Kitchen Sink Erotica: Working-Class Lads, Nudity, Aspiration and Spectatorship in Modern British Culture and Fashion Photography

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Abstract:

This article examines the subject and visual representation of the English working-class lad as both an identification figure for young, modern-day fashion aficionados, and a fantasy figure to a predominantly gay audience. It pays special attention to the character's clothed and naked body, and its performance down the runway; in recent fashion editorials; and British-made gay porn. The article investigates how mostly male British artists view and promote working-class male imagery and specifically how fashion photography of the past two decades frames, produces and articulates stories about social class and class difference in the context of masculinity and nudity, and what do these stories tell us about contemporary models of success, failure, struggle and aspiration in multi-racial, present day Britain. By linking the current fashion industry’s fascination with working-class imagery with a similar cultural trend in 1960s Britain, the research aims to establish that today's fashion image makers share similar tendencies with British Social Realist writers and filmmakers in romanticizing the working class, while sticking to a similar fabricated aesthetic. This enduring fascination for working-class heroes and all things 'street' could become problematic when contextualized with industries and commercial ventures such as fashion, and the promotion of clothing and advertising.

Keywords:

british class system

social realism

male nudity

aspiration

spectatorship

fashion photography

1. Masculinities in Class-Ridden Britain

In their analysis of British cultural identity Mike Storry and Peter Childs outline the stereotypical views and characteristics of the three main classes in British society:

> The 'upper class' had posh accents, went to private schools, lived in stately homes and had aristocratic connections. The middle class were well spoken, lived in suburban houses and valued education. The working class had regional accents, lived in council flats, were members of trade unions, and enjoyed the pub, football and fish.
> (2016: 185)

Contemporary British culture research indicates that due to cultural symbiosis and social fluidity, the clear distinction between those three classes and their associated class identities has pretty much disappeared, and that aspirational consumer culture transformed the previously categorized working class into a low-end extension of the middle class (Biressi and Nunn, 2013). This also affected the way men from different classes presented themselves, with a tendency for men from working class backgrounds to aspire to a higher class (manifested, for example, through opting for clothes that they associate with the upper classes), and middle-class men craving street credibility – dressing in expensive, streetwear-inspired designer clothes. Already at the beginning of the new millennium research suggested that 'It is increasingly difficult to 'read off' boys' or men's class background from the way they present themselves as masculine' (O'donnell and Sharpe 2000: 50). The rise of "New Laddism" in the 1980's and 1990's created a bridge between working-class and middle-class forms of masculinity, taking the form of a '[…] a purportedly classless yobishness and collective male self-celebration which nevertheless had an element of shaky self-reassurance about it' (ibid.: 51). The booze and football-obsessed "lads" (a more self-assured version of the 1970s character) were classless, retained their regional accents and became notorious for their brusqueness and directness to the point of offensiveness. They became the main target audience and consumers of a new breed of sexist men's magazines such as *Nuts*, *FHM* and *Loaded*, and films such as Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) that celebrated their culture in all its Mockney (a manner of speech considered as an exaggerated imitation of cockney in accent and vocabulary) glory. Ritchie's early films are part of a greater British visual culture that still promotes the British class structure as a unique selling point, highlighting how '[…] *culture* works to classify, label and formulate class judgments' (2013: 1). This is particularly evidenced in British cinema and television and their most popular genres: Comedy, Social Realism, Crime, Documentary and Costume Drama, and the portrayal of the kings and queens, masters and servants, East End gangsters, working-class heroes and middle-class folks of England. Casting is an important element in the construction of authentic visual storytelling and actors such as Ralph Fiennes, Bob Hoskins, Jeremy Irons, Michael Caine, Tom Hardy, Ray Winstone, Daniel Day-Lewis and Gary Oldman have a crucial role in establishing a specific image and perception of white British masculinity. The much-publicized personal upbringings of these actors and their own social class backgrounds often contribute further to the image of class-defined masculinity that they were hired to portray. Even out of character an actor's physiognomy and regional accent will be a major factor in the types of roles that he is offered. Tall, floppy-haired, and willowy Hugh Grant or Colin Firth are more likely to play an aristocrat or a middle class character, whereas short, stout and bald Bob Hoskins or Pete Postlethwaite – a working class convict or factory worker.

> Physical appearance in Britain is deeply conditioned by class. […] There is a working-class, North-of-England face which is different from a middle-class, South-of-England one. Jeremy Irons could not hail from anywhere north of Oxford, and Albert Finney is unlikely to come from the so-called Home Counties around London (Eagleton, 2014: 75)

In his book *Hollywood England: British Film Industry in the Sixties* Alexander Walker describes Albert Finney's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* 21 years old character Arthur Seaton as '[…] unrepentantly sexy in a repressive community, sharper than his mates, tougher than the pub brawlers he worsts, antiromantic in his view of women as providing a night's pleasure […] resistant to all life could do to him' (1974: 83–4). British historian Jeffrey Richards considers Seaton's character a generic type within the historical construction of British masculinity, the predecessor to the 1980s Essex Man (1997: 152). This negative depiction of working-class, uneducated white men was a common feature of the British 'New Wave' films, portraying male characters that were showing hostility to the establishment and to the '[…] new materialism, affluence and the homogenizing effect of the mass media' (ibid.: 155). The representation the selfish and hedonistic attitude of the white, working-class male reached its pinnacle in 1963 with Finney's portrayal of the aspirational Tom Jones, and his rise to fame and fortune '[…] amid an uninhibited celebration of sex and conspicuous consumption […]' (ibid.: 156). Even though Henry Fielding's story is set in the 18th century, the film and its main character captured the general essence of the time, Labour's victory in 1964 and the emergence of a new age – '[…] a consumerist world of colour supplements and pirate radio, glamorous television commercials, discos and boutiques, a cult of the new and the now. The accent was on youth' (ibid.: 156-7). And the emphasis on progress, innovation and growth. *Tom Jones* emphasized the fantastical qualities of metropolitan life, mirroring the self-indulgence of the Swinging London scene. *Billy Liar*, which was released in the same year, depicted working-class life in northern England and the mood of a small town as seen through the eyes of its lead male character (played by Tom Courtney) by employing similar

notions of fantasy and escapism, seeing a continued cultural focus (and to some extent also glorification) on the life and character of white working-class males. Even though post-WWII immigration (from the Caribbean in the 1950s and 1960s, and from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in the 1960s and 1970s) contributed to the making of a multicultural British society, judging by the visual culture prevailing at the time and its representation of the British, the country appears predominantly White. Whenever African, Afro-Caribbean, and other racial minorities were portrayed, they were usually presented as cultural dilemmas (interracial relationships in films such as *A Taste of Honey*, or *Flame in the Streets*, both 1961), and it took Hollywood and its '[…] supreme exemplar of the noble black man, Sidney Poitier […]' to take a different, more positive view of this subject in *To Sir, With Love* (1965), though '[…] no black British star emerged capable of emulating Poitier as charismatic standard-bearer of racial equality' (1997: 155). British Social Realist films from the 1980s to the present continue to portray modern-day Britain as a predominantly White country. *Ae Fond Kiss...* (2004) is the only film by Ken Loach – one of Britain's most celebrated, socially conscious and politically aware filmmakers, that features a person of color in a leading role (in a 50-year career). *Rita, Sue And Bob Too* (1986); *Life Is Sweet* (1990); Nil By Mouth (1997); *The Full Monty* (1997); *Last Resort* (2000); *This Is England* (2006); *London to Brighton* (2006); *Red Road* (2006) – all feature white actors in the leading roles.
However, radical culture and street style British fashion magazines of the 1980s such as *i-D* and *The Face* seeked to challenge this by introducing multiracial casting in fashion stories that focused on street style or emerging local brands. By the mid-2000s, a group of young fashion image-makers led by Tyrone Lebon and Harley Weir, further elaborated on this legacy by fully embracing and promoting diversity and inclusivity in their fashion images, and challenging the hegemonic body image perpetuated by American media. The portrayal of urban masculinities throughout their work is youth-oriented, multiracial, and fragmented – curiously almost always fully clothed (as opposed to the almost physical and tactile presence of naked female bodies that feature in their work).

2. Angry Young Men

Social housing was established in England in late nineteenth-century with the *Housing for the Working Classes Act* (1890) but it was not until the 1950s and modern town planning that high rise blocks of flats as housing of the working classes came to dominate the urban landscape in Britain. Those were multi-storey tower blocks, which seemed the ultimate solution to the housing problem at the time. In various parts of the country the external Brutalist architecture of the large concrete council estates mirrored the grim life of those who inhabited them. Richards charts the eventual demise of the close-knit, working-class inner-city communities of that time, which were replaced with '[…] bleak and heartless high-rise estates which rapidly became breeding grounds for alienation, criminality, violence and drug abuse' (1997: 21). Around the same time, those struggles of the English working class and the lives of ordinary people were depicted in a series of social realism films that came to be known as the "kitchen sink dramas" of the *British New Wave*. *British New Wave* films were the result of '[…] the social and cultural upheaval of the late 1950s, which embraced the death of the Empire, the rise of working-class affluence, the emergence of a distinctive youth culture and the revival of the intellectual left' (1997: 148). Unemployment, violence and the despair of disenfranchised youth and "angry young men" were the central themes of films such as *This Sporting Life* (1963) and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962) which a few decades later came to inspire the overall attitude and lyrics of post-punk British bands such as *Joy Division* and *The Fall*. 'The principle mood […] was one of discontent and dissatisfaction, a rejection of things as they were, a powerful sense that Britain was hopelessly mired in hierarchical Victorian world of outdated values, disciplines and restrictions' (1997: 148). Uncommon to films of earlier time period, British "new wave" films were also known for their frank depiction of sex, sexualities and sexual relationships, and their ability to deal directly with topics of present-day interest such as homosexuality or abortion, that were not necessarily the subjects of intense cultural debates at the time. The films' positioning and portrayals of handsome, virile, and arrogant white working-class men and of working-class maleness and cockiness was in sharp contrast with earlier depictions of middle or upper class British masculinity, and its legacy of the stiff upper lip and pompous self-righteousness. These films and their representations of gender roles have had a long-lasting influence on many contemporary British artists, musicians, filmmakers, photographers and fashion photographers. Tony Richardson's *A Taste of Honey* (1961) which was based on the play of the same name by Shelagh Delaney's was influential on the lyrics of Morrissey and *The Smiths*, with Delaney appearing twice on the band's album covers (*Girlfriend In A Coma*, 1987 and *Louder Than Bombs*, 1987). The artwork of *The Smiths* album covers featured a number of Morrissey's other cultural heroes such as James Dean, Elvis Presley, Truman Capote, and Joe Dallesandro, but the real emphasis was on iconic post-war English performers (Terence Stamp, Billy Fury, Pat Phoenix, Richard Bradford, Yootha Joyce, Avil Angers, Murray Head) complimenting and further defining the band's distinctly working-class English aesthetic.
Other than the mediums of film and literature, fashion and rebellion were important forms of cultural expression in Britain in the 1960s, where '[…] it became fashionable for the first time in British history to be young and working class' (Richards, 1997: 18). Some of the greatest cultural figures of the time came from a working-class background, such as British fashion photographers David Bailey, Terence Donovan and Brian Duffy who were responsible for the visual articulation of "Swinging London" – a melting pot of fashion, music and glamour. This was a limited and very specific liberated cultural scene which was a far cry from the world evoked in films such as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) or *Kes* (1969), with their oppressive atmosphere and male-dominated work and leisure settings (coal mines,

factories, and working man's clubs). As Bailey testifies all three photographers were subject to the hegemonic class structure governing many aspects of British life:

> I don't know why they let me in at Vogue [in 1960]. Back then they didn't even use models who were working class. The number of times I heard: "Oh no, we can't shoot her, have you heard her speak?" It was class snobbery of the highest order. I think I got in because the art director [John French] was gay. We were both outsiders and that's why he kept me (The Guardian Website 2014).

Bailey, Donovan and Duffy advocated a certain masculine ideal, with an emphasis on the exploration, representation, and celebration of white, heterosexual, and assertive masculinity. As Duffy later explained:

> Before 1960, a fashion photographer was tall, thin and camp. But we three are different: short, fat and heterosexual. We were great mates but also great competitors. We were fairly chippy and if you wanted it you could have it. We would not be told what to do (The Guardian Website 2010).

While a large chunk of their work was shot in a studio, all three photographers also utilized black and white film over color; the London streets; or decidedly unglamorous, industrial sites as locations. But their choice of pretty models and elegant clothing made the end result still look quite commercial. Donovan was singled out for the '[…] gradual deglamorization of British fashion photography. For example, his groundbreaking men's fashion stories for *Town* were played out against an urban backdrop of almost unremitting bleakness [...] allowing British fashion photography to thrive in specifically British milieus' (Muir, Donovan and Hillman, 2012).

Bailey, Donovan and Duffy and their "angry young men" legacy dominated the British fashion photography scene up until the early 1990s. *England's Dreaming (This is the modern world)*, a fashion editorial for *The Face* magazine (August 1993) photographed by Corinne Day, styling by Melanie Ward, and featuring British models Rosemary Ferguson and George Clements, cemented Day's position as a key member of a group of young British photographers promoting a new breed of fashion photography. Day was preoccupied with alternative beauty ideals (by 1990s standards), documentary-style approach to fashion image making, and an acknowledgment of the impact of Thatcherism on a generation of youth who grew up in this era, depicted by the group of young people she continuously photographed. Desolate high-rise council estates, dilapidated council flats, ravaged squats and dull seaside towns became the backdrop for critical questioning of the prospects for young adults in 1990s Britain, in a mood epitomised by English singer-songwriter Morrissey's lyrics for *Everyday Is Like Sunday* (1988):

> Hide on the promenade / Etch a postcard: "How I Dearly Wish I Was Not Here" / In the seaside town / That they forgot to bomb / Come, come, come, nuclear bomb / Everyday is like Sunday / Everyday is silent and grey (Genius Website 2018)

In her early work Day excelled in bringing together elements of fashion, style, and locations – all appearing lived-in and therefore "real." We find a similar focus on gritty and unglamorous industrial locations settings with the British "new wave" films of the 1960s:

> The bus ride around Manchester that opens the film version of A Taste of Honey captures perfectly the oppressive and decaying world of timeworn military statues, smoke-grimed buildings and weather-beaten Victorian iconography. Out- of-season seaside resorts […] visually encapsulate the mood of despair and desolation that suffuses many of them (1997: 149).

At the same time, the use of locations such as the '[…] seaside holiday, the pub, the football match, the dance, the family party' by British "new wave" film-makers evoked '[…] Hoggartian nostalgia for a warm, old working class culture of community' among consumers of such films, nostalgia for a traditional working-class world that was already beginning to disappear (1997: 156).

In Day's *England's Dreaming* photographs, her models make a rough looking council flat look fashionably cool, injecting a whiff of rebellious, rock'n'roll glamour into the otherwise dreary and scruffy surroundings. Day, arguably more than any other photographer of her generation, was responsible for an evocation of working-class culture and the angst of being young, inspired by the work of American gritty realism photographers Nan Goldin, Larry Clarke and Mary Ellen Mark. This commitment to "realism" and realist "honesty," is always in direct relationship to what preceded it, with Day's artistic innovation considered in light of the dominating style of glamorous and escapist fantasies that fashion photographers such as Helmut Newton, Steven Meisel, and Richard Avedon had made popular in the previous decade. Day's determination to employ young and mostly amateur cast was arguably a practical method for connecting with her young audience. By placing her early fashion stories in an independent magazine such as *The Face* she gained creative freedom to create work that expressed her viewpoint on the state of Britain and its youth at the time.

Crouching against a wall that is sprayed with the graffiti *Modern Life is Rubbish*, the seventeen-year-old Kate Moss – one of Day's frequent collaborators, is ambivalently staring at us in the sarcastically titled *Heaven is Real* fashion editorial (*The Face*, February 1991) – an example of what became known as the "snapshot aesthetic" in fashion pictures – an image and a moment captured in a vernacular style, which could have been caught by street photographers and their preoccupation with contemporary city life. The image conforms to a cultural trend in Britain to recognize, frame and articulate aspects of modern life such as hope, fear, or aspiration in a context of economic conditions and social struggle. In his book *Sex, class, and realism: British cinema, 1956-1963*, John Hill suggests that '[…] the introduction into art of 'new contents', such as working-class life, does not in itself guarantee radicalism: what is important is the treatment of such subject-matter' (1986: 136). He charts the bourgeois and middle-class fascination with working-class squalor or promiscuity, partially contributing to the impact and popularity of the 'kitchen sink' films of the British New Wave, and their depictions of casual, working-class sex:

> Riding on the back of "social commitment" to observe "ordinary people", then, emerges as a kind of sexual fascination with "Otherness", the "exotic" sexualities of those it now has a licence to reveal […] Yet the look which the films encourage […] marking a separation between spectator and subject, the pleasures delivered may well rely less on recognition than the very sensation of class difference (1986: 136)

Although Day's fashion photography features a fair amount of female nudity, *George in the Bath* (1994) is Day's apparently only example of full-frontal male nudity, and an interesting example of the use she had made in her work of a visual mix of drab and cool which came to personify her style. In this photograph, Clements can be seen lying in a bathtub in a slumped position, with his eyes shut and his penis clearly outlined in the murky waters. The photograph has a red colour cast, which gives the scene a number of possible interpretations, but based on Day's overall approach to her personal, diaristic image-making (rather than the more meticulously planned fashion projects) it is probably just a record of an intimate moment, à la Nan Goldin. This image is interesting mainly because it depicts a young, solitary naked male body in the domestic surrounding it inhabits, rendering the image with adult erotic undertones (as opposed to another image of Clements sleeping, fully dressed, on the underground). It shares some similarities with the sense of sanctioned theatricality in other photographs Day took of Clements, most of them with his top off, acting out in front of her camera. Clements became Day's male muse and was photographed by her for various fashion editorials and personal projects. He epitomised the spirit of impudent, youthful arrogance and melancholy she also found in her female collaborators, models Kate Moss, Rosemary Ferguson, Georgina Cooper, Sarah Murray and Tara St Hill. St Hill (Clements's girlfriend at the time he met Day) reminisces about Clements's visual appeal as it is depicted in one of the images in *England's Dreaming*: 'This is George taking his T-shirt off in the woods. Corinne loved the shape George's body made as he undressed, and would often experiment with body shape that way' (The New York Times Magazine Website 2014). The bodies that Day loved became quickly associated with the term "waif" (referring to a very thin young woman) and in Clements's case – "male waif." George's presence and his very young, fit and stick-thin body was an antidote to the typically strong, healthy looking and muscly all-American male models that featured in American men's fashion magazines and advertising campaigns and that were championed in American photographer Bruce Weber's work.

Clements and his childhood friend Rocky played themselves on film as thuggish council estate lads in Day's *Rocky Throw Me the Keys - Anyone Can Play Guitar* and *Creep* – moving image work for the British band Radiohead. Dressed in Day's stylist St Hill's staple mix of vintage and casual, the boys are channeling a cheeky chappy vibe – a cross between cockney, chimney sweep Bert (As it was played by Dick Van Dyke in Disney's 1964 film adaptations of P. L. Travers's *Mary Poppins*) and the Artful Dodger (Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 1838). Their cheeky and confident "performance" as cheerfully cocky white chaps is a re-embodiment of stereotypical male characters specific to British social and cultural history such as Jack the Lad and the Geezer – characters that alongside the Chav in the late 1990s came to epitomize young, British working class masculinity. Even though Paul Wills's *Learning to Labor* research on youthful "laddishness" was completed in 1977, and that his assumptions are over-generalising and to a certain extent polarizing, his description of the model still rings true:

> Toughness and posturing are common characteristics of this form of masculinity, […] even though it has frequently become wholly detached from the culture of industrial manual labour in which it developed. Given that identity is partly defined in terms of who one sees as 'different' and 'other', the lads avoided behaving in ways they might have seen to be weak or feminine, routinely talked of girls as sex objects and tried to treat most girls as such, and adopted aggressive and insulting attitudes to gays and to members of other ethnic groups. […] The macho masculinity of the lads reflects clear class and patriarchal influences and also the shared generational experience of school and impending work as well as a strong sense of white ethnic identity (O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000: 43-44).

An excellent example of how inseparable those various types of British working-class male characters are from the discourse of British national/cultural identity can be seen in the socially aware work of British artist duo Gilbert and George, British photographers Chris Steele-Perkins, Chris Killip, Derek Ridgers and Tom Wood and British filmmakers

Ken Loach and Shane Meadows. Gilbert & George are the only artists in this group whose work supports a gay agenda, and involves full-frontal male nudity. An example of this can be seen in their large-scale, staged photo-collages, titled *Burning Love, 1980; Cock, 1980; Masterbator, 1980; Naked, 1980; Shame, 1980;* and *Stream, 1980*.
Although they had never officially came out as gay, and continuously reject the "gay artists" label, their work features a predominantly male cast, with subjects ranging from the artists themselves, to an array of young male models that are regarded and positioned as the object of their own desire. Their image manipulation and the highly saturated coloured-dyed collage process that came to identify their work, create a distancing effect that turn the male characters into iconic, almost cartoonish representations of British masculinity and class, or British masculinity and race. With a nod to Communist posters and Soviet propaganda aesthetics, their most powerful scenes are probably evoked in *The 1986 Pictures* (*Class War Militant Gateway, Day Man, March, Night Man, The Wall*) and *The 1980 Pictures* (*Britisher, Britons, Bunhill Knight, Cocky Patriot, Day Fear, Four Knights, Guard Plants, Marching, Local Person, Night Fear, Parade, Red Fists, Patriots, Two Patriots*). This group of photographic works presents us with a striking, fictional representation of young urban life characteristic of Britain in the 1980s, suggesting an ethnic conflict in a multicultural Britain.

3. Who Do You Need To Know?

John Hill defines "youth" as '[…] something of a social invention, a cultural expression of social and historical circumstance rather than a biological fact' (1986: 10). The emergence of youth culture and the importance of fashion in the process of reconstructing white working-class identities became part of the cultural discourse of Englishness in the early 1950s with the rise of the Teddy Boys phenomena. Colaiacomo declares that '[…] with the teddy-boy was born the fantasy, and reality, of a working-class dandyism, proletarian and xenophobic, and not devoid of a disturbing, erotic charge (ibid., 64). Teddy Boys were often clustered in south London working-class areas and '[…] became a potent symbol in post-war debates of the threat that American popular culture posed to traditional British values' (Tebbutt, 2016: 97). Elsewhere in Europe, France and Italy saw their own wave of youth-related movements and socially conscious films, the early neorealist films of Pier Paolo Pasolini (*Accattone*, 1961 and *Mamma Roma*, 1962) were particularly important for establishing narratives of class structure, inequality and sexual repression. In *Factious Elegance: Pasolini and Male Fashion*, Paola Colaiacomo highlights how Pasolini's decision to cast amateur actors from working class and disadvantaged socioeconomic background, added a psychological dimension to the narrative of his films, but also shaped Pasolini's particular aesthetic in constructing what he labeled '[…] a real 'race'…. Those bodies were like those in real life as well as on the screen' (2007, 23). In 1976, fifteen years after the release of his first movie, Pasolini lamented the demise of an Italian social class, which his young and inexperienced actors channeled through their proletariat bodies and regional accents:

> If I wanted to reshoot *Accattone* today, I could not do it. I would not be able to find a single young man even distantly corporeally similar to the young men that represented themselves in *Accattone*. I could no longer find a single young man that could say, with that voice, those same things (Verdicchio, 1997: 81).

Pasolini was a highly committed political artist, observing his typical character – the young Borgataro – infiltrating Rome from the city's poor, proletarian suburbs, and in the process adopting new fashions, styles and looks: '[…] the taste for an ultra-modern, provocative elegance, for pointed shoes, and a colored scarf round his neck […]' (2007: 25). Pasolini's yearning for his socially disadvantaged Ragazzi is rooted in empathy but also transgressive, homoerotic desire – that of a highly educated gay artist towards his socially and intellectually inferior muse. The older Pasolini (and probably his audience) shared a fascination with youthful, working class lads with a number of European artists, most notably French writer Jean Genet and British painter Francis Bacon (though his preference was for a slightly older type). *Love Is the Devil: Study for a Portrait of Francis Bacon* (1998) – the reimagining of Bacon's relationship with George Dyer – a working-class petty criminal and an East End Cockney who became the artist's muse, contains a number of full-frontal nude shots of the actor Daniel Craig who portrays Dyer. The emphasis is on Craig/Dyer's unequivocably masculine physique – his rugged face and conventional and highly eroticised manly body – the fitness of a fit workman and amateur sportsman – perhaps a boxer just like the ones featured in Bacon's paintings. Other representations of British working-class criminality and full-frontal male nudity could be seen in British prison films such as *Bronson* (2008) and *Hunger* (2008).

During the late 1980s, British culture was introduced to the Borgataro's distant British cousin – the Essex Man who '[…] arrived in the City of London and became the crude marker of both the shiny success and the darker underside of finance capitalism' (2013: 24). The term was popularised by Simon Heffer in a 1991 piece he wrote for *The Telegraph*, accompanied by a drawn caricature showing a brutish looking young man, his body encased in an ill-fitting suit, standing next to a car parked outside a council house. A pint of lager, a satellite dish, and a used copy of the *Daily Express* tabloid newspaper complement his apparently confrontational personality. The brash Essex Man was the antithesis to upper-class refinement, a "City Boy" that epitomised a fusion of social class, capitalism and masculinity, and showcasing an excessive display of '[…] ambition, virility, consumerist desire for goods […]' (Biressi and Nunn, 2013: 31-36).
Robert Smith cites Wetherell (1997: 5-6), suggesting that:

> […] to be a working-class man meant living out and inhabiting a 'very different set of practices and narratives about what it is to be a real man' from those of other (professional, academic) social classes […] in the expectation that virility, a strongly projected personality and lack of fear could be marketable commodities' (2010: 13)

From the mid-1950s to the early 1970s, class, masculinity, identity and fashion became inextricably linked through the formation of Rockers, Mods and Skinheads – specifically British youth subcultures that fashioned the archetypal working-class male figures and their heightened macho culture with style. As in other male (and supposedly heterosexual) dominated environments such as the military, the police, or the sports locker room, lifestyle and style-oriented masculinities (which are also identified by their particular uniforms), tend to enter the domain of homosexual fantasies. Out of the four it was the British Skins that became one of the most influential subcultural groups within gay "tribes" and their associated dress, and the white working-class skinhead, alongside the soldier, sailor, policemen, and cowboy, has subsequently become one of the most iconic characters in post-war gay pornography. UK gay porn film company *Triga Films* has a dedicated Skinheads section with titles such as *Blokes Down The Boozer*, *British Working Men* and *Skin Bruv*. I already discussed the presumed imaginary tension between the middle-class gay spectator and the supposedly heterosexual, working class male porn actor as a prerequisite for the audience's erotic desire and fantasy fulfillment in previous research.[1] What is interesting to note here, and within British gay porn, is the distinction made between two different types of working-class lads, although to a certain extent both types share a number of visual characteristics. This is evidenced in the porn characters/altar egos of two of the industry's biggest stars – Billy Essex and Paddy O'brian.

Billy Essex is a heavily tattooed (including convict-like facial tattoos) English porn actor exclusive to *Triga Films*. With his short-cropped hair, heavy Essex/Cockney accent, bold aggressive attitude, and the occasional swear word thrown in, he epitomizes Triga's "gay-for-pay" model of choice. In his films, he is cast in the roles of a cheeky London Cabbie; an overly forceful Debt Collector; and a macho badass Geezer. 'Essex is a Southern English county that has become associated with […] new right workingclass Conservatism and of the worst excesses of consumerism (2013: 23),' and the "Essex" in Billy Essex's moniker probably refers to his birthplace and the Essex Boy stereotype – that of a white, brutish, loud and flashy working-class bloke – a present-day Dickensian Cockney lad. On his *@MrBillyEssex* Twitter account he flaunts his drug smoking; sexual dominance; porn sneak peaks; and materialistic belongings such as designer underwear, chunky gold jewellery and various cars and motorbikes. His presence emphasises rough and promiscuous sex associated with "Rough Trade" – a butch and heterosexually-identified working-class male prostitute (Haggerty887: 1999), which has captured the imagination of generations of gay artists and audiences. 'Rough,' according to Matt Houlbrook, defines both the class status of the working-class man in these compensated sexual encounters, and the fact that he is 'unequivocally manly,' which is precisely the enduring quality that turns working-class men involved in prostitution into 'figures of fantasy.'

Over at *Englishlads*, another UK gay porn film company, the preference is for a more refined version of the national beefcake – still heterosexual and "gay-for-pay" but not as coarse as Billy and his mates. *Triga's* builders ("workies"), van drivers, bouncers, policemen, and "council scum" (the title of one of their films) are substituted for young footballers, personal trainers, boxers and rugby players, and a masculine beauty ideal which is based on the Metrosexual's identity – a well-groomed face, a toned and fit body, a trendy haircut and fashionable, David Beckham-type male jewellery and tattoos. Both sites celebrate the "Englishness" of their models, with a continuous presence of the Union Flag on various props in the scenes, on the layout of their Web pages, and the general sense of national pride in the "prime British beef" on display. The most successful of all *Englishlads* models is probably Paddy O'brian – a British and international award winning gay porn superstar whose first performance was for the *Englishlads* studio. Despite his Irish-sounding name, O'brian's Cockney accent and overly cocky, chirpy chappy market-trader demeanour, suggest that he is probably a true working-class East Ender. O'brian's appearance, abrasive authenticity and "working-class charm" all epitomise the studio's masculine ideal and sum up O'brian's credibility as a true object of gay desire. Crossing into new territory, O'brian was photographed for the Autumn Winter 2016 issue of bi-annual menswear publication *Man About Town* by Alasdair McLellan – a Yorkshire-born, celebrated British fashion photographer. Reflecting on the impact of Morrissey's lyrics on his work McLellan says: 'It was basically about Northern life, which related to me and my surroundings. There was also a yearning and longing in his lyrics which seemed to find a place in my photography too' (i-D Website 2014). Titled *Paddy, 2016* the two images feature the stark naked O'brian – one showing him sitting on the floor near a large framed poster for the Smiths' *The Boy With The Thorn In His Side* single (1986), and the other one, cropped from the waist up – lying on his back, his hands behind his head. These pensive moments bring to mind D. H. Lawrence's 1928 novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and the description of the vulnerability of the gamekeeper Oliver Mellors – Connie

[1] *Queering Foreign Bodies: Discourse and Identity in Visual Representations of Straight Migrant Men* (Inter-Disciplinary.Net, 2015) and *Tinker, Soldier, Sailor, Thief: Discourse and Identity in Narratives of Criminality, Risk Taking and the Visual Representations and Appropriations of the Male Sexual Outlaw as a gay fantasy figure - from Art and Literature to Fashion imagery* (Intellect, 2016).

Chatterley's working-class lover: 'When the eyes ceased to laugh they looked as if they had suffered a great deal, still without losing their warmth. But a pallor of isolation came over him […]' (2002: 68). The last lines of the Smiths' song: 'How do you start? Where do you go? Who do you need to know?' (Genius Website 2018) sum up Morrissey's frustration with the music industry that had snubbed him, and are particularly poignant here. The lyrics speak of people seeking transformation in their lives through aspiration, and the wish to be recognised beyond one's immediate surroundings. McLellan's images appear to suggest a degree of acceptance in the case of O'brian, as he crosses over from the "low culture" side of pornography to the "high-art" side of representation. O'brian was used here as a model not only for his willingness to put his naked body on display (a high-risk move for models represented by a modeling agency), but also to imply a certain inner-circle knowledge about who he really is to the irony-seeking fashion audience.

The quiet, reflective mood of *Paddy, 2016* carries over to other male nudes that McLellan shot over the years, most recently materialising as a series of three limited edition, double-sided posters and T-shirts (a collaboration with British fashion designer J.W.Anderson, 2017) pairing images of full frontal male nudity and expressive skies. In his book, *Ultimate Clothing Company* (2014), McLellan already juxtaposed portraiture and landscape photography, aiming to capture what's it like '[…] growing up in England as a young man […] – 'It's [sic] pictures of young men and landscapes, and a lot of the landscapes are from memory: places that I used to go to when I was growing up.' Amongst the '[…] mixture of soldiers, skaters, builders, boxers, and people who I just found, out and about […] (British Vogue Website 2014)' there is a portrait of British gay adult film star Daniel Johnson, also known in the industry in his other porn names Lexxy lex, Master Derek, or Bryan. Titled *Alex, 2013*, the photo shows him sitting in a lawn chair in someone's overgrown backyard, a half-drunk pint of lager in his hand. Part of a typical red brick council estate can be seen in the background – a visual element that features heavily in McLellan's work, and one of a few visual signs he uses to denote "Englishness," in a body of work that came to be known as a documentation of suburban British life – a scene previously overlooked by British fashion photography. "Alex" is a handsome but rough looking lad, in his porn films he is mostly known for his dominating, "active" top roles, epitomising the classic heterosexual "rough trade," "gay-for-pay" type. In *The Abbey Part 2* – one of the very few scenes that cast him as a porn bottom, he plays the role of Footman James who is seduced by Lord Martin – the master of the house (played by British gay porn star Paul Walker), much in the style of *Upstairs, Downstairs* (1971) or *Downton Abbey* (2010-2015) – British drama series focusing on class stratification. The sexual romp takes social class difference as the main component that connects audiences with the master-servant fantasy. Even though Johnson is taking the "passive," subservient role he ends up being the more active subject ("aggressive bottom" is the technical gay porn industry term) – a heterosexually-identified working-class male, maintaining his strong masculine image in order to become an object of desire for gay men who are economically privileged but considered disadvantaged in terms of normative sexual identity. The eroticised performance of Johnson's proletarian masculinity is highlighting the potential for violence implicit in the uneven balance of power between the two men, and the inherited conflict between their associated classes.

Growing up in the mining town of Doncaster in South Yorkshire in the late1980s, McLellan was taking photos of his mates as a hobby: 'They were just my mates hanging around the parks in my village. Then I also started to take photos as a one-to-one experience. It was a way of having something quite intimate with someone, without it necessarily being sexual' (i-D Website 2014). Commenting on casting as part of his creative process, McLellan said: 'A lot of it's just about walking down the street, seeing a great looking lad, and taking a picture of him because he has a good haircut. Sometimes it's just an image. It's not about being this or being that, it's just about wanting to photograph someone' (i-D Website 2014). But in the context of undressed male models appearing in high visibility projects, the casting process would be more difficult and would require more careful consideration than McLellan seems to be suggesting. The models which were cast so far in his full-frontal male nude shoots are either porn stars (so may be quite willing to pose in the nude) or agency-represented models (such as Paolo Gallardo in *Ultimate Clothing Company*, 2014; Danny Blake for *Arena Homme+*, 2014; and Aidan Walsh for *Man About Town*, 2014) that agreed to participate due to McLellan's high profile in the fashion industry and in order to gain more exposure due to the daringness of the act itself. In the specific case of Gallardo and Blake (both featured in jerking off photo shoots in the Fit & Famous category of *Englishlads'* sister site *FitYoungMen*), and Johnson and O'brian, the gay audience's familiarity and interest in them as gay porn performers would imbue their images with additional meaning, and, to a certain extent, a masculine representation of same-sex desire. Another aspect worth mentioning is the lack of diversity in McLellan's casting, with his protagonists being predominantly white, and seeming to originate from and celebrate the same working class environments he meticulously crafts in his images. McLellan presents us with a state of Britain that seems to be unaffected by foreigners and years of immigration. His social vision positions the notion of "home" more as a nostalgic '[…] defensive structure […]' than '[…] a potential site of welcome and hospitality' (2013: 143). And whereas Corrine Day's work from the early 1990s showcase relationships and private moments that provide and encourage an emotional connection between the viewer and the photographs, reflecting a real sense of intimacy whilst capturing the raw energy of her young working-class models, McLellan's nostalgic tendencies and constructed (rather than observed and documented) art or fashion imagery, in addition to the well-groomed appearance of his agency-represented models; the fashionable clothes; and the overall high end quality of the images, can make his work appear emotionless and hollow. The outcomes are somewhat similar to those of Donovan's "gritty" men's fashion stories for *Town*, which failed to deliver any meaningful comments about the social issues of the time due to the commercialness of all elements other than the location of the shoot. This stylised

approach to politically conscious fashion image-making is evidenced in some of leading American fashion photographer Steven Meisel's more controversial (and supposedly subversive) projects that 'Rather than providing social commentary or satire […] dangerously play with the spectacle of violence in the promotion of expensive fashionability' (Ash, 2009: n.pag.). Clearly, McLellan's intent is also to challenge the prevailing notion of masculinity in men's fashion photography, suggesting a more diverse image of contemporary British men. He offers a substitute for the beefy and healthy all-American male body by showing us its antithesis – the beer-drinking, cheeky, young English lad with his smaller frame. However, his choice of models still falls within the range that fashion shoot casting traditionally embraces, opting for manly male models that both gay and heterosexual audiences would perceive as fit and handsome.
To this date McLellan's boldest move (supported by *Man About Town*'s (then) Editor-in-chief Ben Reardon) was *Final Fantasy* starring Cardiff-born model Michael Morgan for the Spring/Summer 2015 issue of the bi-annual *Man About Town* style magazine. *Final Fantasy* featured a series of full frontal nude portraits of Morgan, in addition to the model featuring nude on its limited edition cover, depicted as both spectator and spectacle, and possessing the ability to reconcile '[…] at least artificially, the tension of the Playboy and the Narcissist' (Edwards 2004: 37). Both Reardon and McLellan claimed that the images were meant to come across as spontaneous and natural rather than erotic, sexualized, or shocking. Unlike Day's *George in the Bath* (1994), which presents an opportunity for the viewer's voyeuristic, erotic gaze due to the domestic setting and documentary and spontaneous nature of the image, the austerity of the *Final Fantasy* images: the confident but not confrontational poses, and the severity of the empty studio backdrop, strip any sexual overtones out of the viewing experience, and instead turn the focus to the publication "event" itself as an "attention getter," and to a questioning of male genital and preputial aesthetics (based on social media comments – a preference for cut or uncut, shaved and unshaved cocks, etc.). Sex, nudity, controversy and notoriety sell newspapers and magazines, and so the controversial aspects of featuring full frontal male nudity on the cover of a fashion magazine could be an ironic gesture; a gift to the magazine's sales; and a promotion in the careers of everyone concerned. And since *Final Fantasy* is the only known case of a fashion magazine featuring full-frontal male nudity on its cover, the publication caused a minor uproar, and the limited run of 500 copies apparently sold out in 10 minutes (The Guardian Website 2015).

Three years earlier, in a published conversation between British fashion photographer David Sims, graphic designer and former art director of *i-D magazine* Scott King and *Arena Homme+* Editorial Director (and former Senior Editor of *The Face*) Ashley Heath, Sims brought up the still problematic issue of the sight of the penis: 'It's deeply under-valued the phallus. It's like the final taboo isn't it? We all laugh at it and we don't really want to see one which makes me want to put one up wherever and however I can' (2012: 256). Heath considered the issue within British law and culture:

> The whole penis thing is strange. You get it with magazine publishing… Why can people walk in and look at Michelangelo's David but… […] We still have strict laws in Britain about the publication of erect penises and penises on front covers. It comes back to a 'rape threat' issue I think… (2012: 256)

Man About Town's full-frontal male nudity cover has to be further contextualised within the general approach to full-frontal male nudity in commercial fashion publications and advertising. *Yves Saint Laurent, Paris, 1971* is a black and white studio photograph of the naked Yves Saint Laurent by French photographer Jean Loup Sieff. It features the French fashion designer perched on three leather cushions (though the artful positioning of his legs and the dramatic, heavy shadow studio lighting ensured that his private parts were concealed), and was probably the first published example of male nudity being utilised in a commercial fashion context by a well-established luxury brand. The image was used for commercial and advertising purposes for *Pour Homme* – the brand's first perfume for men, and caused quite a stir at the time. Although emblematic of the designer's penchant for a carefree love of life, and the brand's spirit of bold and youthful arrogance, the underlying characteristics of the ambiguous image – featuring a naked famous fashion celebrity staring at us from behind his thick-rimmed glasses and presenting us his exposed and vulnerable male body, became too controversial for mainstream advertising, even for the bohemian cultures of Paris and London in the early 1970s. The designer's long hair, slim physique, and the positioning of a large circle of projected light spotlighted behind him added religious undertones to the image, which further complicated the viewer's potential interpretations of it – bearing in mind Saint Laurent's drug and alcohol use, battle with bipolar disorder, and his status as one of a very few openly gay French celebrities. Some thirty years later when American designer Tom Ford was Creative Director of Yves Saint Laurent (2000-2004) he went a step further for the brand's M7 perfume for men advertising campaign, featuring French model and former martial arts champion Samuel de Cubber. The ads depicted de Cubber shown in a pensive pose, sitting completely naked with his penis showing on a bare studio floor. The overall natural and unassuming pose, and de Cubber's hairy body (appearing ungroomed, at least by comparison with the popular metrosexual body aesthetic at the time) contribute to the ordinariness and normalness of the scene, perhaps influencing the significant public furor over the M7 perfume campaign. This homage to Sieff's 1971 photograph of Saint Laurent, received over 730 complaints in 2002, indicating that at the start of the New Millennium even the fashion consuming public wasn't ready for the sight of male genitalia in fashion publications and ad campaigns. It is interesting to note that during the previous two decades, American photographers such as Greg Gorman, Herb Ritts, and Bruce Weber published a large volume of work (mostly in photographic monographs) that primarily focused on the male nude or on male erotica, continuing in a similar direction to the line established by George Platt Lynes, Herbert List, Horst, and a dozen or so male physique photographers, working both in Europe and America from the turn of the century to the 1970s. Although primarily catering for a gay audience, at

least in the case of Ritts and Weber the male nude also featured quite heavily in their work for commercial magazines. Their predecessors' work, which was mostly shot in a studio, focused on the physical attributes of the male models, and ranged from art nude and figure photography inspired by Classical Greek and Roman sculptures, to a more explicitly suggestive erotica.

By constructing scenes that present us with the seemingly carefree, laid- back lifestyle of his attractive, highly paid models, McLellan's personal and commercial magazine work is very much in the style of Weber's work. At least as far as their menswear magazine work is concerned, it seems that their target audience is gay male. The *Final Fantasy* images to a certain extent also emulate the basic studio set-up (plain backdrop, minimal props) which was a characteristic of fifties physique art that was directed to gay consumers. McLellan's longing desire for intimacy; claim to authenticity and innocence; and focus on a single, ungroomed and isolated male character captured in arbitrary and nonchalant poses is also reminiscent of the work of John S. Barrington – the most prominent gay (albeit "closeted") photographer working in the UK in the Fifties and Sixties, and especially in his fascination with a model named John Hamill. Like his contemporaries Tom of Finland or Samuel Steward (aka Phil Sparrow), Barrington, who is considered a pioneer of fifties physique art, had a particular fascination with young, working-class, white and heterosexual males – aspiring young men who mostly ended up being his occasional lovers. Barrington describes a chance meeting in 1965 with Hamill, who was an amateur bodybuilder: '12 May: At Roehampton pool meet a stunning blond lad, showing off his diving. Annoy his girlfriend by giving him a card. Dream-boy type, ideal for US clients' (Smith, 1996: 158). Hamill ended up posing for Barrington's camera on many modelling sessions, becoming one of his favorite models for his photographs and drawing studies, and a popular physique model. His pictures ended up in European and American beefcake magazines of the mid 1960s such as *Der Kreis* (*the Circle*) and *Jr.* – publications that were aimed primarily or exclusively at a growing homosexual audience. The motivation for young, working-class and heterosexual men such as Hamill and Morgan to pose nude for homosexual photographers and gay publications is primarily aspirational. Hamill took up an acting career in the 70s and 80s, and Morgan – who was already relatively a successful model by the time he was photographed for *Final Fantasy* became a local sensation when *WalesOnline* ran an article on him, titled "Model teen's meteoric rise from council estate to catwalk." Morgan said in an interview that the idea of doing a full-frontal shoot was at first 'a bit daunting,' but that his mother had told him: '[…] if it's going to help you do what you want to do, do it' (The Guardian Website 2015). Despite the different eras, both Hamill and Morgan's images sit within a framework that emphasises transformation, putting the emphasis on the transformation of the disadvantaged. Success stories such as theirs is a favourite subject of the British tabloid media (which is arguably primarily targeting a working-class audience), that encourages *Rags To Riches* and self-made success narratives, and an individual's transition from a humble working-class background and rather unassuming beginning to achieving fame and fortune.

In this context it is interesting to consider a quote from John Braine, author of the novel *Room at the Top* (1957) and himself an "angry young man" – part of a loosely formed group of 1950s socially conscious English writers:

> The new dimension of the film was in presenting a boy from the working class not as a downtrodden victim, but as he really was. It wasn't important that Joe Lampton was honest about sex, what was important was that Joe was honest about the whole business of class. Most ambitious working-class boys want to get to hell out of the working class. That was a simple truth that had never been stated before. (cited in Richards, 1997: 149-150)

It might be that the intention with *Final Fantasy* was to simply portray youthful male nudity as it really is. But we must bear in mind the underlying factors that ultimately add another dimension to any fashion photo shoot: the opportunistic nature of fashion imaging (model agencies offer free models for editorial shoots in the hope of securing the models' own future commercial work; photographers and models usually do editorial work for free in the hope of securing future commercial work, etc.), and the fabric of everyday life in Britain and how social class and aspiration are embedded in it. Britain's obsession with social class fits with a prevailing Western tendency toward relying on models of success and failure when it encourages ambition. And as evidenced by countless social media profiles – self-promotion seems to be the most effective strategy for those looking for the nearest door of opportunity. Our culture demonstrates a preoccupation with status, celebrity, and branding, and the promotion of self-indulgence and self-glorification. Photography (with the aid of fashion or a total lack of clothing) plays a key role in the encouragement and the dissemination of this aspiration for success, recognition and the rise from hardship to affluence. Body image representation, audaciousness, taboo-breaking or plain old-fashioned nudity play a big role in this process, played out to maximum effect on social media. Even though Instagram has a "no nudity rule," it is full of pornographic images of young adults aspiring to look like (and therefore be) this self-proclaimed "icon," or the other. It is arguably the most prominent platform for visual evidence about how we still perceive gender nudity through different perspectives. Taking your clothes off and having one's naked ambition put out on display used to be associated with lower-class women. "Insecure," "vulgar," "a desperate whore" indicate some of the criticisms which have been directed at women who use their bodies as a tool to promote themselves. These days you'll see men and women flaunting their bodies on their social networking profiles, though it seems like there's still a difference in how both are being perceived. On one hand, there is still much bigotry around female nudity that brings up issues that are particularly race and class related (for example, the 2017 Emma Watson/Nicki Minaj public nudity miniscandal/debate,

considered by feminist Reni Eddo-Lodge on British Vogue's website) whereas on the other hand (and as long as there's no sight of a penis) men are encouraged to display their well-defined bodies, with the exposed male body being admired and applauded rather than criticized. This brings up a fundamental question around aspects of spectatorship: Who is considered the intended audience for images of naked and semi-naked male bodies?

4. What a difference Three Years made in Fashion

Sims brings up the notion of sexual orientation in his discussion of the appeal of male nudity: 'Maybe men are not ready-made to be sexualized – unless you're looking at homo-eroticism. I'm only asking the question. It all seems silly to me and I'm a bit sick of this silliness' (2012: 256). So the obvious answer to the spectatorship question seems to be: gay men. However, since naked female bodies on the pages of fashion and lifestyle magazines are viewed and appreciated by a female audience (regardless of sexual orientation), and parts of the female anatomy such as the breast and the vagina maintain their hold over the cultural debate on the politics of female sexuality (not necessarily led by lesbians), can images of the naked (or semi-naked) male body appeal to heterosexual men? Or at least provoke an interest in the politics of male sexuality other than that which is typically associated with homoeroticism and reserved for a gay audience alone? Michael Hatt puts forward a similar argument when he writes on Victorian representations of male nudity, arguing that the notion of near-naked or naked male figures being the sole preoccupation of gay artists and audience should be questioned. Hatt notes that, with the prominence of late eighteenth-century gay artists in Victorian Culture (Oscar Wilde, John Addington Symonds, Walter Pater) and public acknowledgment of homosexuality, the well-developed male body (that at the time was associated with heterosexuality, health and morality) as depicted in the Arts (and especially in the New Sculpture movement) became '[…] the main concern of purity campaigners […] and debates about the nude' in Britain (1999: 241). It was the depiction of naked females, or showing mixed gender nudity that solicited accusations of sexual immorality, more than men's bodies on their own. Over one hundred and fifty years later the naked female form continues to provoke debate in contemporary culture, whereas the sight of male nudity continues to be categorised as a site for queer fantasies rather than provide an open critique of heterosexuality.

In the context of this article it is important to note that the Sims/King/Heath penis debate happened eight years ago, and that McLellan's *Final Fantasy* cover of *Man About Town* happened five years ago – a generation considering the fast pace of the Fashion Industry. During this time period, three key movements shaped the European and North American fashion worlds, and ultimately our perceptions of nudity, especially in the context of fashion imaging:

1. Male teenagers became regarded as powerful fashion influencers: current research is indicating that teenagers (a section of the Generation Z demographic – born between 1996 and 2015) are not only fashion-conscious consumers, but also a demographic group with immense spending power, with male teens apparently shopping more than female teens. With the influence of rap and hip-hop music, and sports cults such as skateboarding on high-end fashion-sportswear, male teenagers have arguably become one of the principal consumers targeted by the fashion industry, mainly due to the immense popularity and appeal of streetwear. Fashion and music – the arrival of rock 'n' roll, and the rise of youth cults such as The Teddy Boys (with their materialist emphasis on style and appearance of 'hard' masculinity) had already helped to pave the way for establishing the "teenager" as the classless, affluent fashion consumer we know today. In addition, since social media repositioned urban and suburban youth culture as the most significant arbiter of style and fashion within the Millennials, and has done so for vast, networked audiences – notions of gender, sexuality, race, and social class are constantly debated, confronted and contrasted in relation to young adults.

2. Streetwear: Marc Bain (2018) highlights how streetwear evokes '[…] a shared sense of culture […]' and one which is '[…] male-dominated and, too often, frustratingly sexist.' Morwenna Ferrier, the Guardian's acting joint fashion editor, is making connections between today's hyped, expensive, high-end streetwear (brands such as *Supreme*, *Palace*, *Gosha Rubchinskiy*, *Vetements* and *Balenciaga*) and mid-90s streetwear that has its roots in working class youth culture. She cites the male clothing in *La Haine* (1995) – Mathieu Kassovitz's film portraying the violent lives of three young working-class friends living on a housing project on the outskirts of Paris, as an early inspiration for the contemporary celebration of '[…] the anti-luxury luxury permeating menswear now' (2016). Georgian fashion designer Demna Gvasalia's *Vetements* fashion label (kicked off in 2014, Paris and Zurich based) and anti-fashion runway shows – celebrating teen angst depicted by slogan-style hoodies and tracksuits ("Turned on by Danger"; "You Fuck'n Asshole"; "Hi, I Don't Care. Thanks."), and his appointment in 2015 as new Creative Director for luxury fashion house Balenciaga, signaled a new streetwear dawn. A reverse form of cultural appropriation sees influential fashion designers such as Gvasalia, Virgil Abloh (Artistic Director of *Louis Vuitton* and Chief Executive Officer of *Off-White*), Gosha Rubchinskiy and Riccardo Tisci (Chief Creative Officer of *Burberry*) and image-makers such as Alasdair McLellan and Jamie Hawkesworth (who all came from humble beginnings), refabricating and selling trendy working-class nouveau chic fashion and promotional fashion images back to working class consumers, and ultimately to the sovereign middle class consumer.

3. *#MeToo*: the onslaught of allegations of sexual misconduct by multiple women against movie mogul Harvey Weinstein had led to similar accusations of other powerful figures in the film industry, but also the fashion industry, with allegation of sexual misconduct by female and male models. Three of the world's leading fashion photographers: Terry Richardson, Bruce Weber and Mario Testino, were accused of inappropriate behaviour during photo shoots. These allegations not only led to their fashion industry clients' voluntary termination of their contract, but also elicited widespread condemnation. Moreover, the *#MeToo* Movement forced the fashion industry into a position where the over sexualisation of culture and the proliferation of sexual imagery in fashion advertising were questioned and debated.

Social class shapes the definition of youth, masculinity and consumption in the UK. In the conclusion to *The Era of Mass Communication Working Class Male Leisure and Good Citizenship Between the Wars* (2009), Brad Beaven establishes that the British Working Class, especially working-class men, were instrumental to the construction of content and meaning in print media, film, and radio in Britain between the wars. They have done so through their strong presence as consumers, who became increasingly relevant as a target audience to writers, filmmakers, radio schedulers, magazine editors, and publicists. When it comes to thinking about fashion consumption in the UK, the early 1950s introduced the teenager as a new kind of consumer that '[…] had begun to emerge and to be hotly contested in the critical discourse about both fashion and advertising' (Jobling, 2014: 6). We can then track back the influence of the working class youth on clothing styles and subsequently consumer behavior to the late '70s and the development of the Scallies into the '80s Casuals subculture and its association with sports and sportswear (especially football), hooliganism, Thatcher Era unemployment and crime:

> […] the casuals emerged from the dole queues and football terraces, from the 'delinquent' world of drugs and brawls and menace. The visible affluence of these supposed state dependants implies, in itself, illicit goods, and their flaunting of their 'free time' is a reminder that a leisure society creates its own forms of disorder. The Consumption, identity, and style conventional sociological reading of youth sub-cultures as resisting bourgeois cultural hegemony makes no sense of the casuals—they're involved in a stylistic refusal to be excluded from dominant images of the good life (1990, 2006: 120).

Leaving out hooliganism and unemployment, there are a number of striking similarities between the Casuals and today's young male fashion consumers in the UK. Both grew from traditional, aspirational, working-class culture and became cultures in which male youth express themselves and come to terms with their masculine identities through fashion. They also focus on sportswear as a styling element that denote contemporary, masculine coolness; and seem to share a cause by challenging the hegemony of the upper-middle class on fashion trends and ultimate fashion expertise. By dressing up in pristine sports uniforms (the Casuals) or extremely expensive, reimagined streetwear staples such as track suits, hooded sweatshirts, polo shirts and trainers (iGens and Millennials), both groups were and are actively involved in turning popular culture into a dominant global culture, and injecting working-class values into a cultured experience as a form of rebellion – a cynical and subversive celebration of the antisocial antihero. Observing the queue of teenage streetwear enthusiasts outside *Palace* and *Supreme*'s London locations, and especially the teen dress code, it is clear that baggy, oversized and sagging streetwear-inspired high-end fashion is the antithesis of sexual suggestiveness, and that London's youth is interested in anything other than being sexually provocative, especially considering the heteronormative style and dynamics of streetwear. Indicative of this were changes at two big streetwear brands and London teenagers' favorites: American Apparel and Abercrombie & Fitch. American Apparel – an American company that built a clothing empire making sexually explicit ad campaigns, became a bankrupt company by 2017 – selling its intellectual property and other assets and closing its L.A. headquarters and all 110 U.S. stores. In the same year Abercrombie & Fitch dissolved its focus on sexually suggestive images (their erotically charged campaigns used to be shot by photographer Bruce Weber) following the brand's 2015 decision to remove the shirtless male in-store brand representatives/models/"Greeters" from all of its stores worldwide. The tendency to move towards safer brand-marketing strategies fits with today's increasingly conservative political atmosphere, with fashion pages in magazines and advertising campaigns indicating a more moderate direction to the highly sexualised one we used to see around ten years ago (a "movement" led by Terry Richardson, in advertising campaign such as *Tom Ford for Men* (2007); *Supreme x Terry Richardson x Vanessa Veasley* (2010)). This change in direction was recently reaffirmed by the political agenda created by the breakthrough of the *#MeToo* movement that clearly channeled the emotions of women and men with regards to sexual harassment but also on what is and isn't acceptable about gender representation in the media. An October 2018 Fawcett Society report (the Fawcett Society is the UK's leading charity campaigning for gender equality and women's rights), titled *#MeToo one year on – what's changed?* is signaling that in the UK, awareness of the campaign is highest among younger women and men, indicating that they can see a change in social norms around the issues that the *#MeToo* movement has brought to the front. Since the notion of "body image" has been identified in the media (and by scholars alike) as playing a key part in the cultural consumption of clothing regardless of gender, the current climate will clearly shape and have some effect on the consumption of fashion through retail and communication. It seems that in the UK, rather than being preoccupied with the expressions of sex and sexuality, today's youth is more concerned with eradicating gender stereotypes and bridging cultural barriers on the definition of gender itself and the questioning of traditional gender roles.
Amid Brexit concerns, sustainability issues, and the fashion industry's new-found penchant for conservatism it is very unlikely that any magazine editor would now even consider full frontal nudity, male or female, for the front cover of their

magazine. The industry has been especially cautious about how models are portrayed since allegations of questionable behavior during photoshoots were made against three of its most famous and respected photographers by female and male fashion models. In addition we must bear in mind the commercial nature of a contemporary, hard copy fashion publications, and the growing challenge facing hard copy magazines in reaching the widest audience possible at an age that is increasingly digital. Models and modelling agencies are probably more likely to think twice these days before getting involved in risqué projects. One could imagine Michael Morgan shrugging off the *Final Fantasy* cover now, saying he was just being a lad, doing silly things that lads do – like being cheeky and getting your knob (British slang for penis) out in public – both very common in heterosexual "lad culture." This "lad culture" is anyhow a culture that has been in a state of flux for the past five years or so ('lads mags' *FHM*, *Nuts*, and *Zoo* all ceased publication in 2015) due to a change in attitudes and consumer behaviour of young British men. And so it seems as though we have lost the momentum for starting the dialogue on the relationship between corporeality, nudity, and the changing nature of class-specific masculinities in the UK as part of our national discourse. It's a sign of our times and a potent reflection of the current fashion scene that McLellan's Autumn Winter 2018 editorial for *Arena Homme+* (titled *50.01*) is a staged, throwback knights bromance story featuring a mixed-race casting of skateboarders-cum-models and UK male teens idols Lucien Clarke and Blondey McCoy, cased head to toe in shiny and impenetrable silver armour.

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