avenue to examine how masculinities are constructed across the world. Following Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas's argument that 'the male icon has become

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a compelling way of understanding the way in which men assert, frame, and understand themselves and contemporary society' (2017: 2), this Special Issue of *Film, Fashion and Popular Culture* aims to interrogate the multitude of ways costume is used to denote and construct masculinity on-screen. It contains articles from different cultural contexts including Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, China and Turkey. It considers the ways masculinity has been constructed on-screen through costuming weather in historical or contemporary contexts.

As with all examinations of a topic, additional emergent themes make themselves visible. One such emergent theme in this collection is the concept of masculinity and its centrality to national identities, from the stoic royal men of the United Kingdom, to the selfless and loyal soldiers of China and modernizing *Stiliagi* ('hipsters') of Soviet Russia. The role of the state in the construction of masculinity is underscored by the articles in this volume.

The figure of the military man, perhaps unsurprisingly, remains central to social constructs of masculinity. Uniforms are a specialized form of clothing that come with detailed rules on their wearing and grooming and '[i]n the case of uniforms for men, there is a close fit between the attributes of normative masculinity as inscribed in uniform conduct and normative masculine roles and attributes' (Craik 2005: 12–13). The development of the modern military uniform is bound up in the development of the modern democratic state and the concept of citizenship, whereby citizens can exercise their loyalty to the state through military service. When worn properly uniforms communicate loyalty and embody masculine ideals. Conversely, the improper use of a uniform highlights the degeneracy and deviance of the wearer, subverting the image of the emotionally controlled soldier who occupies it. In this volume, Gao's paper demonstrates how the uniform is central to depictions of exemplary Chinese men and the degeneracy of their enemies. Hackett and Coghlan's paper touches upon how royalty in uniform serves as an image of the ideal serving man, whilst simultaneously denoting a royal personage's commitment to their role of leader in the state. The uniform can also hyper-masculinize the wearer, making the ordinary man extraordinary, and within film texts, the hero-soldier is often extraordinary.

The power of the uniform to shape masculinity in the image of the state also belies its weakness. Uniforms, Jennifer Craik reminds us, can be subverted by incorrectly wearing a uniform or misappropriating elements of the uniform and transforming their meanings. As Gao's paper notes, enemy soldiers on film can be shown in a state of dishevelment, their unkempt uniforms indicating their deviance within the nationalistic fictional world. Social transgressions often operate against the state, and here too, uniform can denote one's membership to a group that exists in defiance of national norms, whether that defiance is in the realms of criminality, subcultural rebellion or a rejection of heteronormativity. Articles in this volume examine alternate uniforms of the Italian Mafia (Bauman), the gender-fluidity within the Turkish *Nonosh* (Ulusoy and Gürgen), the world of HBO's *Euphoria* (Betts) and the *Stiliagi* ('hipsters') of Soviet Russia (Myzelev).

Our gender often dictates how we dress: 'many of us dress according to our gender; this may seem obvious. But this is also an example of how we are not free to dress however we want' (Yodanis 2019: 19). Until at least relatively recently, hegemonic norms of 'appropriate gender behavior and appearance still remain[ed] very different for each gender' (Crane 2000: 17). Recent social developments around our understandings of gender have led to changes in

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how we understand dress for gender. Jay McCauley Bowstead, in his essay on contemporary British menswear, takes up this point, arguing that

[w]hile dress has long formed an important site for the contestation of gender, the acceptance that masculinities can be plural and diverse and that there is more than one way of dressing as, or of being, a man is relatively new to mainstream media discourse.

(Bowstead 2021: 145)

These developments are reflected in this volume, with the articles revealing that multiplicities of masculinity occur across the world as revealed by screen depictions. For many of the characters discussed in this volume, costuming is a means through which gender identities are formed or challenged.

While this volume reveals that gender norms have been challenged through costume, nostalgia for particular iterations of masculinity remains popular on-screen. Heroes of every type are revealed through their clothing.

THE PAPERS

Xiang Gao's "Be a real man for our motherland": Masculinity and national security in Chinese Korean war films'

Gao's article explores the construct of the masculine in two Chinese Korean war films. Noting the influence of the state in the construction of masculinities in Chinese cinema. Here concerns over the rise of 'sissiness' in Chinese men is tied to the notions of American influence in domestic culture. In response, a reaffirmation of qualities seen to be central to the Chinese notion of masculinity is demonstrated through an analysis of the films *上甘岭* (*Shangganling*) (*The Battle of Triangle Hill*, 1956) and *长津湖* (*Changjinhu*) (*The Battle at Lake Changjin*, 2021). The militarization of appearance is linked to the maturation of masculinity of characters as they succeed in becoming ideal citizens, loyal and selfless, in defence of the motherland.

Lisa J. Hackett and Jo Coghlan's 'The mad kings of The Royals: Fashioning transgressions in royal popular culture television'

Hackett and Coghlan examine how masculine transgressions and madness are informed by costuming. The authors posit that costuming can inform audience reading and provide a narrative depth to fictionalized accounts of British royal men. In a critical analysis of the four male King/Prince characters of the US/UK television series *The Royals* (2015–18), the interest is in how costuming can reveal and make meaningful attitude, aspirations and actions of heroes and anti-heroes in ways which bring a depth to the narrative and plot. It draws on the view 'that everything an actor wears is a costume that will communicate information to the audience' (Anderson and Anderson 1984: 30).

Rebecca Bauman's "Now you are one of us": Mafia fashion on-screen'

Occupying an almost mythical status on-screen, the stylish figure of the mafia man has served as sartorial inspiration for viewers. Bauman examines how Italian and Italian American mafia films have linked particular styles with both criminality and masculinity. The mafia embody both the deviant image of the criminal and concept of loyalty, central to constructions of masculinity.

Alla Myzelev's 'Let the music play: "Hipsters" and heteronormative fashion'

Myzelev examines the cultural phenomenon of the Russian 1950s *Stiliagi* ('Hipsters') as portrayed in musical film *Stiliagi*. As the first Russian sub-culture, the *Stiliagi* used clothing and music to escape from the realities of Soviet Russia. Their alternate version of masculinity paved the way for future iterations of masculinity, however, as Myzelev reveals, it remains firmly heteronormative despite the homosocial undertones attributed to the *Stiliagi*.

Liza Betts's 'HBO's Euphoria and the complexities at play in the costumed representations of contemporary masculinities'

The fluidity of masculine sexuality and how that is communicated through costume are interrogated by Betts through an examination of *Euphoria*. How clothing reinforces masculine stereotypes is revealed through the restrictive costuming of the hyper-masculine character Nate which lies in contrast to the more alternate costuming of the transgressive, drug-dealing character Fez. These tropes, Betts argues, are reductive of not only masculine, but also by association, feminine identities and more is needed in order to provide diverse representations of masculinity.

Nilay Ulusoy and Deniz Gürgen Atalay's 'From nonosh to pasha: The belated debut of queer men in contemporary Turkish popular culture'

Ulusoy and Gürgen Atalay interrogate how costuming reveals the sexual ambiguity of the character Selim Songür in *The Club* (2021–22) and how this pays homage to the revered Turkish performer Zeki Müren. Müren's homosexuality was never explicitly discussed, however, his costuming communicated much about his queerness. Yet in other ways, Müren exemplified Turkish masculinity, which Ulusoy and Gürgen Atalay argue provide a framework for an acceptable form of queer identity in modern Turkey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The editors would like to extend their thanks to the contributors and peer reviewers of this issue.

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