

THE AGE OF MANSCAPING: CONTROLLING BODIES
AND DEFINING MANHOOD IN THE 21st CENTURY

by

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Thesis directed by Marjorie Levine-Clark

ABSTRACT

Over the last thirty years male body hair removal has become increasingly common. Male body hair removal, or manscaping, as it is often referred to in popular media has spawned a slew of controversy. Manscaping articles reveal a fear of losing “real men” suggesting that the meaning of manhood is changing. According to manscaping rhetoric, strength, self-mastery, the appearance of health, and active heterosexuality are a few of the many criteria of hegemonic masculinity in the 21st century. As a new less hairy image of manhood takes hold across the world many groups struggle to adapt. But the growing popularity of manscaping is one way that bodies are being commodified and reduced to a means to personal identity and success. The development of manscaping corresponds to a culture that rewards alienation, narcissism, fear, and control. I begin my analysis with a reading of manscaping rhetoric from a wide variety of sources and social media. Next I analyze the deeper consequences and implications of the rhetoric. Using a variety of feminist, modern and post-modern perspectives I assess the assumptions made by manscaping rhetoric as they impact gendered, raced, aged, classed, as well as plant and animal bodies.

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend its publication.

Approved: Marjorie Levine-Clark

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I would like to thank all those who confessed their body hair stories to me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	The Task at Hand.....	1
	The Problem: Changing Images of Manhood.....	3
	Some History.....	5
II.	WHAT MANSCAPING IS.....	8
	Manscaped.....	8
	Perfectible.....	10
	Shameful.....	11
	Normal.....	12
	Political.....	13
	Civilized.....	15
	Morally Good.....	17
	Healthy.....	18
	Moderate.....	20
	(Hetero)Sexual.....	21
	Mature.....	24
	Manly.....	25
III.	CONSEQUENCES OF MANSCAPING PROPORTIONS.....	27
	Against the Feminine.....	28
	Against Nature.....	30
	Against the Weak.....	33

	Against the Body.....	36
	Against Society.....	39
	Against Responsibility.....	40
IV.	CONCLUSION.....	44
	Making Sense of It All.....	44
	To What End?.....	45
	Some Hope.....	46
V.	END NOTES.....	50
VI.	REFERENCES.....	55

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Dear Abby: I've never seen a problem like mine in your column. I'm a 33-year old normal man except that I have absolutely no hair on my chest, arms or legs. And that is where I want hair the most. I have plenty of hair on my head and a thick growth in my pubic hair, so I know I can grow hair, but I'm so ashamed of my hairless body I avoid going to the beach. Is there some kind of treatment I can take to promote the growth of hair where I want it? I am miserable in my hairless state. I want to be like the other guys.

--Hairless in Hilo"¹

The Task at Hand

If you are old enough you might be able to sympathize with "Hairless in Hilo's" desire for body hair. Today, you would be hard pressed to find a celebrity, a sports star, or even an up and coming financial advisor sporting a hairy chest. The fact of the matter is, men are increasingly likely to remove their body hair. A 2008 Australian study found that 82.1% of gay men and 66.4% of straight men removed their pubic hair at least once.² In 2009, marketing researchers found that men in the US spend as much as \$2.3 billion a year on skin care and grooming products.³ And in India, marketers are anticipating a 20% annual growth rate of male grooming products by 2015.⁴ Salon owners are overwhelmed by the increasing rates of male customers while some have actually opened salons that cater exclusively to men.⁵ When Braun did a global study across seven countries, they found very lucrative results:

Few women have positive associations with hairy, unpolished men. Just 5% saw such men as attractive, 4% considered them passionate and only 2% associated them with

success. In contrast, 37% women said the word 'ape' came to mind when they saw such men, while 25% saw them as sleazy. About 25% women thought hairy men are lazy or poor, and 23% assumed such men were uncultured.⁶

It is clear, hairy men are going out of fashion and they are being replaced by the new manscaped male.

So what exactly is manscaping? The popularization of the term “manscaping” comes from the television show *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (2003-2007) but is usually understood as the trimming or removal of male body hair and sometimes includes the use of beautifying skin products. Manscaping rituals and styles vary on a spectrum from light trimming of pubic hair before a big date to extravagant trimming, waxing, shaving, plucking, and exfoliating routines. But no matter the extremeness of manscaping, the body is understood as a means of personal self-expression, to display social status and value. The manscaper invests in his body like he would a business. His body must appear competitive, up to date, clean, well designed, functional and lucrative.

We can see the emergence of manscaping through a wide variety of media. Before the term formally existed the male hairless body became popularized by the emergence of body building and pro-wrestling in the early 80's.⁷ Meanwhile, the hairless images of musicians like David Bowie, Michael Jackson, and Prince proliferated in popular media. These icons opened new possibilities of what a man can look like. Today, self-help books, YouTube videos, infomercials and magazines speak bluntly of the virtues and even necessity of male body hair removal. The image of the manscaped body has become ubiquitous in media and advertising. Advertisements with exposed male bodies, regardless of the race, gender, and sexual orientation

of the target audience or model are almost universally going to be “manscaped.” To many men and women born after 1980, the manscaped body is the ideal male body.

The Problem: Changing Images of Manhood

Many manscaping articles have welcomed the development of manscaping as a step towards equality between men and women, or even gay, and straight men. However, I will argue that controlling bodies, whether they are men’s or women’s, only amplifies an overall attitude of domination and commodification bodies. Manscaping rhetoric from industry “experts,”⁸ anti-manscapers, and pro-manscapers exposes the fears and desires challenged and relieved by the development of manscaping. I will argue that the development of manscaping has only superficially challenged definitions hegemonic manhood and manliness continues to be defined against a set of interconnected and decidedly inferior others including but not limited to gay men, poor men, Jewish men, men of color, elderly men, children, animals, and all women.

Manscaping controversy has risen out of the tensions implied by the new image of ideal manhood. Writers, journalists, and marketers are surprised to find that men are removing their body hair, and these groups are take positions on whether it is a good thing or a bad thing. Pro-manscaping media include articles sponsored by various male grooming companies, popular men’s and women’s magazines, and freelance journalists who are excited to see men take up the habit. They believe that it is morally good, healthy, practical, a sign of maturity, civility, and success. Meanwhile, anti-manscaping media is composed of bloggers and journalists fearing the feminization of men. They believe that men are become boyish, vain, and womanly. Manscaping is at the crux of debate between two images of manhood. On one end we have a hairy, antiquated vision of manhood which suggests a simpler time when all men had to do was bring home the

bacon. And on the other end, we have the up-and-coming manscaped vision of manhood which connotes ambiguity, complexity and compromise.

The development of manscaping is a response to the fears and values around the changing image of hegemonic masculinity in the 21st century. It occurred contemporaneously with the outbreak of aids spurring a heightened fear of uncleanness, disease, and gay men. The increasing acceptance of women, non-whites, and homosexuals in public and political spaces and positions of power has threatened male dominance over economics and politics. The rise of social media and the internet has changed the way that people meet, network, and gain social resources. And the disappearance of the middle class has put more men in economically precarious positions forcing them to find other ways to display their social status and ability to perform manhood besides being a breadwinner.⁹ The means of displaying manliness had to be transformed in order to accommodate these new threats to manhood. Manscaping is one way some men are trying to forge a new image of manliness. Today, the body that appears young, healthy, hetero-sexual, economically successful, and effortlessly maintained is the ideal body.¹⁰

What we see in Manscaping rhetoric is one ideal masculinity taking over another. Connell and Messerschmidt describe this process as a "struggle for hegemony" wherein the means of becoming a man within a society are created and changed.¹¹ Historically hegemonic masculinities have "embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men."¹² Today, the hegemonic masculinity continues to be an ideal which most men do not and cannot achieve but nevertheless have a complex relationship to. Hegemonic masculinity sets a standard according to cultural and historical values and material conditions for all who wish to achieve the most desirable and powerful social position of

manhood. The new manscaped vision of masculinity is being constructed through manscaping rhetoric as well as the bodies and beliefs of manscapers. And though many men may not manscape, or they may not call it "manscaping," there is an undeniable shift of signifiers taking place around male body hair and the means to achieve manhood.

Some History

Though manscaping is certainly a phenomenon of our time, many of these fears and desires in manscaping rhetoric build off historical associations of body hair and of manhood. For centuries, the ideal male body was one that has been able to signify affluence and social dominance. Throughout most of history, pale fat bodies signified affluence while laboring bodies were tan from working in the fields and thin due to lack of proper nutrition. But, in the 19th and 20th century, as working class men moved from the field into the factory, tan skin and glistening muscles began signifying an affluent body.¹³ Suddenly, a tan muscular body meant that that person could go on vacations, had access to proper nutrition and had the time to participate in leisure activities such as sports, and exercise. The "healthy" body continued to be a symbol of affluence and leisure, but the symbols changed according to the differing material conditions of the laboring and affluent body.¹⁴ Ideal male body types went from lean and wiry in the 19th century to muscular tan bodies in the 20th century, to now in the 21st century, a thin, toned, tanned and manscaped body.

For millennia, body hair has been an important means to display social positions. Body hair has served as a signifier of gender, nationality, civility, and moral goodness. As early as ancient Rome, Ovid declared untamed body hair on girls a sign of depravity.¹⁵ European colonialists cited inability to grow beards as evidence for the inferiority of non-European men to

justify their humiliation and enslavement.¹⁶ After Darwin, lack of body hair became a tool for evaluating and proving the evolutionary superiority of man over apes (and other human beings.)¹⁷ In the 18th century, Peter the Great levied a heavy tax on all Russian men who kept their beards in an effort to bring Russia in to the modern European age.¹⁸ In the 19th and 20th centuries masses swarmed to see bearded ladies while physicians diagnosed and treated overly hairy women with life threatening treatments like X-rays.¹⁹ Today anxiety around excess and lack of body hair builds off of fears and associations that have developed at different times throughout western history. Within the context of late capitalism, those fears and associations manifest into body hair maintenance rituals, product consumption, and self-commodification on an extreme scale -- Manscaping. Male body hair maintenance has become an expression of personal identity and social value.

Anti-manscapers' anxieties around the changing definitions of manhood are reified in the bodies of manscapers. Many men who were raised to be breadwinners are struggling to provide for their families with a single income. Men have lost many of their homo-social spaces and must share work spaces, social spaces, and home responsibilities with women.²⁰ And to make matters worse they have to compete with men of color, gay men, men across the world, and the images of perfectly sculpted (and hairless) men that are inescapable in pornography, advertising, and media. I will show this by first describing and deconstructing manscaping rhetoric. This will illustrate what exactly manscaping means and why people are doing it, encouraging it, or abstaining from it. We will see how fears, old and new, are called to task by manscaping rhetoric. We will see that tensions and contradictions within manscaping rhetoric reveal the real issues of manscaping (and the new definition of manhood). In the second part of my analysis I will connect those main issues to larger social systems and examine the consequences of this

new manscaped image of manhood. I will show how this new image of masculinity, just like past definitions, is forged against the bodies of others, the less-than-men, and that nobody wins.

CHAPTER II

WHAT MANSCAPING IS

I would like to begin the first half of my analysis with a comparison between two characters defined by their manscaping. The first is Christian Bale's Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho*(2009); the second is Hugh Jackman's Wolverine of *X-men Origins: Wolverine*(2009). Patrick Bateman appears first to us in his apartment, diligently maintaining his toned, tan, smooth, and hairless body.²¹ He treats his body as a piece of work, a place for pride, and a means to profit and power. His character is rational, calculated, and wildly successful in every domain of his life, possibly barring psychological or psychological health. (His smallest decisions -- like where to eat and what to wear are important life decisions which require great thought and planning.) Wolverine, on the other hand, is first and foremost a man-beast. He is hirsute, emotional, and a Canadian wanderer. His character is non-materialistic, confrontational and instinctual. He is always ready for a fight and quick to put his life on the line for love.²²

Both characters are heroes and villains in their own right. Both are reacting to systems of power and have found their place within that system. Bateman was born on top and must maintain that status at whatever physical, psychological, or emotional costs, while Wolverine was born on the bottom -- a mutant rejected from society who must fight to defend what little he has. These characters epitomize the deep associations between body hair maintenance, social status, and morality which will re-emerge over and again throughout my analysis of manscaping rhetoric.

Manscaped

*"Sometimes we just don't deal with an unseemly problem until there's a bright and bouncy name for it. Such is the case with 'manscaping.'"*²³

First things first, let's take a look at the term "manscaping." There has been a recent upsurge of neologisms around male appropriation of behaviors and products deemed "for women." The "man purse" as in a bag for men, "bromance" as in a romance between and for men, and even "mantihose" for male leg wear (as in pantyhose for men). Some neologisms within manscaping rhetoric include the "boyzillian" or "brozillian" (the man version of the Brazilian wax), and "heavage" referring to male chest cleavage.²⁴ Since we do not have an equivalently gendered term for female body hair removal, we are to assume that body hair removal is naturally a woman's behavior and only exceptionally a male behavior. This assumption plays an important role in distinguishing between acceptable levels of male vanity and "womanly" levels of vanity.

The "scaping" in manscaping refers consciously to landscaping. Male (and female) body hair is almost universally referred to in terms of plant overgrowth (jungle, bush, and, forest). The male body is terrain to be tamed, cleaned up, and ultimately civilized for the viewing of others. The Queer Eye originator of the term explains:

Think of it as a wilderness. In the beginning, there are trees and forests and wild weeds everywhere. And then civilization comes along and somebody says, I'm going to keep a garden. I'm going to separate these flowers from the rest. All of a sudden, rather than this unruly growth, you have a landscaped world. In our case, body hair is the natural bounty, and what we need is a little manscaping.²⁵

The male body here is made equivalent to a naturalistic space waiting to be civilized, tamed, and made presentable. And again, we are reminded that "a little" manscaping is needed -- not too much to seem womanly, but definitely some.

Perfectible

One of the most prominent assumptions within manscaping rhetoric is that the body is something in which we can and should invest our money, time, and energy. I use the word “invest” intentionally because the body is literally a site of cultural, social, and economic value. Self-help and advice articles assume that the reader wants to improve himself and increase or maintain his self and social value. Thirty-two-year-old Evan Scott is quoted in one article, “I like to represent myself in a certain way, from no clothes to fully buttoned up, and I think that this is an extension of my overall presentation.”²⁶ Manscaping is something to be done to make you sexier, cleaner, and generally better.

A true manscaper makes a ritual or habit of trimming, shaving, waxing, and plucking body hair as part of a larger image and lifestyle. It makes up a whole package where everything must be there in order to achieve absolute perfection. The ideal manscaper reveals muscle, not fat or bone, he smells good, he is tanned, and he of course knows which body hair is acceptable in what quantities and where. Body hair, like the body itself, is a kind of accessory or clothing, designed and maintained. Men are encouraged to match the amount of chest hair they have with the hair on other parts of their body. Like choosing a suit or tie, there are better and worse combinations of body hair length, coverage, and rate of tapering. Some salons even offer men customized services where they can get their body hair trimmed and shaved to make their waist look thinner, pecks and genitals appear bigger, and abs look more defined.²⁷ The male body, naked, is no longer naked but designed, flexible and improvable.

But what manscapers are actually striving to achieve is a perfect balance. Most of the anxieties around manscaping revolve around the idea of excess -- both excess hair (Wolverine) and excess concern (Bateman). Too much body hair is a problem but so is too much concern. To

be too hairy is to be sloppy, impolite, dirty, unsexy, and with questionable social status. To be too hairless is to be too controlling, too vain, too feminine (or gay), or insecure. The body men must work for is one which appears effortlessly perfect. This is our first contradiction.

Shameful

If you don't have a gift with synonym, sarcasm, and vague innuendo, most manscaping advice might be over your head. In manscaping rhetoric, male genitals are heavily coded. Manscaping is referred to as “going bare down there,”²⁸ and “below-the-belt clean-up,”²⁹ to “deforesting the nether regions” and “clearing the table [to accentuate] the centerpiece,”³⁰ and even “trimming the hedges to make the house look bigger.”³¹ Meanwhile, male genitals are called “happy areas”³² and, tellingly, “manhood.”³³ The coding of male body parts serves a couple purposes. It serves as form of comic relief. Since discourse on male body hair is still pretty new and the authors are trying to sell the idea to men who don't already manscape, most writers, estheticians, and advertisers choose to use funny and unthreatening language to deflate the discomfort posed by talking seriously about the “very real issue”³⁴ of male body hair. Because male body hair has only recently been considered a problem, many people use non-confrontational and indirect references to male body parts to both deflect anxiety and draw attention to this new problem — to create shame but also make a call to action.

Secondly, coding the reasons for manscaping makes manscaping seem more exciting and taboo — in other words, sexy. The coding emphasizes the sexual organs of the male body to promote the imagined sexual benefits of manscaping. Although salons provide fairly straightforward services, when they actually bring up the penis coding is used. One salon owner manages to avoid talking about the male genitals while speaking specifically about them. She explains that “some men think there's an added perk of getting a Brazilian: an enlarging effect

for the main attraction. It accentuates it, because there's nothing to obscure the, you know, implement down there."³⁵ Despite actually doing the work of interacting with this part of the male anatomy regularly, to actually speak of the male genitals is off limits. This puts the penis, and male sexuality, in a strange position of being both very important while the effort put into making it better or more effective is a shameful secret.

Probably the most important shame associated with manscaping is the mere fact of one's manscaping. Though manscaping is considered essential, removing body hair is not something that a manscaper might openly discuss with his friends. In fact, much of the coding, like "doing the deed,"³⁶ or "do their business"³⁷ implies certain discretion involved in manscaping. One salon owner even says one regular originally came in as part of a dare.³⁸ In any case manscaping is something that men should do, but not feel proud of. They should appear maintained, but naturally and effortlessly so. To openly care or put real effort in to one's body or appearance might seem vain, feminine, or insecure. (We will see more on this fact as we continue to traverse the meanings and implementation of manscaping.)

Normal

One of the most important things a salon owner or manscaping product seller can say is just how normal and popular manscaping is. One salon owner explains that he has "a cross-section of people, from body builder-types to business people" others explain that "It's so across the board, it's kind of surprising . . . honestly, it's everybody."³⁹ One *Cosmopolitan* article reports that they found that out of 1,000 "dudes" polled, "a whopping 95% admitted to manscaping."⁴⁰ While the term "admitted" in this quotation shows the shameful element of needing to manscape, the circulation of a statistic like this simultaneously normalizes the act in a powerful way. Men can stop feeling afraid or ashamed of removing their body hair.

Manscaping is not just okay, but it is what everyone else is doing. In the same Cosmo article, one twenty-seven year old manscaper gives his personal testimony:

On a spring-break trip with my boys, I noticed that one guy in our group had what looked like a bush that was trying to escape from his swim trunks...I told him to look around at the rest of us--no one else had anything like that going on. By the next day he had shaved.⁴¹

His story illustrates one way that men are learning to manscape—through one another. This young man very cautiously avoids bringing up the actual act of manscaping and instead focuses on the expectation of a manscaped body through simple illustration. Everyone else had done it—so should his friend.

But what is the purpose of discussing the virtues of manscaping in women's journals like *Cosmopolitan*? Women, just like men, are being taught to expect it. One journalist explains that “Finally men realized if they present themselves for a date with a bush, most likely they won't get a second chance.”⁴² The normalizing force of “expert opinions” and polls influence how manscaping is perceived by both men and women. Therefore, not only other men but women too become important in enforcing the manscaped norm.

Moderate

There are also subtle ideological implications that come with manscaping (or refusing to manscape). A coffee table guidebook outlining pubic hair styles explains that:

If you came of age in the '70's, or just wish you did, the Au Naturel is the style for you. To create it, just let yourself be as your creator made you. Don't shave, trim or even contemplate...use the time you used to spend on pubic hair maintenance to start a food co-op in your community!⁴³

The decision to not-manscape signifies a kind of social defiance and idealism that recalls the beards and long hair of the 60's. But now it is not just beards that signify political status, but all body hair. Manscaping separates those who are longing for the idealistic world of the 60's, and those living in the "real" world where men have to manscape. Hippies and the far left are likely to reject manscaping for its consumerist, materialistic features.

On the opposite end of the political spectrum, the idealized hairy man often brings up nostalgic ideals of former manliness for anti-manscapers. They long for a time when men were manly and knew their place as breadwinner and knew how to handle and protect a woman. An infamous example anti-manscaping women bring up is a centerfold of Burt Reynolds posing naked (and hairy) on a bear rug.⁴⁴ It is not just Burt's body hair that these anti-manscaping women lust after, but a time when men were burly, mature, breadwinners. One woman recalls:

The seventies and eighties were gloriously thatchy [sic] time to be alive: Burt Reynolds was almost indistinguishable from the bear rug on which he lolled in Cosmo . . . but the financial upswing that was the bulk of the Clinton years seemed, sadly, to create a taste for smoother, more boyish men.⁴⁵

For this anti-manscaping woman, the economic comfort of the 90's marked the loss of strong virile men. They were to be replaced by weaker, less mature, "boyish men." Both the leftists and conservatives reject manscaping on the grounds of over feminization. They are both grieving an older (hairy) vision of manhood that represented a different kind of world.

Meanwhile, the moderate man is much more likely pick up on new social queues and take up manscaping. This kind of man's ideology can be best understood through the term "metro-sexual." Manscaping dominates urban areas among white middle class men under thirty-five (though as we will see later, not exclusively.) Social and political values differ among

manscapers and non-manscapers for geographic, social class, and generational reasons. For those on the far left or right, metro-sexuality is typically used as a derogatory term, implying vanity or general lack of manliness (as in, “When you see hair nestling like a headless a squirrel on your beloved’s chest you know you have a man in your bed. Not a metrosexual, but a Man.)”⁴⁶ But others use the same term as an unprejudiced descriptive word.⁴⁷ The metrosexual is not hung up on traditional definitions of manhood. He is able and willing to accommodate the changing demands of society, including manscaping.

Civilized

There is a very rich and curious tendency to equate the hairy man to an animal. Perhaps the reasons for this are obvious to some, but for critical folks like me, it is unclear why this is such a big deal; after all, human beings are in fact animals . . . with body hair. It is unclear in manscaping rhetoric whether animality is good or bad. Hairless men are equated to rats while hairy men are “bears,”⁴⁸ “gorillas,”⁴⁹ or simply “beasts.”⁵⁰ No proof is really necessary to make these associations--a hairy man is somehow self-evidently more animalistic than a less hairy man. One advice column exclaims, “it’s a bear, it’s a beast, it’s big foot. No, it’s simply a very hairy man.”⁵¹ In this case, a man’s hairiness makes him akin to an animal or possibly even a monster. One pro-manscaper fears a momentary upsurge of hairy men (still manscaped, trimmed not shaved) in fashion and media says: “The cavemean is back.”⁵² For him, men who refuse to assimilate modern ideals of hairlessness are so uncivilized that they are comparable to pre-humans. Manscaping for pro-manscapers seems to be a long awaited evolution of the social and civilized male.

Even more curious though, the animalistic man (the non-manscaper) is often described in terms of his sexuality. A hairy man will be more savage in bed while a manscaped man will be

restrained and well-mannered. One anti-manscaper explains that our very same Hugh Jackman (Wolverine) has “unabashedly displayed his sexily untamed man fur . . . and he is all the hotter for it” and that “chest hair has returned with a vengeance as the sign of sex appeal and virility.”⁵³ We are to assume the chest hair is sign of shameless sexuality.

Meanwhile, one pro-manscaping heterosexual woman tells her story about a failed partnership due to one man’s refusal to manscape:

He resented what he referred to as my attempts to ‘feminize’ him. I was merely trying to civilize him. Humans are social creatures and our societies have advanced as body hair has retreated. A streamlined chest is not a sign of wimpishness but of sophistication.⁵⁴

For pro-manscapers, a manscaped man is a tame, polite and accommodating man while for anti-manscapers hairlessness connotes a lack of virility and a victim of the feminizing forces of civilization. Both anti and pro manscapers have the same associations of body hair = animality, lack of body hair = civility, but they have fundamentally different values in regards to these characteristics. In these cases the question really isn’t about whether manscaping is good or not but what makes a man.

Morally Good

“What evil sprouts from the pits and pores of man!”

--Kyan Douglas, “Grooming” in *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*

Many pro-manscaping men and women vow that manscaping is just the polite and considerate thing to do. Since we have already gathered that, at least for pro-manscapers, unchecked body hair is generally considered offensive, the manscaper is morally superior to the non-manscaper. One pro-manscaping woman explains that “[Chest hair] is unpleasantly moist or

far too brillo pad like . . . it leaves the female face scoured-causing itchy, red blotches and leaves the hands with the unpleasant sensation of having uprooted a prickly shrub.”⁵⁵ A manscaped man understands how gross, painful, or otherwise inappropriate others (women specifically) find his body hair and has taken it upon himself to get rid of it no matter the cost. And don’t forget, there is a cost, and some men don’t “have the guts, the required comfort level or the financial means to have their various follicles regularly tended to.”⁵⁶ Some men must just aren’t strong (or financially secure) enough to make the sacrifice necessary to ensure the comfort of others.

In many cases, manscaping is considered part of a mutual compromise. If he expects her to remove her offensive body hair, he should do the same. “What’s good for the goose is good for the gander. ‘If I have those expectations of someone else, I probably would want to return the favor’”⁵⁷ and “[t]he vast majority say they’re doing it because their wife or their girlfriend told them to do it . . . the wives bring them’ saying ‘If I’m going to do it, you better do it as well.’”⁵⁸ Now this makes the non-manscaper look pretty inconsiderate compared to the egalitarian manscaper. One *Cosmopolitan* article even warns: “Guys who don’t trim their pubic hair fall into two camps. The first is the alpha male who thinks maintenance beyond shaving his face is gay . . . the other type of guy is sweet but lazy.”⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the manscaper is depicted in quite a different light. The author explains that “this type of guy knows what’s expected of him and will be attentive without being over-the-top sensitive . . . he’ll be conscious of what you like and how to satisfy you.”⁶⁰ He is the perfect man, and all he had to do was trim a little!

The moral consequences for being a non-manscaper are impressive. In many cases body hair can be a signal to a wide range of character flaws. One woman explains:

Chest hair is often a poor cover for letting the male figure go to pot. These hairy slobbs seem to be saying, look at me, I may be flabby but at least I have next year’s winner of

best garden at the Chelsea Flower show stuck to my front. These men tend not only to booze but to over-eat bacon sarnies and tubs of cookie dough ice-cream behind your back.⁶¹

So, in case you haven't figured it out yet, an unmanscaped man is a selfish, lazy, fat, boozehound. The reasons to manscape are really piling up, but we are just getting started!

Healthy

A man or woman sporting the short trim says to the world, "I'm clean, I'm safe, and I don't have to take prescription meds to control a psychiatric condition"

--Pablo Michelle, *Hip Snips: Your Complete Guide to Dazzling Pubic Hair*

One of the most compelling contradictions within manscaping beliefs has to do with its supposed healthiness (usually physical health, but occasionally, as in the case of the above quotation, mental.) While many pro-manscapers and body hair "experts" believe that less body hair is more sanitary and healthy than bodies with a lot of hair, health professionals have identified a number health risks directly associated with the removal of body hair-particularly pubic hair. Novice historians and even evolutionary biologists explain that humans preferred less body hair because it signaled health since lice were less likely to be present.⁶² But pro-manscapers use this logic to explain that *removing* body hair is cleaner, safer, and more hygienic. One pro-manscaping woman recalls with horror:

In Dr. No, when a giant black tarantula lands on [Sean Connery's] naked front, I found it hard to distinguish the spider from his chest. Both were equally unappealing-and potentially unhealthy. Observing the torso of my hirsute former boyfriend, I was never quite sure what was hiding in all that undergrowth. Fleas? Lice? Some killer bug? Or, maybe nothing at all-and that includes muscle.⁶³

For this woman, body hair not only implies health on a couple levels. The first refers to the pre-historic man who evolved to have less body hair to reduce the risk of infestation (this explanation is still up for debate by the way.) The second is a more modern vision of health connected to musculature. Another woman explains that “[chest hair] is totally uninviting and unhygienic.”⁶⁴ But even those who aren’t so deeply horrified by supposed disease ridden filth that is body hair agree that removing body hair makes them feel cleaner. One manscaper explains simply “It’s routine for me now . . . I do the whole thing myself. I feel better, it looks better. I feel like I’m cleaner, and it’s more sanitary.”⁶⁵

Now, this is all good and fine, except that even the responsible salon owner has to (and occasionally does)⁶⁶ admit that there are health risks associated with the removal of body hair. One doctor even wrote an article explaining that all doctors had a responsibility to encourage their patients not to remove their pubic hair because of the associated health risks. She explains that removing pubic hair not only increases the likelihood of staph infections, boils, abscesses, and pustules, but that “freshly shaved pubic areas and genitals are also more vulnerable to herpes infections due to the microscopic wounds being exposed to the virus carried by mouth or genitals. It follows that there may be vulnerability to spread other STIs, as well.”⁶⁷ Hair follicles that have been irritated by tweezing, shaving, and waxing result in microscopic wounds that can be easily infected. Folliculitis refers specifically to infection of hair follicles which can be caused by body hair removal. To add insult to injury, warm moist places, like those that grow hair on the human body, tend to already be breeding grounds for bacteria.⁶⁸ Hairless bodies can and perhaps should be more closely associated with infections and disease rather than health and sterility. So when a salon owner says of a client: “he likes to feel clean,”⁶⁹ it is important to know that he just “feels” clean and healthy -- whether or not he actually *is*.

Practical

According to manscaping discourse, what sets manscaping apart from female body hair removal is that manscaping is inherently practical, whereas what women do is aesthetic or vain. Manscapers and manscaping product providers appeal to practicality as the primary reasoning for removing body hair. And importantly, the practical value of manscaping sets it distinctly apart from how and why women and gay men remove their body hair (we will talk more about why this is later.) One manscaper explains: “Manscaping helps keep you cooler in the summer months, you use less deodorant . . . There’s no need to get pretty with this thing as we are men—just stay clean and you’re covered.”⁷⁰ Men that manscape for purely aesthetic purposes are considered too feminine or vain. It is important for manscapers to have on hand *practical* reasons for manscaping so as to avoid such accusations. One manscaper even goes so far as to explain: “when body hair grows too long it can be troublesome and get tangled in clothing or even zippers.”⁷¹ Though this may actually be a problem for some individuals, I hardly believe it in itself is a major factor in the development of manscaping. Any excuse, it seems, is a good excuse.

Some benefits can seem superficial but are designed to heighten other features considered “manly” like muscles, heterosexuality, or the penis itself. One pro-manscaping man explains that “[r]emoving chest hair allows for muscles to shine as their definition is more apparent . . . trimming your genital area will profit your personal hygiene, your appearance and it may even spice up your sex life.”⁷² It is commonly understood that a major reason for removing body hair is to show off a muscular or competitive body. This reasoning made the extreme manscaping done by body builders and professional athletes some of the first acceptable instances of hetero-

masculine hairlessness.⁷³ Because the male body was also extremely muscular, the femininity of hairlessness could be forgiven or better yet, forgotten.

(Hetero)Sexual

“Nobody likes wildly unchecked hair unless it’s post JBF[Just been fucked] hair!”

-- Petronella Wyatt and Tanya Gold, “Hairy Chests or Polished Pecs?”

Though it may not seem obvious at first, manscaping rhetoric is a heterosexual affair.⁷⁴ Why? Well, it might have something to do with the fact that homosexual men, and women for that matter, already know how and why to remove their body hair. No one is surprised or confused at gay men removing their body hair, since, again, like women, they just ‘naturally’ do it. We can see this clearly implied in one article titled “Manscaping: Do Straight Men Really Shave Down There?” where one woman explains her first experience with a manscaped body:

I remember the first time I saw a man with shaved armpits at the gym, sometime in the early 2000s. I remember thinking: Gay? Not really getting that vibe. Vain? Hmmm, not really seeing an overly-polished presentation and will you look at the shoes . . . Ugh.

What then?⁷⁵

Body hair removal is only controversial when it is something straight men are doing. It is also interesting to remember that the term “manscaping” was coined by the “Fab Five” of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (2003-2007). This is literally a case where five gay men, who are presumed experts on something like manscaping, apply it, for seemingly the first time, to straight men. And it is in this context, where gay men are helping straight men get and satisfy women, that the term “manscaping” was born. One UK salon owner even claims a new title for men who manscape—the “hetero-politain” because “the emphasis is on the hetero, it stays well clear of the gay thing . .

. Lads can be clean and vain and still very male.”⁷⁶ Manscaping is not only for straight men, but men who want to remain men, in other words, not gay.

We can also see this in the way that manscaping rhetoric exploits heterosexual men’s desire to have sex with women as a primary reason to take up manscaping. Over and over again men defend their seemingly effeminate behavior or appearance as truly manly *because* those behaviors gain access to women’s bodies. One salon owner explains: “I ask every guy at my salon why he came in . . . If he’s straight, it’s always, always to make his pubic hair more . . . [their ellipsis] appetizing to his girlfriend or women in general.”⁷⁷ The use of the word “appetizing” shapes an expectation that oral sex is a logical step for men to justify their partners’ and their own pubic hair removal. Manscaping provides the appearance and the expectation sex.

Though there is some backlash against this homogeneous, hairless phenomenon from female bloggers and writers, women continue to be targeted by magazines like *Cosmopolitan* to expect or encourage their male partners to manscape. One article in *Cosmopolitan* titled “What His Manscaping Style Says About Him” warns of the sexual downfalls of both over and under manscaped men. According to the article, men who manscape just a little (again, not too much to seem vain) are ideal sexual partners and boyfriends. While the non-manscaper can be expected to be “a little lazy” and unadventurous in bed, the over-manscaper will be a big porn fan and a little “insecure.”⁷⁸

But, again, there is another contradiction in the presumed heightened sexuality predicted by manscaping rhetoric. We can see that manscaping actually restrains sexuality and the sexual organs in a couple ways. First, the gradation of waxing styles (up until all body hair is removed) doesn’t actually remove the hair closest to the genitals, but, rather, the edges of pubic hair growth to make the pubic region appear more contained and less expansive. Much like actual

landscaping, pubic hair is removed in order to clean up the edges of hair growth. Waxing techniques are not oriented towards giving greater genital access but rather give the appearance of a more controlled and maintained pubic area. The second thing is that waxing and shaving the genitals requires a twenty-four-hour abstention from sex in order to reduce the chances of irritation and infection (not to mention the other health problems listed in the “Healthy” section). So the removal of body hair actually restricts sexual activity. Manscaping is not about having more sex or having greater sexual abilities or pleasure, but rather, appearing to have a controlled and moderated sexuality.

Mature

“If you’ve spent any time with a male over 35, you know [body hair] is a very real issue”⁷⁹

One of the more surprising demographics for salon owners is the arrival of men over thirty-five. But as one such man admits: “As you get older, you get hairier.”⁸⁰ This fact forces one to realize a broader concern with male body hair -- you get more as you get older. Body hair makes its first appearance at puberty peaks around sixty and then dwindles again. Not such a big deal, unless you live in a time where the youthful body reigns supreme and youthful bodies are less hairy bodies.

Youthfulness is heavily tied to other concepts central to manscaping rhetoric. Men believe they need to appear younger (and thus healthier) in order to appear sexual and thus successful. One New York salon owner, Eaglen, explains, “22 to 34 year olds are more comfortable with coming in for treatment, because it ties in with their feeling that good presentation is linked to professional success,” while 35-50 year-olds “are not going to salons because they feel it’s not macho.”⁸¹ Though there are generational tensions when manscaping becomes “too feminine,” men of all ages are concerned with appearing or maintaining their

youthful, competitive edge.⁸² The obsession with youthfulness, though it sometimes comes under the guise of health, virility, and economic success, is a major preoccupation among manscapers. To remove body hair is literally to remove the evidence of old age and restore a more youthful pre-pubescent appearance.

Despite this obsession with youth, the concept of maturity also plays an important role in manscaping rhetoric. Pro-manscaping women want their men to be mature enough to take care of themselves (“A streamlined chest is not a sign of wimpishness but of sophistication, and with it an ability to negotiate life’s pitfalls”)⁸³ while for anti-manscapers “there is no feeling like being nestled in forests of dark, warm fur, safe and loved and warm.”⁸⁴ What constitutes mature manhood swings between being self-sustaining and having the ability to build strong emotional bonds. These two criteria of maturity are boundaries that men are expected to negotiate in order to achieve full manhood. They must be totally independent but be able to share the depths of their emotional life; be sensitive but not a wimp.

Manly

The main argument within anti-manscaping discourse is an argument based on manliness. One salon owner interviewed in a *New York Times* article explains that

“Guys try it and look and go, it’s better than the mess I had down there . . . And it is. You feel more confident. It actually makes you feel more masculine, instead of less masculine, to get waxed. It sounds like a oxymoron, but it’s not.”⁸⁵

This is an exceptional claim though. Manscapers and manscaping businesses emphasize practical, health, and sexual benefits and avoid the conversation about whether waxing, trimming or shaving is actually ‘manly.’ Instead, the articles focus on explaining that manscaping isn’t just for women, gay men, and porn stars. They explain how much better your sex life will be, how

much bigger your muscles and penis will appear, and how everyone else is already doing it or expecting it. They offer such a wide range of practical reasons to manscape, all of which are considered manly, normal, and good, that actual ‘manliness’ doesn’t have to be spoken of. They are using other signifiers of manliness to redefine what behaviors are necessary to achieve manhood.

Manscaping rhetoric suggests that manliness is achieved by not being vain (like women), being mature (in both senses) and being in control. We see some of these themes in pro-manscaping statements like: “real men do get ‘Boyzilians’ and ‘Manscape’”⁸⁶ and anti-manscaping comments like: “wax on, wax off -- it’s something the Karate Kid does. Not the karate man.”⁸⁷ The thin line that constitutes “manly” manscaping is that it must be done for the right reasons and to the right degree. Manliness is a fragile and fuzzy (no pun intended) concept which manscapers and non-manscapers are forced to navigate every day. The conflicting images of what a real man should look like are what started manscaping rhetoric in the first place. The hyperbolic images drawn on the boundaries of acceptable manscaping reflect boundaries of what makes a man a man.

To return to our original characters, Wolverine represents the under-manscaped man--strong, emotional, and independent. He is a manly man in the most primitive sense while his opposite, Patrick Bateman, is manly in the most modern of senses, adaptive, controlled, and calculated. This tension in contemporary definitions of hegemonic masculinity is at the crux of manscaping rhetoric. It is precisely on this tension that I build the next part of my analysis. The manscaped image of manhood doesn’t quite turn older definitions manhood on their head. Rather, the manscaped body defines “manliness” as superior to and dominant over those deemed

less-than-men. It is against these non-men that manscaped manliness measures itself. These others are the feminine, the weak, the uncontrollable, the boyish, and the brutish.

CHAPTER III

CONSEQUENCES OF MANSCAPING PROPORTIONS

The associations and contradictions present in manscaping rhetoric are not arbitrary or accidental. The themes running through manscaping rhetoric reveal the fears, beliefs, and desires of the greater manscaping culture at large, mainly, those around the redefining of manhood. The desire to control and categorize the body is connected to a greater attitude of control and domination over the bodies of manscapers and all who fail to achieve manliness. Since the controversy of manscaping rhetoric revolves around whether or not manscaping is manly, the debate is really about the redefining of masculinity. But manscaping rhetoric shows that the new manscaped vision of manhood maintains the most important element of the former manhood — that of social dominance. What makes manhood continues to be defined in terms of better, stronger, and successful. Just like the former hairy vision of manhood, the manscaper strives to achieve total control over weakness and the uncontrollable in themselves and those around them. According to manscaping rhetoric, manhood is achieved by being in control. And it is those deemed less-than-men who must be controlled and demeaned in order to achieve ideal “manliness.”

To analyze the implications of manscaping, I will be evoking a variety of thinkers. Though the implications do overlap, I have tried to break up my analysis according to the boundaries created within manscaping rhetoric. My goal with this section is to show how something as simple and everyday as trimming pubic hair can expose the logic of ideologies and power structures. Though manscaping certainly does mark a new vision of hegemonic masculinity taking over an older definition of hegemonic masculinity, it continues to define itself

against those it deems subordinate. In order to buy the reasoning for manscaping in manscaping rhetoric we must first make a few assumptions about what is good (control, manliness, heterosexuality, cleanliness, success) and what is bad (poor, sick, powerless, feminine, old.) It is these assumptions that shape the age of manscaping and keep manliness a title of power.

Against the Feminine

As we saw in the first section, there is a great deal of concern among manscapers and anti-manscapers alike around the manliness or unmanliness of manscaping. The only reason this would be an issue is if there was a preconceived understanding that to be manly was both distinctly different and better than being feminine. In manscaping rhetoric, for a man to be feminine is a bad thing. So it isn't a far reach to say that manscaping rhetoric is not an equalizing force between the roles and duties of men and women but plays on the fears that those distinctions might disappear. Rather than encouraging men to feminize themselves, manscaping rhetoric masculinizes the behavior that was once considered feminine. One way we can see this is that the ways that men are expected to manscape are very different from the ways women remove their body hair. For instance, men are rarely encouraged to shave or wax their underarm and leg hair. Even the most extreme manscapers don't remove all their body hair. In fact, male models are actually encouraged to keep their leg hair and underarm hair.⁸⁸ Men who remove their leg or underarm hair are assumed to be competitive athletes. Men remove only enough hair to extenuate their other 'manly' features (like the penis, competitive edge, or defined muscles), while women are made completely hairless barring their head hair, eyebrows, eyelashes, and perhaps, on rare occasion, a small portion of pubic hair. But the removal of men's body hair is prefaced on the expectation that women will be removing at least as much body hair. Men who remove their pubic hair expect that their partners will be doing the same, whereas women who

remove their pubic hair do not have the same expectations of their male partners.⁸⁹ In this way, the sexual dimorphism between genders is preserved and women's bodies remain still the more problematic. Their hair removal is not about control, but about avoiding masculinization. Where men must be weary not to remove too much hair to remain men, women must actively remove all evidence of their body hair to achieve femininity. The body in its natural hairy state is masculine while femininity requires work and modification of the body.

Feminists of both the second and third wave have identified the emphasis of sexual dimorphism as a mechanism to control and maintain both patriarchy and hetero-normativity. During the 1968 Miss America Pageant protest, Feminists attacked female body hair removal as one of the many expectations preserving female docility and objectification.⁹⁰ The removal of body hair had been one part of making women vain, weak, and most of all, objects to be looked at.⁹¹ What made second wave feminists so angry was that this expectation actually made women expect these things from themselves while big industry and men profited. In the sixties and seventies many women rejected the behaviors of body hair removal (mostly just their leg and underarm hair,⁹² because, if men didn't have to do it, then why should we?

Flash forward to the 1990's. Men are also expected to be concerned with their body hair. Industries began targeting men as a serious market for beauty, anti-aging, and grooming products.⁹³ Manscaping is heralded as an equalizing force between the genders. Now that both men and women are held to physical standards of beauty, men and women are more equal now, right? Unfortunately, this view is increasingly popular within manscaping discourse and is used to justify women's vanity in the first place. Only once in my research did I encounter a comment from one reader that recognized this problem. The commentator was attacking an article written by a woman and self-proclaimed feminist who compared men's concern with their body hair to

women's concern with being overweight. The commentator noticed that perhaps a more apt comparison is between men's concern with body hair and women's concern with their body hair.⁹⁴ But very rarely are men's and women's body hair considered with the same social significance. After all, one grows out of a masculinized body, and the other a feminized one. And feminine bodies are just *naturally* better with no hair.

Third wave feminism has some more answers for us. Judith Butler, a feminist and queer theorist, argues that gender is inherently performative and everyday habits, embodiment, and life-world orientation creates the appearance of two distinct genders.⁹⁵ Ways of walking, speaking, touching, looking, and treating body hair are gendered. This explains why according to one study, underarm hair on a masculinized body is "normal" while that same hair on a feminized body is viewed as "repulsive."⁹⁶ To jumble up or confuse the dichotomy between practical, naturally hairy men and vain, hairless women via manscaping or over manscaping is perceived by the anti-manscapers to be a corrosive force that weakens the power relations established between men and women. It threatens the very foundations of patriarchy and heteronormativity. So when individuals express these fears via manscaping rhetoric with the careful delineation of "not too much" or "just a little" they are also perpetuating the forces that allow the dichotomous gender structure and that follows. And the illusion pro-manscapers have of equalizing genders through male body hair removal only superficially obscures gender difference. As long as the dichotomous meanings and values of male body hair (remove just enough) and female body hair (remove as much as possible) remain the same, female bodies and ambiguously gendered bodies remain subordinate.

Against Nature

Eco-feminists like Caroline Merchant take an additional level of comparison between the devaluation of women's bodies and the devaluation of nature. They argue that there is a deep connection between the ways that men have justified their domination and control of animals and the earth and the domination and control over marginalized human bodies. Historically women, people of color, and deviant sexualities have been associated with both nature and the unnatural. Throughout western history moral, political, and scientific authorities have understood the importance of controlling the forces of nature, women's bodies and non-procreative sexuality as a way to civilize and advance human morals and societies.⁹⁷ They believed that women's bodies and sexual desire were closely tied to the wild animal body and the chaotic rhythms of nature.⁹⁸ The need to control and dominate nature to ensure survival grew up out of and next to the need to control and dominate animalistic and worldly bodies in order to create civil order. The same nature that determined European men to be superior to women and men of color also determined that same-sex relationships were deviant and unnatural. Nature has been used to justify the domination and subordination of bodies that do not abide by hegemonic masculine ideals. And body hair is one thing about the human body that not only directly recalls other animal bodies but sexuality itself (hence the focus on pubic hair). The development of manscaping is a continuation of controlling both men's and women's bodies as well their sexuality.

Nature, as it has been identified within human bodies has been regulated both externally and internally. Sigmund Freud argued that the development of civilization required the mastery of both nature on the outside and the nature that runs deep inside humans.⁹⁹ For Freud, the development of pre-civilized man to become modern man, as well as babies to grow into adults, required the systematic mastery over animalistic desires, namely the desire to kill and the desire

to have sex. The development of shame, conscience, and social conformity are all necessary steps for the successful civilized human being but are simultaneously the cause of neurosis and discontent. The super-ego is the unique human ability to internally control the pre-civilized desires expressed by the infantile Id. Freud was able to articulate the increasing tension and seeming contradiction between the distinctly civilized human and the primitive, sexual, violent animal from which we supposedly arose.

Norbert Elias argues in *The Civilizing Process* that the development of western civilization was simultaneously the development of the self-controlled and domesticated human.¹⁰⁰ He explains that as humans have developed

Social functions have become more and more differentiated under the pressure of competition...As more and more people must attune their conduct to that of others, the web of actions must be organized more and more strictly and accurately, if each individual action is to fulfill its social function. The individual is compelled to regulate his conduct in an increasingly differentiated, more even and more stable manner.¹⁰¹

For Elias, Western civilization is characterized by the process by which humans replaced external controls over nature with more and more complex and internalized systems to regulate and control the threats that humans have encountered throughout their history. According to Elias, a significant moment in the development of western civilization occurred when bodily functions and desires were regulated in the middle ages. He first cites laws prohibiting public sex and defecation. Meanwhile detailed etiquette guides for court societies placed social class distinctions squarely on one's ability to control and maintain the body and its functions. For Elias, the end result of the civilizing process has resulted in the creation of docile creatures.

Civilization was first set against the environment and disease, then against other cultures and classes, but now, people are set against themselves, regulating their every instinct and bodily function. Manscaping is one way that the socially dominant display their status by means of regulating their natural bodily function of hair growth.

The connection between the control of nature and the control of the body takes on another level when we consider the current ecological crisis that has developed in tandem with increasingly high standards of physical maintenance. Mathew Immergut makes the connection between the development of manscaping and increased awareness of ecological collapse (both occurring in the 1980's.)¹⁰² According to Immergut, the tension between the exploitation of nature and the fear of “uncontrollable” elements of the human body has created a simultaneous urge to control bodies and the environment even more. Immergut argues that the fear of loss of control is overwhelming. Individuals are clinging to control what they can in a world where they feel like they are losing control at an incredible rate. Nature and the natural within (or just on the surface) of one's own body is one place where man can still establish his dominance. This is, again, reflected in manscaping discourse as the male body is so commonly equated to a landscape that must be tended, controlled, and monitored.

Against the Weak

The need to control bodies and nature also applies to the need to control the economically disadvantaged and ethnically inferior. It is clear from manscaping rhetoric that success and moral goodness are connected to a well maintained body. And the “whole package” implied by manscaping rhetoric shows the difficulty of achieving and maintaining a high value body.¹⁰³ Though the signifiers of high social value have changed over the centuries, from white wigs, pale

skin, and a full beard to tailored suits and a tan, toned and manscaped body, there is a particular body that dominates contemporary images of the successful man.¹⁰⁴ And that image just so happens to be very difficult if not impossible to achieve, but that achievement lasts for only a short time in one's life. Even models and professional athletes have an expiration date.

The maintenance of such a high value body takes a great deal of investment and luck. To achieve the high value body, one requires not only monetary resources, time, energy, proper nutrition, and means of employment but also the right parents. Culture, ethnicity, and class play heavily into the potential actualization of the high class body. Bourdieu makes precisely this point when he explains how bodies literally become classed.¹⁰⁵ He uses examples of diet to show this difference--that working men prefer hearty, filling foods to balance their calorie output at work as well as the emphasis on physical power within labor environments, while upper class men consider those foods not only fattening or "unhealthy" but also uncivilized.

This makes more sense when we consider the surprising amount of manscaping rhetoric around Jewish bodies and the Jewish reclamation of excessive body hair. In the age of manscaping, body hair and love of it are signifiers of Jewishness. Anti-manscaping is a means of asserting cultural or ethnic difference. Jewish males and females point to their Jewish heritage to explain and justify their body hair and its presence becomes a point of pride. As one anti-manscaping woman explains, "I am a Jewish woman and making passionate love to textiles is in my genes."¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile a young Jewish man learned to defend and reclaim his body hair as a sign of strength and virility:

The first time the shirts came off during Birthright Israel . . . the conversation quickly turned to manscaping. As much as it hurt to be objectified by a group of women, I was

ready to defend my manhood . . . and maybe the heat made me delusional, but I'm pretty sure my au natural look made the women swoon."¹⁰⁷

For these two, reevaluating body hair is a means to fight back on the attack against the excessive body hair that sometimes comes with Jewish genes. But more importantly, and perhaps only accidentally, these men and women are reclaiming body hair to emphasize a greater sense of cultural and ethnic difference and build a greater sense of community and solidarity among those of Jewish heritage.

The rejection of the hairless body causes other problems not just for anti-manscaping Jews but also those within the Bear community. Though these groups are reacting to a culture which marginalizes and demonizes their bodies (partly through their excess body hair) their praise of body hair can result in the same problem of racial and sexual exclusivity. One anti-manscaping woman actually criticizes President Barack Obama's lack of chest hair, saying "I'd predicted a light but noticeable dusting; but even upon CSI level zooming, his skin appeared unsullied. Ah well, nothing will put hair on your chest like being elected president of the United States."¹⁰⁸ She is actually inferring a lack of manhood in President Obama based not on his manscaping but on his presumably genetic lack of chest hair. As critics of the Bear community have argued, setting strict phenotypical rules about what kind of body will or will not be allowed, even if it is the opposite of what is dominantly valued, results in reactionary exclusivity.¹⁰⁹

Manscaping rhetoric (and its definitions of manhood) weeds out more than just minorities and the economically disadvantaged. Even individuals who are able to achieve the high value body do so only conditionally and for a limited time. The economic crisis of late capitalism has caused extreme class distinctions and increasingly devastating consequences of not "keeping

up.” To be considered successful one must be all consumed with the task and willing to do whatever it takes. Andrew Wernick speaks eloquently of the increasing demands and expectations placed on the competitive male body:

Interpersonal exchange may be competitive, but it is certainly not free. Besides the persistence of inequalities between the sexes themselves, class differences and the status hierarchies based on them crucially mediate the search for personal satisfaction and ties, so that the whole process becomes (or remains) deeply enmeshed in the more general scramble for wealth power and status.¹¹⁰

Men striving for success find themselves satisfying the constant demands of others through more and more rigorous and extreme lifestyles. Those who can keep up, and keep their face exfoliated and their body trim, are recognized and treated as more successful and are more likely to advance their careers.¹¹¹ And those who can't are doomed to join the margins just outside “manhood.” Failure to be economically successful continues to be a major factor in achieving manhood, but now more is required to achieve that goal, including dieting, tanning, exercising, and manscaping.

Against the Body

Another not so recent mechanism of control that is embodied by manscaping is its separation of one's “self” from one's physical body. As we remember from the rhetoric, manscaping posits the body as a means or a tool to be improved upon and put on display. The body disappears among other objects which can be reduced to their monetary or social value. As manscaping transcends the realm of superficial and inconsequential and enters the physical reality of economic security, the body becomes a machine—to be used, and exploited.

Karl Marx's theory of alienation speaks directly to the consequences of such a framework. The devaluation of the body occurs through the mechanization of bodies within the material conditions of capitalism. For Marx, the laboring class is alienated from its bodies as a necessary consequence of the means of production.¹¹² In Marx's time, factories and tools were owned by capitalists while the laborers sold their skills, time, and energy required to produce goods. The laborers' bodies were no longer owned by the laborers; rather the laborers' bodies, labor, and life were purchased by the capitalist through wages.

The biggest change between early capitalism and late capitalism is that late capitalism operates not through the production of goods but through the production of needs. Since production has been outsourced and mechanized laboring bodies of the first world have become selling bodies instead of producing bodies. In late capitalism, outsourcing and technology focuses the economy in the first world on increasing the consumption of goods (as opposed to the production of those goods.)¹¹³ Laborers and marketers alike must find ways to manufacture and then sell desires and identities. Service sector and sales workers must be able to sell themselves in order to sell the actual good or service. Under the material conditions of late capitalism the maintained and attractive body is a tool of production and a product to be consumed. Within late capitalism manscaping is a real economic and social investment. For Marx then and today, everyday material conditions, what kind of work is available, and what that work requires of a person, are parts of greater systems of control. And it is the proliferation of service sector, middle management, and sales jobs¹¹⁴ that has influenced the kind of bodies that are considered employable. A body that can sell products, desires, or identities is the ideal laboring body. A beautiful, maintained body becomes literally a means of production, and manscaping is there to help.

Nietzsche too provides a compelling perspective on the ways that modern ideologies rely on the devaluation of the body. When manscapers or salon owners talk about the pain and sacrifice involved with manscaping, it is often with recognition that suffering is an essential part of improvement.¹¹⁵ In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche calls this particular form of devaluing the body “asceticism.”¹¹⁶ For him, the inversion of values within Christianity is key to understanding the ways that modern masses have been taught to view pain and suffering of the body as a means to becoming a good and worthy person. The ascetic is a person who punishes his body in order to grow closer to higher ideals. The body is deprived and castigated so that the soul can thrive. Nietzsche cites the Christian monk and the good Christian as explicitly putting a high value on suffering and controlling the body as a direct means to goodness. Sex, extravagant foods, fine clothing, and material excess are all bad to the good Christian; only lesser men and women give into their worldly desires and become attached to their bodies and material world. The crux of Nietzsche’s argument is that those in power created this inversion of values to control the masses. It has and continues to serve as a powerful ideological tool to enslave them. The masses won’t demand better working conditions or more food if they believe that those things make them a worse person. The powerful deprive and use the masses, but convince them to do it to themselves and that doing so makes them better people.

In the age of manscaping, instead of working toward a good soul, the masses are learning to endure their pain and suffering for the goal of reaching physical and economic perfection. The embrace of long work days, high stress, and bodily abuse in the form of dieting, exercise, and manscaping are contemporary forms of an ascetic value system translated to the material conditions of late capitalism. The intricate relationship between moral goodness, economic success, and physical perfection make asceticism a natural lifestyle choice. Body perfection

rituals are ways the successful man proves himself disciplined and good to both others and one's self. Manscaping rhetoric focuses on fears of looking lazy, fat, or out-of-control and relies on the high valuation of self-control and self-discipline to the point of asceticism. The use and devaluation of the body not only justifies and even glorifies the abuse of one's own body but also the abuse of other bodies.¹¹⁷

Against Society

It may or may not be obvious by now but manscaping rituals require a certain awareness of the body as a thing to be looked at. And despite the rhetoric's vehement claims of practicality over vanity, manscaping is superficial (in so far as it actually deals on the surface of things) and at least marginally narcissistic. Christopher Lasch explores the causes and implications of narcissism in a culture obsessed with self-improvement, individualism, and meaninglessness-- America. According to Lasch, the movement of American culture after the 60s became deeply concerned with changing the self as a means or equivalent to changing systems. The personal space of the body became increasingly public. The world became a mirror reflecting the individual back to his or herself. Concern with the self and self-improvement through jogging, dieting, therapy, self-help literature, and presumably manscaping confuse or eradicate concern for social systems.¹¹⁸ The world and society are reduced to the individual's ability to express oneself and affirm one's own position within society. Social problems become problems of the self and social action becomes a therapeutic ritual. Problems others are having within society become their personal problems.

Lasch was writing in the late 1970s when the commodification of the male body was just becoming noticeable and manscaping first appeared in films like *Saturday Night Fever* (1977).

Now, the disappearance of the boundaries between private and social spheres has become much more prominent. Social networking sights completely obscure the boundary between private and social life, and personal confessions in blogs and self-help rhetoric dominate popular literature (hence my focus on this kind of literature to understand manscaping). Social problems are a matter of personal opinion and experience.¹¹⁹ Systems have literally become so personalized that people cannot distinguish between complex systems and their personal narratives and inversely, how their personal narratives and preferences connect to larger systems of control. Personal physical maintenance, like manscaping, is not just *confused* with social action but actually translates into real social consequences including class mobility, mental health, marriage, divorce, and availability of support networks.¹²⁰

One important element Lasch notes about the narcissistic personality concerns the relationship between the narcissist and the other. The narcissist experiences him or herself as an object to be looked at by others. Narcissists do not experience themselves or others as fully emotional beings because they are focused on performing their image for the consumption of equally superficial others. The narcissist uses the bodies and images of others to compare and justify his or her own body and beliefs. The manscaper justifies his manscaping by valuing and judging the bodies of others, envying other manscaped bodies or ridiculing improper manscaping habits in others.¹²¹ Manscapers/narcissists objectify themselves and others in one swoop.

Against Responsibility

For the manscaper, morality is reduced to individuals striving to reflect an image, usually an impossible image, which is ultimately a matter of personal preference. In the age of manscaping, morality in the form of social responsibility cannot exist because everything is

personal and apt to change as soon as the next image demands reflection. Post-modernists like Baudrillard argue that morality loses its meaning when reality becomes a simulation, and that simulation has more consequence than the original.¹²² Images are privileged over flesh and biology. In the case of the development of manscaping, the ideal image of manhood dictates what ideologically dominant men do, and since right now “real men manscape,” those who wish to be ideologically dominant will manscape. Flesh begins resembling the images themselves, glossy, sterile, reproduced, and homogenized.

Another consequence of our image-based culture can be illuminated through analyzing the ways that women’s potential has been stunted or stalled by idealized (and also impossible) images. In her series *Killing Us Softly*, Jean Kilbourne discusses the pedophilia inherent in many advertising campaigns featuring infantilized women and sexualized young girls.¹²³ Advertisers’ repetitive use of hairless, emaciated, and usually digitally altered images of women in fragile and docile positions creates an impossible and damaging ideal for girls and women to strive for and boys and men to expect. With the prevalence of images of young men with little to no body hair, it is no coincidence that older men are becoming avid manscapers while young men in their twenties and early thirties are manscaping to maintain their youthful appearance.

Of course the meanings behind the hairless female and the less-haired man can’t be compared all the way across, but we can certainly see similar themes and fears manifesting in young men as in young women. If idealized women’s bodies appear pre-pubescent, vulnerable, and weak, then idealized men’s bodies are getting stalled somewhere just after puberty, when they are just becoming consumers, are sexually driven, and are very impressionable. Men and boys must face the beefed up, glossy, tan, and hairless men with full heads of hair and novelty sized penises that surround them in pornography, media, and advertising.¹²⁴ They, like so many

before them are being trained to feel inadequate next to the impossible ideals late capitalism has set before them. They get stalled in the self-doubt in an emotional state that closely resembles adolescence.

The very real phenomenon of men waiting longer to gain financial independence, get married, and start families is mirrored in the development of manscaping. There is a significant connection between the need to manscape, sexual availability, and successful manhood. We can see this because so much of manscaping rhetoric tries to convince men that the only way they will gain access to women's bodies (and thus achieve manhood) is to trim their pubic hair. This focus on the perpetually sexually available man explains the popularity and high social value of being a non-committed, up-and-coming *guy*.

The now antiquated ideal of the (whipped) family man is being replaced by the new image of the ideal man as single, sexual, and perpetually loosely committed. Michael Kimmel's *Guyland* studies the extended periods of youth and difficulty transitioning to "manhood" that have become increasingly noticeable over the last thirty years. Kimmel describes *guyland* as "a kind of suspended animation between boyhood and manhood, *guyland* lies between the dependency and lack of autonomy of boyhood and the sacrifice and responsibility of manhood."¹²⁵ *Guyland* and manscaping have developed concurrently and proliferate among the same demographic—white, middle class, college bound or educated, 16-26 year-old bachelors. Kimmel describes this group as having less and less incentive to begin a career and family, to settle down and to "give up" all the great things about being a single guy that are so readily available in this culture like video games, gambling, strip clubs, pornography, sports culture, and binge drinking just to name a few. And the development of manscaping is inextricably connected to this new developmental stage through being an element of the "guy code" that is holding

young men in a self and other destructive purgatory. The shaming, the competitiveness, superficial sexuality, and even the homophobia are all elements Kimmel describes as part of the “guy code” which perpetuates guyland. The same hegemonic ideals that keep guys from becoming men keep them, and everyone who wants to be like them, manscaping.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Making Sense of it All

We have begun to get a picture of the complexity and pitfalls of achieving manhood in the 21st century. The manscaper must navigate a narrow space which can be both self and other destructive. Men demean themselves and others according to a standard created by the same industries that profit off of their insecurities. They ridicule other men for being too vain, too fat, too hairy, and too lazy, but they must hold themselves to those same standards. To achieve the image of perfect manhood men must diet, exercise, tan, have the right kind of sex, and maintain body hair. He must avoid femininity, fear the forces of nature inside and outside his body, regulate his most basic desires and needs, alienate and demoralize himself, and live in everyday fear of his inevitable aging and death. To establish his superiority the contemporary man must negotiate his place among ideologies and bodies with conflicting messages and impossible ideals. He, like everyone else must define himself by the fears and desires of his culture.

In the age of manscaping, we are fostering a very particular culture dominated by fear, separation, and control. We are scrutinizing men's bodies in belief that the universalizing of self-regulation creates equality, but we are only justifying the scrutiny and management over all bodies. We use Manscaping to subvert and devalue the intimate connection between our bodies and our environment.¹²⁶ We are internalizing shame and control over our most basic desires and functions for the sake of social order.¹²⁷ We are embracing our own enslavement because we believe it will make us better people.¹²⁸ We are creating subclasses of subclasses in order to maintain a social hierarchy out of hope that we will someday be on top.¹²⁹ We have reduced the

complexities of our social world to ever changing fads and glossy images.¹³⁰ And we are struggling to ignore ideals which fetishize irresponsibility, violence, and insecurity.¹³¹ Our culture is sick and if we continue to look for the cure in rigorous self-management we will continue to create ourselves in the image of late-capitalism: a hyper-reality where success is achieved through inequality, environmental crisis, and apathy towards extreme social injustices.

To What End?

To understand manscaping in terms of systems of power we must heed the advice of Michel Foucault¹³². We must ask what pro-manscaping forces are trying to do, and who benefits from the development of manscaping? In the past, monarchs, clergy, states, and the medical industry have used body hair to control and order bodies for their benefit.¹³³ Now, industries, including the entertainment, hygiene, fitness, and dating industries, have been the driving forces in creating the expectation of manscaping. Salons and companies that sell grooming products immediately benefit from the development of manscaping. But they are hardly capable of creating a cultural shift all on their own (especially since most salon owners are themselves surprised to see how many men are utilizing their services.)

If we look at the greater health and beauty industry that encompasses the entire package of body improvement, like dieting, exercise, cosmetics, fashion and tanning industries, we get closer to finding the core beneficiaries of the manscaped male. These industries are intricately connected to the entertainment industry, including the unbelievably profitable sex and porn industries, the service industry where singles meet, mingle, and try to impress one another (this includes bars, clubs, restaurants, and even major shopping centers.) But that still doesn't answer why the new hegemonic masculinity has taken the particular shape that it has.

When the majority of young, successful, ideologically dominant men are stressed out, making and spending as much money as they can, concerned about things like love handles, balding, and back hair, and spending every waking hour trying to be better, a very particular society is created. Manscaping is just one component of a complex culture that is designed to create self-centered, docile, and socially apathetic individuals, in other words, the perfect consumer.

In late-capitalism (often referred to as “consumer capitalism”), the most important element of economic success for the powerful is to produce consumers. The upper classes preserve their power by creating individuals who are totally invested in the creation of their personal identity through the constant consumption of products and services. The few individuals who own major media and industries want to create a population that will work as hard as they have to for as long as they need to in order to achieve the consumptive ideals that have been created for them. Advertising and media have normalized and profited from images of the manscaped man, the tan body, the hairless woman, the glossy haired woman of color,¹³⁴ and so many others. Industry profits on the creation needs and desires that did not previously exist in order to convince people that they are not good enough without them. They learn to enslave themselves under their own manufactured insecurities in hopes that they might be able to achieve perfection, if only for a little while.

Some Hope

Though I have made manscaping to be the root of evil, it is not evil in and of itself. It like any tool can be used for good or bad. Connell argues that alternative masculinities and even newer hegemonic masculinities can be a way to corrode structures of hierarchy embedded in

definitions of manhood.¹³⁵ There are several ways that male body hair removal can be used to challenge the ills of late capitalism by challenging its definitions of manhood. Since manhood under the ideology and economic conditions of late capitalism is focused on social superiority, invulnerability, economic security, and maximized profit, questioning those elements through manscaping (though the term itself would have to change) can actually corrode the culture which late capitalism has built.

For Marx, there is a certain inevitability that capitalism creates its own destruction.¹³⁶ The contradictions within manscaping rhetoric reveal the contradictions of late-capitalism. The means of appearing healthy--shaving, waxing, tanning, jogging, dieting -- actually cause damage to the body. The body is the site where the contradictions in late capitalism play out. If the economically successful must appear healthy and happy, but are actually becoming less healthy and happy as a result, the contradictions between appearance and the real limits of physical bodies reveal the failure of late capitalism. The pain and risk of manscaping is one way that men can come to realize the contradictory ideologies of late capitalism and thus become critical of its structure.

As men are allowed more and more space to explore their bodies in social spaces they can foster an orientation of self-care instead of self-mastery. Confronting the body, its suppleness, and its limits might create a new appreciation for the body itself. Men might be able to experience their bodies not just as a means to an end, a machine, or an image, but as a fluid, mortal, affective, and expressive part of all their experiences, social and otherwise. They might even start to respect and honor the power of nature in the world as it is reflected in their bodies.

Manscaping might challenge men's beliefs and fears around femininity. It might also, in turn, make women less rigid about the kind of people, occupations, and behaviors they consider "manly" and even challenge their own beliefs and expectation of themselves. For Butler¹³⁷, male body hair removal might serve as a bridge to allow men and women to explore the malleability of gendered bodies and see the construction of gendered bodies. The challenging of gender might liberate the boundaries that trap both men and women in socially regimented behavior. Already men are becoming more open to take up and take seriously other activities that have been also been deemed "womanly" like childcare, crafts, design, and dance. If men use manscaping as tool to challenge traditional gender signifiers, drawing on radical gender bending groups like drag kings, drag queens, and faeries,¹³⁸ they too might find liberation from the rigid boundaries late-capitalism has established for them.

Also, the fluidity of symbols like body hair might increase critical thought and self-exploration. If people learn to question the meaning, historical, and social context of their bodies they might learn that it does it does not make them or anyone else better or worse, just different. The acceptance of the identities of others might eliminate the need to compete with and judge others. If individuals can embrace the play of signifiers like body hair, and personal identities, (we see this potential in the sheer silliness of pejjazziling -- the adornment of the male pubic area with small jewels) then people may be pushed towards a more playful attitude towards identity and learn to respond to others and situations on a case by case basis. Identifying and categorizing bodies could become so taxing that people might just accept themselves and others as they come and stop taking those categories so seriously. As bodies and lifestyles become more about personal preference and self-expression then maybe, just maybe, we will experience ourselves, others, and nature as essentially fluid, supple, and occasionally fuzzy.

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- ⁸⁷ Dom Knight, "Men, Be Proud of Your Hairiness," July 26, 2012. <http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/beauty/7353848/Men-be-proud-of-your-hairiness> (Accessed November 10, 2012)
- ⁸⁸ "Shaving Men's Body Hair," <http://www.campus.men.com/male-modeling/shaving-mens-body-hair.html>, (Accessed July 13, 2012)
- ⁸⁹ J. M. Lewis, "Caucasian Body Hair Management: A Key to Gender and Species Identification in the U.S. Culture?" *Journal of American Culture* 10, no. 1 (1987).
- ⁹⁰ John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freeman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* 2nd Edition Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. pp. 301-325 explain this phenomenon.
- ⁹¹ Ashley Hawkins, "Reflections on Body Hair," *Off Our Backs* 34, no. 11/12 (November-December, 2004); Robin Friebur, "Shaving is the Pits," *Off Our Backs* 35, no. 5/6, (May-June, 2005).
- ⁹² Facial hair and other hair growth was usually still removed as it was still considered too ugly while underarm and leg hair became political signifiers J. M. Lewis, "Caucasian Body Hair Management: A Key to Gender and Species Identification in the U.S. Culture?" *Journal of American Culture* 10, no. 1 (1987).
- ⁹³ Andrew Wernick, "From Voyeur to Narcissist," from *Beyond Patriarchy* ed. by Michael Kauffman, (Canada: Oxford University Press) 1987: 290.
- ⁹⁴ Lil Bit [pseud] comment on Paul Russel, "Keep the Rug: An Appreciation of Male Body Hair," April 17th, 2012 <http://www.askmen.com/dating/heidi/hairy-men.html> (Accessed November 10, 2012).
- ⁹⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Troubles* (Psychology Press)1990.

⁹⁶ J.M. Lewis, "Caucasian Body Hair Management: A Key to Gender and Species Identification in the U.S. Culture?" *Journal of American Culture* 10, no. 1(1987).

⁹⁷ You can read more on this point in John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman's *Intimate Matters History of Sexuality in America*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1997; Elizabeth Reis, *American Sexual Histories* (Wiley Blackwell) 2012; Rachel Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press) 1999; and Anna Clark's *The History of Sexuality in Europe* (London: Routledge) 2011.

⁹⁸ Caroline Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (Harpers Collins) 1990.

⁹⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton and Company) 1961.

¹⁰⁰ Norbert Elias, *Power and Civility: The Civilizing Process Volume II*, trans. Edmund Jophcott (New York: Pantheon Books) 1982.

¹⁰¹ Elias, *Power and Civility*, 232.

¹⁰² Matthew Immergut. "Manscaping: The Tangle of Nature, Culture, and Male Body Hair" in *The Body Reader* ed. Lisa Jean Moore and Mary Kosut (New York University Press) 2010: 287-304.

¹⁰³ The whole package can also be seen in another semiotic study done by Phillip Vannini and Aaron McCright. "To Die For: The Semiotic seductive Power of the Tanned Body" in *The Body Reader* ed. By Lisa Jean Moore and Mary Kosut. (New York: New York University Press) 2010: 228-251.

¹⁰⁴ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*; Johannes Endres and Joel David Golb, "Diderot, Hogarth, and the Aesthetics of Depilation," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2004).

¹⁰⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (London: Routledge) 1984: 175-177.

¹⁰⁶ Wyatt, "Hairy Chests or Polished Pecs?"

¹⁰⁷ Zach Goldbaum, "Manscaping on Birthright," June 20, 2012, <http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/103707/manscaping-on-birthright> (Accessed November 10, 2012)

¹⁰⁸ Klein, "The Return of Chest Hair."

¹⁰⁹ Peter Hennen, *Faeries, Bears and Leatherman* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press) 2008.

¹¹⁰ Andrew Wernick, "From Voyeur to Narcissist" from *Beyond Patriarchy* ed. Michael Kauffman (Canada: Oxford University Press) 1987: 295.

¹¹¹ Elder GH Jr. Appearance and Education in Marriage Mobility," *American Sociological Review* 34, no. 4 (Aug., 1969): 519-533; Falkner et al. "Social, Educational, and Psychological Correlates of Weight Status in Adolescents," *Obesity Research*. 9, no. 1 (January 2000); Gortmaker S. L., et al. "Social and Economic Consequences of Overweight in Adolescence and Young Adulthood". *New England Journal of Medicine* (September 30, 1993); Phillip Vannini and Aaron McCright, "To Die For: The Semiotic seductive Power of the Tanned Body" in *The Body Reader* ed. Lisa Jean Moore and Mary Kosut (New York: New York University Press) 2010: 228-251.

¹¹² Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fawkes (Penguin Books) 1990.

¹¹³ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke University Press) 1991.

¹¹⁴ Kimmel, *Guyland*, 34-35.

¹¹⁵ Typewriter "Manscaping is a Hairy Business."

¹¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage books/Random House) 1989.

¹¹⁷ The separation of self and body, and then devaluation of the body has a great number of consequences including the proliferation of western medical sciences where the body is treated as a symptomatic to the mind and cannot allow for more holistic approaches. The lack of actual concern with health and focus on the appearance of health is another consequence. People would rather look healthy than actually be healthy. This explains how profitable food and drug industries have become, selling nutrient free food and mind altering drugs to cure much stress related problems. This is just to name a few.

¹¹⁸ Christopher Lasch, "The Awareness Movement" in *Culture of Narcissism* (Warner Books) 1979.

¹¹⁹ We can see this confusion explicitly in rhetoric around the recent Occupy Movement. Some of the unifying rhetorical themes of the movement revolved around personal narrative in the form of confession made public through signs posted on the internet. Meanwhile critics of the movement gave personal advice like "Get a job" or simply "stop whining" as a solution to vast social problems.

¹²⁰ Elder GH Jr. Appearance and Education in Marriage Mobility." *American Sociological Review*, 34, no. 4 (Aug., 1969): 519-533; Falkner N.H. et al., "Social, Educational, and Psychological Correlates of Weight Status in Adolescents," *Obesity Research*, 9, no. 1 (January 2000); Gortmaker S.L. et al., "Social and Economic

Consequences of Overweight in Adolescence and Young Adulthood.” *New England Journal of Medicine*, (September 30, 1993).

¹²¹ Hilmantel, “The New Male Grooming Obsession.”

¹²² Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria (Michigan: Glaser University of Michigan Press) 1995.

¹²³ Jean Kilbourne, "Infantilization & powerlessness," *Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising's Image of Women* (2010) DVD.

¹²⁴ Duane A. Hargreaves and Marika Tiggemann, “Muscular Ideal Media Images and Men’s Body Image: Social Comparison Processing and Individual Vulnerability,” *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 10, no. 2 (2009): 109–119.

¹²⁵ Kimmel, *Guyland*: 6.

¹²⁶ Immergut, “Manscaping: The Tangle of Nature, Culture, and Male Body Hair.”; Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*.

¹²⁷ Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* ; Norbert Elias, *Power and Civility: The Civilizing Process*.

¹²⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*.

¹²⁹ Marx, *Capital*.

¹³⁰ Lasch, *Culture of Narcissism*.; Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*.

¹³¹ Kimmel, *Guyland*.; Kilbourne, *Killing Us Softly 4*.

¹³² Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, (New York: Vintage Books) 1990: 81-91.

¹³³ Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, *The Last Taboo*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press) 2006; Rachel Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press) 1999; Estelle Freedman and John D’Emilio, *Intimate Matters History of Sexuality in America*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press) 1997.

¹³⁴ Noliwe M. Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty Culture, and African American Women* (Rutgers University Press) 1996.

¹³⁵ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, 159; Connell, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept" 833.

¹³⁶ Marx, *Capital*.

¹³⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Troubles*.

¹³⁸ Peter Hennen, *Faeries, Bears and Leatherman* (University Of Chicago Press) 2008.; Terry Goldie, “Dragging out the Queen: Male Femaling and Male Feminism” in *Revealing Male Bodies*, ed. Nancy Tuana (Indiana University Press) 2002. Faeries, Drag kings and queens often play on the mixing of gender signifiers to corrode traditionally held beliefs about gendered bodies and sexualities.

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