

Week 3: MECS3003 Representations of Men in Popular Culture

Watch the video <https://youtu.be/LdFI2xugeZg> (9.26) C4 News and Crisis of Masculinity

1. Are there stereotypes of masculinity in popular culture – or, as suggested on the video, do you think these no longer exist?
2. What male role modules in popular culture can you think of?
3. Is social media important in relation to masculinity?
4. Is there a difference in relation to the class and masculinity?
5. Do you think masculinity is in crisis?

Watch the Video on Nihilism <https://youtu.be/yvSov9optIU> (5.02)

Questions to think about/discuss:

1. What is nihilism?
2. What is character driven nihilism?
3. How does nihilism relate to *Black Mirrror* (according to the video)?
4. What popular culture can you think of which has elements of nihilism?
5. What aspects of existentialism apply to *Rick and Morty* <https://youtu.be/-JFA764oTZo> (see first 5 minutes)

Extract from Scott (2014: 159) 'Where previous animated fairy tales had confined their dark sequences to discussions of "evil" by focusing on "witches," in *Toy Story 3*, the dark questions raised rather than absolutely moral are existential. When Buzz insists: "there's gotta be a way out" of the plastic bag, Mr. Potato Head says something somewhat shocking: "Oh, Andy doesn't want us. What's the point?"—a sentiment that reflects a brutal, almost suicidal nihilism. This nihilism is continually reconnected to questions of the material. As the toys consider how to escape the bag, Ham's reply ("Ah, forget it. It's triple-ply high density polyethylene!") reminds us of the plasticity of the toys and causes us to consider whether ripping the bag is not itself a kind of violent, even genocidal, act for the plastic things with which we identify. What is more it reinforces the toys' sense of doom, nihilism and anger at their fate.

Questions

1. Are there other examples of existentialism that you can think of in relation to this film (if you are familiar with *Toy Story 3*).
2. Are there examples from other animated films that relate to existentialism? Are those characters usually male or female?
3. How would you draw on the actual dialogue from a text that you might focus on (text here means anything from films, to television, music etc.) in your plan/essay?

We will watch clips in the seminar from the documentary **Ian Hislop's Stiff Upper Lip - An Emotional History of Britain** (to highlight some interesting ideas in relation to masculinity for discussion).

<https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/clip/24198>

And <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/clip/24199>

1. Do you think that the notion of the stiff upper lip still applies to masculinity or masculinities? Are there examples that reinforce/challenge this in popular culture/media?
2. Is there greater public emotional display for both males and females in popular culture/media?

Other questions

1. In groups, pick one male lead character that your group are familiar with and analyse them in relation to challenging/reinforcing stereotypes of masculinity.
2. In groups, see if you can apply the concept of existentialism to a male lead character.
3. Discuss the masculinities that are on offer in popular culture? Are there any that dominate?
4. In groups, discuss what you could focus on in relation to the assignment
Scott, E. (2014) Agony and Avoidance: Pixar, deniability and the adult spectator. *Journal of Popular film and Television*. Vol. 42(3), pp. 150-162.