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# TRANSNATIONAL MASCULINITIES (2016/17)

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Institute for Advanced Studies University of Bristol
BIRTHA
mmics Men & Masculinities in Culture & Society Research Network

# *Transnational Masculinities* (2016/17)

*Transnational Masculinities* is a series of workshops, lectures, and public talks that took place in 2016/17. These events were organized by Dr Connor Doak and Dr Bradley Stephens, co-founders of the MMICS (Men and Masculinities in Culture and Society) Research Network. The series was generously sponsored by the University of Bristol's IAS (Institute for Advanced Studies) and, in the case of the 'Beyond Putin' event, by BIRTHA (Bristol Institute for Research the Humanities and Arts). After an introduction by Dr Doak on MMICS, its aims and intentions, in conjunction with our issue on 'Embodied Masculinities', *HARTS & Minds* has the pleasure to present reports by postgraduates and early career researchers who attended the following events:

- *Performing Masculinity* workshop (23rd January)
- *Why Masculinity Matters* talk in collaboration with *Consented* magazine (2nd February)
- *Inclusive Masculinity* Keynote Lecture by Professor Eric Anderson (30th March)
- *Institutions of Masculinity* workshop (9th May)
- *Beyond Putin: Masculinity in Russia & Eastern Europe* workshop (19th June)
- *Masculinity and Power* workshop (30th June)

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## Introduction

In 2015, Professor Raewyn Connell, often regarded as the founder of critical masculinity studies, addressed a packed seminar room at the University of Bristol. She called for researchers to move beyond the typological approaches that have dominated the field in recent years (what does masculinity look like in a particular place or time period), instead urging us to focus on the peculiar durability of masculinity, its ability to reproduce itself historically and to travel across geographical borders. How do we explain men's continued economic and social dominance, even as women benefit from increased opportunities? How does masculinity reinvent itself to preserve its power? What drives the nostalgia for mythologized, supposedly traditional forms of masculinity? How does the changing world economic order—the rise of many developing countries—reshape global masculinities?

Inspired by the success of Connell's visit, Dr Bradley Stephens and I decided to set up a research network that would begin to investigate some of these questions. Both Bradley and I come from Bristol's School of Modern Languages—he is a senior lecturer in French and I am a lecturer in Russian—and we felt our linguistic and cultural training made us suited to understand how masculinity gets 'translated' across cultures and borders. Of course, we also recognized that any single academic discipline would not be sufficient to understand the transnational dimension of masculinity. In particular, we understood the need to bring together researchers from the social sciences and from the arts, as the two fields had developed rather different theoretical approaches to masculinity. Therefore, we undertook to build a network that would be interdisciplinary not only in name, but genuinely open to dialogue about the theoretical assumptions and methodologies of critical masculinity studies.

In 2015-6, we secured funding from Bristol's IAS to hold workshops under the title of 'Masculinities in an Age of Global Uncertainty', a title that proved more prophetic than some of us would have liked, as the UK unexpectedly voted to leave the EU and Trump defied the odds to secure the American presidency. As issues of masculinity once again entered the public spotlight, we were awarded a second, more substantial IAS grant to fund a more sustained series of events under the title 'Transnational Masculinities' during the first half of 2017. These events brought together emerging and more seasoned scholars of masculinity from across the UK, tackling rather broad topics within masculinity studies that transcend national borders as well as disciplinary boundaries. It is this series of events that is recorded

here, and we are grateful to all the participants who wrote up the reports from each of these events, as well as to *HARTS & Minds* for providing a forum to publish the proceedings.

As our IAS funding for 'Transnational Masculinities' comes to an end, we recognize the need to sustain our community of scholars for the future. To that end, we have established MMICS, the Men and Masculinities in Culture and Society Research Network, which aims to provide an interdisciplinary hub for researchers in masculinity studies within the UK, and beyond. Our future plans for the network include organizing a major conference, as well as building a programme of events focused on public engagement and impact. Building on our existing partnership with *Consented*, we envisage closer collaboration with others non-academic partners, including activists, social workers, and writers who approach masculinity critically. For those who wish to get involved, please feel free to email me at the address below and follow us on our social media feeds.

Dr Connor Doak
connor.doak@bristol.ac.uk

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***Performing Masculinity***
23rd January 2017. **#performingmasculinity**
Report by Dr Costanza Curro (UCL)

*Performing Masculinity* was the first event of the 'Transnational Masculinities' workshop series of the MMICS Research Network. This workshop (as with the network more widely) aimed to investigate masculinities embedded in different social, cultural and political forms. The focus of enquiry is shifted from masculinity as representation to masculinity as performance in a dynamic interaction with specific historical, cultural and socio-political contingencies.







Normative *versus* subversive performativity of the male body was a core theme of the five talks. Dr Ruth Heholt (Falmouth) highlighted the tension between invisibility and exposure over representations of the male phantom's body in Victorian ghost stories. The invisibility that characterises the Victorian white male body in its universal and apparently unchallengeable normativity is reversed by the immaterial body of the ghost. The latter, while being open to scrutiny in its transparency, at the same time lacks the power of taking up and controlling space as a fundamental feature of normative male performativity. The anxiety surrounding this very possibility of the male body to be material, visible, and therefore performative was also emphasised by Dr Enrico Biasin (Bristol), who explored men's problematic identity as performers in pornography. Professor Andrew Spicer (UWE) then addressed the relationship between iconicity and performance embodied in the figure of Scottish actor Sean Connery. Dr Eleanor Rycroft (Bristol) identified facial hair as a fundamental token of masculinity in early modern theatre, a bodily feature which ultimately preserves a character's manhood in spite of their effeminate behaviour. Theatricalised

performances of masculinity were also the focus of the paper by Nick Havergal (Bristol), who presented part of his doctoral research on the performativity of male bodies in events such as theatre plays, or boxing matches as a source of 'therapeutic' homosocial bonding in post WWI South-West of England. The trend of displaying the body in the constructed public forum provided interesting links between this and Biasin's paper, and in both cases, there was a sense that by creating this ideal there was an implicit (and in Havergal's paper also an explicit) shaming of those whose bodies and masculinity were considered "sub-standard". Yet there was also a sense that performances of shared experience, rather than competitiveness, are posed as core expressions of masculinity in a society which needs to be healed after the horrors of the First World War.










In all of the presentations, the problematic fragility of normative images of masculinity is exposed through moral, cultural and social challenges which prevents masculinity from being truly performative. These challenges underpin the tension between empowered and disempowered masculinities. The male body of the performer is obscured by the centrality of the female body as the 'real' spectacle in mainstream pornography. In such performances, the vulnerable masculine body is deconstructed as a disembodied and replaceable item. The iconicisation of masculinity, while locating the performative body in a timeless condition which is closely associated to myth, opens up the possibility for a reversed iconicity as well, with the crystallisation of negative physical stereotypes in the body. Reversing markers of masculinity inform theatrical performances of the male body as well. Facial hair is at the same time a token of masculinity and a threat of masculinity itself. For example, as Dr Rycroft revealed, in the 1620 pamphlet *Haec Vir* (or 'The Womanish Man'), the protagonist is depicted as effeminate because of his obsessive attention over his appearance, an obsession which is expressed by his little pointy beard.

The discussions throughout the day largely drew upon Judith Butler's work on performance and performativity. The institution of gender takes place through 'internally discontinuous' acts, which nevertheless appear as substance, that is, as 'a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief'. Yet, if gender identities are grounded 'in the stylized repetition of acts through time […] then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating' (Butler 1988). The multidisciplinary contributions to the workshop investigated performative embodiments of subversion and reproduction of ascribed 'masculine styles' and provoked and uncovered interesting connections across some otherwise disparate historical spaces and forms that provided testament to the pervasive influences of constructions of masculinity.

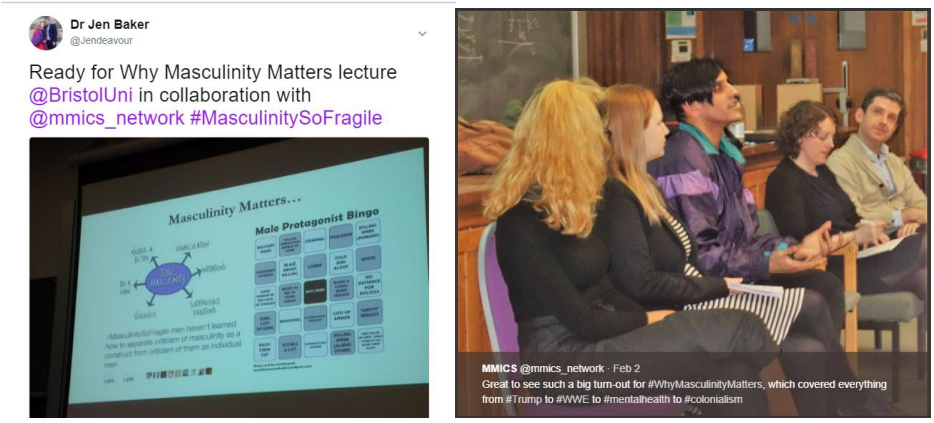
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***Why Masculinity Matters***
Thursday 2nd February 2017. **#MasculinitySoFragile**
Report by Dr Jen Baker (University of Bristol)

*Why Masculinity Matters* was organised by MMICS in collaboration with *Consented* magazine and aimed to bring together a diversity of students, staff, and was chaired by Mike Pope (Co-founder of Consented), but also opened the discussion up to its audience. It posed questions such as why masculinity matters in 2017? How does it affect students and young people? How do leaders – both male and female – perform masculinity and why? How do we make sense of the rising diversity of masculinities in today's world combined with the backlash against them? And what next for men and masculinity?




Amit Singh from @consenteduk was the first to address the sold-out theatre, and commenced with "the wildest of cards": Trump and voting demographics. Singh lamented the toxic pervasiveness of the ideology that got Trump into power and noted how it has inflated the mainstream radicalisation of young white men in the US. He noted how the Media ignore the emphasis on the whiteness of perpetrators of violence within these contexts, thereby normalising archaic misogynistic oppression. He then moved on to the historical foundations of insidious gender ideals, reminding us that colonisation leads to the repression of sexualities in regions previously fluid and open in gender identity. Singh's well-communicated, expressive, and humorous discourse ended with the question as to whether, when attempting to "save" masculinity, we reinforce similarly toxic ideas: e.g. "Real men should cry" is also harmful because it merely enforces another ideological expectation. Natalie Jester, a PhD student in International Relations at Bristol also addressed the notion of "expectations" and approached the idea of masculinity and its importance from a Security Studies perspective, noting how identity (and its gendering) is shaped by threat and response. A threat is seen as masculine or a threat to masculinity, and the response must therefore be hyper-masculine (shouting, firm tone, an erect posture) – no matter who is threatening or responding. Constructions of "Britain" as an ideal are reliant on the rhetoric of neo-colonial masculinity in which opposition is Othered as civilised vs. uncivilised. For example, Islamic terrorists are described as "barbaric" and "medieval" compared to the apparently advanced and sophisticated political make-up of its victims.

Meenakshi Bala, a medical student at Bristol and *Gal-Dem* magazine subeditor, took a more personalised approach, thinking about how, within a context of illness and health, it is difficult to separate patriarchy from the individual men with whom we interact, and noted how both male and female doctors unconsciously impart news and discuss health with male patients according to gendered prescriptions. Similarly, because masculinity constructs a

disconnection from pain and emotion and a discomfort discussing mental health, this leads to an undeniable correlation with suicide rates of men. She also discussed how this extends to everyday life: as women, attempting to promote equality, and protect ourselves, do we find ourselves persecuting the men in our lives for the wider inequalities caused by toxic patriarchy? Leading on from this, Dr Patricia Neville, a lecturer in sociology at Bristol spoke about how the body that we inhabit (our physiological makeup) is linked to a sense of self and identity and that of others, and notes that in the health behaviours of men the choices they make are very often influenced by their beliefs and knowledge systems – and particularly masculinity leads to risk taking in terms of physical activity, and ideas of persistence and risks in aspects such as drug-taking, alcohol consumption.

Dr Bradley Stephens, lecturer in French at Bristol, and co-founder of MMICS, took a slightly different approach by discussing *where* masculinity matters as part of a consistent feature of historical spaces. He gave examples firstly of the C19th French "grands hommes" as icons of politics but moved swiftly to pro-wrestling as the embodiment and performance of masculine ideals. Stephens notes the glamorized hyper-masculinity of WWE and Trump's foray into the fantasy of masculine dominance in 2003. And yet, the "Poster boys" of WWE were often booed by fan-base who rejected the models and desired instead the "indies" instead who break the mould. Similarly, women in WWE were previously clichéd as swimwear models or butch, but fans complained in recent years, and the character development suggests that perhaps masculinity can be part of the solution not just the problem.




In the open Q&A section, one audience member expressed concern that masculinity is not in fact deconstructed enough, but actually just being re-commercialised in more liberal ways, and that education in schools was surely key? The panel responded well, reminding us that this event alone is only a platform for discussion and cannot resolve the ubiquitous nature of these issues, but mentioned the outreach work being done by consented and Bristol University. Another audience member questioned why trans-issues had not been raised in this event – the panel apologised for the lack of space dedicated to the trans-community, but one member suggested that those aspects were deserving of their own talk, whilst another posited in contrast that inclusivity was necessary and hope to address this lack in the future. The talk was, I believe an important event in attempting to bridge such gaps, but highlighted the extent of the battles still to be faced.

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***Inclusive Masculinity*** a keynote lecture by Professor Eric Anderson.
30th March 2017. **#InclusiveMasculinity**
Report by Dr Hannah-Marie Chidwick (University of Bristol)

Professor Eric Anderson, Professor of Sport, Masculinities and Sexualities at the University of Winchester, UK, delivered a confident and absorbing keynote lecture for the Men & Masculinities in Culture and Society network's *Transnational Masculinities* series. With an impressive fourteen books and sixty articles under his belt, Anderson presented his revolutionary "inclusive masculinity" theory from an academic position comfortably bolstered by investigation – and life experience. The motif "Let the research speak for itself" punctuated his lecture throughout, and proved a strong asset for Anderson's significant ideas, already renowned, concerning modern masculine behaviours.

With "inclusive masculinity" theory, Anderson seeks to move away from the "hegemonic masculinity" stratification (also referred to as "toxic" masculinity), made popular in the mid-nineties by Raewyn Connell's groundbreaking work, *Masculinities*. Anderson's research is specifically centred on male participation in sport and university culture, motivated, he told us, by his former profession as a "closeted" high school gym coach in "very conservative" Southern California. When one of his students was brutally assaulted, following Anderson coming-out and his pupils' lamentable "guilt by association", Anderson was so appalled that he exchanged his letter jacket for letters at the end of his name.

Specifically troubling was the media's description of this hate crime as "boys being boys", echoing the tropes of dominance, violence, and "homohysteria", which pulse at the heart of the "hegemonic" masculinity model. During his lecture, Anderson explained how, throughout the twentieth century, homosexuality became an immanent policing mechanism for masculinity , peaking in the 1980s in tandem with the HIV/AIDS scare. To be *masculine*, one not only had to be heterosexual, but also to virulently dissociate oneself from homosexuality.




Now, Anderson asserts, something "beautiful" is happening instead. An illuminating selection of reports, videos, statistics, and anecdotes, corroborated the commonality of the "bromance" in contemporary male culture (indeed, Anderson is poised to publish an article on this subject). Tactile and emotionally vulnerable behaviours, so alien to the Arnold Schwarzenegger types heralded as exemplarily masculine in the 1980s, are especially facilitated by the fraternal environment of the sports team or university campus. "Inclusive" masculinity, therefore, does not mean *bi*sexuality, but sexuality itself becoming increasing irrelevant as a behavioural inhibitor.

Yet, the world of sport itself is problematic in this regard: although many sports fans are ambivalent to the sexuality of their team's players, this might be because those players are

*good at sport*, not because the fans are unprejudiced. While a rugby team's typical night out might feature games of "gay chicken", the players will still chant homophobic slurs, inherited from their predecessors. Anderson's theory prompted thought-provoking critique from his audience, and he encouraged further analysis. In an increasingly diverse society, more research is needed into the masculine praxes and attitudes of different cultural groups, other than the predominantly white and Western youth of Anderson's studies, in order to establish the reach of this new "inclusivity". And what of those young men who do not go to university, but leave school at fifteen – the most "hypermasculine" age, according to Anderson – and continue to perpetuate the ideologies of their more blinkered male relatives?

Nevertheless, as Anderson asserted, the world *is* changing very rapidly. Let us hope that the proliferation of inclusivity continues to purge our society of toxicity.

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***Institutions of Masculinity***

9 May 2017. **#InstitutionsofMasculinity**

Report by Hannah Wright (London School of Economics and Political Science)

Scholarship on masculinities increasingly addresses ways in which institutions and organisations shape, and are in turn shaped by, gendered norms and meanings. The 'Institutions of Masculinity' workshop explored the construction of masculine identity in three diverse institutional settings.

A key theme of the workshop was the ways in which institutions can be a site for the production of masculine identity narratives that are used to explain or justify the institution's activities. This was evident in Dr Paul Higate's (University of Bristol) findings from his ethnographic study exploring masculinities within private military and security companies (PMSCs) operating in contexts such as Afghanistan and Iraq (Higate 2015). Higate examined 'identity work': that is, the material and symbolic practices that constitute, and are constituted by, contractors' self-understandings or identities. He described British contractors' identity narratives as based upon restraint in the use of force ('brains not brawn'), and constructed relationally through deliberately distancing themselves from their 'hypermasculine' US counterparts, whom they portrayed as aggressive and too quick to use their weapons. Higate argued that, in the context of heightened criticism of the use of PMSCs in conflict-affected countries, this identity work on the part of British contractors helped to make their own armed presence appear reasonable, constructing US contractors as the proper targets of criticism. Similarly, Dr Victoria Basham (Cardiff University) interrogated the political work that constructions of masculinity do within UK government programmes to promote a 'military ethos' among white working-class boys as a means of recruiting them into the armed forces (Basham 2016). The classist assumption that physical aggression is a natural part of working class (male) youth culture helps to justify channelling that supposed aggression into military service, ostensibly swapping one form of violence for another, state-sanctioned variety.

Yet the presenters also showed that these institutional assumptions about masculinity, while legitimising the ways in which organisations work, can lead to failures to address the real needs of men and boys. Basham argued that encouraging working class boys to join the military allows the state to avoid addressing deep socioeconomic inequalities – exacerbated by austerity policies – that inhibit their life chances. The boys drop academic subjects at school to join the Army Cadet Force, creating a path dependency that further narrows their career options. On the same theme, Professor David Abbott's (University of Bristol) research on men with the life-limiting condition Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy showed that health and social care institutions' failure to take into account the men's gender identities led to their needs going unaddressed (Abbott, Jepson & Hastie 2016). Disabled people are often portrayed as genderless, and until recently, 'Duchenne boys' were not expected to live to

adulthood, meaning their carers often do not conceive of them as men. Typical cultural markers of masculinity, such as musculature and sexual prowess are harder for men with Duchenne to access, while carers' understandings of them as fragile make it difficult for them to exercise independence and take risks. Social care institutions' conceptions of Duchenne men as childlike means that little consideration is given to, for example, their sexual desires, yet the men cannot achieve sexual satisfaction without the physical help of others.

Ultimately, then, the workshop highlighted that institutions' gendered assumptions may serve important justificatory functions for the institutions themselves, but this can be at the expense of serving the interests of men and boys participating in them.

## References

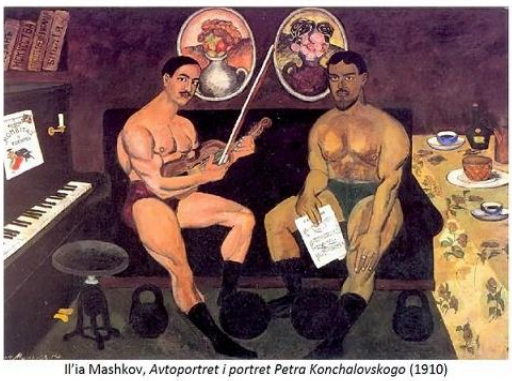
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## *Beyond Putin: Masculinity in Russia, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus*

19th June 2017 **#BeyondPutin**

Report by Gah-Kai Leung (University College London)



Il'ia Mashkov, *Avtoportret i portret Petra Konchalovskogo* (1910)

This workshop, devoted to masculinity in a regional case-study of Russia, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, spoke to the 'Transnational Masculinities' series' interest in how ideas of masculinity circulate across geographical boundaries. The papers showcased a generous selection of methods, themes, approaches and examples, generating some productive points of intersection.

Nick Mayhew (Cambridge) opened the discussion with his presentation, which explored the ways in which the Russian state has constructed its own revisionist version of premodern Russian masculinity in order to legitimate contemporary myths of heteronormativity as an unchanging ahistorical fact. Mayhew illustrated his argument with reference to both historical and contemporary treatments of the marriage between the saints Petr and Fevroniia, who were first canonized in 1547. Commentaries in the eighteenth century stressed the spiritual element of the union and the celibate nature of their marriage, while the twenty-first century understanding has shifted the focus onto heterosexual reproduction.

Professor David Gillespie, recently retired from University of Bath and now the holder of a visiting affiliation at Tomsk State University, Russia, continued the proceedings with his

paper on the novella and film of Vasilii Shukshin's *Snowball Berry Red* (*Kalina krasnaia*, 1973-74) and their relationship to the village prose movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The conventional village prose narrative revolves around older characters who embody traditional values seen to be in conflict with modernity. By contrast, Shukshin distances himself from this movement through the central character in *Snowball Berry Red*, Egor Prokudin, who personifies a kind of 'martyred masculinity.' Prokudin's tragic fate therefore symbolizes the figurative death of the village prose movement in Shukshin's eyes.

Dr Catherine Baker (Hull) explored the idea of Eastern European masculinities through an attempt to reconcile the notion of the 'transnational' on the one hand with the notion of 'masculinity' on the other, positing that popular culture can function as a site where the transnational dynamics of the ideological construction of masculinity are visibly played out, in addition to the more formal areas of 'hard politics'. Baker focused on contemporary reimaginings of the Yugoslav Wars in metal music, in particular the example of Marko Perković Thompson. In so doing, she brought out several interrelated strands of analysis: metal music as a locus of the transnational epic imagination; the circulation of mythologies of masculinity, folklore and war; and resonances with Croatian memory politics in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars.

Lastly, Dr Costanza Curro (UCL) overviewed her research on Georgian post-Soviet masculinities, looking in particular at the ways in which masculinities play out in two everyday Georgian contexts: *supra*, the traditional Georgian feast; *birzha*, a form of young male street socialisation. Curro discussed her experiences interviewing Georgian men aged between 20 and 70 at various points from 2008 to 2017, in order to build up a picture of how male citizens construct, practice and perform their masculinity.




Subsequent discussion and reflection revealed several recurring themes that brought the papers into dialogue with each other, but I will just point out two that particularly captured my attention. First, great emphasis was placed on the ways in which contemporary ideologies of masculinity appropriated versions of history in order to legitimate themselves. Whether it be the Russian state revising historical attitudes to medieval saintly marriages, metal music invoking Croatian memory politics, or Soviet authors subverting the quasi-Romantic village prose ideal, an analysis of present-day masculinities demonstrates a constant anxiety about the past and how the past might shape or contest new forms of masculinity. Second, the papers collectively insisted on the importance of rituals in promulgating certain forms of masculinity over others, be they the rituals of life in rural Soviet Russia or contemporary urban Georgia, the state-sanctioned spectacles of saintly feast days, or even metal music gatherings as a type of popular ritual. If we think more deeply about the relationship between masculinity and ritual, we start to see how rituals might serve as institutions of masculinity, which in turn construct hegemonic ideals of what it means to be masculine.

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***Masculinity and Power***
30th June 2017. **#MasculinityandPower**
Report by Dr Alex Boican (UCL)

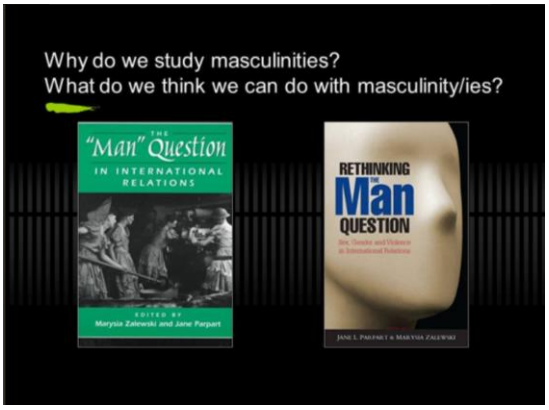
The last research workshop in the series was conducted under the title 'Masculinity and Power'. Power has always been gendered, and, at least in the patriarchal imaginary, masculinity has been the name of embodied power. However, power structures are currently undergoing significant redeployment and this is bound to transform the meaning of masculinity as well as cause anxiety. This situation was reflected in the three guest speakers' presentations.




Dr Sarah Bulmer (Exeter) opened the session with a topic that sits right at the heart of the relation between masculinity and power: the army. Titled 'Beyond militarized masculinity: rethinking military power and masculinity', Dr Bulmer's presentation charted the process that led to the lifting in 2000 of the ban on LGBT persons joining the British army. Dr Bulmer highlighted the army officials' difficulty in drawing stable boundaries between straight and gay embodiments of masculinity, but, equally, the 'resilience' of an anxiety around the status and meaning of masculinity in the army after the lifting of the ban. This shows, she argued, that power "works" even when it "fails".

In the second paper, Dr Rahul Rao (SOAS) shifted the focus to the gendered imaginary of IR. Under the provocative title 'Dysfunction and dysphoria: anxieties of, and about, rising members', Dr Rao's paper suggested that the ways in which rising powers on the international scene, such as India, undergo a process of re-symbolisation might be akin to sex reassignment operations, precisely from orientalised femininity to challenging masculinity. Conversely, he identified gendered anxieties in the established powers, such as the US, which experience immigration and investment from the global South as forms of penetration to which they only ambivalently consent.

Fittingly for the final speaker of the series, Professor Marysia Zalewski (Cardiff) moved from a descriptive to a more theoretical discursive register. Her talk, titled 'What do we think we can do with masculinity?', acted as appraisal of the existing vast amount of work – scholarly, political, judicial and popular – on masculinity (remarking that 'we can do a great deal!'), but also as an inquiry into the limits of our agency over the thing called "masculinity". Referencing her own recent study of sexual violence against men, a subject still lacking proper visibility, Professor Zalewski questioned the current tendency to flatten out gender, a tendency that does not allow for a differentiated understanding of men and women's embodied experience of sexual violence. She highlighted the need for a more gender-inclusive approach to the study of sexual violence.




The presentations were followed by an animated discussion developing the themes forwarded by the speakers, particularly the concerns around issues such as: masculinity and violence, the masculinity embodied by current political leaders such as Trump and Putin, men and the politics of anger, and the current traditionalist backlash. The clear outcome of the workshop was that masculinities, both the object and the field of research, are undergoing momentous change and that they demand a more systematic research approach.

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## Reviewer Biographies

**Dr Costanza Curro** received her PhD in social anthropology from the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL, with a thesis on hospitality practices in the Republic of Georgia. She has also focused on the intersection between masculinity and mobility in the post-socialist urban space, on ritual and alternative economies, as well as on gender, identity and nationalism in the former Soviet Union. She is currently working as coordinator for the UCL-based Global Informality Project

**Dr Jen Baker** is currently Teaching Fellow in C19th Literature at the University of Warwick. She received her doctorate from the University of Bristol in 2017, and is a researcher of gothic literatures and cultures, with particular interests in representations of childhood, and Victoriana, and is also Co Chief Editor of HARTS & Minds. https://hcommons.org/members/drjenbaker/

**Dr Hannah Marie-Chidwick** is a researcher of Roman history and Continental philosophy, who recently earned her PhD in Classics from the University of Bristol. Her research currently focuses on the figure of the soldier in Roman literature. www.bristol.academia.edu/hannahmariechidwick

**Hannah Wright** is a doctoral researcher at the London School of Economics and Political Science's (LSE) Gender Institute, and a Researcher at the LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security. Her current research focuses on the relationship between the gendering of organisational cultures in government departments responsible for foreign policy and different approaches to issues of peace and security.

**Gah-Kai Leung** is finishing an MA in Transnational Studies at University College London. His dissertation research examines the ethical and political dimensions of gender-neutral toilets. Gah-Kai is interested in philosophical approaches to contemporary political issues such as multiculturalism, religion, war, gender and sexuality. He also runs a podcast series (www.provocateurpodcast.com) featuring interviews with emerging scholars and thinkers. http://hcommons.org/members/gkleung

**Dr Alex Boican** has received his doctorate from the University College London in 2016 for the thesis Rearticulating Socialist Subjectivities: Class and Gender in Romanian Fiction During Communism. Currently, he is working on developing a critical theoretical framework for a comparative analysis of the politics of "crisis of masculinity" in contemporary Romanian, French and English novels.