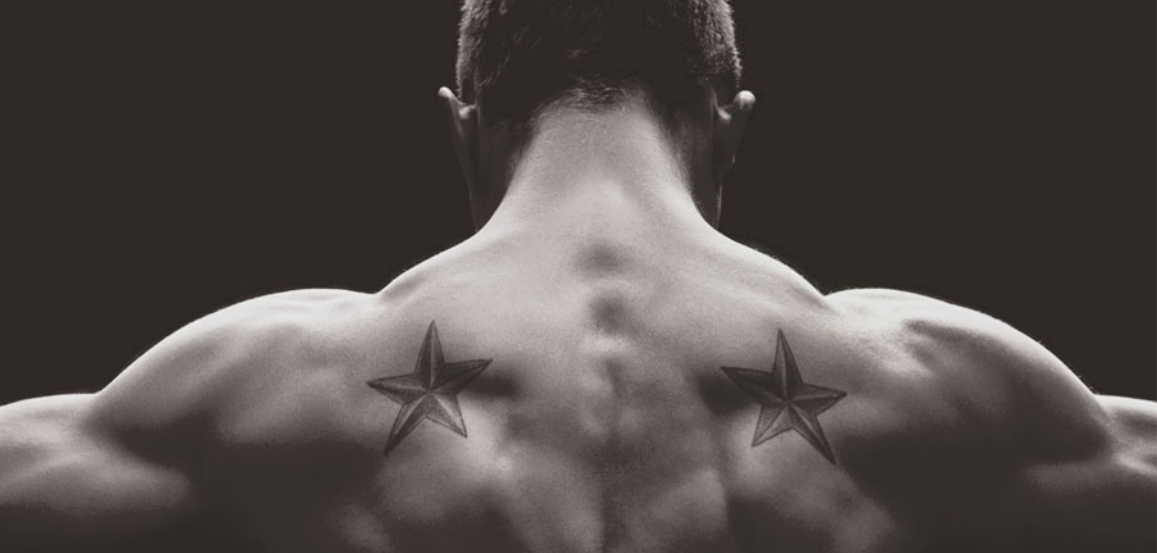

MEN IN WOMEN'S WORLDS

Constructions of Masculinity in Women's Magazines

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For Louis and Rich

Preface and Acknowledgements

As a teenager I was an avid reader of women's magazines. I remember eagerly devouring their advice on how to perfect the latest make-up trends and must-have looks, and, most importantly, how to bag myself a man. It wasn't until I grew up a little, that I was able to reflect that this advice seemed to consistently involve me doing all the hard work, and I suspected that the boys I was interested in weren't slavishly following the same kinds of tips from *FHM* or *Loaded.* I also began to realize that the kinds of men I encountered did not always behave in the same ways that the magazines I read told me they would.

When I embarked on this research project I was no longer an avid reader of women's magazines. Since I began writing this book, I have also become a parent, and as a parent I am concerned with how I can ensure my children will grow up understanding the importance of being able to recognize and call out forms of stereotyping and social discrimination such as those found in the pages of women's magazines.

Although advances in digital technology have certainly changed the landscape of women's magazines (see, for example, Duffy 2013), scholarship in feminist, media and cultural studies indicates women's magazines are still perceived as having salience in women's lives; their

potential to influence how women think about themselves and how they 'should' behave is therefore still relevant (see, for example, Ytre-Arne 2011a). In writing this book, I was curious to see if my experiences of how men were talked about in these texts still rang true from my teenage years. I won't spoil the ending, but it's fair to say that there's still a long way to go in tackling some of the assumptions made about both men and women in texts such as these.

This book builds on work done for my doctoral thesis, completed at the university of Huddersfield. I would therefore like to thank my supervisors, Professors Lesley Jeffries and Dan McIntyre, for their help and support during my time there, and to Lesley in particular for encouraging me to write this book. I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues in Linguistics at Nottingham Trent University for their support during the final push. Special thanks must go to friends who listened to me moan and gave me helpful advice (and cake!) along the way: Cleo Hanaway, Jai Mackenzie, Laura Paterson and Kirsty Budds. Finally, thank you to my family for your enduring love and support, and especially to Rich and Louis, the men in my world.

Nottingham, UK Laura Coffey-Glover

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Introduction: Analyzing Gender Construction in Women's Magazines

This book presents a Feminist Critical Stylistic analysis of a large dataset of women's magazines collected in 2008, to examine the ways in which men are 'sold' to women as part and parcel of a successful performance of heterosexual hegemonic femininity. The book is an explicitly feminist endeavor; I am interested in the implications of these constructions for the ways in which women may then perceive themselves, and potentially alter their behavior in line with the standards and expectations set by women's magazines.

Women's magazines have been in circulation since the late 1600s (Braithwaite 1995), and although sales figures for UK print publications are generally in decline, top-ranking women's magazines like *Cosmopolitan* still achieve bi-annual sales figures of around 300,000 (Oakes 2016). Research on reader engagement with online and print versions also shows that, on the whole, readers of women's magazines prefer print versions to their digital counterparts (Edelmen 2010; Ytre-Arne 2011). The fact that women's magazines have such an established history and persistence in the face of digital markets is therefore testament to their popularity among female audiences. It is also for this reason that examining how gender is constructed for their readers is such

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an essential area for feminist study: it is important to examine the kinds of ideologies of gender that women are buying into when they consume these texts, and to interrogate the potentially damaging effects of these.

A critical linguistic analysis of women's magazines is not in and of itself a new idea—there is a healthy body of existing research on women's magazines and other types of media discourse that deals with the various ways in which texts can and do influence their readers (discussed in more depth in Chapter 3), but work on women's magazines is almost exclusively concerned with examining these issues through the lens of how *women* are sold to women (see, for example, Talbot 1995; Jeffries 2007; Ringrow 2016). Feminist linguistic research has shown how women are constrained by what Talbot (1995) refers to as 'consumer femininity', whereby women are encouraged to engage in beautification processes that involve 'fixing' problems in their appearance in order to uphold ideals of femininity and, ultimately, please men. Very little has been said about how men and masculinity are manifested in these texts, despite the fact that much of this research cites men as the motivation for these constructions of women. Choosing to focus solely on women's roles, women's language, or women's writing means that women become marked; studies of gender in discourse analysis demonstrate a phallocentric tendency to analyze 'women's language' as a deviation from the male norm (Mills 2012: 17). It is therefore important to challenge the androcentrism of research which implies the deviancy of women's behavior and implicitly upholds men's status as norm-makers.

Research focusing on the notion of gender-linked speech styles in the past dominated discourse analytical work on gender identity (see Chapter 2 for an in-depth overview). However, studying the ways in which gender stereotypes are created and recirculated through discourse is also a useful contribution to the study of the relationship between language and gender identity. The kinds of ideologies that are valued in a particular culture will most likely have some effect on the members of that culture and therefore have the potential to shape opinions and beliefs. For example, studies in psychology suggest that 'media framing' (Taylor 2008) can affect beliefs and attitudes regarding sex and relationships, as well as sexual behavior (Taylor 2008; Aubrey et al. 2003; Collins et al. 2004).

In recent years there has been increased public interest in how 'lad culture' proliferates in spaces such as university campuses and 'lads mags', where 'lad culture' can be viewed as behavior involving youthful hedonism and participation in 'raunch' or 'sex object' culture, serving as a form of homosocial bonding (Phipps and Young 2015: 3). Feminist interrogation of 'lad culture' is exemplified by, for instance, the 2013 Lose the Lads Mags campaign in the UK, coordinated by feminist organizations UK Feminista and Object. Grassroots feminist campaigns like the Everyday Sexism Project (Bates 2014) and No More Page Three have been successful in making visible the sexualisation and objectification of women in such spaces, and critical attention has been given to the notion of the 'mainstreaming' of lad culture (see García-Farvaro and Gill 2016), but this book will argue that the ideologies of hegemonic masculinity that circulate in male-targeted media like men's magazines are also prevalent in female-targeted media such as mainstream women's magazines, which makes them an important site for feminist critique.

1.1 Theorizing Gender: The Trouble with Binaries

The distinction between 'sex' as a biological category and 'gender' as a social construction is a fundamental development of Western feminist thought, and can be attributed to feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir's observation that one is not born, but 'becomes' a woman (1949). Asserting a sex/gender binary recognizes that femininity and masculinity can be viewed as behaviors or practices that are not shaped by biology: men can exhibit stereotypically feminine qualities (such as a predilection for wearing pink), and women can behave in ways associated with ideological masculinity (such as displays of aggression). On the face of it, this is an attractive proposition for feminist commentators who wish to point out the fallacies of asserting that men or women are biologically destined to be better suited to particular roles or occupations. However, early theorizing in areas like anthropology and sociology has tended to oversimplify the sex/gender dichotomy to the extent

that gender is sometimes viewed as an adornment that can easily be untangled from biological sex—indeed, this is sometimes referred to by feminist theorists as the 'coat-rack' model of gender (Nicholson 1994). The reality is much more nuanced, since gender stereotypes are often based on biological traits. For example, the prevalence of the 'male as breadwinner' script has been largely based on a generalization that men are physically stronger than women, and this has been used as justification for men's dominance in the workplace for centuries.

In her treatment of what she calls 'neurosexism' in scientific research, Cordelia Fine (2011) debunks myths surrounding so-called 'hard-wired' differences between the male and female brain that have been used to justify why men make better scientists than women or why women are naturally suited to caring roles such as nursing or teaching. She argues that the social effects of gender (expectations of gendered behavior) can have an observable impact on the brain, resulting in patterns that we then interpret as sex-based difference. Acknowledging that supposed 'hard-wired' biological differences are often in fact the psychological result of social stereotyping is an important and compelling argument. What this nuanced interpretation of the social constructionist account of gender shows is the highly complex relationship between the biological and the social. As Cameron (2007) argues, what is important is not necessarily whether or not biological differences exist between men and women, but what ideological use is made of (supposed) differences.

1.1.1 Gender as Performative

In her seminal work, *Gender Trouble* (1990, 1999), feminist philosopher Judith Butler interprets gender as 'performative', defining 'gender' as 'the repeated stylization of the body' (1990: 33). Like the coat-rack model, this theorization of gender emphasizes a separation between biological essence and social construction, but this reconfiguration also emphasizes the role of individual and structural agency in the production of gender identity: gender in the performative account treats identity as something which is enacted, something that you *do* rather than something you *have*. This means that gender is not an innate

category but something which is *performed* or *achieved* through our interactions with others, and the discourses that we are exposed to in our daily lives.

The notion of performativity is a development of the linguists Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969, 1979, 1983, 1989) speech act theory. Austin had noted that illocutions like 'I promise' or 'I pronounce you…' are 'performatives', in that they bring a state of affairs into being, rather than describe something that already exists. Such performatives cause changes in the real world. Butler argued, therefore, that language could be used in order to create or *construct* gender identity. In this model, gender is conceived of as a socially constructed process which we are *continuously* engaged in:

> Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance of a natural sort of being.
>
> (Butler 1990: 33)

What Butler means by this is that repeated linguistic and non-linguistic acts, such as styles of dress, gesture, posture, ways of talking and so on, over time become naturalized, acquiring cultural intelligibility as 'normal' expressions of gender in a particular society. Crucially, performances of gender are not a 'free for all': permissible gender performances are regulated by institutional norms like the legal system, workplace and media organizations. Women's magazines, in their repetition of culturally intelligible ideologies of gender, are also arguably part of the 'rigid, regulatory frame' (Butler 1990: 33) that polices individual instantiations of gender. If masculinity and femininity are products of what we do, then the meaning of these actions can only be legitimized by their recognition from others: aggression, virility and dominance can only come to index a masculine persona if others acknowledge that these qualities might point to masculinity, and this can only occur if these connections are repeated over time. Women's magazines are an example of texts that reiterate ideas of what are possible and acceptable performances of masculinity, which 'congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance of a natural sort of being.'

(Butler 1990: 33). That these repetitions lead to an illusion of naturalness explains how performativity works to hide the performative nature of gender: repeated performances of, for example, men's sexual pursuit of women, means that carnality comes to be perceived as an 'essence' of male identity so that carnality entails masculinity, rather than it being seen as a potential behavior that may or may not be enacted by a man. Performativity theory is therefore a useful framework to account for the ways in which the illusion that 'men are naturally carnal' can be sustained by women's magazines and other mass media texts.

Research adopting this kind of approach has tended to focus on individual performances of gender through interaction (see for instance Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; Livia and Hall 1997; Zimman 2014). However, one of the main tenets of this book is that media texts' constructions of gender can also be considered performances of gender identity, and their potential to influence readers' world-views means they are an important site for feminist analysis. Because women's magazines (and other written texts) are mediated, the way they construct gender identities is much less spontaneous than performances of gender in naturally-occurring speech, and that is the point: they are 'scripted performances' of gender. This also means that the distinction traditionally made between spoken performance and written representation needs to be questioned. Particularly, because texts like women's magazines present a 'tissue of voices' (Talbot 1992: 176), the line between written and spoken discourse becomes blurred.

1.1.2 Indexicality

Related to the notion of performativity is that of 'indexicality', from linguistic anthropology (Ochs 1992). In her research comparing the communicative practices of motherhood in US society with that of Western Samoa, Ochs employs the notion of indexicality to argue that gender is either directly or indirectly indexed through language. Direct indexicality refers to language in which the sex of the speaker is explicitly encoded, such as items like *man/woman* and *husband/wife* or titles such as *Mr/Mrs*. Indirect indexicality refers to language use that has become

associated with gendered meanings. For example, a competitive interactional style is often associated with masculinity, where more supportive speech styles have come to signal femininity.

While indexicality is usually used in interactional studies of gender (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Holmes 2006), it is also a useful concept when analyzing textual constructions of gender, as lexical items have also become imbued with gendered meanings. For example, Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010) observe how men's physical appearance is more likely than women to be described in newspaper representations with adjectives such as *handsome, strapping* and *stocky*, where those such as *pretty, sexy* and *glamorous* were used in descriptions of women. While these items do not directly index gender, in that the referents of, for example, *glamorous*, do not necessarily have to be female, they most frequently are, and therefore the word indirectly indexes, or 'points to' femininity. The concept of indexicality is therefore particularly useful for accounting for the relationship between linguistic description and gender stereotyping.

1.2 Discourse and Ideology in Critical Linguistics

This book follows in the tradition of 'critical' linguistic approaches to analyzing text, in that I am interested in interrogating the role of language in the production of gendered discourses. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emerged in the early 1990s as a synthesis of critical approaches to 'analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language' (Wodak and Meyer 2009: 10). CDA understands texts, and in particular media texts, as simultaneously reflecting and creating ideologies for the reader. As a political approach, it is concerned with 'de-mystifying' ideologies and power via the 'systematic and *retroductable* investigation of semiotic data' (Wodak and Meyer 2009: 3). This means that analyses of data, (whether written, spoken or visual) should be transparent to the reader.

At the core of all CDA approaches is a broadly post-structuralist interpretation of 'discourse' as 'broad constitutive systems of meaning' (Sunderland 2004: 6), which differs from more traditional linguistic definitions as 'language above the sentence'. However, different CDA perspectives do use the term in different ways, something which has attracted a good deal of criticism (see for example Widdowson 1995). In particular, those working explicitly within the dialectical-relational (Fairclough 1996) or social actors (Van Leeuwen 1995, 2008) approach adopt the Foucauldian sense of 'discourse' as referring to 'practices which systematically form the subjects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972: 49). This sense is most similar to the concept of 'ideology' and the two terms are often used interchangeably. I personally have found it helpful to make a distinction between 'discourse' as 'text that is focused on a particular topic' (Mills and Mullany 2011: 76), or 'ways of seeing the world' (Sunderland 2004: 28) and 'ideology' as denoting the *naturalization* of such discourses: the state of being viewed by a particular community or society as *common-sense knowledge.* This interpretation of 'ideology' is in keeping with a performative account of gender that views gender as a set of practices: ideologies of masculinity in women's magazines are thus common-sense ideas about men (those that have the appearance of normality) as a result of their repetition in discourses (repeated linguistic 'acts').

1.3 Feminist Critical Stylistics

Critical Stylistics is a method of analysis which can be viewed as bridging the gap between CDA and stylistics. CDA conventionally aims to show 'non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and domination' (Fairclough 2001: 229), and is predominantly used to analyze non-fictional texts. Stylistics, on the other hand, in its attempt to explain the 'relation between language and artistic function' (Leech and Short 2007: 11) has traditionally focused on literary genres.

Critical Stylistics aims to 'assemble the main general functions that a text has in representing reality' (Jeffries 2010: 14), and can

be considered as a development of CDA in terms of both theory and methodology (Jeffries 2007, 2010). One of the main criticisms of CDA is that it has not yet developed a full inventory of tools for the analyst to work with, although work in the dialectical-relational tradition often utilizes elements of functional grammar inspired by Halliday (1994). The lack of a standard set of tools is a (perhaps inevitable) consequence of its multidisciplinary theoretical foundations. Indeed, Wodak and Meyer (2009: 2) assert the necessity of eclecticism in their discussion of what distinguishes CDA from other forms of discourse analysis:

> CDA is […] not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se but in studying social phenomena which are necessarily complex and thus require a multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach.

Because of its focus on eclectic theories and methods of analysis, CDA is sometimes less concerned with conducting detailed, linguistic analysis of ideological meaning than with critiquing the socio-political context for the production of texts. This, as Jeffries points out, can result in 'patchy' coverage of linguistic structures, and the lack of a clear, comprehensive toolkit makes it difficult for students of English Language to apply to the analysis of texts (2010: 6). Critical stylistics attempts to counter this by introducing a systematic model of analysis which amalgamates tools from stylistics and critical linguistics, in order to explore the linguistic choices of text producers and their possible ideological implications.

Proponents of CDA assert that it is not in itself a unitary theory or methodology, but rather a 'school' of intellectual inquiry (see Wodak and Meyer 2009: 5), and have therefore been criticized for using the label as more of a political statement or 'act'. Where CDA analysis takes a specifically left-leaning political standpoint, Critical Stylistics is proposed as a method of uncovering the linguistic mechanisms of ideological meaning in any text, regardless of the analyst's political persuasions (Jeffries 2010: 14). The model is based on a series of 'textual–conceptual' functions (outlined in Chapter 4), which address a level of meaning between formal structure, or *langue* and the reader's contextualized meaning, or *parole* (de Saussure 1960). At this level of meaning,

the text uses language resources in combination with ideational meaning to present the world in a particular way (Jeffries 2014: 409). The reader has to work out how the text does this, thus the textual–conceptual functions 'are intended to capture the fact that texts can create specific types of meaning in a number of different ways' (Jeffries 2014: 409). Different kinds of linguistic features (such as nouns, pronouns and nominalizations) can 'name' a particular entity in the world, or different types of syntactic structure can be used to create relationships of opposition in texts (see Chapter 6), so the textual–conceptual functions demonstrate that there is no direct relationship between (linguistic) form and (conceptual) function. These textual functions also form part of the 'ideational metafunction' of language (Halliday 1994), in that they are ways of creating worldviews. They help to uncover how ideology is embedded in a text through a consideration of how linguistic form links to higher-level conceptual meaning.

This book also proposes a specifically feminist approach to undertaking Critical Stylistics, in that its ultimate aim is to uncover how particular stylistic practices contribute to structural patterns of gender inequality in society at large. I argue that the stylistic choices made to construct male identities in women's magazines have potentially detrimental effects on women readers, since they recirculate the idea that men are necessarily (biologically) different from women, the heteronormative principle that heterosexual relationships are a defining aspect of female identity (that women *need* men in order to be validated), and that men are naturally driven by 'primal' urges of aggression and sexual carnality that ultimately serve to reaffirm positions of dominance.

1.4 Corpus Linguistics and Gender Performativity

Corpus linguistics is 'the study of language based on examples of real life language use' (McEnery and Wilson 1996: 1). A corpus is defined as a collection of texts that are machine-readable, authentic, and sampled in such a way as to be representative of a particular language or language variety (McEnery et al. 2006: 5). It uses quantitative methods to

analyze large bodies of naturally occurring language in order to uncover linguistic patterns, and is widely renowned for its contributions to lexicography and descriptive grammar (Mautner 2007: 54). Corpus linguistic analysis involves feeding digitized texts into corpus interrogation software, which can perform statistical calculations to reveal linguistic phenomena such as keywords and collocations, which are then interpreted manually by the researcher.

Because of its reliance on statistical patterns rather than qualitative analysis and intuition, corpus linguistics aids the rigor and objectivity of analyses. Of course, corpus-based studies also require some qualitative input: it is ultimately the researcher who interprets linguistic patterns (Baker 2006: 18). However, quantitative methods allow the researcher to analyze larger bodies of text, which increases the reliability of findings, and using frequency data can support findings derived from smaller-scale analyses.

Corpus linguistics has a wide range of applications in linguistics, including language teaching and translation studies (Xiao and McEnery 2002); lexicography (Podhakecka and Piotrowski 2003); forensic linguistics (Woolls and Coulthard 1998); discourse analysis (Baker 2006, 2008) and stylistics and literary studies (Semino and Short 2004; Mahlberg 2007; Mahlberg and McIntyre 2011). Corpus-based approaches to text analysis have become increasingly popular over the last few decades, and have previously been applied to the investigation of discourses and ideologies in media texts (Baker et al. 2013; Baker and Levon 2016; Caldas-Coulthard and Moon 2010; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008; Van Dijk 1991).

Of most relevance to the present study is the growing body of corpus-based work that has been carried out in the area of language and gender (for example Baker 2010, 2014; Baker and Levon 2015, 2016; Sigley and Holmes 2002; Koller 2004; Taylor 2017). This may seem to contradict the shift from analyses of large-scale patterns in sociolinguistics to small-scale studies (Swann 2002), and the general trend in feminist thought, which has turned from global notions (for example of sisterhood), to more localized, individual issues (Baker 2006: 9). However, I assert that the recent conceptualization of gender as performative is entirely in alignment with the cumulative focus of corpus

linguistics: for instantiations of gender to become recognizable, they have to be reiterated, and corpus linguistics works on the basis of collecting numerous examples of a linguistic feature, allowing the researchers to see its incremental patterning. As Stubbs puts it: '[r]epeated patterns show that evaluative meanings are not merely personal and idiosyncratic, but widely shared in a discourse community' (2001: 215). The effectiveness of corpus linguistic methods in establishing cumulative meanings is therefore a strong rationale for adopting a corpus-based approach, in order to observe the role of media texts as mechanisms of gender performativity.

1.5 Summary and Outline of the Book

This chapter has introduced the aims of this study of masculinity construction in women's magazines and outlined some key concepts for my approach to studying gender identity in the data, including the notion of gender performativity and the importance of viewing language as a tool for constructing gendered discourses in texts. I have also briefly outlined the Feminist Critical Stylistic approach that underpins this research and its relationship to its intellectual cousin CDA.

Chapter 2 provides a brief account of relevant debates in language and gender study, and places this study within the context of a performative approach to gender construction. Chapter 3 contextualizes the study in relation to existing empirical work on women's and men's magazines, identifying key themes in the literature; including the construction of femininity as a consumerist practice, the construction of gender as biologically determined, the relationship between feminism and women's magazines, and the construction of heteronormativity.

Chapter 4 details the methodological processes involved in constructing the magazine corpus and implementing the Critical Stylistics framework: I discuss how I collected and categorized the articles for inclusion in the corpus in terms of different text types and magazine genres, and I explain how I have used corpus linguistic tools to aid my analysis of the different conceptual-textual functions.

Chapters 5 through 8 present the results of the analytical processes described in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the analysis of Naming and Describing, which refers to the ways in which the texts label and describe male identities. I identify lexis which exhibits lexical, social and referential gender, serving as direct and indirect indices of masculinity. Chapter 6 describes how the texts create equivalences and oppositional meanings that construct men as equating to 'cultural ideals' and other metaphorical concepts, including conceptual metaphors. I also discuss how men are presented in terms of various oppositional constructs, including hyponyms of a GOOD/BAD dichotomy. Chapter 7 shows how the texts represent men's actions and states of being, focusing on actions towards women and states of being denoting both physical and personal traits. In the final analysis chapter, I examine how the texts assume and imply ideologies of masculinity through different types of presupposition and implicature.

In Chapter 9 I pull together the findings of the analysis and point to how they reveal five unifying trends: the idea that men are either 'good' or 'bad'; that men are motivated by carnal instincts; that they are naturally aggressive; that men and women are inherently different creatures; and the idea that heterosexuality is normative. I also show how the different textual-conceptual tools work together, by conducting an analysis of an excerpt from the data as a case study. Finally, I evaluate the effectiveness of combining corpus linguistics with the Critical Stylistics model, and offer some suggestions for further research in this area.

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