'New Man', Old Worlds: Re-articulating Masculinity in the Star Persona of Orlando Bloom

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Introduction

Despite the question marks that remain over Orlando Bloom's durability as a film star, [1] the British actor's rapid rise to fame already carries with it academic interest due to the way in which debates surrounding masculinity have coalesced around his ascent. The star's success has been notable for the extent to which it has been read within the British and American media as representative of a shift toward a new model of masculinity in contemporary Hollywood and wider society. Sharon Waxman in the *New York Times,* for example, explains that whereas "once upon a time […] the American leading man had a square jaw, a glinty gaze and an imposing physique […] the new generation of Hollywood's young leading men are soft of cheek, with limpid stares and wiry frames", and then goes on to include Bloom in her list of "new-model" men (Waxman, 2004). She adds that such men are defined by "more overtly sensitive and emotionally available qualities" than the macho men of old, and that these qualities may be connected to the emergence of "a more feminized […] society" and "the rise of the 'metrosexual' male" (Ibid). Bloom's value as a case study lies in the potential to interrogate such generalizations, through careful consideration of representations of the star within the texts of his films and as a celebrity. This can also grant us a clearer insight into masculinity's status as a social/cultural construction, with particular emphasis on the operation of hegemonic masculinity. For example, to what extent might the discursive construction of Bloom's masculinity reveal this category to be "diverse, mobile, even unstable" (Beynon, 2002: 2), contingent upon a range of social/cultural/historical contexts? In addition, how might hegemonic masculinity be articulated through the textual and extra-textual positioning of Bloom, working to "define successful ways of 'being a man'" whilst defining "other masculine styles as inadequate or inferior" (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994: 3)?

What makes Bloom particularly interesting as an alleged exemplar of a new masculinity at play within Hollywood (and beyond) is the fact that the star's success is predicated almost exclusively upon roles within period films, or at least films with strong connotations of the historical adventure or epic: the fantasized "middle-earth" of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001, 2002, 2003), the twelfth century BC of *Troy* (2004), and the seventeenth century of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films (2003, 2006, 2007). Such an apparent paradox can be seen to make tensions surrounding the social/cultural construction of masculinity more acute, with the historical displacement of Bloom heightening questions of continuity and/or change, and coherence and/or instability. For example, how are these films able to reconcile the "newness" of Bloom's masculinity with their historical settings? To what extent might this produce incoherence, or are such tensions managed through the operation of hegemonic masculinity? This paper will address such questions through analysis of the discursive construction of Bloom's masculinity within the promotion and text of the historical epic

Kingdom of Heaven (2005). In doing so, I will consider the varying relationships between past and present articulated through Bloom, outlining those individual, generic and wider social/cultural histories in which the star is located. Through this, we can interrogate attempts at historicizing representations of masculinity within Hollywood, whilst also gauging the degree to which masculinity's coherence as a concept may be problematized by this "new man's" adventures in the past.

"From Boy to Man"

The promotion for *Kingdom of Heaven* (*KofH*) was marked by a certain amount of anxiety surrounding Bloom's masculinity and, consequently, his status as a star. This was manifested by the stress upon the transformation of Bloom's status as both a man *and* a star through the film. The magazine *Film Review*, for example, declared that the star "comes of age" in the film, "a movie which shows he has muscle and true grit as well as strikingly handsome looks" (Millar, 2005: 19). The film is said to lay to rest "any lingering doubts that the star is just a pretty face […] who lacked the right stuff to take the lead and dominate a movie in his own right" (Brett, 2005: 7), whilst Bloom's co-star Eva Green adds that, as the central character Balian, "he's turning from […] boy to man" (in Haynes, 2005: 53). Here, then, the star's "pretty face" and "handsome looks" are equated with boyishness and positioned in opposition to those qualities of "muscle", "grit", and the "right stuff" that enable a star to "take the lead", to "dominate a movie" and thus be a man. [2] Such an equation seems rooted in the idea that Bloom is emasculated by his status as a pin-up, upon which his reputation as "a pretty face" is built. Richard Dyer notes how the passivity and powerlessness associated with being looked at conflicts with the notions of power and activity believed to be embodied within masculinity (1982: 66). In addition, Melanie Nash and Martii Lahti highlight the "proximity to both feminized iconography and to female consumers" embodied with the figure of the male pin-up, and the potentially "degrading connotations for male stars" that result from this (1999: 71). Indeed, in a glossy double-page spread, packed full of pictures of Bloom, the girls' magazine *Tiger Beat* offers a dissection of Bloom's "unique sense of style", picking over his appearance in ways that he is powerless to resist and codifying the star through the terms of fashion in such a way as to produce parallels with the treatment of female stars: "His awesome hair makes you want to run your fingers through it, and the fuller, undone style complements his strong features" (Haver, 2005).

The potential emasculation and feminization of the star embodied within Bloom's status as a pin-up are further compounded by his representation within his films. As the elf Legolas in *The Lord of the Rings* (*LOTR*) trilogy, Bloom is characterized by long, flowing blond hair, and the star is often bathed in bright light and backlit, making his hair glow, and accentuating his smooth white skin. Such techniques are employed within the film to stress the spirituality and agelessness of the elves, but have commonly been employed to present female stars (Dyer, 1997: 122-125). Indeed, the trilogy's main female stars, Liv Tyler and Cate Blanchett, also play elves and are represented via a similar range of techniques. Despite the star's feminine appearance, Legolas' actions can be seen as more stereotypically masculine, fulfilling the role of the man of "few words but mighty deeds" (Donald, 1992: 130), expressing himself largely through his bow and arrow. Nevertheless, within the film as a whole, it is the more muscular and rugged Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) who is crowned King, with Bloom merely a supporting player in the saga. A hierarchy of masculinity is thus established, and mapped on to the bodies of the stars, with Bloom's youth, beauty and skill subordinate to the age, strength and brawn befitting the king.

If such a message appears implicit within *LOTR*, then it becomes explicit within *Troy*, in an indictment of those men defined through their pretty faces. As the Trojan prince Paris in *Troy*, Bloom's status as an object of beauty is both fetishized and critiqued, via the presentation of the star's hairless physique. After Paris woos Helen (Diane Kruger), wife of the King of Sparta, we see a silhouette of her lying naked on the bed, but see Bloom, naked from just below the waist up, in the centre of the frame, and oiled. Later, on the boat back from Sparta to Troy, Paris informs his brother Hector (Eric Bana) that he has stolen Helen away from her husband. As Bana rages over Paris' thoughtlessness and selfishness, Bloom is placed to the centre/right of the frame in a medium shot, light shining down on his smooth, hairless chest as his robe slips to one side. This is in contrast to the hirsute Bana, whose bearded face, shrouded in darkness, dominates the left of the frame in close-up. Whilst all of the male stars of this film are presented as objects of spectacle throughout (particularly Brad Pitt as Achilles), Bloom's representation is notable for the degree to which this is made particularly explicit and never justified by action, exacerbating those tensions surrounding passivity and masculinity described by Dyer (1982: 66). The accentuation of Bloom's hairlessness can also be seen to stress the character's youthfulness and/or vanity. Paris' status as a "ladies man" is thus ultimately shown to be a sign of weakness and immaturity. Indeed, his infatuation with Helen leads him to take her with him to Troy. However, when confronted by her husband Menelaus, he flees from a fight to the death, falling grovelling at his brother's feet. Such a sequence acts as a stark expression of Paris' shortcomings, and the hierarchy of masculinity, within this film. The film suggests that those men interested in women in excess of, or at the expense of, combat, become women themselves, in appearance and action. The ultimate tragedy appears to be that Paris' behaviour leads not to his death, but to that of his brother, Hector, a "real" man (hirsute, muscular, authoritative), as well as the deaths of thousands in the subsequent war between the Trojans and the Greeks.

Thus, despite Bloom's action heroics in *LOTR* and, indeed, as the swashbuckling blacksmith Will Turner in the first *Pirates of The Caribbean* film, the promotion for *KofH* appeared to pivot on the conflict between Bloom's somewhat emasculated and feminized persona and the kind of masculinity felt to be embodied by leading men in historical epics. The star's status as "a pretty face" is seen to be out of place alongside those stars most famous within the genre of the historical epic, such as Charlton Heston and, most recently, Russell Crowe. Such stars can be seen to be characterized chiefly by the size and "hardness" of their bodies, with these bodies acting to symbolize the huge responsibilities that their characters have to shoulder, and their incredible determination. Leon Hunt and Steven Cohan both offer summaries of the many eulogies to Heston's imposing physique, from Derek Elley's description of the star's "towering […] epic presence" (in Hunt, 1993: 68) to Donald Spoto's description of the star's body being as "firm as Moses' rock" (in Cohan, 1997: 156). Martin Fradley detects a similar discourse at work in descriptions of Crowe within *Gladiator* (2000), with the star able to command "the movie magisterially" (Felperin in Fradley, 2004: 243) and exuding "the physicality of a wild animal" (Nathan in Fradley, 2004: 243). As the film magazine *Empire* puts it, "Russell Crowe is not a Starbucks cappuccino man. 'Rugged' is the word" (Palmer in Fradley, 2004: 243). Here, the stars' bodies are held up as evidence of their masculinity, authenticating the power and authority that they wield within their films. In the case of Crowe, we can also see evidence of a binary being established between the "rugged" star and the oppositional figure of "Starbucks cappuccino man". Alongside his film roles, it is Bloom's extra-textual status as just such a "Starbucks cappuccino man" that can be seen to have exacerbated those anxieties surrounding his role in *KofH*.

Such a phrase feeds into the discourse of the "new man" or "metrosexual" through which Bloom's persona has been understood and/or critiqued. [3] John Beynon outlines the way in which the identities of the "new-man-as nurturer" and "new-man-as-narcissist" were discursively produced as new forms of masculinity in the 1980s in response to feminist calls for greater male involvement in the domestic sphere and an intensification in male consumerism, particularly in the arena of fashion (Beynon, 2002: 98-105). "Scrambled together" to form a "generalized 'new man-ism'" (Beynon, 2002: 99), the concepts to which these discourses refer were re-energized in the new millennium through the adoption of the term "metrosexual", although in this instance male narcissism was seen to have run rampant, with male sensitivity reduced to the level of superficial signs. [4]

The construction of Bloom's persona can be seen to form points of connection with both those strands of narcissist and nurturer, contributing to his identification as just such a "new man" or "metrosexual". The emphasis on the star's carefully groomed appearance in films such as the *LOTR* trilogy and *Troy* can be seen to combine with his extra-textual status as a pin-up with a "unique sense of style" and "awesome hair" to make him a symbol of the increasing narcissism allegedly characteristic of new men. This is further compounded by the star's involvement in an advertising campaign for the Gap clothing chain, and his willingness to discuss his own body-consciousness. Interviewed by the *Telegraph Magazine*, he tells them that "I'm quite careful about my diet, I don't do dairy at all" (Fox, 2004: 27). The star's status as a nurturant male, "emotionally literate, sensitive and in touch with his gentler, 'feminine side'" (Beynon, 2002: 121), is also evident, to a point, within his films and, to a greater extent, in his extra-textual representations as a celebrity. Whilst the character of Legolas in the *LOTR* trilogy remains a somewhat enigmatic figure, Paris' exchanges with Helen in *Troy* are marked by their emotional honesty and sensitivity. In his bid to persuade Helen to leave Sparta with him, Paris declares that "If you come, we'll never be safe, men will hunt us, the gods will curse us, but I'll love you, till the day they burn my body, I will love you". Later, responding to Helen's surprise that he would also leave his palace in Troy to protect them, he adds that "You left your home for me". Bloom's interviews are marked to an even greater extent by emotional expressivity and allusions to his inner sensitivity. On being asked about how he felt when the filming of the *LOTR* trilogy ended, the star replied that he felt "Very emotional […] It really brought me close to tears […] I was just reminded of how special the relationships on this film were" (*Empire* supplement, 2003: 18). The star also explains that he is:

> [Q]uite sensitive to women. I saw how my sister got treated by boyfriends. I read this thing that said when you are in a relationship with a woman, imagine how you would feel if you were her father. That's been my approach, for the most part. (in Glock, 2004)

The degree to which Bloom's sensitivity in this instance is shown to be born out of his close relationship to his sister, and "agony-aunt" relationship advice, only accentuates his closeness to a stereotypically feminine sphere, and thus his "new man" status. The star's consumerist narcissism, emotionality and consequent emasculation all join together in this one description from the *Telegraph Magazine*: "There is an element of the excited puppy about Bloom. Everything -- right down to the soya latte he is drinking is 'awesome', 'amazing' or 'fantastic'" (Fox, 2004: 27).

Potential comparisons between Bloom's soya latte puppy and the rugged Crowe were further exacerbated by the fact *KofH* was directed by Ridley Scott, the director of Crowe in

Gladiator. Indeed, this fact was much trumpeted in the promotion for the film, in a bid to underline Scott's success in this genre. [5] As a result, the publicity for the film stressed the transformation of Bloom's masculinity, with particular focus on the star's physical appearance. For example, attention was drawn to the weight and muscle the star gained for the film. The magazine *Film Review* mentions that Ridley Scott "knew that Orlando would have to get buffed up to be completely convincing as a knight of the Crusades" (Millar, 2005: 19), and we are told by Bloom himself that he put on fifteen to twenty pounds to take the role "into the realm of being more of a man" (in Topel, 2005). Attention was also drawn to Bloom's bearded, more roughed-up look, echoing the representational strategies evident within *Troy*, in which hirsuteness comes to define male authority, authenticity and strength. Bloom mentions that, along with the help of his make-up artist, he went for "different levels on the beard at different times to create that masculine, real man of that period" (in Topel, 2005), and *Film Review* cites images of the bearded star as evidence that Bloom "has successfully thrown off his teen pin-up persona to embody the look of his role" (Anon, 2005: 59). In addition, publicity for the film also played up the more "manly" aspects of Bloom's actions during the making of the film, telling us that the star handled the ancient weapons of combat and the horseriding with "remarkable ease", and that the star was a "real trooper" (Millar, 2005: 19).

However, if attempts were made to negate the narcissistic connotations of Bloom's new man persona, publicity for *KofH* still worked to incorporate aspects of Bloom's status as nurturer, in a bid to stress the distinctiveness of his role as the central protagonist Balian. "Balian doesn't have the capacity for war in the way we might think about it", Bloom told *Empire* magazine, "he starts to rake the lands and make them better by building constructions like water wheels" (Anon, 2004: 10). Elaborating on Balian's nature, and his own, Bloom is asked what would prompt his own hypothetical "crusade". He answers:

> Happiness, humanity. I would go on a crusade for humanity. If life isn't about human beings and living in harmony, then I don't know what it's about. And I think as Balian does: He fights for the people, he fights to protect the people and it doesn't matter what color you are. It doesn't matter what religion you are, it doesn't matter what your beliefs are, what sex you are, what sexuality you are. We're all equal in the eyes of god, whoever that may be. (in Topel, 2005)

Here, Bloom's stress on his heightened sensitivity is self-evident. What's interesting, though, is the degree to which Bloom conflates his persona with that of the medieval knight Balian, in spite of the historical inaccuracy of such a comparison. How, though, does the film attempt to resolve these tensions between Bloom's star persona and the character of Balian, and between Balian's character and wider history?

"What Man is a Man Who Does Not Make the World Better?"

Looking at the text of *KofH*, we can see evidence of its attempt to both negate and incorporate Bloom's "new man" status. In doing so, the film forms a dialogue not only with the history of Bloom's star persona, but also the legacy of the historical epic as a genre, and wider history itself. *KofH* can be seen to offer a slight contrast or complication to those "'Masochistic' spectacles of heroically suffering white men [which] have become perhaps the key trope in recent Hollywood action cinema" (Fradley, 2004: 239), and which Fradley sees as defining *KofH*'s predecessor *Gladiator*. For Paul Smith, the passage of the hero "from

eroticization, through destruction, to re-emergence and regeneration -- is such a staple of action movies […] that it can readily be called their orthodox structuring mode", with this mode functioning to legitimate and make pleasurable the return of male power via its temporary loss (Smith, 1993: 156, 170). As Fradley summarizes, "the hero knows he will get his ball(s) back, but chooses to believe, albeit briefly, that the lost object is irretrievable" (Fradley, 2004: 239), producing pleasure for the audience in the "generic reversal" that this loss enacts (Ibid: 240). [6] More importantly, it is only by "allowing himself to be hurt" and thus "temporarily relinquishing the phallus" that the hero can "make himself an imitation of Christ and [acquire] the moral authority (and sympathy) to win hearts and minds" (Savran, 1998: 147-8).

It is this structuring mode, pivoting upon male masochism that Fradley finds within *Gladiator* (Fradley, 2004: 242), summed up neatly by the film's promotional tag-line, "The general who became a slave […] the slave who became a gladiator […] the gladiator who defied an empire". Within *KofH*, however, Balian's progress through the narrative is organized around a rapid and unhindered rise to power from humble blacksmith to noble knight. Balian is at his weakest at the beginning of the film, in emotional turmoil due to his wife's suicide. However, his emotional weakness manifests itself through physical strength, as he runs his sword through the village priest after being taunted over the nature of his wife's death. Thus despite Balian's inward suffering, externally he projects a certain strength and this only increases as the film progresses. Having been confronted by a crusading lord, Godfrey of Ibelin (Liam Neeson), and told that he is Godfrey's son, he joins the journey to the Holy Land. After only minimal combat training from his father, Balian is able to successfully repel soldiers that have come to arrest him for the priest's murder. Godfrey, however, is fatally injured, but knights Balian before he dies, securing his successor. Arriving on the shores of Palestine via a shipwreck, Balian defeats a Saracen warrior in combat but spares his defenceless servant, indicating his prowess and nobility. He then assumes his father's estate and position and becomes a loyal servant to Baldwin, the King of Jerusalem (Edward Norton), protecting firstly the city of Karak, and then Jerusalem itself, against the Saracen forces of Saladin.

There are threats to Balian's rise to power along the way, notably the villainous Knights Templar, whose lust for war makes Balian their enemy. However, their threat is always neutralized, with Balian comfortably fighting off a party of Knights Templar who have been sent to kill him. Whilst Saladin's forces are also ultimately triumphant, the loss or "destruction" inflicted upon Balian himself is always minimized. Although captured by Saladin's forces in the defence of Karak, Balian is then spared by a Saracen lord who turns out to be the "servant" that Balian spared earlier. Despite his capture, Balian's efforts to protect the city also enable Baldwin to arrive with the full force of his army and agree terms with Saladin. Likewise, whilst Balian's defining act is the surrender of Jerusalem to Saladin, his valiant efforts ensure the safe passage of the city's inhabitants. Balian's status thus steadily increases as the film progresses, with the character never losing his grip on power and authority throughout the whole film. Never must he undergo the loss of status and brutal physical punishment that characterizes much of Maximus' journey in *Gladiator*. Considering the fact that the film's "script went through a series of revisions -- which didn't really end […] until the last scene had been shot" (Scott, 2005: 52), one could speculate that the smoothness of the character's passage may have been intensified by that anxiety, evident in the film's promotion, over Bloom's ability to convincingly embody such power and authority in the first place.

Such an anxiety can be seen to have been informed, in part, by Bloom's physique and consequently informs the representation of the star's body within the film. *KofH* is notable for the degree to which Bloom's body is under-emphasized, in stark contrast to the emphasis on the muscles of Crowe or Heston in their epic roles. [7] Bloom remains heavily clothed throughout the film, weighed down by a range of shirts, jumpers, cloaks, scarfs and armour. We only see his bare torso once, as he entertains Baldwin's sister Sibylla at his estate. Even then, he has a towel over one shoulder, the scene is set in the half-light of dusk, and, after a brief pause facing the camera, he turns and walks away. The whole shot lasts only eight seconds. This can be seen as an attempt to disguise Bloom's apparent physical "lack" in comparison to the physiques of Crowe or Heston, and the attendant implications regarding his embodiment of masculinity (as touched upon earlier). Such under-emphasis could also be seen as an attempt to downplay Bloom's own status as a pin-up, and the connotations of narcissism and femininity that come with this more passive display of masculinity. Taken together, these two factors help to explain further the lack of extended masochistic suffering for Bloom/Balian within the film. If seeing the male mutilated is always an "unquiet pleasure" (Willemen in Smith, 1993: 156) that may nonetheless be negotiated via the structuring code outlined by Smith, then observing the mutilation of Bloom may be too disruptive for male viewers, given the connotations of passivity and powerlessness already embodied within the star's physique.

That said, Bloom's face is frequently fetishized throughout the film. Indeed, the majority of the shots of Bloom are either medium close-ups or close-ups. This could be due to a greater faith in Bloom's beard as a symbol of masculinity than his muscles. It could also be a measured attempt, within the context of the film and the genre, to play upon Bloom's pin-up status and exploit his large female following. More significantly, though, it suggests the importance of Balian as an especially soulful knight, with the camera frequently lingering upon Bloom's furrowed brow and searching gaze. In so doing, the film could thus be seen to be making clear connections with Bloom's existing star image. Indeed, whilst the film's structure and representational strategies might be shaped, in part, by a certain anxiety over the "problematic fit" between Bloom's "new man" persona and Balian's status as a knight of the crusades, the film can still be seen to make "selective use" (Dyer, 1998: 127-131) of this persona. [8] Bloom's status as "nurturer", for example, is incorporated into Balian's character and his quest for peace, and is central to the film's construction of masculinity.

The very first words that Balian speaks are "What man is a man who does not make the world better?" as he reads out the inscription carved into a beam in his forge. From the outset, then, the film positions itself within the tradition of male epics through its construction of masculinity as "something that can no longer be taken as 'implicitly known'" (Hunt, 1993: 65) but is, rather, examined. As the film progresses it fleshes out its vision of a "better world" and man's role within it. As he lies dying, Godfrey tells Balian of the role he could play in helping to achieve "a better world than has ever been seen. A kingdom of conscience, a kingdom of heaven, there is peace between Christian and Muslim". Upon knighting Balian, he then delivers the knight's oath, "Be without fear in the face of your enemies. Be brave and upright that God may love thee. Speak the truth always, even if it leads to your death. Safeguard the helpless and do no wrong" and slaps Balian hard in the face "so you remember it". Thus, ideal masculinity, via the symbolism of knightliness, is configured as the use of strength and authority to maintain peace and protect the weak. Indeed, if, as indicated above, Balian's path is marked by increased prowess and power at every turn, the character is also marked by a heightened affinity for the weak and the helpless, and a strong inclination towards peace, marking firm connections with Bloom's existing star persona. When challenged by the

Saracen warrior on his arrival in Palestine, Balian first replies that he has "no desire to fight", and only fights to keep his horse. Of course, he then wins his duel. On sparing the life of the warrior's "servant", and declining his offer of service, Balian also adds that "I have been a slave, or very near to one. I shall never keep one, or suffer them to be kept", and in fact gives the servant his horse. Later, he chides a group of men in his courtyard for mishandling a horse, comforting the animal by talking to it and stroking it gently. He also brings water to his father's estate, corralling a multi-faith group of young and old into digging a well, with the proclamation that "it is my land, what would I be if I did not try to make it better?" His commitment to peace finds its ultimate purpose in his dedication to Baldwin's vision of a multi-faith Jerusalem, and his commitment to protecting the weak reaches its apotheosis as Saladin lays siege to Jerusalem in the film's climax. "We fight not to protect these stones but the people living within these walls" he exclaims, whilst also adding, to audible gasps that "no-one has claim, all have claim" over the sacred city. The film could consequently be seen to articulate a hierarchy of masculinity, in which male sentiment and compassion may be valued, but only when allied to the strength and authority necessary to keep the peace and "safeguard the helpless". True masculinity is still equated with the Law within this film, however compassionate its face.

Such a message could be seen to follow in the tradition of historical epics, particularly the thematically very similar *El Cid* (1961). Like Balian, Rodrigo/The Cid (Charlton Heston) is marked as a gifted fighter. "Never have I seen a man fight with greater courage" remarks the king on witnessing Rodrigo in combat, and, indeed, the film is regularly punctuated by scenes of the character's prowess in battle. Again, though, like Balian, Rodrigo is also marked by a commitment to peace and a strong desire to protect the weak. As Mark Jancovich notes, Rodrigo is "cast as a liberal warrior whose fight for Spain is clearly defined as a battle for religious and racial tolerance" (2000: 90), and this is clear from the outset, as Rodrigo shows mercy to the Moorish kings he has taken prisoner, at the expense of being accused of treason. Explaining his actions to his love, Chimène (Sophia Loren), he pleads "Why are we killing each other?" and, later in the film, after persuading the King to let sympathetic Muslim troops fight alongside the Spanish against the Islamic tyrant Ben-Yussuf, he cries "How can anyone say this is wrong?" Defending the city of Valencia against Ben-Yussuf's forces, Rodrigo then orders bread to be launched over the city's walls towards the enemy troops, with the cry "We bring you peace […] we bring you freedom […] we bring you life […] we bring you bread"; an act of charity that recalls his decision to share his water with a leper earlier in the film. As in *KofH*, however, Rodrigo's quest for peace and understanding is nothing without the force that wills and guarantees it. Refraining from killing an opponent, Rodrigo declares that "Any man can kill, only a king can give life". Here, masculine authority is not questioned, only the ends to which this authority is employed.

Such a model of masculinity can itself be seen as a contemporary re-working of the knightly notion of chivalry itself. For the chivalrous knight, piety formed a central component. As the fourteenth century knight Geoffroi De Charny outlines in *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*:

> There are those who should be held to be men of worth by everyone. That is those who love, serve, and honor God and His gentle Mother and all His power, and refrain from actions by which they might incur Their wrath, and who have within them such steadfast qualities that their way of life cannot be criticized for any vile sins nor for any shameful reproach, and they thus live loyally and honestly. (De Charny, 2005: 81)

However, such piety needed to be allied with great prowess, resting upon the "warrior virtues" of "great strength, hardiness, and skill in using arms on horseback or on foot" (Kaeuper, 2005: 23), to form the complete "worthy man". Of course, the figure of the pious warrior was full of contradictions, such as the necessity of war as the ultimate test for prowess. However, such tensions were negotiated through the justification of war on the grounds of the avoidance of "disherison or dishonour, or to protect defenceless young women, widows, or orphans" (Kaeuper, 2005: 35). As Kaeuper adds, "few conflicts in contemporary Europe could not fit within one of these elastic rubrics" (Ibid). Within this context the Cid and Balian could thus be seen as contemporary re-workings of the pious warrior, with piety, in the case of *KofH,* re-inscribed in secular terms but no less attached to prowess.

What makes *KofH* particularly interesting, though, is the fact that Balian walks, or rather rides, away from his position of male/moral authority at the very end of the film. Having surrendered Jerusalem in order to save the lives of its inhabitants, he returns to his village in France with Sibylla, with whom he had earlier had an affair. "Decide not to be a Queen, and I will come to you" he tells her, and so she does. Likewise, when Richard the Lionheart comes riding through Balian's village in a bid to persuade him to come on another crusade, Balian rebuffs him with the reply that "I am a blacksmith". Balian then gently caresses wild flowers and rides off into the sunset with Sibylla on horseback. What are we to make of this rejection of the model of masculinity that the film has taken great pains to set up as its ideal? For one, it would seem that Balian is only able to reject such a model having already thoroughly embodied it, rebuffing the King from the position of strength and authority he has now acquired. The very beginning of the film, in contrast, pivots upon Balian's change of heart over his initial rejection of his father's request, with the character, and indeed the star, still having something to prove. Secondly, such a rejection can be seen to be born out of tensions between Balian's character and contemporary readings of the Crusades as politically/morally unacceptable. Baldwin's reign and Balian's surrender were chosen as the film's focus as they allowed the filmmakers, via what Ridley Scott calls "intelligent conjecture" (Millar, 2005: 22), to explore ideals more palatable to a modern audience. As Scott argues, Baldwin's "ideal was to create a very forgiving and new world, contrary to that which was in Europe at the time" (O'Hagan, 2005: 79), thus enabling his vision of Balian as a secular warrior-saint. The Crusades as a whole, however, have become symbolic of religious intolerance and brutal barbarism, with Scott himself decrying "Terrible, terrible behaviour. Revenge, and revenge, and revenge" (Ibid). There is consequently no place for Balian's new-model knight within this wider history.

More importantly, perhaps, Balian's rejection could highlight the impossibility of the ideal masculinity established by the film, recalling those tensions embodied in the ending of *El Cid*. Both Leon Hunt and Mark Jancovich highlight the conflict between "public responsibilities and […] private desires" within Rodrigo/El Cid (Jancovich 2000: 95). This is most marked in Rodrigo's period in exile, when he resumes his relationship with Chimène. Chimène remarks that she is now glad that Rodrigo is "no longer the king's champion, you no longer have your knights and your armies and that you have only me […] we will find some hidden place where you are not known and we will make our lives there". Rodrigo appears to endorse Chimène's fantasy, but then opens the door of the cabin to be confronted by hundreds of soldiers calling for the "Cid". It is clear that however attractive such a fantasized "hidden place" may be, it is Rodrigo's duty as a leader, and as a man, to face up to his responsibilities, and he is invigorated by the challenge, with Heston wide-eyed and almost manic as he replies to Chimene's pleas of "But why, but why?" with "For Spain, Spain!" Whilst this path leads

Spain to glory, and turns the Cid into a legend, it also results in his death. Thus, for Hunt, within this film "masculinity […] in its 'highest' form becomes exotic, uncanny, impossible" (Hunt, 1993: 82). To embody masculinity in its most ideal form ultimately robs the individual of his own life, a trajectory echoed by *Gladiator*. Of course, what is significant about *KofH* is that Balian does not give up his life. Instead, he rides off with Sibylla towards their own "hidden place". This too would appear to suggest the impossibility of the ideal of masculinity established within the film. The decision to let Balian consciously walk away from this ideal, however, undermines it to a greater extent than the implicit contradictions of *El Cid* or *Gladiator*. Thus, despite the eulogization of male authority that the rest of the film shows us, this ending could be read, in part, as a critique of this form of masculinity. Anti-war in message and, at points, in its mise-en-scene, [9] Balian's climatic rejection of a position of male/moral authority could be seen as the film's indictment of the violence which ultimately underpins this masculine ideal, suggesting that it is perhaps impossible to hold authority and be pious.

The fact that the film's message regarding masculinity is ultimately paradoxical, though, can be seen in terms of an uncertain response to contemporary events, produced through differences between the creative voices engaged in the film's production. Meeting with Ridley Scott to discuss their plans for the film in New York in the aftermath of 9/11, screenwriter William Monahan clearly cites the influence of those events (Scott, 2005: 47) and, for him, the film's moral is that "it's better to live together than be at war […] that kindness is better than hate. That it's better to discard the world -- money, position, power […] -- than to endanger your integrity" (Scott, 2005: 59). Scott's comments regarding the film, however, suggest a greater interest in exploring the embodiment of integrity through power: "the knight was the cowboy of that era. He carried with him degrees of fairness, faith and chivalry […] Right action is what it is really about" (in Dabashi, 2005: 26). In the end, the film can be seen to embody both these visions, compounding the instability of Bloom as Balian and, more significantly, masculinity as a category.

Conclusion

Reflecting upon Bloom's role within *KofH*, and his career prior to this film, one can consequently see that the old worlds the star frequently inhabits are able to accommodate his status as a "new man" due to two main factors. Firstly, it would seem that the qualities allegedly characteristic of the "new man" are not entirely new. Such qualities are evident, to varying degrees, in the generic and wider social/cultural histories which Bloom's films draw upon, such as the concept of the Chivalric Knight or epic stars such as Charlton Heston. More importantly, such histories have worked to position these qualities, via absorption or expulsion, as "subordinate variants" (Lindisfarne and Cornwall, 1994: 3) to a hegemonic masculinity pivoting upon power and authority and literally embodied through an imposing physique. As such, Bloom's incorporation into his period films can be seen as a continuation of this process. That said, Bloom's career shows us that this process is neither static nor without tension. Influenced indirectly by political events, the ending of *KofH* can be seen to challenge, in part, the hierarchy of masculinity that the rest of the film has helped to establish, drawing attention to the instability of masculinity as a category, and its contingent relationship to history. Any account of potential shifts in the articulation of masculinity within culture and society thus needs to be aware of the ongoing resilience of particular hegemonic forms, whilst still recognising the potential for change produced through historically specific circumstances. In addition, any attempt to describe such developments

must also acknowledge the long history of those competing masculinities evident in *KofH* and wider culture and society today. As R.W. Connell explains:

The history of masculinity […] is not linear. There is no master line of development to which all else is subordinate, no simple shift from "traditional" to "modern". Rather we see […] complex structures of gender relations in which dominant, subordinate and marginalized masculinities are in constant interaction, changing the conditions for each others' existence and transforming themselves as they do. (1995: 198)

Indeed, one year after the *New York Times* reported that "Hollywood's He-Men are Bumped by Sensitive Guys" (Waxman, 2004) *The Daily Telegraph* announced "Goodbye, New Man. Welcome back, Mr Rough and Ready" (Hastings and Jones, 2005). If such an announcement may point to the resilience of those hegemonic forms of masculinity outlined in this paper, it also reminds us of the continuing struggle between dominant, subordinate and marginalized masculinities, with the ground never completely secure and the outcome never certain.

Notes

[1] Steve Rose describes him as a "Mark Hamill in the making" in his *Guardian* review of *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2006). http://film.guardian.co.uk/News_Story/Critic_Review/Guardian_review/0,,1808764,00.html [Accessed 18 July 2007]

[2] Such a discourse was replayed in the promotion for the film's release on DVD, with the front cover of *DVD Monthly* proclaiming that "Orlando Bloom speaks about becoming a man" and adding, in the introduction to their feature, that "we caught up with Orlando to find out what it was like going from being a boy to a man" (Issue 69, Oct 2005, p. 44).

[3] In addition to Waxman's comments, see also Chris Hastings and Beth Jones (2005), and Doug Giles (2005) 'Metrosexual or Medieval?'at http://www.townhall.com/columnists/DougGiles/2005/04/16/metrosexual_or_medieval [Accessed 31 July 2007]

[4] See various entries from Mark Simpson on his website for the evolution of the/his term: http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual_beckham.html; http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual_ios.html; http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/MetroDaddy_v_UberMummy.html [Accessed 17 August 2006]. See Rowena Chapman for a discussion of such developments as early as 1988, addressing, for example, the transformation of "the nurturant tadpole" into "the narcissistic toad" (1988: 232).

[5] For example, the Odeon's free magazine *Addict* tells us that *KofH* is "brought to the screen by the man who reinvented the genre with *Gladiator*" (May/June, 2005: 11) whilst *Film Review* writes that the film is directed by "the movie-maker who made sword and sandal adventures box office again with the Oscar-winning *Gladiator*" (Millar, 2005: 16).

[6] As Altman explains, "[G]eneric reversals produce pleasure in proportion to the distance that must be traversed in order to restore order […] The greater the risk, the greater the pleasure of the return to safety. The greater the wrong, the greater the pleasure in righting it. The greater the chaos, the greater the pleasure of restoring it" (Altman, 1999: 155-6).

[7] See Fradley (2004) for a discussion of Crowe's body in *Gladiator*; see Cohan (1997) on Heston in *Ben Hur* (1959) and *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and Hunt (1993) on Heston in *El Cid*.

[8] For Dyer, a "problematic fit" occurs when there is a significant contradiction between star image and character. Through "selective use", however, a "film may, through its deployment of the other signs of character and the rhetoric of the film, bring out certain features of the star's image and ignore others. In other words, from the structured polysemy of the star's image certain meanings are selected in accord with the overriding conception of the character in the film" (Dyer, 1998: 127).

[9] As Hamid Dabashi argues, "The battle scenes offer more opportunities to contemplate nobility and salvation than to revel in the detail of violence. One aerial shot towards the end of the battle for Jerusalem rises so bewilderingly high above the carnage it begs the question "Why?"" (Dabashi, 2005: 27)

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