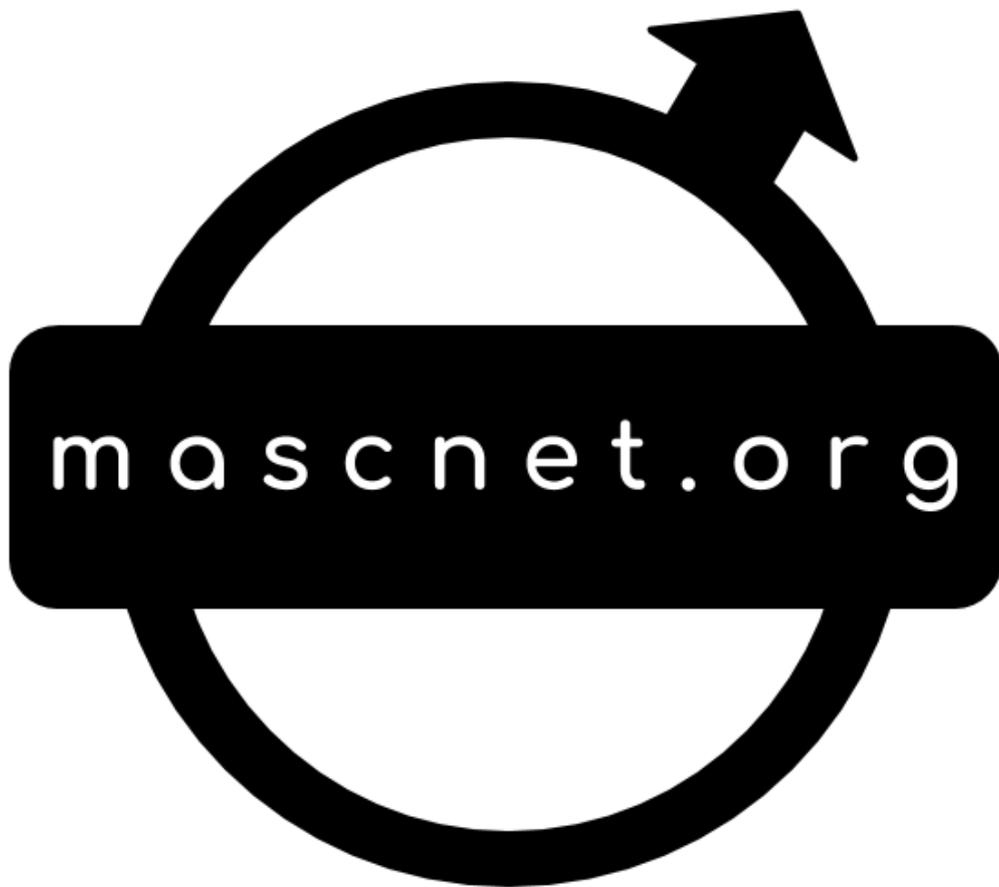


**Masculinity, Sex and Popular Culture  
Research Network**



**Masculinity and National Identity  
Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020  
Village.Berlin**

Welcome to the second symposium organized by the Masculinity, Sex and Popular Culture Research Network, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The Berlin symposium will explore the connections between masculinity and national identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some of the questions that the network plans to address at this event include:

- What are the relations between nationality and sexual ideals?
- How do models and patterns of masculinity operate in their national contexts?
- What are the connections between masculinity, the male body and nationalism?
- In what ways do questions of class, race and ethnicity connect to national masculinities?
- What is the place of non-heterosexual masculinities in relation to ideas of nation?

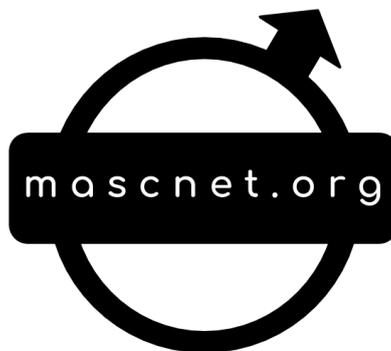
This is part of a series of events that are taking place during 2019 and 2020 across Europe in Birmingham, Berlin and Barcelona to bring researchers across the arts, humanities and social sciences together to explore approaches and debates around sex, sexuality and contemporary masculinity and to share ideas with the public.

You can find more about our events and join the network at <http://mascnet.org>

John Mercer, Clarissa Smith, Charlie Sarson



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council



# Masculinity and National Identity

## Schedule

9.00 Welcome and Introductions

John Mercer (Birmingham City University) *Masculinity, Sex and Popular Culture*

Jose Arroyo (Warwick): Introduction

10.00 – 11.30 **Panel 1: Nation, Bodies and Sex**

**Chair: Peter Rehberg (Schwules Museum)**

- Gustavo E. Subero, (Imperial College London) *(Re)imagining Latino Masculinities in recent US sitcoms*
- Amy Burge, (University of Birmingham) *"I love my Russian heroes": Masculinity and National Identity in Twenty-first Century Popular Romance Fiction*
- Emre Busse, (Freie University, Berlin) *Men of Turkey: Tracing masculinities through gay 'ethnic' pornography*
- Ashley Morgan, (Cardiff School of Art) *The Archetype of hardness: the legacy of oppression in the collective unconscious of Welsh masculinity*

Coffee Break

11.45 – 13.00 **Panel 2: Nationalism and the Alt-Right**

**Chair: Mark McGlashan (Birmingham City University)**

- Alexandre Pichel-Vázquez, (University Oberta de Catalunya) *Demonstrating Emotional Bodies: Between the Spanish National Straightness and the Anti-Colonial Obliqueness*
- Gyorgyi Horvath, (London School of Economics) *"He Took the Red Pill and Learnt a New Lingo". The Spread of Anglo-American Networked Misogyny in Hungarian Online Spaces*
- Jacob Johanssen, (St Mary's University) *Incels and Male Fantasies Today*
- Abbie Bonane, (Goldsmiths College, University of London) *Understanding Homonationalism - Examining the Far Right's Shift From Homophobia to Nationalist Inclusion*

13.00 – 14.00 Networking Lunch

14.00 – 15.00 **Making Images: Artist Presentations**

**Chair: Begonya Enguix (Open University of Catalonia)**

- Kirsten Adkins, (Wolverhampton University) *Napoleon Dynamite by Me (Single Channel Film. 6") [FILM SCREENING]*

- Ron Amato, (Fashion Institute of Technology, NYC) *One Artist's Personal Journey Through Photography*.

15.00 – 16.30 **Panel 3: Politics and Positionality**  
**Chair: Florian Vörös (University of Lille)**

- Ian Sergeant, (Birmingham City University) *Black Masculinities: Hyper (In) Visibility*
- Mikel Aramburu, (University of Barcelona) *The Gender of the Other. Masculinity and national identity in Catalonia*
- Sophie Kratidou & Nefeli-Maria Giannaki, (Panteion University, Greece) *Constructing masculinities in the swirl of the Macedonian Question*
- Lisa Nike-Bühring, (University of Gloucestershire) *Growing Old in a Neoliberal Society: Reflections of Older German Men*

Coffee Break

16.45 – 18.00 **Panel 4: Gay Sex and the City, Jamie Hakim book launch**  
**Chair: João Florêncio (University of Exeter)**

- Jamie Hakim, (University of East Anglia) *Work That Body: Male Bodies in Digital Culture*
- Kristian Møller, (University of Copenhagen) *Sex drugs and changing gay BDSM scenes: a transnational comparison*
- Sebastian Baxter, (Manchester Penetrated) *ChemSex Aesthetics and the Cultural representation Of Chemsex: A Manchester Penetrated investigation into a (sub)cultural practice*
- Maurice Nagington, (University of Manchester) *The paradox of chemsex: bringing people together and breaking the gay community apart*

18.00 – 18.15 Closing comments

## Abstracts

**Gustavo E. Subero**

*Imperial College London*

### ***(Re)imagining Latino Masculinities in recent US sitcoms***

Most research into Latino and Latin American masculinities concurs with the idea that men must behave in ways that offer a rather caricaturised version of their gender identity in order to be recognised as 'masculine'. From Carlos Alberto Montaner's (2001) highly biased and rather negative theorisation of Latin American identity to less nuanced views of male identity in the continent by the likes of Gutmann (1996), Mirandé (1997) and Lancaster (1994), theorists continue to regard Latin(o) 'hombría' as a form of consciousness that defines masculinity as an identity position. Such a position regards women as nurturers and carers (although they continue to be confined to the domestic sphere and are regarded as inferior) while other men are regarded as a threat. Furthermore, masculinity is shaped by corporeal expressions and by a desire to outman other men in order to reassert one's position of masculine superiority. This also has very specific ramifications to the way that men must behave in private and public and how those around him will interpret such behaviours. As my own work (2014, 2016) evidences men (macho men as ultimate guarantors of patriarchal masculinity) will punish not so much the attraction to other males, but any effeminate behaviour other males may present, as well as any deviation from traditional male roles. This paper proposes a reconsideration to such stereotypes whereby recent U.S. sitcoms such as *Jane the Virgin*, *Modern Family* or *Fuller House* reconsider the notion of Latin(o) masculinity in light of a post #metoo era. As such, the Latin(o) male protagonists in such sitcoms (as they all have starring roles) are portrayed in ways that subvert and outright challenge previous misconceptions of Latin(o) maleness. As David T. Abalos argues, 'they [stereotyped Latinos] are struggling with archetypal relationships and dramas, especially patriarchy, possessive love, uncritical loyalty, and the disappointed male' (2002: 155). The paper, then, proposes a shift in the depiction of masculinity by analysing male figures who are more emotionally responsive, equalitarian in gender roles and more flexible in terms of masculinity styles.

**Amy Burge**

*University of Birmingham*

### ***"I love my Russian heroes": Masculinity and National Identity in Twenty-first Century Popular Romance Fiction***

With 1300 authors around the world, and 120 new books published each month in 26 languages and 109 international markets, Harlequin Mills & Boon deserves its reputation as the world's biggest romance publisher. The publisher has an equal reputation for crafting a space where desirable "exotic" masculinities, specifically alpha, or hegemonic masculinities, are formulated.

“Modern Romance”, the publisher’s flagship series, is described as “the home of the alpha male” and of “international settings”; the approximately 1900 novels published in the series since its inception in 2000 merge hegemonic masculinities with diverse ethnic and national identities. The romance hero who hails from South America, Russia, or the Middle East, for example, provides a certain exoticism in these romances predominantly written and read by women in Britain, Australia, and North America. The series thus offers a unique opportunity to chart shifting articulations of erotically charged, ethnically and nationally “exotic” masculinities in one of the most popular twenty-first century literary forms.

My paper presents quantitative data, charting the shifting codification of heroes and nationality across the twenty-first century. It also offers close readings of individual texts and online reader reviews, focusing specifically on a hero-type that emerged in 2009: the Russian hero. I explore how a mainstream publisher constructs specific ethnic and national masculinities, asking what this reveals about popular fiction’s attitude towards cultural masculinities and national identity. Ultimately, the paper asks: how do Western romance books and readers imagine those from elsewhere?; Why are particular national masculinities desirable at particular times?; And what can this reveal about the development of mainstream popular tastes around nation and masculinities?

**Emre Busse**

*Freie University, Berlin*

***Men of Turkey: Tracing masculinities through gay ‘ethnic’ pornography.***

As a relatively common phenomenon in European representations of gay sexuality and masculinity, ‘ethnic’ pornography has been a constantly growing market over the last 30 years. As part of this phenomenon, Germany has also produced around 49 films of gay ‘ethnic’ pornography that are produced in Turkey. All of these films were produced by two companies, in Germany, owners of which have Turkish immigration background, except for one German national. These productions are of additional critical importance and represent a radical shift in contemporary aesthetics of gay ‘ethnic’ pornography as the producers and directors are of Turkish descent, which creates a contrast to earlier examples of gay ‘ethnic’ pornography in Europe. Especially, at a time when the public image of gay culture is becoming more and more liberal and mainstream both in Europe and specifically in Germany, and when the Turkish immigrant community appears to be irreversibly embedded into the German culture, my proposed research enables the analysis of how these two different sexual and cultural spaces define and produce alterity through masculine body representations, then and now. These points also appear as spaces of freedom, which are not much different to the spaces of freedom created through sex tourism while also referring to how these spaces sanctify the heteronormativity of the Western social body. My paper will propose reading masculinities through this cross-cultural exchange between Germany and Turkey while exposing the specific

examples of gay 'ethnic' pornography. To this end, I will engage with both archival and critical analysis of these productions.

**Ashley Morgan**

*Cardiff School of Art*

***The Archetype of hardness: the legacy of oppression in the collective unconscious of Welsh masculinity.***

Academic research on Welsh masculinity has mainly focussed on aspects of Welsh culture which have contributed to a fixed sense of 'traditional' masculinity based on resilience and hardness (Walkerdine, 2012; Ward, 2013; Beynon, 2002; Penlington, 2010 and Harris and Clayton, 2007). Using Jung's theory of the phenomenon of the collective unconsciousness, I examine the idea that 'hard' personas which have formed amongst some Welsh men is a consequence of an historical sense of oppression, predicted on economic hardship and manual labour. Welsh men are often valued and venerated through the media for displaying traditionally tough, masculine behaviours such as excessive drinking, working in industrial jobs, and playing hard, especially at rugby. 'Traditional' hegemonic values of masculinity are represented through such performances of physical and mental toughness, which are venerated by other men and often lead to toxic behaviours (Kupers, 2005; Morgan, 2019). So-called 'traditional' forms of masculinity are heavily challenged elsewhere in society (Connell, 2005; Bridges and Pascoe, 2014), yet still appear to be highly valued in mediated depictions of Welsh masculinity. This is problematic as the hardness trope encourages traditional aspects of 'male behaviours' which challenge emotion, health and sexuality.

This article uses examples from the film *Pride* (Warchus, 2014), as a means by which to demonstrate that oppression of Welsh men has been very slow to change. While there is greater acceptance of masculinity as a more dynamic concept starting to seep into cultural consciousness, in the case of gay ex-rugby player, Gareth Thomas, and rugby referee Nigel Owens, arguably their masculinity is considered to be permissible within the still narrow confines of Welsh male identity as these men display traditional concepts of 'hardness' through their association with national sport of Wales. Arguably, the legacy of hardness runs deeply and still persists in the collective unconsciousness of Welsh men.

**Alexandre Pichel-Vázquez**

*University Oberta de Catalunya*

***Demonstrating Emotional Bodies: Between the Spanish National Straightness and the Anti-Colonial Obliqueness***

In the last two decades, research on emotions and politics has considerably increased in social science. At the same time, the Spanish political scene has suffered enormous transformations with a wide range of demands. However,

they all share the capacity to emotionally mobilize in order to create their own affective political space. In this sense, this is a work-in-progress research based on providing an insight into the new Spanish political configuration through the study of the emotions and affects that arise from the new role of gender discourses in politics. In other words, the aim is to explore how the emotions towards gender discourses influence the political construction of the discourse, and how such constructions determinate some political bodies. It is a matter of explaining the role emotions and affects play in the struggle for political, sexual and gender hegemony.

This work is based on an ethnographic analysis of two different demonstrations: the Spanish right-wing nationalist to celebrate the Spanish National Day and the anti-colonialist response. Both demonstrations took place in Barcelona on the same day (October 12, 2019) which facilitated the data collection. The ethnographic analysis is based on a participant observation and a close reading and critical discourse analysis of the manifestos as well as the digital interactions on Twitter and Instagram to consider the emotions of the texts.

Accordingly, this preliminary paper proposes that gender discourses play a major role in the construction of the national and anti-national feelings of both demonstrations: On the one hand, there is an encouragement for a straight and masculine configuration in Spanish nationalism. On the other hand, the anti-colonial response receives a great support from sexual and gender deviations.

**Gyorgyi Horvath**

*London School of Economics*

***"He Took the Red Pill and Learnt a New Lingo". The Spread of Anglo-American Networked Misogyny in Hungarian Online Spaces***

My paper discusses the spread of "networked misogyny" (Banet-Weiser & Miltner 2016) and corresponding constructions of masculinity in Hungarian-language online spaces, with special attention to the overlaps and synergies between misogynistic content imported from Anglo-American sources and the issue of "globalized masculinities" (Connell 1993). My primary examples will be the *Csajok és Pasik* [Chicks and Lads] relationship advice blog and the *Férfihang* [Male Voice] anti-feminist blog, both launched in the early 2010s, but originally entirely differently positioned on the local mainstream-subculture axis. Specifically, whereas *Csajok és Pasik* since the early 2010s served as the number one online space where romantic relationships could be publicly discussed and pieces of relationship advice shared and sought for, *Férfihang* – with its content mostly imported from the Anglo-American online manosphere – started as a niche blog in 2013. By 2016, however, *Csajok és Pasik*, too, has gradually shifted towards misogynists and anti-feminist discourses, in line with a broader spread of Hungarian-language misogynist online spaces that typically imported their content from Anglo-American online sources and reacted to an earlier major rise in the visibility of feminism in the

Hungarian-language segment of the internet. My paper explores, with the help of CDA, 1) the ways in which the elements of a specific Anglo-American misogynistic discourse – i.e. the "common denominator", which, as Marwick and Caplan (2018) pointed out, brings together the heterogeneous and diverse online communities of the manosphere – are present on these two blogs, as they are activated, re-affirmed or, occasionally, challenged; and 2) the novelty element of this specific discourse in the Hungarian context (i.e. its difference from more received anti-feminist and misogynist subcultural discourses in Hungary), with special attention paid to how this novel discourse offers and circulates new mediated representations of gendered identities, romantic relationships and intimacies for Hungarian netizens.

**Jacob Johanssen**

*St Mary's University*

### ***Incels and Male Fantasies Today***

This talk presents some results from a research project on the Manosphere, a clustering of misogynistic online communities that are often in close proximity to the 'alt-right'. I will focus on the Incel community. It consists of men who refer to themselves as 'involuntary celibate', (or incel), because they have not engaged in romantic or sexual encounters for some time (or never in some cases). I present some exemplary discourses from a Reddit forum by drawing on the German cultural theorist Klaus Theweleit and his two volumes *Male Fantasies* (Theweleit 1987, 1989). He analysed the male fantasies of the Freikorps soldiers during the Weimar Republic and what they thought of women and fe/male bodies.

Many of the narratives by Incels are about naming women as sluts who are only interested in being with good looking men. I argue that Incels both desire and wish to destroy women, who they perceive as having a phallic potency. Consequently, they resort to symbolically castrating and destroying such women. This gives them a sense of agency and pleasure over their own (libidinal) frustration. At the same time there are many narratives that show self-pity and a kind of self-destruction. Users describe how ugly they are, detail mental health conditions, and a general hatred of the world. Yet, such narratives are often coupled with a description of how they would like to be. Many posts discuss genetics, specific bodily shortcomings, and how cosmetic surgery and exercise can help.

I argue that the male fantasies of the Incel community bear some resemblance to Theweleit's theorisation of the proto-fascist male body. A male body that destroys women, while at the same time appropriating them. A male body that is obsessed about its own embodiment and signs of masculine strength. I show the proximity to the fascist body and reality that is dreamed up by many men in the Manosphere today. A reality which comes dangerously close to the soldier males of Theweleit's study of 1920s Germany.

**Abbie Bonane**

*Goldsmiths College, University of London*

***Understanding Homonationalism - Examining the Far Right's Shift From Homophobia to Nationalist Inclusion***

Historically, far right ideology has been at odds with gender and sexual diversity, considering both to be antithetical to the patriarchal nationalist ideal of what it means to be part of a nation state. LGBT people were often easy targets for nationalist governments, groups and individuals to paint as an 'enemy' of the state, alongside racial minorities and ideological opponents, with rhetoric and action framed around 'othering' them from the rest of the citizenry as a direct threat to the nation.

As of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in tandem with the growing acceptance of LGBT people, a progressive understanding of gender and sexual diversity and the legitimisation of gay rights across the Western world, there has been a realignment within far right ideology to prioritise inclusion of LGBT people amongst nationalistic ranks, framing the safeguarding of LGBT culture and values as paramount to the Western ideals of modernity and progressiveness. Protecting LGBT rights, which have now been positioned as inherently Western democratic rights, became a new objective for the historically homophobic 'nation', and historically homophobic nationalists.

To understand this repositioning from far right homophobia to homonationalism, this paper will examine the Western world's own realignment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century from homophobic – or, to a lesser extent, homotolerant - to homoinclusive. When Western governments began including and even heralding LGBT people as part of their national fabric and using acceptance of gay rights as a barometer of a nation's progressiveness, modernity and compatibility, so too did the far right. With narratives of LGBT people shifting from being centred around exclusion to inclusion within the state, so too did the narratives of defending this new national cohort. Nation's LGBT populations were frequently juxtaposed with the nation's immigrant and racial and religious minority populations, with narratives describing the latter's religious or cultural incompatibility and unwillingness to accept the former, and in turn, unable to accept the nation's democratic and progressive values. By continuously reinforcing this narrative, it offered the far right greater legitimacy amongst the populace, even amongst some LGBT people, as now both the nation-state and the far right were operating within a new aspect of an old binary: The progressive, homoinclusive West and the backwards, homophobic 'others' of the East.

**Kirsten Adkins**

*Wolverhampton University*

***Napoleon Dynamite by Me (Single Channel Film. 6") [FILM SCREENING]***

A US soldier who claims he was bored one day, memorises and performs the dance from the cult film *Napoleon Dynamite* in a mess tent somewhere in Iraq during the war. 'Napoleon Dynamite by Me' is an artists intervention which explores themes of narcissism, masculinities and state controlled violence. The soldiers movements are both aggressive and playful as he parodies a caricatured effeminacy. His gestures may appear sexualised or threatening, or silly and even vulnerable within his dance sequence.

Black and white imagery of the dancing soldier is juxtaposed with broken images from a staged terrorism alert which took place in central London and was broadcast across news media in the UK. Female victims scream as they are supported by male paramedics. Terrorism it would appear is stereotypically gendered.

'Napoleon Dynamite by Me' has been exhibited in Birmingham and was reviewed as part of Digbeth First Friday:

"The dancing soldier in the tent reminded me of a peacock. He was cocky. The fact that it took place in a tent would suggest he is at war somewhere, which contrasted sharply to the frivolousness of his display. His buoyancy was in some ways hopeful, but there was something unpleasant about his control. He kept to a defined space in front of the camera, while at the same time remaining fluid. There was no room for anyone else and the 'all about me' narrative was completed with the film below of what looked like a women fellating a man. If she wasn't – she/ they looked like there was some form of sexual act being carried out for the benefit of one, rather than both. The positioning of the monitor (below) also placed female below male."

### **Ron Amato**

*Fashion Institute of Technology, NYC*

### ***One Artist's Personal Journey Through Photography***

Growing up during the 1960s and 1970s in Brooklyn, New York, in a working class, third generation Italian-American family, presented particular challenges for a young gay boy. Exacerbating these challenges was the fact that I attended Catholic schools for grades one through twelve. In my grammar school, boys and girls were housed in separate buildings and only came together for religious services. Trying very hard to change my circumstances for high school, all my attempts to attend a public school were rebuffed by my parents. Instead I was enrolled in a Catholic high school, which until my freshman year was exclusively male. My freshman class was the first to allow female students. However, in a class of over one hundred boys, there were only eight girls.

These were the circumstances of my upbringing. For most of my first twenty

years, I stayed closeted in some misguided attempt toward self-protection and preservation. As a commercial photographer, I tailored my art to fit the straight world in which I hid. However, art, mine and other's, became the foundation on which I built my coming-out process.

During this presentation I will chronicle my coming out process through photographs I looked at and photographs I made. From my childhood as a consumer of media, through my early career as a commercial photographer, to my current status as a fine artist and educator, I will use the imagery that has populated my life to build the timeline of my personal development.

**Ian Sergeant**

*Birmingham City University*

### ***Black Masculinities: Hyper (In) Visibility***

This paper utilises the method of autoethnography to respond to the symposium's theme of Masculinity and National Identity. It challenges prevalent negative and binary socio-political and cultural constructs of Black British masculinities. It raises the issue of the dichotomy of Black British masculinities/identities that can be both hyper visible by mere presence in predominantly white spaces (Spack, 1997) and at the same time rendered invisible, when that presence is not acknowledged (Arday, 2018). As being in predominantly white spaces can have a detrimental effect and can lead to a sense that you don't belong (Miller, 2016), you can feel like an imposter (Archer, 2008).

Black hyper (in) visibility in academia are reflected in recent discourses of institutional decolonisation (Rhodes Must Fall, 2018; Arday, 2018; Azeezat Johnson, 2018), reports of Black academic disparities (Williams, 2019) and racial incidents (Brinkhurst Cuff, 2019). Such discourses highlight the fragility and notions of Blackness, belonging and identities in contemporary Britain and indeed Europe (Benson, 2019).

Ontologically, my experience of HE is as 1 of only 3 PGR's of Black African Caribbean background recruited to the M4C scholarship programme in 2018, from a total of over 80 PGRs. I am 1 of just 30 Black African Caribbean fully funded PGRs recruited during 2016-19 of a total 19868 funded PGRs (Williams, 2019).

Autoethnographic stories are artistic and analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experiences (Adams, 2014). Therefore, this paper situates my experiences to date as a PGR, including hosting an interdisciplinary symposium *Anticipating Black Futures* in 2019, which considered the futures of Black people in Britain through lived experiences of the present. It will also include reflections on my first academic paper presentation at the Masculinity Network launch and my experience as M4C Student Advisory Forum representative for BCU.

**Mikel Aramburu**

*University of Barcelona*

### ***The Gender of the Other. Masculinity and national identity in Catalonia***

The Catalan identity has been formed largely in opposition to the Spanish identity. However, in the last third of the XXth Century, Spanish immigrants in Catalonia were incorporated into a new Catalan civic identity.

Before the recuperation of Catalan self-government in the 80s, the Spanish immigrant was largely imagined as male. This can be seen in the first definition of civic Catalan-ity by Jordi Pujol (president of Catalonia between 1980-2003): “A Catalan is a *man* who lives and works in Catalonia”. Although Spanish migrants were sex balanced, men were the majority among salaried-workers. So, salaried work as condition for access to Catalan-ity was also an implicit gender condition. Also in the field of literature, Juan Marsé, the main novelist to deal with Spanish migration in Catalonia, wrote several novels with the same gender/ethnic/class script in which he narrated the sexual encounter between a rich, Catalan young woman and an unscrupulous, young, male, poor, Spanish immigrant.

In this period, Spanish migrants were portrayed both as useful men at work producing surplus value and as threatening sexual or marital partners for Catalan women.

This gender characterization of the national other changed with the recuperation of Catalan self-government. During the 90, the Spanish immigrant character in literature, movies and songs was mainly a sweet woman embracing Catalan identity.

In all, very few people (mainly men) from migrant origins have spoken out about this experience, at least until recently, when a new and also gendered voice has emerged. In the last few years, several children of Spanish migrants have written autobiographical accounts about this condition. Most of these voices correspond to LGBTQI+ subjectivities stressing both their discomfort with the sexual conventions in the neighborhood communities where they were raised and their externality from the political and social Catalan mainstream that they have met in their professional lives.

**Sophie Kratidou & Nefeli-Maria Giannaki**

*Panteion University, Greece*

### ***Constructing masculinities in the swirl of the Macedonian Question***

This research investigates the interweaving between masculine identity and Greek national identity, exposing the representations of hegemonic masculinities in Greece, during the years of the economic crisis. It focuses on the rallies that took place between 2018 and 2019, in the context of the resolution of the name dispute of North Macedonia and it aims to

problematize the articulation of the nationalist discourse, the representations of the nation and masculine identities, through the mass media and the demonstrators' discourses.

The historical context of the research is during the economic crisis, a period marked by profound socio-political and cultural transformations that rearranged the structures and processes of Greek society. Specifically, we trace the formation of an emergent radicalized right-wing movement - apart from the great majority of progressive left-wing demonstrations - during the protests of the Squares Movement (2011), which re-emerges during the rallies for the Macedonian question. Maintaining this link, our research examines the morphology of the rallies, the ways of claiming and the political discourse articulated by the participants, in order to stress how the rallies became a privileged field of reconfiguring the national identity and precisely, the Greek hegemonic masculinity. Which are the features of these specific national masculinities, emerging from the rallies for the Macedonian question?

Finally, as this research investigates the causes of the accentuation of the nation narrative during the economic crisis in Greece, an inevitable question arises: How does the economic crisis introduce new connections in the constructing procedure of the national and masculine identity? What could be the link between the construction of Greek hegemonic masculinities and the effort of a national redeployment of Greece, as a hegemonic force in the Balkan region?

**Lisa Nike-Bühring**

*University of Gloucestershire*

### ***Growing Old in a Neoliberal Society: Reflections of Older German Men***

In a neoliberal society the individual's worth is determined by one's market value. Consequently, in western countries youthfulness is celebrated and worshipped while older age is often linked to decline, frailty and dependence. Retirement robs older men of a meaningful role ensuring all-encompassing agency, linked status and importance. and consequently not only seriously impedes their claims for patriarchal privileges and hegemonic status but also challenges their sense of self. However, agency, dominance and related feeling of personal significance can, according to the recently increasingly influential neoliberal narrative of successful ageing, be retained provided men in their third and fourth age are fitter, healthier, more affluent and, most importantly, more in control of themselves and others than women, regardless of age, and than other older men.

Nonetheless, in the long run, age-related bodily and mental decline can, if you are fortunate - in the double sense of the word - be postponed, but it cannot be stopped. As traumatic as this realisation might be for many men, it might also provide them with the opportunity to critically reflect on formerly held beliefs of what it means to be a man and lead to alternative constructions of manhood in older age.

Facilitating a better understanding of how older German men, who before retirement belonged to the ruling class of white, heterosexual, able-bodied, affluent and urban men, construct their identity in later life and of how they incorporate the dominant western master narratives of ageing and masculinity into their life-course narratives has motivated my interviews with four upper-class German men. The outcome of these explorations has informed the proposed talk which is aimed at extending the discussion of masculinities by reflecting on the effects of ageing on the emotional geographies of men who in many respects used to embody the standards of hegemonic masculinity.

**Jamie Hakim**

*University of East Anglia*

***Work That Body: Male Bodies in Digital Culture [BOOK LAUNCH]***

*Work That Body* explores different ways that the male body has been represented by, constructed in, and experienced through digital media during the age of austerity. It argues that the male body has become a key site in contemporary culture where neoliberalism's hegemony has been both secured and contested since 2008. It does this by looking at three different case studies: the celebrity male nude leak; the rise of young men sharing images of their muscular bodies on social networking sites; and the rise of chemsex. It finds that on the one hand digital media has enabled men to transform their bodies into tools of value-creation in an economic context when their traditional bread-winning capacities have been diminished. On the other it has also allowed them to use their bodies to form intimate collective bonds during a moment when competitive individualism continues to be insisted on as the privileged mode of being in the world. It therefore offers a unique contribution not only to the field of digital cultural studies but also to the growing cultural studies literature attempting to map the historical contradictions of the austerity moment.

**Kristian Møller**

*University of Copenhagen*

***Sex drugs and changing gay BDSM scenes: a transnational comparison***

Hakim (2018) argues convincingly that chemsex sociability should be understood at the juncture of various social, material, technological, and normative movements, in his case the spread of competitive individualism in London. In this sense, chemsex operates as "an embodied response to material conditions shaped by neoliberalism" (ibid.:1). Conversely we should also examine how chemical and social practices take part in *already* established sexual scenes, and the role that national contexts play. This paper then asks how gay male BDSM scenes are affected by the emergence of methamphetamine (crystal meth) and Gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB) as sexual drugs. Some national BDSM scenes are organized around

membership to organisations that control physical, digital and discursive resources, while others are more loosely organized and governed. How does national law and regulation of such organisations frame what kinds of adoption, change or rejection that can take place, and how do the organizational power of easily available social platforms take part in the construction of new chemicalized BDSM scenes?

Methodologically the paper compiles its data archive through a combination of interviews, online observation, and document analysis. Law documents and other documents for each national site are used to describe the organisational requirements to and regulation of BDSM activity, event spaces and organisations. Decision minutes from BDSM/kink organisation meetings are searched for reference to crystal meth/GHB issues and policies. Informant interviews with key scene participants, organisers and breakout actors from Copenhagen and Sydney form the basis for further understanding the local debates around the issue. And finally, some observation on online for new and alternative “drug-friendly” BDSM/kink social scenes are included.

**Sebastian Baxter**

*Manchester Penetrated*

***ChemSex Aesthetics and the Cultural representation Of Chemsex: A Manchester Penetrated investigation into a (sub)cultural practice.***

While there exists a growing literature of research into Chemsex as a practice from public health and cultural studies perspectives, there remains a paucity of artistic interventions into understanding Chemsex. Since the practice came in the public purview in around 2015, the main body of representation of Chemsex has at best sought to interrogate the practice using solely a medical model of analysis. At worst some cultural representations (such as the Vice 2015 documentary *Chemsex*, and James Wharton’s problematic 2017 monograph *Something for the Weekend*) applied the medical model to highlight pathological aspects of the practice that were both reductive and hugely stigmatizing of gay/bi/queer men who engaged in Chemsex - ‘what could arguably be seen as a moral panic across Britain’s media about the problems Chemsex posed for gay and bisexual men and public health more generally that had a tendency to pathologize both the practice and the reasons why these men in engage in it’ (Hakim 2018: 1). Furthermore, little of this Chemsex cultural produce sought to unpack regional variations within Chemsex culture, with the overwhelming majority of these representations being London-centric.

Emerging for the artistic research project *Manchester Penetrated*, Dr Sebastian Baxter’s paper uses a performance based, multi-media approach with a distinct psycho-sexual geographical bent to explore the emerging aesthetics of Chemsex from an artistic and experiential perspective. Firstly, the paper draws on the work of theorists Kane Race, Dion Kagan and Jamie Hakim to examine an aesthetic of Chemsex representation (based heavily on the medical model, public health concerns and the historic language of AIDS

crisis) that became imposed upon discourse around Chemsex as a meta-textual framing device. This paper argues that the pathological implications of this framing of Chemsex has led to a culture of silence around the practice through the use of culturally loaded language and images that plays heavily on AIDS crisis discursive tools (Kagan 2018). Finally, the work proffers that regional exigencies and geographical specificities play a central role in how Chemsex can be understood and how it could be framed.

At the core of *Manchester Penetrated* is the political objective to de-stigmatize Chemsex in order to create an open discourse about the practice, and challenge societal attitudes to queer sex and addiction in a wider sense. Employing auto-ethnographic prose & Agit-Porn video (an aesthetic device that merges Queer cinema, archive footage, amateur camera-phone pornography, and political sloganeering) this experimental and experiential paper seeks to explore the materiality of the practice and an emerging chemsex aesthetic, teasing out the nuances and often contradictory subjectivities inherent in what is, as Dr Sebastian argues, a *subcultural queer* practice.

**Maurice Nagington**

*University of Manchester*

***The paradox of chemsex: bringing people together and breaking the gay community apart***

Chemsex as a phenomenon is not new, even the word is getting old and being appropriated for various political purposes which it never originally contained. However, its naming and ordering as a particular practice (sexual), consisting of certain people (gay and bi men), taking specific substances ("chems"), with specific metaphors applied (such as the "unholy trinity" of GBL, mephadron, and methamphetamine), in specified places (private parties in private residences) has increasingly given it an inflection that it is a fearful destructive force that has got out of control and may even "spread" to the straight community. In other words chemsex(ers) need disciplining via pop psychology, medicine and criminal justice (which also have their profit making enterprises) to make "them" normal "like us", thereby securing the continued status quo of a gay scene which is now making profit out of the status quo *and* its prohibitionist strategies to maintain it.

Yet as many have argued being gay is at its best when it is a destructive force. So this paper will celebrate these acclaimed destructive forces, lean into them, but in doing so destroy the entirely self-serving and prohibitionist disciplinary mechanisms. It will suggest gay subjectivities must (re)emerge through chemsex cultures to affirm that being gay is a pleasurable way of engaging with bodies.

These arguments will be made in reference to longitudinal interviews with twenty gay men in Manchester (UK), films (documentary and pornographic), novels, and plays to celebrate the paradoxical representations of how

chemsex is bringing people together into the "same place", despite "destroying" the community where gay men "traditionally" met. In doing so it presents a counter-narrative to the competitive neoliberalism of London, and instead suggests something different can emerge when one reads chemsex culture and its phenomenology in Manchester, the birth place of the co-operative movement.