

Multipurpose Masculinities

Gender and Power in Low Countries Histories of Masculinity¹

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The minimal ambition of any history of masculinity is to demonstrate that masculinity *has* a history. Scholars in this field share the aim to trace how notions of masculinity have changed over time, to investigate under what conditions this happened, and to explore how these changes have shaped the lives of men and of women. This might sound like a truism, but the idea that masculinity has a history bears repeating in view of the current cultural ascendancy of attempts to redefine sexual difference as a natural given. Conceived of as natural, this difference is affected only by the *very long durée* of evolutionary time, but otherwise appears as a-historical.² Much as this view requires correction, the agenda for the history of masculinity should not be set solely by the need to criticise breathtakingly reductionist accounts of sexual difference. An equally important aim is to make the insight that masculinity is a cultural category matter for fields of historical inquiry outside those that centre on gender narrowly defined.

On the pages of a bi-national journal it is perhaps appropriate to try and illustrate the relevance of the history of masculinity ‘beyond gender’ by reference to a significant moment in these nations’ shared past. In the aftermath of the Belgian revolution of 1830 that would result in the break-up of the short-lived United Kingdom of the Netherlands, Dutch poet Johannes Immerzeel wrote sarcastically about Belgian revolutionaries as ‘real men’. As he depicted them, the Belgian revolutionaries, led into a state of moral and political abandon by their excessive worship of the goddess Liberty, scream out their love for her in the streets, dance around the tree of liberty in an indecent manner, assault with supposed ‘manly valour’ opponents who refuse to give up distinctions of rank and proclaim a revolutionary programme of idleness – ‘Liberty without work!’ – and utter lawlessness: ‘Every free man is free to kill!’³ Immerzeel’s catalogue of the Belgian revolutionaries’ political

and moral failings was intended to diminish their revolutionary zeal through a diminishment of their manliness, but also brought to light the contours of what, presumably, he considered true manliness to be. That too, centred round a love of liberty, but this was a love of a temperate nature that sustained political moderation, morality, industriousness and adherence to the law.

This snippet from the war of words that accompanied the Belgian revolution offers a glimpse at both historically specific notions of (un)manliness and at their role in an early nineteenth-century language of nation and nationalism. In the latter a rhetoric of masculinity often held a prominent place. Gender historians have pointed to the ways in which discourses of the modern nation were suffused with references to masculinity – and femininity – that served to draw sharp boundaries between self and other, to encourage emotional investment in the nation and to lend a sense of reality to a new and still relatively ‘empty’ category of political identification.⁴ In the heat of ideological battle Immerzeel used the masculinity of moderation and morality he claimed for the Dutch to distinguish metonymically Belgian political unruliness from Dutch virtuousness. In the longer run this putative moderate and moral masculinity became part of a notion of Dutch national identity. In the course of coming to terms, after the break-up with Belgium, with its status as a minor European nation, the Netherlands assembled an idea of national self in which being small became the prerequisite for greatness. Innocent of the political cynicism Europe’s great powers displayed, its greatness would lie in a moderate and moral manliness that was thought to permeate its domestic politics, its foreign policy and the nature of its colonial rule.⁵ This is a history of masculinity that is no longer exclusively about masculinity; it has become a gender history of nation and nationalism.

1 I thank the editors of *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* for their useful comments on an earlier version of this introduction.

2 For an overview and critique of the currently dominant paradigm in studies of sex differences that concentrates on hormonally determined differences in brain organisation: Rebecca M. Jordan-Young, *Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences* (Cambridge MA, London 2010). For the sobering argument that the idea of a biological basis for sex differences has in modern times never been as fundamentally questioned as have other categories of difference, race in particular: Nancy Leys Stepan, ‘Race, Gender, Science and Citizenship’, in: Catherine Hall (ed.),

Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Manchester 2000) 75.

3 J. Immerzeel Jr, *De lof der Belgische vrijheid* (The Hague 1831) 6-8.

4 For an overview: Mrinalini Sinha, *Gender and Nation* (Washington DC 2006).

5 Stefan Dudink, ‘Die unheroischen Männer einer moralischen Nation. Männlichkeit und Nation in der modernen Niederländischen Geschichte’, in: Claudia Lenz (ed.), *Männlichkeiten - Gemeinschaften - Nationen. Historische Studien zur Geschlechterordnung des Nationalen* (Opladen 2003) 67-87.

The goal of this special issue of *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* is to contribute to a history of masculinity that moves ‘beyond masculinity’ by pointing to its relevance to other fields of historical inquiry. Written in dialogue with the international literature in the field, the articles offer analyses of masculinity and its ‘work’ in various socio-cultural and political domains in the modern history of the Low Countries. To be sure, they do not aim at definitions of the specific nature of a ‘Low Countries masculinity’. In line with the general aim of this issue, the relation of masculinity to nation and national particularities is explored by asking about the ways in which masculinity is called upon to establish notions of national self and other. This introduction outlines the conceptual framework on which such an approach to the history of masculinity rests and situates the individual articles within the issue’s overall organisation.

The unmarked masculinity of history

Statements such as those by Johannes Immerzeel are useful to students of masculinity not only because they point to a history of masculinity ‘beyond masculinity’. By offering a glimpse at a culture’s notions of masculinity they reveal something that often remains implicit. Usually quietly assumed rather than explicitly articulated, these notions come to the surface when hostility seems to require an emphatic statement of the opponent’s lack of manly virtues. Notions of masculinity often tend to emerge during or in the aftermath of conflicts and struggles over power. Therefore, such contexts are useful ones for the detection of a category of gender that is sometimes hard to perceive because its presence in the historical record is mostly implicit or remains hidden in seemingly universal categories such as ‘man’, ‘humanity’ and ‘mankind’.

Masculinity-as-it-emerges-in-conflict is a good starting point for an analysis of conceptualisations of gender more generally. Relatively explicit articulations of masculinity that surface as a result of various forms of friction, offer a view of the wider cultural formation of gender. The use of masculinity in conflict is one of these cultural moments that require rendering explicit both its demarcation from categories of non-masculinity (such as femininity and effeminacy) and the nature of this demarcation. Apart from bringing to light the contours of a masculinity of moderation and morality, Immerzeel’s text also pointed to the general notions of sexual difference of which it formed an element. Apparently masculinity could come undone under the influence of passions that were hard to control and resulted in either masculinity giving way to unmanly forms of behaviour, or in deeds of aggression that seemed manly but were not because of the absence of the self-mastery true masculinity possessed. Masculinity’s volatile nature suggests that here too, sexual difference was conceptualised not as securely given but as a precarious difference, the existence of which required a tight reigning in of the passions.

Masculinity is not always present only implicitly and it does not exclusively manifest itself negatively, that is through the denial of the manliness of others. There is a risk of overstating the idea that masculinity is – always, everywhere, necessarily – an ‘unmarked’ category.⁶ Historical studies of masculinity are actually in a good position to explore the fluctuations of masculinity’s visibility and ask under which conditions masculinity appears as an unmarked category and when it becomes observable ‘as such’. That among scholars of gender, historians in particular are prone to start from assumptions about masculinity as generally unmarked, is hardly surprising however, given the fact that in most historical work masculinity has appeared, and often still appears, as both omnipresent and invisible, in the sense that is not questioned or investigated.⁷ To the extent that they revolve around the recording of the lives and actions of men, many historical works can potentially offer great insight into masculinity as an historical category – if it were not for the fact that almost none of these works study the men whose lives and doings they reconstruct *as men*, that is, as gendered human beings that live and embody gendered constructions of identity.

This simultaneous presence and absence of men and masculinity is to be found perhaps most clearly in traditional military and political history where ‘extraordinarily volitional’ male subjects are involved in the ‘endless adventure’ of high politics and warfare.⁸ It is however, by no means only in this body of work that men and masculinity propel the narrative forward without their coming into view as such. This paradox also shapes writing outside of traditional histories of war and politics; it can be found in many histories that revolve around notions of heroism, be they narratives of exploration, scientific progress or entrepreneurship. The paradox of unmarked masculinity, in all likelihood, is a constitutive element of the modern, professional writing of history. It took a fundamental critique of the discipline to bring this to light and to make it possible, as a result of this awareness, to think and practice

6 The tendency to universalise is the result of the background of this concept in structuralist linguistics and semiotics. On the couple ‘marked/unmarked’ in linguistics: William O’Grady et al. (eds.), *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction* (London, New York 1996) 374-375. The classic semiotic statement: Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (New York 1967) 77.

7 For a foundational text on the history of masculinity in these terms: John Tosh, ‘What should Historians do with Masculinity?: Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *History Workshop Journal* 38 (1994) 179-202.

8 I take the phrase ‘extraordinarily volitional subject’ from Judith Butler, ‘Speaking Up, Talking Back: Joan Scott’s Critical Feminism’, in: Judith Butler and Elizabeth Weed (eds.), *The Question of Gender: Joan W. Scott’s Critical Feminism* (Bloomington, Indianapolis 2011) 16. John Pocock used the term ‘endless adventure’ in his critique, of a different but not entirely unrelated nature, of traditional histories of high politics: J.G.A. Pocock, ‘The Concept of a Language and the *Métier d’Historien*: Some Considerations on Practice’, in: A. Pagden (ed.), *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge 1987) 29.

a history of men and masculinity. This fundamental critique was offered by women's history and gender history, in particular as these reconsidered an earlier emphasis on correcting the record through the inclusion of the, previously ignored, experiences of women. Instead, historians of women and gender proposed to think of gender as a cultural set of changing, perceived differences between women and men that shapes the lives of women and men but also has an impact on other historical events and processes – one of these being the writing of history itself.⁹ It is this questioning by women's and gender historians of the ways in which gender shapes the writing of history that has enabled researchers to remove the veil of universality behind which the 'extraordinarily volitional subjects' of history hid and to study them as gendered human beings.

Theorising gender in history

Historians of masculinity are indebted to women's and gender history for more than the fundamental critique of their profession which made it possible to 'see' men and masculinity as objects of historical analysis. A dazzling series of theoretical and conceptual innovations, both in women's and gender history, and women's and gender studies more generally, have provided the tools to understand masculinity as profoundly shaped by socio-cultural context, and therefore as deeply historical. What started with relatively modest concepts such as 'gender roles' has become a wide-ranging and sophisticated field of theory that questions the given and supposedly natural character of sexual difference. Moving well beyond role sociology, theorists of gender for instance, have explored the ways in which the body itself has gender written onto, and into it, in processes of cultural and material signification. No longer the firm basis of an unchanging sexual difference, the body then, appears as implicated in socio-cultural processes in which gender is produced 'all the way down', without a prior, given difference on which it is supposed ultimately to rest.¹⁰ Historians of masculinity coming into the game at a relatively late stage, have at their disposal a wealth of theoretical insights that can help them historicise masculinity in divergent ways and to different degrees.

9 For a recent overview of this development: Sonya Rose, *What is Gender History?* (Cambridge, Malden MA 2010) 1-16. On the way gender has shaped the modern, professionalised and academic way of writing history: Bonnie Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women and Historical Practice* (Cambridge MA 1998).

10 For overviews: Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitzsimons and Kathleen Lennon, *Theorizing Gender* (Cambridge, Malden MA 2002); R.W. Connell, *Gender* (Cambridge, Malden MA 2002).

From the theoretical approaches on offer, the contributors to this special issue built most clearly on Joan Wallach Scott's proposal to historicise gender through an analysis of its role in the establishment, legitimisation and contestation of various power relations.¹¹ Conceiving of sexual difference as socio-culturally constructed, Scott defined gender as the meanings given to the perceived differences between the sexes, and used a framework of post-structuralist provenance to analyse this process of signification in terms of the workings of discourse. In itself this definition already entailed a programme for a deep historicisation of gender, but the crucial move in Scott's argument was to propose to concentrate historical studies of gender on the ways in which gender serves as a means of signifying – expressing, legitimising, challenging – relationships of power. This proposal led the way to a two-pronged approach of gender as a historical category. It focused attention on first, gender as *productive*, as an element deployed in the making of various relationships of power. Second, it asked historians to take into consideration the ways in which gender is *produced* in the course of its deployment in different historical processes.

The uses of masculinity

If historians of masculinity turn to Scott's approach because of its usefulness in studying the deployment of masculinity without taking recourse to essentialist notions of masculinity, this does require a critical rethinking of some of the theories and approaches that are currently quite prominent in studies of masculinity – both in history and elsewhere. The currently most influential concept in studies of masculinity is probably sociologist R.W. Connell's notion of 'hegemonic masculinity'. In her groundbreaking 1995 study *Masculinities* Connell argued for thinking masculinity in the plural, hence *masculinities*, because it is always inflected by categories of difference other than gender, such as race, ethnicity, class, religion, age, sexuality et cetera. She proposed that studies of masculinity concentrate on understanding the dynamic relations between divergent kinds of masculinity in specific socio-cultural contexts.

Conceiving of these relations between masculinities as relations of power, she turned to the notion of 'hegemony' to characterise these and argued that at a specific moment in time one kind of masculinity can be thought of as occupying a position of hegemony within a wider set of gender relations.¹² In line with Gramscian theories of hegemony, Connell described

11 Joan Wallach Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *American Historical Review* 91 (1986) 1053-1075.

12 R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge 1995) 76-81. Other positions in this configuration of power relations are occupied by 'subordinate', 'complicit' and 'marginalised' masculinities.

this power relation as culturally grounded rather than as relying on force and as embedded in material institutional practices. Wanting to avoid the reduction of the study of masculinity to the drawing up of typologies, she stressed that relations of hegemony are always contestable and, as a result, are variable over time.

The emphasis Connell places on the plurality of masculinities and on the dynamic nature of the relations between them, helps to avoid thinking about masculinity in terms that are either straightforwardly essentialist or attribute too much socio-cultural stability to constructions of masculinity. At the same time however, Connell's account of the ideological deployment of hegemonic masculinity seems to limit the space for grasping the diversity and variability of masculinity she has opened up earlier. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as

the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.¹³

Masculinities might be diverse and variable, but hegemonic masculinity's work – its part in giving meaning to and justifying social structures – is presented here as relatively one-dimensional and stable. For Connell, hegemonic masculinity, however contestable and variable, in the end constitutes a defence mechanism aimed at safeguarding the continued existence of patriarchy. It is very likely that culturally exalted notions of masculinity play a part in justifying inequalities of power between women and men, but it is the question whether that is the *only* thing they do. Do they not also help represent other power relations as natural and inevitable?

Historians of colonial masculinity have pointed out how masculinity served to make colonial rule and the hierarchies of race on which it rested appear as self-evident and just. Culturally exalted notions of the masculinity of colonisers and ideas about the effeminacy or the animal and wild masculinity of the colonised were a crucial element of the ideological repertoire of imperialism and colonialism. In this context the work of masculinity was not restricted to safeguarding patriarchy; it also helped sustain power relations of a different nature.¹⁴ Building on this work, historian Mrinalini Sinha has

¹³ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁴ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, New York 1995); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender*

and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest (London, New York 1995) 22; Joanne Nagel, *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers* (Oxford, New York 2003) 91-94.

argued it demonstrates the need to write histories of masculinity in which masculinity is understood

[...] as constitutive of a wide set of social relations. Masculinity, seen thus, traverses multiple axes of race, caste, class, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity. Masculinity, that is to say, cannot be confined within its supposedly 'proper' domain of male-female relations.¹⁵

Sinha argues for a history of masculinity that moves beyond masculinity by concentrating on analyses of masculinity's 'rhetorical and ideological efficacy in underwriting various arrangements of power'. Her approach to the history of masculinity is very close to Scott's notion of gender history in this respect, as well as in her contention that it is only in its ideological deployment that masculinity is constituted. Referring to masculinity's work in colonial India, Sinha claims that both British and colonial masculinity are shaped by the practices of colonial rule. Masculinity, she writes, 'acquires its meaning only in specific practices: it has no a priori context or origin'.¹⁶

A history of masculinity without men

Taking this approach to the study of masculinity to its logical conclusion, Sinha argues that masculinity should be studied without assuming that, in the end, it derives its meaning, or very existence for that matter, from its relationship to male bodies (men). Hers is a history of masculinity in which masculinity has no foundation in the supposedly given category of men. In a sense it is a history of masculinity without men. This is an approach that assumes that masculinity does not originate from male bodies and that is not devoted to tracing the ways in which variable notions of masculinity become connected to 'actually existing' men.¹⁷

To argue that masculinity has no foundation or intrinsic meaning might be experienced as deeply counter-intuitive. It is however, this 'emptiness' of masculinity that helps account for the many ideological uses to which it can be put. It also deserves to be emphasised that the sense that masculinity cannot be a relatively indeterminate category needs to be understood, to a certain extent, as the product of a specific ideological deployment of masculinity. The context of this deployment is the deeply gendered history of the making of the modern nation and nationalism. One

15 Mrinalini Sinha, 'Giving Masculinity a History: Some Contributions from the Historiography of Colonial India', *Gender and History* 11 (1999) 445-460, 446.

16 *Ibid.*, 446.

17 *Ibid.*, 453. On this point, also see: Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Malden MA, Oxford 2010) 18.

of the elements of this history is the process in which nation and masculinity attributed the power of self-determination to each other in a mutually reinforcing manner. This dynamic of a nation and masculinity engaged in the mutual reaffirmation of the power of self-determination has been the implicit topic of traditional political and military history with its unmarked (omni)presence of masculinity. A history of masculinity could do worse than to start by disentangling masculinity and nation if it wants to understand, and distance itself from, the fiction of self-determination that is this entanglement's product.

Relationships of power

The articles in this special issue analyse the work of masculinity in a variety of arenas in which struggles over diverse forms of power took place. The establishment of state power and of the legitimacy of a specific political regime are at stake in Matthijs Lok's and Natalie Scholz' analysis of the rhetoric of masculinity in the Dutch and French Restorations that followed the political crises that came with the breakdown of Napoleonic rule in 1813.¹⁸ I cover similar terrain in my discussion of the part of masculinity in providing the Dutch Restoration monarchy with political legitimacy in the face of the destruction of traditional modes of legitimacy in the late eighteenth-century democratic revolutions. Power relations within the state apparatus are central to Josephine Hoegaerts' study of the role of masculinity in signifying hierarchy in the nineteenth-century Belgian army. Gemma Blok's exploration of the rhetoric used by Dutch movements against alcohol abuse around 1900 sheds light on the role of masculinity in both the competition over political power between various branches of a social reform movement and in the ways non-state organisations wielded power in civil society. Finally, Tine Van Osselaer, in her article on male visionaries in interwar Belgium, investigates struggles over authority and the right to speak religious truth, as these took place at the fringes of organised religion.

As diverse as the arenas of power, are the specific notions of masculinity that emerged from them, and the effects of these on the relations of power in these arenas. Lok and Scholz demonstrate the importance of a rhetoric of fatherhood in the various strategies of legitimisation employed by the Dutch and French Restoration monarchies. Patriarchal justifications of monarchical

18 On the notion of a 'rhetoric of masculinity' and its meanings in modern political culture see Anna Clark, 'The Rhetoric of Masculine Citizenship: Concepts and Representations in Modern Western Political Culture', in: Stefan

Dudink, Karen Hagemann and Anna Clark (eds.), *Representing Masculinity: Male Citizenship in Modern Western Political Culture* (New York 2007) 3-22.

power, of course, were not new. In fact they were central to the ideological repertoire of the monarchies of the *ancien régime*. Profoundly challenged by the ‘fraternal’ politics of the democratic revolutions, a rhetoric of fatherhood was revitalised and transformed during the Restoration era. The Restoration monarchical politics of fatherhood emphasised the love of the father-King for his children-subjects rather than his authority over them. As such, they proved useful particularly in discrediting Napoleon and his regime, depicting them as tyrannical, cruel and bloodthirsty. The politics of the benevolent father marked the beginning of a new era after decades of darkness. The representation of the nation as a harmonious and loving family with the patriarch imagined to be at the head also served to paper over the political divisions of the immediate past and the present.

If the loving father-King helped to restore monarchy in post-Napoleonic Europe, it also played a part in its adaptation to a political world in which traditional strategies of monarchical legitimisation had lost their power. Restoration monarchies avoided the dangerously democratic representation of monarchy as resting on the will of the people. The rhetoric of affection between loving father and children however, did assume that monarchy required emotional investment on the part of both the King and his citizens. This relationship was definitely not one of democratic consent. The requirement of mutual affection however, did imply that political authority did not simply reside in the monarch. However ‘un-political’ the emotional rhetoric of affection might seem, it presumed that monarchy’s power was partly derived from its subjects. The masculinity of the loving father was an important element in this precarious, post-revolutionary balancing act between authority and consent.

My article on an 1818 state portrait of King William I discusses masculinity’s part in resolving another contradiction in the legitimisation of the Dutch Restoration monarchy. In my reading of this portrait I point to the ways in which it drew on conventions for representing the King’s body that had emerged during the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras. Depicted in accordance with these conventions, the ideal male body of the revolutionary period had appeared as a sign of natural political virtue and as the counter image of *ancien régime* artificiality and corruption. At first sight, the reappearance of this revolutionary body politics on a Restoration state portrait might seem out of place. On closer inspection however, it can be seen to have helped provide legitimacy to the newly established monarchy. The naturalness of this virtuous male body lent a sense of reality to the Restoration monarchy. This wanted to escape the theatricality of the old regime, but at the same time, in the absence of traditional modes of political legitimisation, was forced to rely on theatrical means of legitimisation. A masculinity that simultaneously signified virtue and naturalness helped resolve this tension in Restoration politics. Like the benevolent fatherhood of the King and the politics of mutual affection it supported, masculinity here served as a conduit that allowed

certain elements of democratic political modernity to enter the world of Restoration politics, while at the same time transforming these elements.

Josephine Hoegaerts studies notions of masculinity deployed in practices of signifying hierarchy in the nineteenth-century Belgian army. Her article demonstrates the importance of male metaphors of kinship, and of fatherhood in particular, in the making of relations of power within the state apparatus. Masculinity, as Hoegaerts shows, was crucial to the establishment of authority and morale in the army. Its specific construction, however, could change over time and adapt to changing circumstances. For most of the nineteenth century authority in the army, and elsewhere, was expressed in terms of fatherhood and of filial obedience. Conceived as a social position and concomitant role based primarily on age, fatherly authority was strict and stern. When, towards the end of the century, the need to respect soldiers' individuality arose, it could also appear as more benevolent and caring. In both variants of fatherhood however, it was a social role – and so was masculinity.

This gradually began to change from the 1880s onwards. Masculinity started to be defined less as a social position marked, among others things, by age and marital status, and more in terms of male physiology. Male authority then resulted not so much from metaphorical fatherhood – officers occupying the position of the father – but from actual fatherhood or the capacity for it. This shift in the intertwined meanings of masculinity and fatherhood necessitated a reframing of claims on authority that had been couched in the language of paternity. It also tended to undermine these claims. Since practically every man had the physiological capacity for fatherhood, the new construction of masculinity could result in male authority becoming the possession of every man as well. From that point onwards obedience and cohesion in the army were represented as resulting from the authority that came with officers' paternity or the capacity for it. It could also result from the sense of responsibility of the collective of men – all of them potential fathers – who willingly chose to be disciplined and were actively obedient. In this context brotherhood emerged as a metaphor that competed with fatherhood in claims to, and the expressions of, male authority in the army, but also in politics and in representations of the nation.

Next to kinship, chivalry, understood not so much in terms of bloody battle but as a morally upright disposition to serve just causes, in the nineteenth-century was an important language for the expression of masculinity and of claims of authority based on it. Gemma Blok's article on Dutch movements against alcohol abuse around 1900 shows two branches of this movement using a rhetoric of chivalry as they competed to define the goals and means of the temperance movement. One group of temperance campaigners aimed merely at the reduction in the use of spirits or at a general moderation in the use of alcohol. They sought to achieve this through state intervention, and presented themselves as chivalrous knights engaged in a fight to protect the wives and children of the men who had become

emasculated slaves as a result of the alcohol abuse. They called upon the state to join them in this chivalrous campaign for the protection of the weak.

Teetotallers, on the other hand, conceived of the battle against alcohol abuse as a fight of man to man in civil society. Drunkards were now represented as sick men who potentially could be reformed, but this reform also required self-reform on the side of the temperance campaigner. He was to be gentler with the drunkard who needed care rather than punishment, but harder on himself. His work required a heroic choice of total abstinence. The teetotallers used a language of chivalry that was more ambitious and extensive than that of the more moderate wing of the movement. It was used to bolster the manliness of their movement and themselves. Abstinence implied a break with a manly tradition of sociability that centred on the shared consumption of alcohol. The new approach of drunkards as patients in need of care threatened to undermine the image of the social reformer as engaged in a noble fight against evil. The teetotallers' at times hyperbolic language of chivalry served to underline that teetotallers too were men engaged in a battle for social reform. Both their ability to speak up, and be heard, in the public sphere and the appeal of their movement to other men were seen to depend on teetotallers' appearing as manly. Here, masculinity had become a rhetorical device in the struggle over (political) power within a social movement. Also, it figured as the desired outcome of practices of discipline aimed as much at reformers themselves as at their subjects of reform.

Tine Van Osselaer's study of male visionaries in interwar Belgium presents the reader with expressions of religious experiences that appeared to go against contemporary norms of manly behaviour. These lower class men displayed an intense emotional expressivity during their encounters with Mary. This seemed to place them outside notions of manhood that stressed men's rationality and composure. However these notions were more flexible than one might expect and proved capable of accommodating the ecstatic religiosity of these male visionaries. This was behaviour that people expected to accompany visionary experiences, including those of men. Something that also helps to explain the absence of critical comments on the visionaries in terms of unmanliness is the notion that the Marian encounter constituted a moment of transcendence. During these moments visionaries were thought to rise like angels above their humanity – including their sex. The lack of criticism can also be explained by the fact that these men returned to normative modes of manly behaviour after their ecstatic meetings with the divine. In this case, the relative elasticity of normative notions of masculinity allowed these men to exert a specific form of power – the authority to speak religious truth.

The flexible nature of religious notions of masculinity enabled these men to speak on religious matters without their credibility being challenged but to be heard, the visionaries, situated at the fringes of organised religion needed further support. They found themselves in an environment marked by

struggles over clerical and lay religiosity and over religious authority between higher and lower echelons of the clerical hierarchy. Several actors engaged in these struggles promoted, for different reasons, the male visionaries. As a result, the visionaries got caught up in the strategies over religious power which were not theirs. Here, masculinity did not serve as the well-defined anchor point for claims to authority of a group that asserted to embody this masculinity: rather, masculinity appears here as relatively flexible and as opening up a space for contestation between actors other than those whose masculinity was initially at stake.

For a history of masculinity the variety of masculinities discussed in these articles, as well as the highly divergent conflicts over power in which they were deployed, are more interesting than any commonalities between them. Still, two conclusions of a more general nature may be drawn. First, in none of the cases presented did the deployment of masculinity serve exclusively to safeguard ‘the legitimacy of patriarchy’ in order to ‘guarantee [...] the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’, as Connell’s theory of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ would suggest. The articles in this special issue underline Mrinalini Sinha’s contention that the ‘rhetorical and ideological efficacy’ of masculinity resides in its ability to underwrite ‘various arrangements of power’, and not just those concerning gender. The conflicts over power in which masculinity was rhetorically deployed that the authors of this issue analyse were often struggles between men. In these conflicts appeals to masculinity served to make the access to political, social, military and religious power the privilege of some men and to exclude other men from it.

This is not to say that the deployment of masculinity did not happen in the context of conflicts over power that pertained to gender. The late nineteenth-century emergence of metaphors of brotherhood that Josephine Hoegaerts indicates redefined power relations between men. They also excluded women more firmly than before from access to citizenship, which became anchored in the shared physiology of men. The teetotallers who claimed to be manly knights, studied by Gemma Blok, did so as part of their struggle with other (male) temperance campaigners. They also attempted to stake out for themselves a piece of the emerging field of professionalised social care in which women hoped to find employment. The male lay visionaries in Tine Van Osselaer’s article entered into competition not just with male clerics, they also competed with the lay women and girls who had obtained a certain amount of religious authority as a result of their Marian encounters. In none of the articles however, is the meaning of the rhetoric of masculinity under discussion to be found exclusively or ultimately in its link to power relations of gender. All of them, in other words, point to the fruitfulness of a history of masculinity that moves ‘beyond masculinity’ and ‘beyond gender’.

Second, several of the constructions of masculinity under discussion seem remarkably less straightforwardly ‘manly’ than one might expect. Fatherly figures of authority, be they Kings or officers, could be as loving as

they were stern. Chivalrous social reformers boasted their capacity to fight social evil as much as their ability to care for its victims. Male visionaries displayed a range of emotions that went against codes of manly rationality and composure, but were not discredited for this. This relatively wide range of what could count as manly indicates how the history of masculinity might contribute to a rethinking of dominant narratives in the history of conceptualisations of gender. The idea that somewhere ‘around 1800’ a modern regime of sexual difference emerged in which this difference was constructed as both binary and natural, has been criticised repeatedly and from various angles. Nevertheless, it continues – implicitly – to shape much work in gender history. It has yet to be replaced with a convincing alternative account of the making of modern notions of sexual difference. The relative generosity and flexibility of normative notions of masculinity explored in this issue, suggest the persistence of notions of sexual difference of a less binary nature well into the nineteenth, and even twentieth, century. Josephine Hoegaerts’ assertion that it is only from the 1880s’ onwards that masculinity becomes constructed in terms of a universal male physiology also indicates that the modern naturalised regime of sexual difference might be younger than gender historians have often assumed.

Perhaps what we are dealing with here is a male privilege not to be hemmed in by restrictive normative models, including those of gender. In a critical analysis of the research on the gender history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century domesticity, Martin Francis has argued that the lives and subjectivities of men were never fully determined by prevailing codes concerning man’s place in the world. ‘Men constantly travelled back and forward across the frontier of domesticity, if only in the realm of the imagination’.¹⁹ The articles in this issue present us with a similar ability of notions of masculinity not to be entirely constricted by normative codes. They point to the ability of rhetorical and ideological constructions of masculinity to incorporate under the label ‘masculinity’ a relatively wide range of characteristics and behaviours – including those otherwise deemed ‘feminine’. As a result of this the category masculinity can be deployed in many ideological registers and to varying political effects at the same time. In this respect too, the contributions to this special issue suggest that in order to understand the power of masculinity historians need to go ‘beyond masculinity’ – just as masculinity ‘itself’ has done. ◀

19 Martin Francis, ‘The Domestication of the Male?: Recent Research on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity’, *The Historical Journal* 45 (2002) 637-652, 643.