JYU DISSERTATIONS 291

Harri Salovaara

Connected and Troubled Masculinities in Contemporary Mountain Sports Texts

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Esitetään Jyväskylän yliopiston humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellisen tiedekunnan suostumuksella
julkisesti tarkastettavaksi yliopiston päärakennuksen auditoriossa C1
lokakuun 23. päivänä 2020 kello 12.

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by permission of
the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Jyväskylä,
in Main building, auditorium C1, on October 23, 2020 at 12 o'clock.

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 2020

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Cover picture by Randy Rackliff.

Permanent link to this publication: http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-8312-3

ISBN 978-951-39-8312-3 (PDF)
URN:ISBN:978-951-39-8312-3
ISSN 2489-9003

ABSTRACT

Salovaara, Harri
Connected and troubled masculinities in contemporary mountain sports texts
Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2020, 99 pp.
(JYU Dissertations
ISSN 2489-9003; 291)
ISBN 978-951-39-8312-3 (PDF)

This dissertation investigates masculinities and nature in mountain sports texts. Men and masculinities are disproportionately responsible for the current state of climate change and biodiversity loss but representations of masculinity in mountain sports texts and those representations' relationships to the environment are under-researched. This dissertation therefore examines how nature and masculinity are represented in mountain sports texts. To support the central research aim, the articles gathered in the dissertation ask four questions, each one using different kinds of texts as materials: 1) How are cultural male/female and human/nonhuman borders represented in contemporary nonfiction mountain sports films? 2) How are male athletes' embodied, connected relationships to nature represented in commercial YouTube videos produced by the outdoor gear company Salomon? 3) How are nature and the professional mountain athlete Timothy Olson's troubled past commodified via social media branding? 4) How is the search for healing from trauma by male mountain athletes represented in contemporary mountain climbing literature, more specifically in Jeff Long's *The Wall* (2006) and Tommy Caldwell's *The Push* (2017)? The dissertation's method relies on theoretical contextualization via the fields of critical gender and sports studies, ecocriticism, and trauma studies, and a multisensory close reading of multimodal texts. The dissertation's key findings are the influence of commercial interests on representations of new hybridized, connected, masculinities in the mountains, and the way male athletes' troubled, even traumatized past experiences frame representations of them. More specifically, some representations attempt to frame men's relationships to nature in ecological terms by highlighting their connection to their environment and by eschewing traditional hegemonic (hyper)masculinities. Further, male mountain athletes' traumatized or otherwise troubled pasts influence how their relationships to the environment are represented, and even how their motivations to practice their sports are framed.

Keywords: critical sports studies, critical studies on men and masculinities, ecofeminism, ecological masculinities, ecocriticism, mountain athletes, mountain sports, trauma

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Salovaara, Harri
Luonnonläheiset ja ongelmaiset maskuliinisuudet nykyisissä vuoristourheiluteksteissä
Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2020, 99 s.
(JYU Dissertations
ISSN 2489-9003; 291)
ISBN 978-951-39-8312-3 (PDF)

Tämä väitöskirja tutkii maskuliinisuuksia ja luontoa vuoristourheiluteksteissä. Miehet ja maskuliinisuudet ovat suhteettoman suuressa vastuussa nykyisestä ilmasto- ja biodiversiteettikriisistä, mutta vuoristourheilumaskuliinisuuksia ja niiden suhdetta luontoon ei ole tutkittu paljoakaan. Siksi tämä väitöskirja kysyy kuinka luontoa ja maskuliinisuuksia representoidaan vuoristourheiluteksteissä? Tämän keskeisen tutkimusongelman tueksi väitöskirjan artikkelit kysyvät neljä lisäkysymystä, joista jokaiseenetsitään vastausta erilaisten tekstien kautta: 1) Kuinka kulttuurisia sukupuolien ja ihmisen ja luonnon välisiä rajoja esitetään vuoristourheiludokumenteissa? 2) Kuinka miesurheilijoiden ruumiillistunutta luontoyhteyttä esitetään outdoor-yhtiö Salomonin tuottamissa YouTube-videoissa? 3) Kuinka sekä luonto että ammattiurheilija Timothy Olsonin ongelmallinen menneisyys kaupallistetaan sosiaalisen median brändäyksellä? 4) Kuinka miespuolisten vuoristourheilijoiden yritystä parantua traumasta esitetään vuoristokirjallisuudessa, nimenomaan Jeff Longin *The Wall*issa (2006) ja Tommy Caldwellin *The Push*issa (2017)? Väitöskirjan metodi nojaa teoreettiseen kontekstualisointiin, jossa käytetään kriittistä sukupuolen- ja urheiluntutkimusta, ekokritiikkiä ja traumatutkimusta yhdistettynä multimodaalisen aineiston moniaistimukselliseen lähilukuun. Väitöskirjan avainlöydökset paljastavat, kuinka kaupalliset intressit vaikuttavat uusien, luontoon yhteydessä olevien hybridimaskuliinisuuksien esittämiseen, ja kuinka miesurheilijoiden ongelmalliset tai traumaattiset menneisyydet vaikuttavat siihen, kuinka heidät esitetään. Osa representaatioista pyrkii esittämään miesten luontosuhteet ekologisina korostamalla heidän yhteyttään luontoon ja pyrkimällä välttämään perinteisiä hegemonisen (hyper)maskuliinisuuden mallia. Miespuolisten vuoristourheilijoiden traumaattiset tai muuten ongelmalliset menneisyydet myös vaikuttavat siihen, kuinka heidän luontosuhteensa esitetään, ja myös kuinka heidän motivaationsa vuoristourheilun harjoittamiseen esitetään.

Avainsanat: kriittinen urheilututkimus, kriittinen miestutkimus, ekofeminismi, ekologiset maskuliinisuudet, ekokritiikki, vuoristourheilijat, vuoristourheilu, trauma

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FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Even if it is a clichéd way of starting the foreword and acknowledgements section, I cannot but state that writing this doctoral dissertation has indeed been a long and winding road and, at times, an even infuriatingly bumpy one. After resigning from a well-paid and secure job in management in the hope of doing more meaningful work, I found myself on a journey of research, teaching, writing seemingly endless amounts of funding applications, and a sequence of temporary work contracts and intermittent periods of funding. During the journey there have been periods of surprisingly intense joy at what must seem like very mundane things to many, such as finding the perfect topic sentence to describe what a paragraph discusses, or finding an even better word in a thesaurus to describe the word "clarify." There have also been more predictably joyous moments such as news of research funding and of articles being accepted. To provide a contrast to all that joy, there have been many moments where I have been close to abandoning the entire project and doing something completely different with my life. These moments have come both from feelings of personal inadequacy when a particular research challenge has felt too large an obstacle to surmount, but also through organizational turmoil that I had no control over myself. However from my current vantage point I am able to say that my journey as a scholar has been rewarding, and that the contrast of the shadows has helped me appreciate even more the times of light and joy. I now want to thank the numerous people who have provided support during my journey, in dark times or light.

First, I would like to thank the reviewers of my dissertation. Nicole Seymour provided detailed, insightful, and even encouraging feedback on my dissertation manuscript, and I have done my best to address her suggestions in the finished dissertation. Toni Lahtinen provided similarly astute and helpful commentary, and since he kindly promised to act as my opponent, I am lucky to get to discuss his feedback further in my doctoral defense.

Second, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my two dissertation supervisors. Helen Mäntymäki has worked tirelessly not only to comment on my work but also to offer guidance and support in my effort to establish myself as an academic professional. Marinella Rodi-Risberg has been invaluable in me getting to this stage in my dissertation, as her detailed and encouraging commentary has helped me raise the standard of my writing immensely, and she has also helped in this regard by co-writing one of the dissertation articles (Article 4) with me.

Third, I wish to thank all the other mentors I have had the pleasure to learn from over the years. I spent a fall semester studying ecocriticism at Hacettepe University under *Hocam* Serpil Oppermann, and her kind guidance and expert teaching made this a formative period in my development as a scholar. Martin Hultman and Paul M. Pulé at Chalmers University have also played vital parts in guiding my work, and their deep commitment to masculine ecologization and activist scholarship have been constant sources of inspiration. During long

conversations with them I was also fortunate to meet visiting scholar Bob Pease who made many valuable comments regarding my work. In addition, I would also like to thank all the distinguished ecocritics with whom I have had the privilege to organize EASLCE webinars over many years. Simon C. Estok, Ursula Heise, Hannes Bergthaller, Cecilia Åsberg, Marietta Radomska, and Christa Grewe-Volpp have all been inspiring hosts and teachers to me and all the webinar attendees, and many have also taken an active interest in my research project and provided guidance. I also wish to thank my wonderful webinar co-organizer Molina Klingler for her help and support.

Fourth, I would like to thank all the journal editors and anonymous reviewers who have given selfless advice on my articles, and wish I could remember the names of all the conference participants over the years who have asked intelligent and helpful questions about my research. I also wish to extend heartfelt thanks to the numerous colleagues and peers I have had over the years. I have been part of an inspiring research group at the University of Vaasa where I started my doctoral studies, and I want to thank Anu Heino, Wiriya Inphen, Noora Karjalainen, Roman Kushnir, Maria Lehtimäki, Anni-Kaisa Leminen, Tim Reus, Susanna Rönn, and Carola Wide for their help and support. I also want to thank the senior staff at University of Vaasa, such as Sirkku Aaltonen, Kristiina Abdallah, William Goymer, Gerald Porter, Nestori Siponkoski, and Jukka Tiusanen, who all provided instruction over the years. I also want to extend thanks to the many good people I met during my exchange studies at Hacettepe University in Turkey, such as Emine Seda Caglayan, Gülşah Göçmen, Merve Sari, and Zümre Gizem Yilmaz, who all made me feel welcome far away from home. When the University of Vaasa transferred most of its humanities students and staff to the University of Jyväskylä, I always felt welcome there and wish to give thanks to senior staff such as Samu Kytölä, Sirpa Leppänen, Mika Lähteenmäki, Arja Piirainen-Marsh, and Anne Pitkänen-Huhta as well as my new colleagues such as Päivi Iikkanen, Annukka Lahti, and Tuire Oittinen for being so warmly welcoming. I also owe many thanks to Roger Noël Smith for providing both expert language checking and warm encouragement when finishing the dissertation manuscript. All of the people mentioned here have been integral parts of the entire research project as well as the writing process. Any faults to be found in the dissertation even after all of their advice and support rests solely with me.

In addition to individual people, I must also thank the many institutions that have provided me with the material resources to conduct my research. The University of Vaasa's Graduate School provided me with the first home for my research and also directly funded it. In addition to funding granted by the University of Vaasa Graduate School via the University of Vaasa Foundation, I wish to thank the Finnish Cultural Foundation's South-Ostrobothnia Grant via the Viljo Syrenius Foundation for providing valuable early career financial support that enabled my full time immersion in doctoral studies. I also wish to thank Hacettepe University for accepting me as an exchange student and the Erasmus+ program for granting funding. I also want to thank the University of

Jyväskylä for hiring me as Doctoral Student and thus providing me with the time and money to do my research. Throughout my studies, and especially during those often inevitable breaks between research funding, I have also worked intermittently at Linginno Language Centre at the University of Vaasa and wish to thank colleagues there for their ongoing support. Besides these institutions, I wish to warmly thank artist Randy Rackliff for graciously allowing me to use his evocative artwork in the cover of this dissertation.

Finally, but certainly most importantly, I want to thank my family for their constant support during this long process. I could not have done it without you. I look forward to seeing the direction this journey takes next.

Vaasa 22.9.2020
Harri Salovaara

TABLES

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly urbanizing global society, mountain sports and nature are marketed as commodities to be exploited. Measured by the rising number of participants and the increasing cash flow towards large, multinational travel, sports, and outdoor gear companies, the consumption of these "commodities" has seen a steady rise for the better part of the past twenty years (Breivik, 2010; Gardner, 2015; Hoffman et al., 2010). However, despite the rising participant numbers and increased female participation (Austin, 2015), gender distribution within the field of outdoor and mountain adventure is still skewed towards being an overwhelmingly male endeavor; female athletes are still the minority both in terms of sports practiced in nature and their commercial representation, and they often experience unequal treatment when practicing their sports (Howard, 2018; Lieu & Rennison, 2018; Warren, 2018). This being the case, this dissertation focuses on how masculinities in nature are represented in relation to gendered practices and environmental issues in contemporary mountain sports texts. Further, I study how cultural assumptions about nature and masculinities relate to how men are still the dominant group—though contestedly so (Martinez-Garcia, 2020, forthcoming)—in outdoor and mountain sports, and, finally, how responses to the current environmental crises are represented in my research material.

This present dissertation investigates representations of nature and masculinity in mountain sports texts. The key findings include the influence of commercial interests on representations of new hybridized, *connected*, masculinities in the mountains, and the way participants' *troubled*, even traumatized past experiences frame representations of them. The research aim(s) and questions are outlined in detail in Section 1.1, and the key findings discussed in Section 5. For the purposes of this study I have limited my data to mountain sports and male mountain athletes. Although delimiting the research objects to male athletes was initially largely a nonpolitical choice, my continued immersion in critical gender and sports studies has brought this research, as the study has progressed, firmly into the field of what Habermas has called an "emancipatory [knowledge] interest" (1971, p. 211), that is, research with an interest in a critical

study of inequities. Because many sports are inherently, even hostilely[1], gender binary in the way they are organized, delimiting the research material to representations of cis men forces men and masculinities who have so far been "categorically unmarked" (MacGregor & Seymour, 2017, p. 10) to become marked and foregrounded and, therefore, open to critical inquiry. As Anthony Easthope remarks, "[m]asculinity tries to stay invisible by passing itself off as normal and universal" (1990, p. 1), and this foregrounding is therefore necessary.

As for mountain sports, they can be defined as sports that take place outdoors, that is in nature, often in the mountains, and usually hold some risk for their practitioners (Salovaara, 2015). Adventure and mountain sports are also sometimes labeled "extreme" sports, but the concept is contested (Robinson, 2008) and fraught with potential for misunderstanding. Choosing mountain sports as a delimitation has also placed indoor and/or urban extreme sports such as mixed martial arts and skateboarding outside the scope of study. Throughout the study I have specifically looked at the mountain sports of ski mountaineering, mountain climbing, and mountain running (see 2.1 for more on these sports), all of which share common surroundings, elements of danger and the need for some physical and mental endurance, and also are often practiced by at least partially the same group(s) of people. I also myself practice[2] the same mountain sports that I study, and this insider status, combined with my privileged ontological position as a white, able-bodied cis male, has influenced the choice of research materials as well as my method of analysis (see 1.2 and 1.3 for more).

Seeing that men[3], or, in some cases more specifically masculinities[4], are disproportionately responsible for the current state of climate change[5] and biodiversity loss through, for example, consuming more, exhibiting higher rates of climate change denialism, attacking especially female climate activists, voting against environmentally sustainable policies, and having more historical responsibility due to their overwhelming role both historically and contemporaneously in economic and political decision-making (Ballew, Marlon, Leiserowitz, & Maibach, 2018; Love & Sulikowski, 2018; Hultman & Pulé, 2018;

[1] The case of intersex athlete Caster Semenya being banned from competition is sadly enlightening in this context (Malik, 2019).
[2] At least, I have practiced them prior to and during the research process but may not do so any more as my increased critical self-reflexion has affected my views on my own practice and its environmental impact.
[3] Especially but not limited to white conservative males, see, for example, (Jylhä;Cantal;Akrami;& Milfont, 2016; Krange, Kaltenborn, & Hultman, 2019).
[4] Although men, especially men in the Global North, certainly are disproportionately responsible for the current situation, it is analytically useful to distinguish masculinities as a set of cultural assumptions from men as biological beings. Avoiding collapsing men with masculinities allows for studying masculine traits across the gender spectrum, also in research contexts beyond this dissertation.
[5] I mostly refer to climate *change* throughout, despite applauding, for example, *The Guardian*'s attempt to express the urgency of the situation by using the phrase climate *crisis*. This is due to the many sources cited here not yet adopting the phrase and me consequently not wanting to change what they have said. For a critical discourse analysis discussion on how the original phrase "global warming" became changed to ''climate change'', see, for example, Richard J. Alexander (2009, p. 209), and for more on critical discourse analysis methods and political implications, see, for example, Breeze (2011).

IIHS, 2019; Koivisto, 2017; Nelson, 2020; OECD, 2008; Whitmarsh, 2011), I see it is vital at this moment of humanity's recent entry into the Anthropocene (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000) to study masculinities and nature. The conduit in this case is to do so through studying sports because they are important constituents of gendered identities and therefore shape societies (Brummett & Kraft, 2009). Mountain sports are not isolated from gendered practices or from environmental issues. On the contrary, the fragile mountain ecosystems experience more rapid climate change than lower lying areas (Fort, 2015). Changes in the European Alps have caused climbing routes to crumble, approach trails to become no longer usable, villages to be threatened and even destroyed, and numerous people have lost their lives in accidents resulting from rapid warming (Auerbach, 2019; Bertorello, 2019; Hansen, 2019b). Additionally, the vital "Third Pole" of the Earth, the large glaciated area of the Himalayas, Karakoram, and Hindu Kush in Asia is rapidly melting (Rasmussen, 2019). The preceding news articles are all from 2019 but climate change, biodiversity loss, including mass extinctions, and the increased toxicity (Cielemęcka & Åsberg, 2019) of the environment are hardly news anymore nor, as Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy asserted more than a decade ago when discussing if and how climbing narratives could have influence on society, are technological solutions the *deus ex machina* that will fix everything.

> The Alaska Range sees higher temperatures every year, and every year water tables are lower in the Sacramento Valley. There is mercury in the Ottawa River; there are fewer cod off the Grand Banks, fewer salmon in the Columbia, and it seems the air we breathe causes Parkinson's for the old, asthma for the young and an uncertain fate for those in between. Technological solutions have been proffered, attempts at mitigation have been made, but the cars on the highway get faster and wider. What we need isn't a new machine, it's a new way of thinking.[6]

McCarthy has argued convincingly that climbing might potentially have transformative potential and this is further discussed in Section 2 and Article 2, but in studying mountain sports it is important to acknowledge that although they can be exhilarating and rewarding for their participants, mountain sports and their practitioners are part of the problem. Climbing, for example, impacts the environment in numerous negative ways by displacing flora and fauna and by contributing to carbon emissions (Allf, 2018; Apollo, 2014; Renault, 2019), and similar impacts can be attributed to mountain and outdoor sports in general (MacBride-Stewart, 2019; Sato et al., 2013).

Responses to the environmental crises are also deeply influenced by gender issues, which is evidenced by the vicious and misogynistic backlash that teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg has recently suffered (Ernman et al., 2019; Gelin, 2019). Pertinent to the following discussion on the links between hegemonic masculinities, that is, ideological and oppressive notions of idealized masculinity (Connell, 2005), and environmental destruction, that backlash is directly linked to conservative white men and masculinities (Anshelm & Hultman, 2014; Jylhä

[6] McCarthy, 2008b, p. 157

et al., 2016; McCright & Dunlap[7], 2011) and, significantly, also to xenosceptic attitudes (Krange et al., 2019). In light of the entanglement of sport, gender, and the environment introduced here, studying combined representations of these three items together hopefully also aids understanding of all three separately. This dissertation now proceeds by discussing the aim(s) of this research, both academically and also with a view on wider politics, and by introducing the research questions that the current societal and environmental situation has helped motivate.

1.1 Aim(s) and research questions

In a traditional monograph dissertation, authors can structure their thesis around a single aim or research question over which they have (relatively) complete control during the entire writing process. This is different from an article-based dissertation where, although there is an overall aim and research question in the research process, each separate article itself also needs to have one or more clearly defined research question(s), each of which would then ideally also support the central aim of the thesis. Therefore the division of research questions into several dynamic questions (in the sense that they undergo constant revision during the research process and also in the sense that journal and book editors influence them) allows for diversity in approaching the overall aim of the thesis.

The aim of the present dissertation is to examine how nature and masculinity are represented in contemporary mountain sports texts[8] (both written and audiovisual). I refer to the term *contemporary* in two ways. First, I specifically mean contemporary in the temporal sense of mostly[9] the last decade. This is the explicit time period that my study focuses on. Second, my study also aims to show how representations of mountain masculinities of the past are both similar to those in current times but also how contemporary mountain masculinities differ from those of the past. Similarities include how hegemonic masculinities are upheld via athletic activity in nature, and differences include how such recent issues as climate change are either present or, even more notably, absent from contemporary texts. Capitalist interests in producing commercial mountain sports texts are another divergence from older traditions where virile masculinity was (re)enacted in nature and strongly linked to patriotism and nation-building (Kolodny, 1975; Norwood, 1996).

Regarding the central role of *representation* in these questions, I refer to a contemporary understanding of representations as having not merely textual meaning but also visceral, material significance (Jokinen, 2019; Rust et al., 2015).

[7] I find McCright and Dunlap's (2011) original and unexplained framing of climate change denialism as something that a "cool dude" does, slightly problematic.
[8] "Texts" are understood broadly here to reflect the current practice in literary and cultural studies, and include audiovisual materials such as films and videos and also social media updates.
[9] *The Wall* (2006) is the oldest of my key materials.

This understanding is based on ideological meanings ascribed to elements in texts, that is, representations, taking on agential power in the world. Jacques Derrida (1976) famously argued that the world is deeply textual and Richard Dyer (1993) insists that "there is no such thing as unmediated access to reality" (1993, p. 3). This thesis therefore proceeds from the notion that while the world is materially real, at the same time it is textually constructed and represented. Ecomedia scholars Stephen Rust et al. view "popular cultural artifacts" and nature as "entangled together, both in how media texts represent the environment" and "in the inevitable ways that media texts and systems are materially embedded in natural resource use and abuse" (2015, p. 2). Similarly, Ursula Heise has argued for the importance of "Google Earth with its zooming ability" as a "representational tool" that surpasses "the old Gaia image" (Heise, 2008, p. 21) where the Earth was viewed from afar. There is an important visual distinction between seeing the Earth as one blue ball in space where it is easy to imagine humans and nonhumans and their common planet as a harmonious unity, and conversely being able to zoom in and see parts of this supposedly harmonious entity cruelly exploiting other parts of it.

The material repercussions of representations have been frequently discussed also in critical studies on men and masculinities and furthermore in discussion of relations between masculinities and sport (Lafrance & Rail, 2001). The significance of not only textual but also visual representations in upholding hegemonic masculinities is succinctly articulated by Susan M. Alexander who asserts that "[v]isual representations serve as agents of masculine gender socialization" (2003, p. 540). Dyer has further argued that mountains are visually represented as places where primarily white European males can experience the perceived uplifting attributes of mountains, their "clarity and cleanliness of the air, the vigour demanded by the cold, the enterprise required by the harshness of the terrain and climate, the sublime, soul-elevating beauty of mountain vistas" (2002, p. 21). Further discussion on how representations of nature facilitate specifically white, able-bodied males' outdoor recreation can be found, for example, in Mei Mei Evans (2002) and Sarah Jaquette Ray (2017).

To support the central aim, and also to facilitate shedding light on smaller individual aims in the articles gathered here, this study pursues the following four research questions (*RQs*) (one research question per article):

> *RQ 1) How are cultural male/female and human/nonhuman borders represented in contemporary mountain sports films? This research question was investigated in the article "A fine line": Crossing and erecting borders in representing male athletes' relationships to nature.*

> *RQ 2) How are male athletes' embodied, connected, and even eroticized relationships to nature represented in Salomon's commercial YouTube videos, and how does this extend to Salomon's attempt to brand itself in ecological terms? This research question was investigated in the article "Desire to be connected to nature": Materialism and masculinity in YouTube videos by Salomon.*

RQ 3) How are both nature and one mountain athlete's (Timothy Olson) troubled past commodified into a hybrid, partially ecological and partially hegemonic, professional athletic masculinity via social media branding? This research question was investigated in the article "Nature is dope": Timothy Olson and athletic masculinity in nature.

RQ 4) How is (some) men's seeking of healing from trauma represented in contemporary mountain climbing literature? This research question was investigated in the article El Capitan as a site for male healing from trauma in Jeff Long's The Wall *and Tommy Caldwell's* The Push.

Two things emerge from these four research questions. One, this thesis focuses specifically on how male mountain athletes' varied relationships and practices in the mountains are *represented* in various texts. Two, despite the seeming heterogeneity of the research questions, they are each sturdily connected to each other but also continue from one question to the other, meaning the following: *RQ 1* starts from an initial point of relative unawareness and asks a somewhat modest yet general question. *RQ 2* then refines that initial question into a more specific one and also adds the element of commercial interests into the question. *RQ 3* asks a further question on commercial interests but also directs focus to commodification of an individual's troubled past in this connection. *RQ 4* then completes this battery of questions by closing the discussion on commodification and directing the discussion on general troubled pasts into a specific investigation of trauma. Thus, each *RQ* contributes to the central aim by investigating a specified subsidiary theme in the overall framework of the thesis. This dissertation contextualizes the answers to these questions in relation to previous research in the fields of critical studies on gender, sport, and nature, and discusses ways in which this new knowledge might impact contemporary society and politics. In conclusion, representations are loci of power, and it is therefore necessary to investigate what representations of nature and masculinity in contemporary mountain sports texts may tell us about men and masculinities in nature.

1.2 Material

The primary research material for this thesis consists of four different kinds of texts. For article 1, I studied contemporary nonfiction mountain sports films. For article 2, I continued with films but with a slight change in genre as I moved from films made for movie theaters, film festivals, and DVD[10] distribution into YouTube videos produced by a single commercial entity (the outdoor gear company Salomon). In article 3 I moved further away from films into studying

[10] Digital Versatile Disc. The format was still current at time of writing the article in 2015 but that it is becoming largely outdated demonstrates the speed of technological development. All the films can now most easily be accessed online.

social media (YouTube is also a form of social media), this time via the microblogging and social networking services Twitter and Facebook[11]. In article 4 I studied literature, and the primary material consisted of one novel, *The Wall*, by Jeff Long (2006) and one memoir, *The Push*, by Tommy Caldwell (2017). All the materials have masculinity and nature in a central role. A full list of my key materials is provided below. Next, I outline in more detail the characteristics of my material as well as extend a critical look into the data collection process and the geographic and cultural diversity (or lack thereof) of the materials.

All key materials are included in TABLE 1. To help the reader to be able to locate all the materials as easily as possible, each source is also added into the *References* (6) list with full URLs where available. The six films studied in article 1 are, in alphabetical order, *Déjame Vivir* (English: Let Me Live) (Montaz-Rosset, 2013), *A Fine Line* (Montaz-Rosset, 2012), *In the High Country* (Wolpert, 2013), *Reel Rock 7* (2012), *Reel Rock 8* (2013), and *Unbreakable* (Benna, 2012). The three primary films studied in Article 2 are, in alphabetical order, *Fast and Light* (Salomon TV, 2016), *Kilian* (Salomon TV, 2016), and *Outliers* (Salomon TV, 2016). Article 3 relied on a set of supporting material (referenced in the article) to establish and contextualize the discourse of men in nature often having troubled pasts but the key materials under close reading were three posts on Facebook by Timothy Olson (Olson, 2015, 2016a, 2016b), and six Twitter "tweets" (Olson, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, 2016e, 2016f)." In Article 4, I studied two literary works, the novel *The Wall* by Jeff Long (2006) and the memoir *The Push* by Tommy Caldwell (2017).

[11] Both companies, especially Facebook, have recently been under scrutiny and received heavy criticism due to facilitating the spreading of misogyny, hate speech, and political propaganda, but these issues were not part of my research at the time of writing the articles.

TABLE 1 List of primary material, in order of articles

Data type and title	**Country of origin**	**Year of production**
Déjame Vivir (DVD/online)	Spain	2013
A Fine Line (DVD/online)	Spain	2012
In the High Country (DVD/online)	US	2013
Reel Rock 7 (DVD/online)	US	2012
Reel Rock 8 (DVD/online)	US	2013
Unbreakable (DVD/online)	US	2012
YouTube videos by Salomon (three videos, all freely available online)	France/Int'l.	2015 & 2016
Timothy Olson on Facebook (three posts, all freely available online)	US	2015 & 2016
Timothy Olson on Twitter (six "tweets," all freely available online)	US	2016
The Push (memoir)	US	2017
The Wall (novel)	US	2006

As the table above shows, my key materials are entirely Ameri- and Euro-centric. This could be construed as idiosyncratic and unrepresentative were it not for the fact that these two cultural and geographic areas in the Global North represent not only the most successful outdoor sports media houses and apparel and gear business conglomerates but also provide the majority of their consumer base (Market Watch, 2019). So these areas also represent the most common demographics of outdoor recreation. The (at least current) hegemonic position (Campbell & Kean, 2006; Crane, 2013) of especially American production and technology companies is also visible in the chosen data set.

The texts mostly occupy a somewhat ambiguous, if not liminal, position in the world. They are neither obscure underground texts nor are they extremely popular in the mainstream; rather, they are popular in the participant groups that are the supposed target audience of the texts' makers. To elucidate, both of the *Reel Rock* films discussed here toured the world on small scale climbing film festivals and gatherings—as indeed did later installments of the film series—and are well known within climbing circles but do not receive mass theater distribution. The other films' audiences are similar. On the other hand Salomon's YouTube videos analyzed in the articles have garnered audiences of just under 300,000, apart from the title *Kilian* with 1.1 million views as of August 2020. To clarify the texts' popularity further, as of August 2020 Timothy Olson has just over 53,000 Facebook followers and 35, 000 Twitter followers. The sales figures for Jeff Long's *The Wall* are not available but he is described as a "New York Times bestselling author" (Simon & Schuster, 2020). The case of Tommy Caldwell's *The Push* is very similar (Penguin Random House, 2020). Pertinent to the discussion on the texts' popularity, the first climbing text to gain true

mainstream attention, at least since Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* (Krakauer, 1999), namely the Oscar winning climbing film *Free Solo,* about Alex Honnold's climbing exploits (Vasarhelyi & Chin, 2018), was released in theaters too late for me to include in my core material. Had it been released earlier, the eventual articles that form this dissertation may have been different, especially as Honnold has espoused explicitly environmentalist and feminist attitudes (see section 2.2 for more). It should also be noted that the intended audience of the texts may influence how gender and nature are portrayed in them. For example, *The Wall* as a horror novel is likely intended for a general audience whereas the climbing films discussed in article 1 are unlikely to be encountered by the general public. There are also genre-specific conventions that differ between the media and how they are designed to influence audiences. For example visual media such as films can construct (and criticize) hegemonic masculinities differently compared to a novel. However it is notable in this context that such similar representations were observed across the texts analyzed in the articles gathered here.

Being involved with mountain sports myself, my participant status has also necessarily affected not only how I interpret my data but also how I have selected it; I refer to this in Donna Haraway's terms as (embodied) "situated knowledge" (1988, p. 584). A deliberate understanding of research as situated, subjective knowledge affects all facets of research, and Sparkes and Smith reinforce this notion by claiming that "our bodies clearly do influence our analysis" (2012, p. 65). Thus my own status as an observant participant and participant observer (Wacquant, 2006, p. 6) has necessarily shaped my research[12].

The selection process of key materials represents my deepening understanding of the cultural phenomenon of mountain sports and especially their practitioners' gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, and ability. For Article 1 my data selection process was admittedly idiosyncratic but none the less provides a representative selection of the most popular contemporary nonfiction mountain sports films. They provided a robust basis for starting to ask questions about masculinity, nature, and sport but only in the following articles did my accrued knowledge of my topic enable me to make more informed decisions on data selection.

Having gained some overall understanding of representations of male mountain athletes in nature from the research conducted for Article 1, I focused in Article 2 on a smaller set of data to further investigate what I had discovered when writing Article 1. Having identified an emerging new discourse of connected athletic masculinities (McCarthy, 2008a; Salovaara, 2020, forthcoming) across various strands in the mountain sports media, I was able to recognize Salomon and its recent production of YouTube videos as a viable conduit in studying the topic. The three YouTube videos selected (see Table 1) present to the viewer in essence a trilogy centered around popular Salomon athlete Kilian Jornet and advance an emerging new discourse of athletic men being connected to their environment. It is perhaps worth clarifying here that as a term,

[12] This research project initially had an (auto)ethnographic element to it, and I wish to pursue this further in the future (see section 5.3 for more).

"connected" may of course also apply, for example, to a farmer or a hunter who is born and stays in one specific spot of earth, owns it and farms it, pours chemicals into the soil, and hunts the local fauna. However, I define the term so that to be connected does not (or, *should not*) include violence and hierarchical structures.

I became convinced throughout the research process that social media is not only worthwhile as an object of study (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016) but that investigating deeper into one individual athlete's social media posts (or, microblogging) enables one to gain an understanding of the processes that professional athletes use to brand themselves in certain environmentally friendly terms. Hence I chose one very popular athlete (American mountain runner Timothy Olson) who is prolific in social media, and I used his posts as the basis of a case study that became Article 3 in this dissertation.

Choosing my material for Article 4, I wanted to also include literature because it is still, even in the time of social media, an important medium where representations of gender and nature are present and also contested. Discussions with my dissertation supervisors were also an influencing factor in this choice of material, which is indicative of the dynamic research process that an article based dissertation is. The deciding factors in choosing the two books, *The Wall* (Long, 2006) and *The Push* (Caldwell, 2017), were that they together form a rare synchronicity in that they both deal with trauma, a topic whose importance had grown throughout the research process, and they both have the same spatial location, the mountain El Capitan (Tutocanula in Native Miwok language) in Yosemite (Ahwahne in Native Miwok language) National Park as the primary locus of action.

Ultimately my insider status as a consumer of mountain sports media has enabled me to make choices that might have been unavailable for outside researchers. This has resulted in an eclectic selection of data that is nevertheless representative and enables this dissertation to address the specific research questions that were generated during the research process.

1.3 Methods of analysis

The method used throughout the analysis of the research material in the articles has consistently been a qualitative literary and cultural close textual analysis. More specifically, I use theoretical contextualization and a multisensory close "reading" of multimodal texts filtered through the particular "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988, p. 584) of myself being involved in the sports I study. "Close reading" as a term to describe a method may seem vague, and this may have allowed its wide usage in various forms through literary studies and criticism. Barbara Herrnstein Smith, for example, describes it more as a "practice" than a "methodology" (2016, p. 57), which speaks of its widely adopted but often vaguely determined use.

Although close reading can be practiced nonpolitically, and sometimes indeed is criticized for that (DuBois, 2003), I have chosen to use the method in combination with an explicitly political theoretical framework to better contextualize the analysis. In this, I follow Norman Fairclough's assertion that texts do not exist in a vacuum but often reflect (mis)use of power that has "material effects" (2005, p. 73), so the analysis of the research materials also contextualizes them in relation to the current gender inequities and environmental crises. My theoretical framework of critical gender and sports studies, ecocriticism, and gendered trauma, is also inherently political, and critical of power inequities. The appropriateness of qualitative research in favor of a quantitative approach in this kind of context has been argued for by, for instance, Ruth Wodak (2007), and the usefulness of qualitative research in specifically feminist research has been discussed before, by Ted Gaiser for example (2008).

Through close reading, which here also includes *looking* and *listening*, a sustained search for recognizable patterns in the texts was conducted. The texts have then been further analyzed and, importantly, contextualized, through the chosen theoretical frameworks of ecocritically informed critical studies on gender and sport, and in the last article also on literary and feminist trauma studies. Although close reading is characteristically a literary studies method (Goulimari, 2015), its use in studying "texts" in a broader sense of the word allows for a practice that accommodates the multimodal nature of the research material. Close *looking* has previously been employed as a research method (Paasonen, 2010) and close *listening* has also been used earlier, in combination with close reading (Mononen, 2018), specifically to study audiovisual materials.

The practical element of analysis for each article consisted of the following procedure. First, after establishing what qualifies as the primary material of analysis, the texts in question were read through (and/or looked at and listened to) several times in order to be able to identify recognizable patterns that could be fruitful to study further in light of the chosen theoretical framework. Then individual, shorter representative samples of the texts were set apart for the actual close reading portion of the analysis. In the final stage of the analysis, the theories of critical gender and sports studies, ecocriticism, and trauma studies were brought in to contextualize the findings.

Apart from the general theoretical framework it employed, each article also employed relevant theories suitable for the specific material at hand. So, for example, in the first article that studied films, feminist film theorists such as Alison Butler (2008) and Laura Mulvey (1975) were used to provide genre-specific knowledge, and in the fourth article horror theorist Gina Wisker's work (2005) contributed to understanding what makes horror fiction somewhat different from other literary genres and how that should be taken into account in a feminist analysis of it.

The selected method proved to be successful in analyzing the chosen research material, and also enabled a systematic pursuit of the aim of examining representations of nature and masculinity in mountain sports texts and in finding

answers to the four research questions. Close readings of multimodal mountain sports texts have so far rarely been used in combination with the broad and political theoretical base that this dissertation employs. This makes the combination of method and analysis original and allows for new knowledge on masculinities in nature to emerge.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This first section of the thesis has so far introduced the general topic as well as elaborated on the more specific aim and research questions (1.1). Further, the key research materials used in the research have been introduced along with the data collection process (1.2). The methods of analysis have been discussed (1.3), and the rest of the thesis structure is outlined here.

The next section (2) begins by outlining the *Background and context* of the thesis as well as outlining previous research on the thesis topic. It discusses mountain sports, the central practice described in the articles contained in the thesis (2.1) as situated and mediatized activities and also introduce the central protagonists of the research material, that is, the male mountain athletes studied here (2.2).

Section 3, *Theoretical framework*, contextualizes the research conducted here in terms of where it is placed in theoretical conversations in the fields of critical gender and sports studies (3.1), ecological masculinities and material ecofeminisms (3.2), and trauma, nature, and gender (3.3).

In Section 4, the *Summaries of original papers* describe to the reader the contents of each of the four articles (4.1–4.4) gathered here. Each article has a concise summary that enables the reader to obtain an initial understanding of the central research questions of each article as well as an explanation of each article's key finding(s).

The final section of the thesis, *Discussion* (5), commences with a recapitulation of the key research findings in terms of explicating the new knowledge acquired during the research process of the dissertation. The rest of the section discusses how to evaluate the research findings (5.1) and what their implications and significance are (5.2). The section ends with concluding remarks on recommendations for future research and a discussion about potential societal implications of the research. The section is followed and the thesis concluded by a summary in Finnish and a list of references.

2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In this section, I first introduce previous research on sports, gender, and nature, and then contextualize it by discussing mountain sports as situated, mediatized practices. Lastly, I discuss male mountain sports practitioners through the lenses of race[13], class, sexuality, and able-bodiedness, and also address their psychology through looking at their motivations for practicing their sports as well as the role of trauma. Because the articles gathered here focus exclusively on representation, I provide a context for those representations. To briefly outline what I mean by words such as "sport" and "recreation," here is a brief summary.

Sport and recreation as concepts are closely related and often used interchangeably, though recreation explicitly refers to non-professional activity and can of course have nothing to do with sports, whereas sports often involve at least the potential to be professionalized into becoming profitable for the practitioner. Recreation, on the other hand, may become lucrative for commercial interests that may offer merchandise to aid that particular form of recreation. Further, mountain sports are often described as "alternative" sports. "Alternative" refers both to the sports being non-mainstream (i.e. not as popular as for example the big team sports and consequently less well known) but also, because they potentially offer more space for self-reflexivity, to their function as sites where non-mainstream modes of behavior are more likely to appear (Thorpe, 2010) (see section 3.1 for more).

Previous research on sports, and extreme sports in particular (Breivik, 2010; Delle Fave et al., 2003; Isaksen, 2012; Mackenzie, 2013; Messner, 2005; Winslow, 2009), has largely neglected the significance of nature to the participants and focused on issues such as flow states, competition, risk, and adrenaline (Brymer & Gray, 2009). This is understandable in instances that concern indoor extreme sports but surprising when the object of study concerns outdoor adventure and mountain sports that are, by definition, practiced out-of-doors, that is to say, in nature. Although the mountain sports participants who practice their sports in nature are primarily male, very scant scholarship exists on the bearing of gender

[13] The use of the word "race" is a linguistic convention of the English language and widely used also in the humanities, and I therefore also use the term in this dissertation.

on how their relationships to nature are represented (Salovaara, 2015). This paucity of research helped me establish my own study in the newly emergent field of theory and practice that combines environmental humanities theory and critical studies on men and masculinities into an ecomasculine or, ecological masculinities, viewpoint on studying nature and masculinities (Allister, 2004; Cenamor & Brandt, 2019; Gaard, 2014; Hultman & Pulé, 2018; Kreps, 2010; MacGregor & Seymour, 2017).

Gender, and masculinities specifically, have been in focus in the past when mountain sports have been studied (Bayers, 2003; Robinson, 2008; Thorpe, 2010) but there are only rare instances when athletes and nature form the explicit focus of research. Before this dissertation and the articles contained here, that research included Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy (2008a) who studied mountaineering texts, and Eric Brymer and Tonia Gray (2009) who studied outdoor adventure athletes. Both focused on the practitioners' connection to nature, and this dissertation builds on their work. Further, Niklas Vainio (2003) and Martha Wörsching (2007) have done foundational work in specifically studying representations of male mountaineers and nature, and my work aligns with and expands on their studies. This relative research gap may stem from the fact that ecocriticism and, more broadly, environmental humanities, the main theoretical framework(s) in studying representations of nature, have historically not been overtly interested in masculinities (not to mention sports), but have instead sought to analyze representations of nature and those representations' gendered aspects based on an ecofeminist hermeneutics. This study, therefore, adds the lens of critical studies on men and masculinities to the discussion on gender, nature, and sports.

The next section first discusses mountain sports and contextualizes them theoretically, and then focuses specifically on mountain sports practitioners. Obviously, there are no mountain sports without mountain sports practitioners and *vice versa*, but this division is intended to contextualize each separately for the reader. It is also important to note here that there are potentially two different discussions around the practice of mountain sports (practitioners). Firstly, I discuss these sports here as practiced by "every*man*" and discuss previous literature on mountain sports culture in this light. Secondly, the research articles included here employ these discussions mainly in the context of studying commercial representations of *professional* mountain athletes. This conceptual difference is relevant especially when discussing the media aspect of these sports' practitioners.

2.1 Mountains and mountain sports

Mountain sports take place in situated locations. The mountains, hills, and crags where the athletes move are meeting places of the social and the ecological where each affects the other in turn. Essentially, this is a human-nonhuman agentic "assemblage" (Bennett, 2010, p. 24) of pseudo–natural spaces culturally transformed into sporting grounds by human agency mixing with the non–

human agency of the landscapes, flora, fauna, and rock. Perhaps contrary to common imagination, and certainly to the fictions produced by commercial mountain sports media, most mountains, and most of the mountains where leisure activities take place, are not "wild" in most senses of the word. Even without mass (extinction) events such as the climate crisis or the current catastrophic rate of biodiversity loss visible everywhere, mountains included, the insights gained through feminist material ecocriticism and research on toxicity make it abundantly clear that no corner of the planet is beyond human influence (Alaimo, 2008; Åsberg & Mehrabi, 2016).

Although humans have never before influenced their environment to the extent that is now apparent, mountains have throughout history been the object of human emotions. They have been commonly feared but also often venerated as spiritual sites and often carried religious meanings (Bernbaum, 1998). Perhaps it is emblematic of human nature that even beliefs that mountains house sacred beings have not always saved mountains from humans ravaging them. A famous example recounted in legends of the Chinese Qin era is the "punishment of spirits residing on Xiang mountain" due to "heavy winds" near the mountain that made a river crossing difficult, which then led to the "whipping" of Xiang mountain (Sanft, 2008, p. 25).

> The emperor [Qin Shihuang, 259 BCE–210 BCE] decided to punish the spirits. He ordered three thousand convict laborers to cut down the trees on Xiang mountain and turn the mountain the reddish-brown color of a convict laborer's uniform by exposing its soil. [14]

Qin Shihuang, the first emperor of a unified China and the epitome of a conquering [15] "hero," used technologically less sophisticated techniques to subdue mountain nature than contemporary men in power, but the toxic, that is, destructive and dominating (Kupers, 2005) masculine hubris needed for such action seems socially embedded in certain masculinities, as Nicole Seymour has discussed in writing how "toxic masculinity" and "environmental destruction" are connected (2018, p. 181). Further, Qin Shihuang's actions may be seen as an expression of Simon Estok's concept of ecophobia[16] (Estok S. , 2018), meaning "irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world," seeing that they are entirely irrational[17] and also destructive (Estok S. , 2009, p. 208).

Mountain sports often take place on land appropriated from indigenous peoples, and the environmental and social justice aspects are largely backgrounded and depoliticized in discussions among mountain sports practitioners. However, a hopeful note in the context of environmental justice and mountains laden with spiritual meaning is the case of Ausangate (Willkanuta

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[14] (Sanft, 2008, p. 25)
[15] For more on the discourses of conquering, caretaking, and connection (McCarthy, 2008a) in relation to mountain sports, see article 3 (Salovaara, 2020, forthcoming).
[16] For more on the use and history of the concept of ecophobia within ecocriticism, see, for example, MacKenzie and Posthumus (2013) and Estok (2018).
[17] Granted, it could conceivably be argued that Qin Shihuang's actions can also be viewed as a rational show of power to his subjects and therefore understandable from a power politics perspective.

in native Aymaran) mountain that was recently protected from multinational mining interests by native protesters in order to protect its "right to existence" (Hume & Rahimtoola, 2018, p. 143). Moreover, in the mountainous Nordic Sámi areas, the commercial exploitation of their land has faced resistance through the practice of *artivism* (Fish, 2020). So, though the overall picture of human-mountain interaction remains bleak, these two examples, over 2200 years apart, illustrate how humans as socialized beings affect mountain ecology in ways most often detrimental but on occasion benevolent.

I consider mountain sports locations, therefore, as socio–ecological spaces, partially the same way as Hubert Zapf considers the golf course as a "postnatural space … of social entertainment" (2016, p. 107). Donna Haraway's (2003) term *natureculture* succinctly expresses the co-constitutiveness of nature and culture that Zapf refers to when he discusses the golf course. Further, in understanding the socio-ecological functions of the mountains, Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia is useful. Foucault defines heterotopias, in opposition to "utopias," as "counter-sites" that are "real places" and that relate to all other sites and places through processes of mirroring and representation (1984, p. 3). For Foucault, a heterotopia is "a system of opening and closing" that is not "freely accessible" but demands specific actions or "rites and purifications" of entrants (1984, p. 7). Mountains as heterotopic places have their own sets of inclusions and exclusions that both mirror and act as the "other" of the contemporary urban cityscape (Foucault, 1984, p. 8). The openings and closings of entry into the mountains are many, but some of the more important ones are an individual's disposable resources in the form of enough money to spend on something arguably frivolous and also the leisure to spend one's time as one chooses. From a demographic point of view in a Euro-American context, such resources are more likely to have accrued for someone who is white, male, and educated. Entrants into the mountain heterotopia also need a fit, able body which, curiously, they simultaneously risk by entering. Ray, 2017; Salovaara & Rodi-Risberg, 2019). Therefore, in introducing mountain sports next I briefly outline these relevant openings and closings in terms of the fitness and risk tolerance that participation involves.

The sports that frame this study are ski mountaineering, mountain climbing, and mountain running. Ski mountaineering (also referred to as *ski touring* when not practiced competitively) is a sport where participants ski (or race) up and down wintry mountains. Leisurely ski tours can take from a few hours to several days with possible nights in between sometimes spent in camping conditions but most often indoors in mountain huts or the like. Races can take from roughly 30 minutes to, again, several days of sustained endurance effort. Aside from the normal sports injuries, avalanches form the biggest risk factor to participants and are a frequent cause of death. Ski mountaineering is most popular in Europe and North America but is practiced worldwide.

Mountain climbing is defined broadly here as climbing *in* the mountains. This includes rock and ice climbing on crags and also so called big wall climbing that blurs the line between rock and mountain climbing because the climbing

routes take climbers up steep vertical and overhanging rocky mountain formations hundreds of meters high. Mountain climbing in particular is a risky sport, and made more so as climate change negatively affects the climbing routes up the mountains (McClanahan, 2019). Casual observers may be aware of the frequent deaths on Mount Everest (Chomolungma in native Tibetan) and the frequent deaths in the Mont Blanc Massif[18] (Wallace, 2012) as they are widely reported in mainstream media. However, despite frequent reports of death, and the recent fame of *Free Solo* (Vasarhelyi & Chin, 2018) possibly skewing nonparticipants' perceptions of climbing and climbers, most climbers spend the majority of their time climbing quite safely. In fact indoor climbing, an almost perfectly safe form of climbing, is the most popular genre of climbing in the United States and elsewhere (American Alpine Club, 2019; Daoust, 2018) and often practiced also by outdoor and mountain climbers. Mountain climbing, on the other hand, includes a variety of risks, including avalanches and rock falls, crevasse falls and falls off mountains, and it demands of participants some ability to be able to negotiate these risks.

Mountain running in this context refers to the practice of running in the mountains, either in a racing situation or otherwise. Mountain running ranges from the relatively safe practice of running on established trails on and around mountains into adventure and racing contexts where participants attempt to climb up and down, ropeless and as quickly as possible, technically difficult mountains at high altitude, and descend by running down the mountain. The latter practice involves similar risks and blurs the boundaries between mountain climbing and mountain running. Distance-wise, mountain runs can be short steep dashes of a few kilometers up a mountain or, at the other extreme, take several days and cover hundreds of kilometers of mountainous terrain. Some physical endurance is required of participants.

Common to all these sports is that they take place in the mountains and are often considered to be extreme sports. Brymer and Gray define extreme sports as "outdoor leisure activities where the most likely outcome of a mismanaged mistake or accident is death" (2009, p. 2). However, this definition is only partially applicable to the sports discussed here. Although mistakes in these sports can and frequently do lead to serious accidents or death, the vast majority of the time when these sports are practiced risk is reasonably well managed. From my own vantage point of situated knowledge, I would argue that this is indeed true for most "extreme" sports where the practitioners themselves decide if and when they are willing to accept more risk in pursuit of higher rewards with most of them spending most of their time in benign terrain.

Mountains are often described and perceived as places of transcendence and the sublime (Bolland, 1996; Macfarlane, 2008; McNee, 2014). However, these notions of the transcendent and sublime have so far largely been discussed in the context of white and wealthy men. The environmental justice aspects of outdoor

[18] An average of around 100 deaths per year is often cited though most years the fatality rate is lower. However, Mark Twight's moniker for Chamonix, the town at the foot of the Mont Blanc Massif, as "the Death Sport Capital of the World" (2001, p. 155) has stuck in the parlance of climbers and other "extreme" athletes.

recreation are frequently backgrounded. Outdoor recreation is largely practiced by privileged groups and often causes environmental harm not only to nature but often also to already non-privileged groups, for example when Westerners travel to Asia or Africa for mountain leisure activities. Thus, even if the participants describe their activities in terms of "connecting" (see Article 2), that connection is irrevocably *connected* to conquest, as so much of that activity takes place on conquered land. This is naturally the case also when practicing mountain sports in America and, at least partially, in Europe[19]. As indigenous studies scholars Eve Vincent, Timothy Neale, and Crystal McKinnon argue, "colonial dispossession" of indigenous cultures and knowledge and attempts at "naturalizing discourses" around nationalism are inextricably a part of colonial histories and the conquest of indigenous peoples (2014, pp. 13, 14). Thus notions of "sport" and "recreation," not to mention "exploration" as it is so closely linked to conquest, become increasingly complex.

Further, even when climbing's environmental impacts (often on colonized land) are discussed, mainstream commercial climbing media sidesteps the issue by focusing on general Leave No Trace principles such as picking up trash and being considerate to other (human) climbers, not being loud, not crowding routes by bad rope management, and generally just "be[ing] cool" (Coppolillo, 2017). Critical self-reflection on the large issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss is often completely omitted in these discussions. Further, the dominant discourse in Western mountaineering history books is that mountaineering as an activity was largely initiated by the wealthy nineteenth century Englishman (Macfarlane, 2008). In contrast, mountaineering by women has largely been disregarded throughout history (Ives, 2016), and research on mountain worship shows that peaks between 2500 and 6700 meters high "across five continents, were ascended in prehistoric times," dating back up to 18000 years (Echevarría, 2014, p. 190). This consistent historical backgrounding most likely affects the cultural framing of mountains as places of leisure for the well-off Western male, and mountaineering as his domain.

The cultural associations of mountains and mountaineers cannot but be visible in mountain sports texts. Although the articles in this dissertation discuss mainly professional mountain athletes, mountain sports texts are widely consumed by the general population. American mountain climbing films such as *Dawn Wall* (Lowell, 2017) and *Free Solo* (Vasarhelyi & Chin, 2018) have recently gained mainstream media attention and won accolades, and commercial social media sites such as YouTube make mountain sports media more accessible than ever as well as giving active participants an opportunity to produce content. Contemporary mountain sports media is prone to sensationalist reportage but, as Robert Macfarlane (2008) explains, publishers of mountain sports texts have since the eighteenth century attempted to sell texts by promoting them in the terms that they consider correspond with the public imagination. Deep ecologist

[19] For example, I have frequently "recreated" on land appropriated from indigenous Sámi people. The same is true for most who have ever ventured outside in the Nordic countries, or at least in their northern parts (debate exists as to how far south Sámi settlements extended historically).

Arne Naess's book on an early Norwegian attempt to climb Tirich Mir in Afghanistan is an example of this: the back cover of the expedition book tries to entice the general public by sensationalizing the climb and using a hypermasculine conquest mode of discourse to describe the attempt, even though the book itself is largely humble in tone and discusses in detail the climbers' feelings of connection to mountain nature (Naess, et al., 1952).

Further, media practices affect how mountain sports and their practitioners are viewed and also possibly who practices them. The mediatization (Corner, 2018; Couldry, 2008) of mountain sports, meaning in this context how media practices shape how mountain sports practices and practitioners are represented in media, is an important factor both in how certain groups of people are represented as compared to other groups, and how that affects the environment (Rust et al., 2015). Nick Couldry (2008) has argued that in some instances using the term "mediation" in favor of "mediatization" may allow for more flexibility for interpreting digital storytelling (pp. 375, 389). Both terms are used in the field of media studies, however, and I have chosen to use mediatization in this specific context to reflect how contemporary media practices allow for a limited amount of readily available models, especially for female mountain sports practitioners and to nonwhite practitioners. An example of this is the lack of representation of female and nonwhite climbers in mountain sports media and, further, limiting existing female representation to spheres where their physical appearance can more easily be on display. Charlotte Austin quotes climber Kath Pyke arguing that current media practices focus on the safe and sanitized forms of women's climbing by showing "women with beautiful bodies achieving at sport [20] climbing" instead of the high, cold mountains (2015, p. 49). Austin argues that this is due to the fact that "[f]emale mountaineers have yet to reach a critical mass in the media" and that women "may assume, consciously or unconsciously, that the world of alpinism is less welcoming to them" (2015, p. 49).

So, gendered and mediatized representations affect how professional athletes are portrayed in commercially produced mountain sports media content and texts. As Richard Dyer has remarked, "unmediated" experiences are difficult if not impossible to access (1993, p. 3), and this is even more so as perceptions of reality are increasingly media saturated (Klein B. , 2013). However, nonprofessional and sub-elite level athletes also produce media content that is viewed by the general public. YouTube as a social media platform is a convenient channel for this, but commercial capitalist interests also attach themselves to sub-elite athletes who invent media projects that companies may deem to help them greenwash their image to better suit the current understanding that climate change (if not crisis in their view) is real. Even multinational banks, the epitome of global capitalism, have started supporting climate change awareness. For example, Nordea has joined the mainstream environmentalist mountain sport and skiing advocacy group Protect Our Winters (POW) to promote the Climb for

[20] *Sport* climbing refers to a safe climbing practice where climbers rely on pre-established protection (bolts) in the rock and where the focus is on the pure physical difficulty of linking together individual climbing moves.

Climate project "to raise awareness" of climate change (Climb for climate, 2019). This is despite even elementary school children being "aware" of climate change. These forms of "digital storytelling" and branding as contemporary media practices extend the range of texts beyond "production or distribution" and contribute to the "mediatization" of media practices (Couldry, 2008, p. 374).

Mountain sports literature also contributes to the mountain sports media landscape. Its literature is somewhat different from other mountain sports media in the sense that it allows for expression of thoughts and opinions in a less frantic and hurried atmosphere. Due to its longer history, it may also better reflect larger time frames of ideas related to mountains than contemporary media, especially social media. Climbing and mountaineering books, both fictional and nonfictional, have provided participants and nonparticipants alike a window into the practice of mountain sports and also shaped the way mountains are viewed and who is seen moving on them. They have so far, in most cases, not challenged clichéd notions of men in the mountains but reinforced them. However, as Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy's research into the sentiments expressed in mountain sports literature show, there is an undercurrent of intimate human connection with mountains in mountain sports literature that resists the clichéd notions. McCarthy is hopeful that "maybe listening closely to the words mountains speak through climbers will tell us where our culture has been and, also, where it's going" (2008a, p. 158). Such historical perspective is relevant also in the following discussion on the men practicing mountain sports, although the focus will be more on contemporary male mountain athletes than their historical predecessors.

2.2 Mountain sportsmen

The word "sportsmen" in the title, with all its negative connotations of masculinism and outdoor "sports" such as hunting, may sound jarring. However I use the word consciously to emphasize and foreground men and masculinities. In the following I discuss mountain sportsmen in terms of their race, class, sexuality, able-bodiedness, and psychology (with an emphasis on the role of trauma in framing their activities). I discuss mountain sportsmen in general as well as draw attention to certain aspects of representations of professional mountain sportsmen which are the focus of my research articles.

Critical sports scholars Barry Brummett and Rachel Kraft assert that sports are central building blocks of identity for many people, and "participants often define themselves by what they play" (2009, p. 12). Specific to gender, they further claim that "participating in synchronized swimming sends different messages – about gender, sexuality, masculinity, femininity, national allegiance and origins, and so forth — than does participating in Thai kickboxing" (2009, p. 13). Further, Bourdieu has claimed that "sports like mountaineering," often practiced by the educated (and indeed educator) classes, allow for "symbolic gratifications associated with practicing a highly distinctive activity (2001, p. 439).

Outdoor and mountain sports may also function as these signs of "*distinction*" (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 432, emphasis in original) for white ethnic groups and contribute to inequity. Although the popularity of outdoor and mountain sports is growing (Breivik, 2010; Gardner, 2015; Hoffman et al., 2010), participation rates among the Hispanic and Asian populations in the United States are experiencing only miniscule growth (Outdoor Industry Association, 2018). Further, African-Americans recreate in the outdoors and mountains disproportionately little (Mills, 2012), and overall in the United States participation rates among various minorities (including ethnic) are historically low (Jensen & Guthrie, 2006).

There are some instances of white, male, able-bodied, and heterosexual mountain athletes explicitly advocating gender equity and environmental issues. An example is the famous vegetarian[21] rock climber Alex Honnold who works with environmental justice issues and is an advocate for feminist issues (Honnold Foundation, 2019; Rassler, 2015; Skenazy, 2018). However, explicitly politicized statements from professional male mountain athletes are generally not readily forthcoming. It can also be surmised that there has been a lack of representations of nonwhite, non-male, non-able-bodied, and non-heterosexual mountain athletes in the mountain sports media. This may have ramifications on who ends up practicing these sports.

As discussed in Section 2.1, entry into the world of mountain sports requires an amount of disposable income as well as leisure time, and these conditions are more easily met in the Euro-American context if one is white. It can be argued that mountain sports are implicitly "white" due to white men's over-representation among the practitioners as well as in depictions of the practitioners. Richard Dyer (2002), for example, has discussed racial tensions in representations of white men's bodies. He claims that media representations that expose the generally "unimpressive" white male body may upset white/nonwhite power relations (2002, p. 263). However, he also claims that men's "bodily superiority" is harnessed to exert a type of seemingly biologically determined power over women, and that representations of working-class white male bodies in particular assert white male supremacy (2002, p. 263).

Dyer also discusses Nietzsche's Übermensch myth and its (post-Nazism) fascist connotations in relation to bodybuilding specifically, but the discussion can easily be extended also into discussions of mountain sports that, like bodybuilding, involve "pain, bodily suffering, and with it the idea of the value of pain" (2002, p. 265). The overwhelmingly white genealogy of mountaineering specifically as sport instead of being religious or associated with hunting traces back to Europe, from where mountaineering as a recreation was imported to (North) America through white colonizers. In Europe, white, athletic masculinity and mountaineering were strongly associated in, for example, the *bergfilm* genre (e.g. Fanck, Storm over Mont Blanc, 1930; Fanck & Pabst, The white hell of Pitz Palu, 1929), that connected them not only with Nazi Germany and its ideals of

[21] Aside from article 3, the diets of male mountain athletes are not discussed in my articles. However, I have argued elsewhere (Salovaara, 2019) that diet is an important consideration of ecological masculinities. Section 3.2 of this dissertation discusses the topic further.

"Aryan" male heroism (Baer, 2017; Gutmann, 2013) but also with a "a desire to shape and subdue female presence" (Rentschler, 1990, p. 156). Although *bergfilm* translated into English simply means "mountain film," the Germanic name refers specifically to Weimar era German film that laid the foundation for Nazi Germany and popularized the notion of a Germanic male as a hero on the mountain. Popular contemporary mountain films (e.g. Eastwood, Eiger Sanction, 1975; Harlin, Cliffhanger, 1993; Kormákur, Everest, 2015) on the other hand, largely originate in Hollywood and instead of invoking nationalism often espouse notions of traditional hegemonic (and toxic) masculinities[22]. Stephen M. Whitehead has also discussed how, as a response to white men's attempts to aggressively dominate both women and nonwhite men, "many men of colour continue to seek dignity and respect through the stylized display of an often aggressive, misogynistic 'cool pose'" that challenges inequity through an attempt at appropriation of hegemonic masculine traits (2006, p. 71).

The overrepresentation of white men in mountain sports may also be partially due to their different risk perception. Ursula Heise has argued (referring to research by James Flynn et al.) that white males in general see the world as containing fewer risks than any other demographic group (Heise, 2008). Heise argues that this is due to white males feeling that they are in control of the world, and that even the catastrophic risks associated with Arctic drilling do not disturb them (Heise, 2008). Heise's work also provides an advantageous link between whiteness and class. She is critical of successful, white, male environmentalists such as Gary Snyder who have advocated rural retreat and settling into one specific location, for advocating what is attainable only for the wealthy and who tend to be intellectuals (Heise, 2008). White men are generally speaking historically more responsible for the current environmental crisis than other groups[23] (see, e.g. Hultman, 2016, and the Introduction here), but curiously there seems to also be a persistent linkage between media representations of wealthy environmentalist men and nonpolitical environmental action. Veteran American naturalist Doug Peacock describes Doug Tompkins, environmentalist and founder of The North Face outdoor apparel company (known for many things but not for its firm environmental policies), as "the ultimate can-do guy … prepared to take on the devastation of the world's forests singlehandedly" (2017). Peacock describes Tompkins's method thus:

> He owns and pilots a Cessna 206 and exploring wild country by air is his passion. He was looking for a large expanse of wild biodiversity; that is, a big chunk of uncut forest. When he finds one he likes, he buys it. Instead of writing his congressman, he just writes a check.[24]

Such environmental action may be admirable, but possible only for a select few who have succeeded in turning a profit in the capitalist system, usually at the

[22] Charlie Chaplin's *Gold Rush* (Chaplin, 1925), on the other hand, would provide an early example of a mountain film depicting a vulnerable and non-hegemonic masculinity.
[23] The current rapid industrial expansion in, for example China, does however mean that the contemporary situation is more nuanced.
[24] (Peacock, 2017)

expense of the environment in the first place, and also not conducive to political change.

Based on the analysis of the research materials of this thesis, male mountain athletes' myopia towards equity issues seems prevalent. To be clear, mountain athletes do not generally belong to what Naomi Klein has dubbed, the "Davos[25] class" (Klein N. , 2016) but certain economic as well as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1994) seems necessary to participate in mountain sports. Despite mountain sportsmen often wanting to position themselves on the fringes of society in seemingly marginalized positions as "dirtbags" rebelling against societal expectations (Martinez-Garcia, 2020, forthcoming; Taylor III, 2010), this is more a cultural romanticization than the lived reality among the majority of the participants. The sports of running and skiing in the mountains, in particular, are implicitly middle class. Running is attached to capitalist society's glorification of staying fit to be able to perform better at work (Abbas, 2004) and skiing is a predominantly white leisure activity (Harrison, 2013) and for many also prohibitively expensive due to, for example, the costly equipment and travel usually associated with it (Kahma, 2010; McGibbon, 2006).

Bourdieu has discussed how "the privileged" classes practice sports "which always lead them elsewhere, higher, further, to new experiences and virgin spaces" not accessible to the "vulgar" masses, in order to distinguish themselves from the non-privileged (1994, p. 215). Further, he claims that a sport suits the bourgeois when "the use of the body" can be done elegantly as in mountaineering which he sees as the highest form of sporting distinction.

> The aristocratic asceticism of the teachers finds an exemplary expression in mountaineering, which, even more than rambling, with its reserved paths (one thinks of Heidegger) or cycle-touring, with its Romanesque churches, offers for minimum economic costs the maximum distinction, distance, height, spiritual elevation, through the sense of simultaneously mastering one's own body and a nature inaccessible to many.[26]

Pertinent to the current discussion is Bourdieu's critical view of new, alternative sports being established as an American-brought "counter-culture" that offers through use of high-tech and/or "*natural*" (emphasis in original) apparel and gear a "natural return to nature" (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 220).

Besides being more easily accessible to relatively wealthy white men, mountain sports are also relatively more accessible to heterosexual males than non-heterosexuals and non-males. Indeed, sports are exceedingly heteronormative in general (Carreiro, 2009; Lafrance & Rail, 2001; Yandall, 2013). However, aside from the assumption that all male athletes are heterosexual (and public exceptions are sadly rare), I want to draw attention to the possibility of viewing (some) male mountain athletes in similar terms as ecosexuals, as has been discussed in recent research (see, e.g. Stephens & Sprinkle, 2016).

[25] The symbolism of the world's richest people meeting amongst the mountains, whose vanishing snows their actions are concretely contributing to, seems fortuitous in helping establish this link.
[26] (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 218)

Ecosexuality, as defined by the *Ecosex Manifesto* (Stephens & Sprinkle, 2014), entails loving the earth "madly, passionately, and fiercely," to "caress rocks" and "save the mountains." This type of "green hedonism" (Ensor, 2018, p. 151) is evident especially in Article 2 of this dissertation. The emphasis on embodied contact with mountains and rocks and the eroticized depictions of men caressing rock are discussed in detail there (and also to an extent in Article 1), and constitute one of the dissertation project's key findings (the other being the close relationship between trauma and the participants' troubled pasts in framing their practice). Although Sarah Ensor is justly skeptical of the ethical ramifications of unbridled hedonism, regardless of whether it is motivated by true love for the earth or not, she does assert that there is value in moving environmentalist discourse away from constant negation, "restraint … leaving little room for either desire or pleasure" (2018, p. 150), a notion also discussed in relation to queer environmental practice by Nicole Seymour (Seymour, 2018).

Although ecosexuality is implicitly queer (Seymour, 2018) and therefore not easily compatible with mostly (?) heterosexual male athletes, there are some common threads between queer ecosexual practices and the practices of the male mountain athletes discussed here. For example, some depictions of the male athletes' intimate touching of the earth, as discussed in Article 2, carry eroticized overtones. On the other hand, Tommy Caldwell, as discussed in Article 4, refers to the mountain El Capitan as his "mistress" (2017, p. 237), and further, some male mountain athletes' notions of "conquering feminized nature are discussed in the articles, so although acts of declaring love for and caressing rock may seem queer, they are nevertheless often contingent with patriarchal and heteronormative practices. Further, there are also some implicitly non-heteronormative practices and discourses (including jokes) around mountain sports, such as the act of crack climbing (inserting one's fingers or fist into natural cracks in the rock), declarations of love for other men (see, e.g. Twight, 2001), and sharing of body heat in order to succeed on a climb. It should also be noted that although Caldwell refers to El Capitan as his "mistress," the noun is masculine in Spanish. Indeed, mountain nomenclature often tends towards (white settler) masculine grandiosity, such as in the renaming of Chomolungma (roughly Mother Goddess of the Earth in native Tibetan) into Everest after the Surveyor-General of India, renaming Denali (The High One in native Tanana Athabaskan) as Mount McKinley after Republican presidential candidate William McKinley, and renaming the native Navajo tribe's Dook'o'oosłííd (the summit which never melts) mountains north of Flagstaff, Arizona after male settler colonialists.

The authors of the *Ecosex Manifesto*, Elizabeth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle, have further elaborated on the concept of ecosexuality elsewhere. They claim that it is "a new sexual identity, an environmental activist strategy, and an expanded concept of what sex is (and can be) in our culture," and they state that ecosexuality can incorporate "dangerous" practices such as "climbing Mount Everest" (2016, pp. 313, 320). To be clear, I do not claim that male mountain athletes would routinely self-identify as ecosexuals (they do not), but I do ask whether there exists besides the seemingly requisite "masculine

heteronormativity" of men "[l]oving Nature" (Morton, 2010, p. 279), also another, rarely discussed (and arguably rare) facet of possible male responses to nature that may be relevant in some cases while not so in others.

Crucially, the very existence of the link between being able to love nature and finding that love in the mountains, points to another rare discussion, namely that of the assumption of the fit and healthy body being a prerequisite for loving mountain nature. This is evident in how McCarthy frames mountaineers' embodied relationships to the mountains they climb, and the "physicality" required to achieve an ecologically minded relationship to mountain nature (2008b, p. 170). This view is criticized by Elizabeth A. Wheeler who asserts that the unspoken demand of a fit, able body, means that "environmental consciousness depends on bodily ability" and is thus implicitly ableist (2013, p. 556). Sarah Jaquette Ray (2017) has assigned a similar critique towards outdoor recreation in general.

Unquestionably, an able and in most cases exceedingly fit body is a central theme in all of the research articles here. Its centrality is similar to the categories of male and masculine. Similarly, able-bodiedness seems to have a tendency to go unnoticed and uncategorized because an able body is taken for granted. Further, though nonprofessional mountain athletes as the subjects of my research articles are generally not in possession of such extremely fit bodies, they do have able bodies that enable them to enjoy the mountains in vastly different ways than individuals with disabilities.

A fit and able "gendered sporting body" is also in fact central to non-elite male mountain sports practitioners (Thorpe, 2010, p. 179), and Marcos Mendoza argues that an "alpine masculine subject" that displays a "robust physicality" not afraid "to engage with the difficulties and dangers of nature" contributes to establishing "heroic narratives" that enable alpinist men to not only perform superbly in the mountains but also to portray themselves as the leading conservationists of fragile mountain nature (2018, p. 1). Mendoza's study concerns mountain recreation professionals and volunteers, and he further claims that when conservation money and masculinity meet, such as in ecotourism professionals, "[a]lpine men" can acquire "a powerful symbolic position … because of their role in fostering capital accumulation through the stewardship of consumption" that ends up, through "[c]ontrolling this environment [creating] spaces of gendered privilege" (2018, p. 4). Crucially for the current discussion, he also claims that "[a]lpinist culture rhetorically embraces an egalitarian ethos that rejects gender, racial, class, national or age exclusions" but in reality ends up (further) privileging "white men" (2018, p. 11).

As I argue in Section 2.1 and in Article 4 here, risk tolerance is a central facet of engaging in mountain sports, and Mendoza's research is pertinent also in this regard. He makes visible the implicit assumptions between low risk tolerance, low fitness, and low masculine status on the one hand, and high risk tolerance, high fitness, and high masculine status on the other (Mendoza, 2018). The connections between the masculinities of mountain sportsmen, their (at least seeming) comfort in risky situations, the psychology attached to risk tolerance,

and how issues such as individuals' troubled, even traumatized pasts may affect how and why they go to the mountains, is the final consideration of this discussion.

According to psychological research by Erik Monasterio et al., participants in adventurous and dangerous sports "exhibit significant temperament and character differences" compared to "a normative population sample" (2014, p. 218). It may be interesting to note that although a fit and able body is seen as a prerequisite for enjoying mountain sports (see above), there is seemingly no corresponding demand for a healthy mind. Articles 3 and 4 discuss men's psychological issues extensively, and Alex Honnold's "strange brain" is discussed in a somewhat admiring tone in an article that speculates on how he is able mentally to do such dangerous things as difficult ropeless[27] climbing (MacKinnon, 2016). It seems likely that there are "protective" factors or mitigating circumstances involved in portraying certain mental abnormalities when they are exhibited by an athletically successful person, and in Honnold's case an athletically successful white male athlete. Importantly in relation to practicing sports in nature, participants in mountain sports also often describe their motivations for engaging in risky activities as gratifying due to experiencing feelings of "connectedness to nature and respect for the natural environment" (Monasterio, 2007). In fact, Brymer and Gray refer to extreme sports athletes' practices as a "dance," a "fluid and responsive interplay between the extreme sport participant and nature" as opposed to notions of conquest (2009, p. 3), and in so doing they juxtapose the veteran and novice views on how and why dangerous outdoor sports are practiced.

> The criticism that extreme sports participants are out to conquer the natural world may be more a reflection of how a naïve non-participant of extreme sports or even a novice practitioner understands the relationship as opposed to an inherent element of the extreme sport experience[28].

Germane to the previous discussion, their analysis also implicitly relies on a fit and able body that is able to experience this seemingly more refined relationship with nature.

It may seem counterintuitive that practitioners describe their experiences as so profoundly rewarding due to feeling so connected to nature, while their actions in reality often cause damage to the environment. However I argue that this is a central human dilemma that is not limited to mountain athletes. Most people probably realize that simply being alive negatively affects the environment, but as William Cronon observes, while suicide may present itself to an individual as a logical solution, it is hardly a practical tool to try to engage large numbers of people with environmental issues (1995). So, the irony of

[27] To clarify common misconceptions in mainstream media on climbing nomenclature: *Free climbing* means climbing without weighting the rope or any other protection such as bolts in the rock, but *solo climbing* can be practiced with or without a rope and with or without weighting protection, and *free solo climbing* (often also referred to as *ropeless climbing*)—climbing both without a rope and without weighting any other protection—is what Honnold is most famous for.

[28] (Brymer & Gray, 2009, p. 3)

declaring a love of nature while simultaneously participating in its demise, should be familiar to us all. This irony can be well conceptualized through Timothy Morton's notion of dark ecology (Morton, 2016). The irony in Morton's concept of dark ecology may be best expressed by quoting him at length:

> There you are, turning the ignition of your car. And it creeps up on you. You are a member of a massively distributed thing. This thing is called species. Yet the difference between the weirdness of my ignition key twist and the weirdness of being a member of the human species is itself weird. Every time I start my car or steam engine I don't mean to harm Earth, let alone cause the Sixth Mass Extinction Event in the four-and-a-half billion-year history of life on this planet. (Disturbingly, the most severe extinction so far in Earth history, the End-Permian Extinction, was very likely caused by global warming.) Furthermore, I'm not harming Earth! My key turning is statistically meaningless. In an individual sense this turn isn't weird at all. But go up a level and something very strange happens. When I scale up these actions to include billions of key turnings and billions of coal shovelings, harm to Earth is precisely what is happening. I am responsible as a member of this species for the Anthropocene[29].

Similarly, it is unlikely that most mountain athletes when climbing, running, or skiing in the mountains, routinely think of the negative effect they are having[30] and, furthermore, any individual action they take is statistically meaningless. However, harm is nevertheless being done. Nicole Seymour's discussion on this may further illuminate the irony here. She discusses (referring to research done by environmental sociologist Mark Stoddart) how skiers "are neither stupid nor unaware" in relation to their environmental impact but "actively grappling with their own behavior" (Seymour, 2018, p. 63). Similar ironies have been brought up, for example, by Simon Estok when discussing ecocritics who, of all people, should probably be aware of the ironies inherent in doing environmental research and traveling to tell other people about it: "… even ecocritics like me don't seem to hesitate flying anywhere anytime if someone else is footing the bill" (2017, p. 4). To sum up, mountain athletes, as well as ecocritics and Global North residents in general, indeed do damage the environment but they are not, to use Seymour's expression, entirely "free, individual agents" (2018, p. 63) but rather part of a complex, irony-laden network of human actors entangled in a spiral of variously negative actions.

Central to male mountain sports practitioners, and especially to representations of them, is also the persistent emergence of participants experiencing all or some of the following issues: trauma, depression, self-destructiveness, suicidal thoughts and actions, and substance abuse. This is the second major discovery made during this research process. To my knowledge, statistical data is yet lacking to establish how frequent these experiences are among non-elite participants (and I have not accrued quantitative data on representations of these issues among elite athletes, either) but some qualitative (arguably, anecdotal) research exists into a non-elite male mountain athlete's trauma experience in psychologist Laura Brown's work (2008, pp. 131–151).

[29] (Morton, 2016, p. 8)
[30] Though this certainly has frequently been in my mind.

Brown discusses trauma specifically as it relates to gender and sex. She claims that "masculinity as a narrow social construct penalizes those men who stray from its boundaries by labelling them weak, nerdy, or negatively feminine" (2008, p. 133), and this exposes men to trauma differently from how women are exposed to it.

As for the representation of professional male mountain athletes, there is a widespread and recurring discourse that depicts highly successful male athletes such as mountain and ultrarunners Timothy Olson (the primary case study of article 3) (Olson T. , 2012), Rob Krar (Shannon N. G., 2014) and Jim Walmsley (Vigneron, 2018) as victims of depression. Kilian Jornet (see Article 2 for more) in his latest film (Montaz-Rosset & Serra, 2018) has openly discussed his struggles after the trauma of losing his partner, Stéphane Brosse, while skimountainering together, the ensuing alcohol abuse, self-destructive and suicidal behavior, and ultimately, redemption from healing in the mountains. Interestingly as related to the relationship between elite and non-elite mountain athletes, he admits also to feeling "dirty" due to having to publicly practice his sport and live out his life, even amidst personal loss, under public scrutiny (Montaz-Rosset & Serra, 2018). Similarly to Jornet, Tommy Caldwell, whose memoir *The Push* (2017) is discussed in Article 4, also seeks healing from trauma in the mountains and under public scrutiny.

Sigmund Freud has discussed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* the struggle between two drives, *Eros* (representing, among other things, life, love, and pleasure) and *Thanatos* (representing, for example, death and destruction) (Caruth, 2013; Freud, 2010). The death drive, as discussed by Freud, can arguably be seen in force in many extreme climbing and mountaineering narratives, illustrating the prevalence of this discourse, especially as the examples gathered here represent merely the proverbial top of the iceberg. For example, American extreme alpinist Mark Twight has described his dangerous climbing not as suicidal but "as a tool to forestall suicide rather than a method of achieving it" (2001, p. 51). The sentiment was also picked up by Alex Honnold who sees his dangerous free solo climbing as a means to of coping psychologically with the fragility of a romantic relationship (Honnold, 2015). Further, legendary American mountaineer Jonathan Waterman was notorious for his extreme relationship with both risk and extreme mountain nature. He reported being "disappointed by survival [in the mountains]: 'Living through it meant that nature wasn't as raw as everybody wanted to believe it was" (Wejchert, 2015, p. 88). To end on a poignant note that may relate to the previous examples (further study in this area would be needed to better establish the implicit link), another American extreme alpinist Steve House has offered "self-loathing" as the primary motivation for his dangerous climbing (House & Johnston, 2014, p. 383) and discussed healing from trauma through practicing mountains sports (House, 2019). Such cases show that the discourse of troubled masculinities extends beyond the representations discussed in Article 4, and into mountain sports practitioners.

The next section develops the discussion from describing mountain sportsmen to the relevant theories used in this dissertation for theoretical

contextualization. It begins with critical gender and sports studies where some of the themes touched upon in this chapter are fleshed out more fully, then moves on to a discussion of ecological masculinities and the theoretical underpinnings necessary to further contextualize the research articles gathered here, and ends with a discussion on trauma and gender, the context for which was here briefly outlined.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework relevant to my thesis. I see this theoretical framework as consisting of three specific strands of theory. First, critical gender and sports studies are vital in critically examining the practices of male mountain athletes and provide the lens through which I view men, masculinities, and sports. This is the longest theoretical discussion of my dissertation (Section 3.1) for two reasons. Firstly, it amalgamates both gender and sport into one discussion, and secondly, it is the overarching discussion, along with the environment and trauma, that frames the entire research project. I chose the amalgamation of gender and sport due to my specific research focus that considers them inseparable from each other, unlike research that would focus only on one of the two aspects. Since the research articles gathered here also consider branding and the commercial aspects of professional mountain sports athletes, they are also briefly discussed in this section.

The second strand of theory, the environmental humanities, is an umbrella term for ecocriticism in general. Its established subdiscipline of ecofeminism, and its derivatives ecological masculinities and material ecocriticisms, form the second major theoretical viewpoint of my thesis. I draw especially on materially informed ecofeminisms in formulating my view of ecological masculinities, and this discussion takes place in Section 3.2.

Finally, Section 3.3 discusses the third strand of theory, namely the intersection of trauma, nature, and gender. This section is shorter because gender and nature have already been extensively theorized in Sections 3.1 and 3.2. However, the specifics of gendered trauma in nature have been crucial in generating my research findings on the importance of trauma and individuals' troubled pasts in formulating their practices in nature as well as their responses to trauma, and therefore including this theoretical discussion here is important.

As with the previous section, the discussion between sport, gender, and nature overlaps between the sections, but I hope that the separation into these three strands of theory guides the reader. Throughout, my analysis of my primary research materials relies on a specific reading of these three strands of theory, each of which is in turn influenced by three perspectives. First, I view

men and masculinities through a critical lens that pays attention to both gender equity and the destruction of the environment associated with hegemonic masculinities, and I have a similarly critical view of sports as powerful markers of identity. Second, my theoretical understanding of environmental issues is materialist-discursive, meaning that although I do acknowledge the importance of discursive representations of nature, men, and masculinities, they cannot in my view be interpreted in isolation from matter and bodies. Third, my understanding of trauma theory is in accordance with the contemporary understanding of trauma as simultaneously both specific and pluralized, an understanding to which especially Article 4 of this dissertation has further contributed.

3.1 Critical gender and sports studies

This section consists of two large fields: critical gender studies—mainly critical studies on men and masculinities in this specific context—and critical sports studies. The reason that these large entities are brought together here is that they are inextricably linked in my materials. All of the articles discuss specifically sporting masculinities, and it is therefore necessary to discuss them together here. Gender studies as a broad field originated and developed in women's studies and feminist theory, especially in second and early third wave feminism (e.g., de Beauvoir, 2011; Butler, J., 1999; Mulvey, 1975; Spivak, 2003) that analyzed women's oppression by men and advocated political and cultural change and gender equity. Critical studies on men and masculinities is a (pro)feminist successive field that initiated a systematic study of men and masculinities specifically in order to analyze gender inequities. Due to the delimitations of the study, this dissertation foregrounds critical studies on men and masculinities and does not engage in an extensive discussion on gender studies in general.

This section proceeds as follows: I briefly outline *gender* and the contested words *men* and *masculinities*, including toxic masculinities (Kupers, 2005), and then discuss the delimitations of how sports studies theory is utilized in this dissertation. I then follow with a discussion on the central concepts of critical studies on men and masculinities such as hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), inclusive masculinity (Anderson, 2005), protest masculinity (Broude, 1990; Connell, 2005), and hybrid masculinity (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Towards the end of the section, I segue to the discussion in Section 3.2 on ecological masculinities and material ecofeminisms via the concept of gender performativity (Butler J., 1999) by looking at it through a material feminist lens.

Masculinities are culturally constructed, and are most usefully seen as plural instead of a single, monolithic masculinity. Since Judith Butler's foundational work and her widely accepted notion of gender and also sex as social constructions (Butler J., 1993; 1999), gender and sex have collapsed together much the same way as men and masculinities have. That is to say it has become increasingly difficult to discuss one without the other, and especially so within

the field of critical studies on men and masculinities. This has led to some confusion as to who or what exactly should be the subject of critical stud men, or masculinities[31] (Hultman & Pulé, 2018). However, the notion that gender is a social construct and sex is a (mostly) biological category remains a useful heuristic. As for men and masculinities, it is safe to say that men do exist in the material world as one of several (Ainsworth, 2015) biological sexes, but Jeff Hearn, for example, has criticized most usages of masculinity, especially in singular, as both overly simplistic and imprecise. Hearn claims that "[i]t cannot be assumed *a priori* that masculinity/masculinities exist" but that the concept is often an ideological reproduction of heteronormativity (1996, p. 214). Stephen M. Whitehead also notes that"[a]t the level of, for example, biology, the brain or genetics, masculinity does not exist" (2006, p. 34). I consider Hearn's and Whitehead's critical inquiries useful, but ultimately I revert to the position that in order to critically discuss both the social discourses that produce representations of, in this context, specifically men, and the material repercussions of often toxic masculinities overwhelmingly embodied in men's bodies, the concept of masculinity is ultimately useful if it is recognized as plural (Hultman & Pulé, 2018; MacGregor & Seymour, 2017), a stance that Hearn acknowledges as an "advance" in critical studies on men and masculinities (1996, p. 213).

The material repercussions of toxic masculinities, defined by Terry A. Kupers as the "socially destructive" forms of hegemonic masculinity, namely, "misogyny, homophobia, greed, and violent domination" (2005, p. 716), are inextricably linked to men's outdoor sporting activities, seeing that they often cause at least some environmental damage. This happens regardless of whether these individual men embody the negative, toxic, elements of masculinity or identify as profeminist environmentalists. For instance Jillian Rickly (2012) places climbing activities as part of "petroculture" (Shannon, et al., 2011, p. 323) due to climbers' reliance on "petroleum-based synthetics" in their choice of gear and apparel (Rickly, p. 10). Mountain sports are obviously not the only form of sports that rely on fossil fuels to generate profit for the manufacturers of athletic gear, and the entanglement of capitalist interests and representations of sporting masculinities is a constant theme in the research articles gathered here. Further, the way outdoor sports companies attempt to brand themselves and the athletes they sponsor in certain ways (Alexander S. M., 2003; Miloch, 2010) runs continuously through the dissertation.

Contemporary sports and politics are in many respects intertwined and equity issues are frequently under debate. Although many sports brands seem to steer clear of any political controversy, some, especially in the United States, have also been involved with various issues often deemed bipartisan, controversial, or part of identity politics. The protests, mainly among African-American players in the NFL, of kneeling during the National Anthem to protest racism (and, President Trump), is a situation in which the NFL found itself involuntarily but,

[31] To clarify briefly, they both should be studied critically but it is useful to make a conceptual break between the two in order to delimit the discussion.

for example, the NBA which relies heavily on African-American viewership and players (Luoto, 2019), has taken a deliberately anti-racist stand, as has European (association[32]) football with its "Say no to racism" campaign[33] (UEFA, 2016). Recently re-emerged Black Lives Matter protests after the death of George Floyd in the hands of the police in Minneapolis, Minnesota have also reached widely into professional mainstream sports such as tennis, football[34], and basketball (CNN, 2020). Interestingly, the NBA also supported LGBTIQA+[35] rights in the United States by removing their All Stars game away from Charlotte, North Carolina because it passed discriminating legislature (Luoto, 2019). Similarly, large outdoor sports brands such as Patagonia and The North Face influenced the removal of the industry's largest business gathering, the Outdoor Retailer show, away from Salt Lake City, Utah, due to anti-environmentalist legislation over public land usage (McCombs, 2017). These positionings, seeing that they come entirely from profit-based businesses, are interesting in the context of this research, as they may signal changing attitudes in society at large. Otherwise the businesses would likely not be taking the financial risk[36].

Pertinent to the discussion on the relation between branding, sports, identity, and masculinities, is the notion of hegemony and how sports uphold certain forms of it. John Storey has concisely and usefully defined it as follows: "[h]egemony involves a specific kind of consensus: a social group seeks to present its own particular interests as the general interests of the society as a whole" (2006, p. 63). In relation to what is considered hegemonic, Susan M. Alexander has discussed how commercially produced representations of fit and athletic men contribute to the creation of a "branded masculinity" (2003, p. 551), and Kimberly S. Miloch has shown how branding contributes to a decoupling of the relations between actual needs on the one hand and desired products and branded identities on the other (2010). Storey has also discussed the relations between identities and consumption, and states that an individual's "[s]ocial identity becomes a question of what we consume rather than what we produce" (2006, p. 63). Thus masculinities, consumption, branding, hegemony, and sports are all interconnected.

Sports studies as a field is vast and includes research from such diverse fields and starting points as sports medicine and performance physiology, sports sociology and, in the case of my research, critical humanities studies on sports as a cultural phenomenon that constructs both culture at large and the individuals

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[32] When referring to *football*, I mean specifically European football, often referred to as a*ssociation* football or *soccer* in the United States.
[33] It should be noted that the international football's governing body FIFA originally disbanded the campaign in 2016 (Associated Press, 2016).
[34] Although football's English Premier League initially supported the BlackLives Matter movement, they later rebranded their own anti-racism campaign in less overtly political terms as "No room for racism" (The Premier League, 2020).
[35] Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual, and other.
[36] See, for example, Krahma and Kronenberg (2017) for a discussion on how businesses such as Patagonia may in fact benefit financially from positioning themselves so as to be seen as sustainable and ethical.

who partake in sports. From a historical perspective Roger Horrocks has discussed how representations of a disciplined "male body" contributed in the nineteenth century to capitalist ideology through correlating the male work force's ability for "team-work" in service of the nation, and especially the "*white*" male body's ability on the sports pitch (1994, p. 150, emphasis in original). Further, Michael Messner has worked on the relations between gender and sports, and he claims that men "created modern sport as an institution that affirms the categorical superiority of male bodies over female bodies, as well as men's centrality in public life" and, importantly, in relation to class and ethnicity, that there is "a structured channeling of disproportionate numbers of men of subordinate social classes and racial/ethnic groups into the more risky and violent sports". (2005, pp. 314, 317). This, however, means specifically the more traditional team sports and is not necessarily directly applicable to alternative sports such as the mountain sports discussed here. As Belinda Wheaton and Alan Tomlinson suggest, in alternative sports gender identities are not as simple and divided as in mainstream sports (1998). However, despite these reservations, Niklas Vainio (2003) has claimed that images of mountain masculinity may uphold a master identity of masculinity over nature and women (Plumwood, 1993), so the relation between alternative and mainstream sports is not simple either.

Further, Lindsey J. Meân discusses the importance of media in constructing sport's cultural significance, and she claims that this contributes to "sport remain[ing] a powerful site in the re/production of the traditional, hegemonic gender order" (2010, p. 67). Luke Winslow has also shown how attributes such as "courage, toughness, and physical strength" that some sports require of their participants result in those sports, and their participants, being seen as more masculine than other sports and their participants (2009, p. 94). Bryan E. Denham and Andrea Duke contribute further to this discussion between gender, sport, and hegemony, by showing how "mediated sport texts tend to reproduce dominant conceptions of masculinity, idealizing independence, physical strength, emotional stoicism, strict heterosexuality, and the capacity to overcome adversity and physical pain" (110), thereby creating a "masculinity grounded in strength and stamina" (2010, pp. 110, 111). This leads to "masculine" sports being thought of as including "danger, violence, speed, and endurance", while women athletes and their sports are "expected to be aesthetically pleasing" (Denham & Duke, 2010, p. 111). These cultural notions of sports as gendered practices can partially explain the masculinization of mountain sports and the (relative) exclusion of women, non-heterosexual men, disabled persons, and other minorities in mountain sports. I next move on to a more specific discussion on the notion of hegemonic masculinity, especially as it relates to sports by enabling exclusionary practices, starting with a brief historical overview.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was originally introduced in the 1980s, partly as a critique of the then prevalent sex-role theory (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1987) and more widely disseminated in R.W. Connell's *Masculinities* (2005). In *Masculinities*, Connell identifies both the state and

capitalism as masculine ideological structures which uphold hegemonic masculinity and exercise control over both women and those men who do not conform to its requirements. To arrive at hegemony, Connell used Gramsci's formulation of it as both "ethico-political," "economic," and necessarily "exercised by the leading group" (Gramsci, 2000, pp. 211–212), and identified this leading group as those men who embody hegemonic masculinity. Since hegemonic masculinity is an ideological representation of masculinity that is directly beneficial only to a select minority of men and not something that actually corresponds with reality for the majority of men (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003), it effectively functions as a large-scale system of oppression that encompasses the vast majority of the planet's human population as well as oppressing the nonhuman.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has since been updated by Connell and James Messerschmidt (2005) to answer to the critique it has received. This elaboration, among other things, rejects Bourdieu's (2001) explanation of the reasons behind masculine domination out of his own habitus framework (since the reproductive qualities of field and habitus arguably presuppose that women are implicated in their own oppression, they may be seen as problematic concepts within critical studies on men and masculinities). Connell and Messerschmidt also take into account recent developments in sports sociology where the role of sports in producing hegemonic masculinity has been recognized. They acknowledge the well-established importance that sports have to play in the production of hegemonic masculinities. This was also noted previously by Andrew Parker who offered a Marxist approach, combined with "sports feminism" (1996, pp. 129–131), to deconstruct some of the power structures of hegemonic masculinity, as well as by Chris Haywood and Mairtin Mac an Ghaill who have explored the possibility for sports to represent a form of "middle-class protest masculinity" (2003, p. 68), and by Messner who, citing earlier research, acknowledges the possibility that in alternative sports gender is not as simple and divided as in mainstream sports yet suggests that "extreme sports" in fact work as a kind of a "backlash by white males" who see their dominance as under threat (Messner, 2005, pp. 314–319).

While the role of sports in producing hegemony is acknowledged, its actual function in producing hegemony is unclear and shifting. Positioning sports in relation to hegemonic masculinity is therefore conceptually problematic, as it seems to work in unison with the shifting nature of hegemony itself which, as Connell and Messerschmidt argue, constantly evolves through always conforming to current cultural trends to remain in a position of hegemony (2005). The problem that presents itself is that both sports and hegemony are thus simply assigned certain roles within the structure, and so work essentially as naturalized, almost atavistic, constituents that always necessarily serve to reproduce male hegemony. As discussed below in reference to ecomasculine theory, environmentally inclined masculinities are seen as less masculine by the malestream than environmentally oblivious masculinities. As such, their ontological starting position is implicitly already in a state of hybridity, on what

could be described as a sliding scale between hardness and softness. Such hybridity may have either positive or negative repercussions for gender equality. If hybrid masculinities consist of "identity projects" that appropriate aspects of various marginalized "Others," as Tristan Bridges and C.J. Pascoe claim, and thus both "reproduce" gender inequalities and "obscure this process" (2014, pp. 246–247), the repercussions certainly are negative. Bridges and Pascoe nevertheless recognize that hybridity has "incredible potential for change," and that this potential, if it could be recognized and channeled towards not just "shifts" but instead "challenges" to "systems of power and inequality," has great transformative promise (2014, p. 256). In this regard, sports could play either an emancipatory or oppressive role.

Some of the problematics of sporting masculinities can be observed in Eric Anderson's concept of inclusive masculinity. Inclusive masculinity, first introduced in 2005, explicitly contrasts itself with hegemonic or, to use Eric Anderson's term, "*orthodox*" masculinity (Anderson 2005, pp. 337–338, emphasis in original). Much of Anderson's research on inclusive masculinities has taken place in a sporting context, and it therefore opens up possibilities for the research of sporting masculinities in wider contexts also. Its potential in this regard, however, is somewhat offset by its optimistic presupposing of a non-homophobic context in order for it to function, a context which is arguably yet to gain significant enough traction within sports, despite recent research especially in popular team sports in the Anglophone world suggesting that this may be changing (Magrath, Cleland, & Anderson, 2020).

On the surface, inclusive masculinity can be seen as an antithesis to hegemonic masculinity. This is largely because of its inherent optimism that challenges the originally somewhat rigid and deterministic structure of hegemonic masculinity by claiming the emergence of a new, socially liberated and non-homophobic masculinity (Anderson & McGuire, 2010). However, it is also possible to see inclusive masculinity as a direct competitor of hegemonic masculinity, one that is not a "subordinate form of masculinity" but a new "institutionalized" masculinity that in certain circumstances replaces hegemonic masculinity at the top of the masculinities "pyramid" (Anderson 2005, 348). Does this mean that inclusive masculinity is to be seen as part of the deterministic cycle of reproducing hegemonic masculinities that always conform to their surroundings? Possibly, at least according to Anderson who claims that it does affect the ways in which "masculinity is construed and valued" (Anderson 2005, p. 353), and thus enables it to become "the [new] hegemonic form" (Anderson, 2008, p. 614).

Inclusive masculinity theory further posits that hegemonic masculinity is valid only "in periods of high homophobia" but that, during specific contexts in specific eras and social settings, "two archetypes" of masculinity are observable (Anderson and McGuire 2010, p. 251). This multiplication of masculinities serves to strip hegemonic masculinity not necessarily of its hegemony but that particular hegemony's dominating qualities. Anderson and McGuire thus suggest that whenever there is more than one, seemingly dominant masculinity,

it leads not to a "stratified", in Connell's terms, but a "horizontal alignment" which is then neither dominant nor hegemonic in the sense that Connell uses the term. Inclusive masculinity theory further posits that men are thus "free to choose" which kind of masculinity they wish to align themselves with, "without undue cultural pull" (Anderson and McGuire 2010, p. 251). Such freedom, however, is most easily available to males who already exhibit traits congruent with privileged masculinities and can rely on a non-homophobic and enlightened environment (Morris & Anderson, 2015).

Inclusive masculinity theory has been criticized from a variety of vantage points. Rachel O'Neill, for example, while explicitly neglecting to engage in a discussion on the validity of Anderson's empirical data, criticizes the concept based on its "political underpinnings and effects" (2014, p. 2). Specifically, she finds problematic Anderson's failure to acknowledge that men, regardless of their seemingly progressive and equitable attitudes, are in actuality "implicated" in "the remaking of gender and sexual inequality in new and ever more insidious forms" (2014, p. 16). She also criticizes Anderson for a "superficial analysis," for paying too much attention to the outward appearance of men instead of their actual practices (2014, p. 15). Sam de Boise (2014) also criticizes Anderson based on the political ramifications of his theory. In fact, de Boise considers Anderson's concept to be "redundant at best and dangerous at worst" (2014, p. 2) and indicates that, as noted above, the inclusivity that Anderson proclaims is, in fact, inclusive only to "some white, gay, men, and boys" who therefore, through their (relatively) privileged position, participate in the reproduction of "hegemonic configurations of power and the hybridization of existing hegemonic practices" (2014, p. 17). Pertinent to a discussion on the political usefulness of inclusive masculinity is also the larger question of whether inclusion is always desirable. Inclusion as a word with mainly positive connotations may seem inherently advantageous, but it is worth asking the critical question whether, for example, climate change skeptic or racist masculinities should be included in conversations around change, or whether blocking actions would in fact be more useful.

While both O'Neill and de Boise's criticisms of inclusive masculinity are often pertinent, what is perhaps the most interesting part of the criticism in the current context is that de Boise also refutes Anderson's observations regarding increased "physical intimacy, tactility, and display of emotion" among male athletes in mainstream sports, noting that especially mainstream sports such as football have historically been sites "where 'masculinity' is queered" (2014, p. 13–14). However, as Melissa Lafrance and Geneviève Rail note, there are limits to the usefulness of queering masculinities when they take place within capital-driven mainstream sports. They state that "subversion-through-consumption" is mostly impractical, as "positing that subversive potential can be realized through consumptive patterns is problematic, not least because consumptive patterns rely on "male/heteronormative/white supremacist capitalist market forces" (2001, pp. 37, 47). Therefore there are limits to what kinds of protest may be fruitful and who undertakes protest actions. The notion specifically of protest

masculinity, often evoked in conjunction with negative associations for those who do not benefit from hegemonic masculinity, is commonly associated with Connell's analysis of it in *Masculinities* (2005), and I next discuss protest masculinity, a core concept especially in Article 3, in more detail.

Connell introduces the concept of hegemonic masculinity in *Masculinities* (2005) in conjunction with her life-history research on various masculinities, including those involved with environmental actions. Connell argues that men in the "radical environmental movement … must be dealing … with demands for the reconstruction of masculinity" (2005, p. 90). However she does not make explicit the connection of environmentally oriented masculinities to her other focus group, which is working-class protest masculinities. That connection is therefore undertheorized when potential forms of environmental or, ecological, masculinities are considered. It is worth noting at this juncture that the concept of protest *femininity* is largely nonexistent in feminist theory (Salovaara, forthcoming), which in the context of this research serves to highlight differences of viewing gendered practices, protest, and the environment.

The definitions of protest masculinity vary, as do interpretations of the term's origins. Connell traces it to Alfred Adler (Connell 2005), though others, such as Gregory Walker (2006), prefer Talcott Parsons as its originator, while Gwen Broude (1990) approaches it from post-Adlerian psychology and neglects Parsons. This discrepancy in agreeing even on the foundations of the term may serve to highlight how it, too, is still undertheorized. All definitions, however, share common notions of protest masculinity involving negative traits and behavioral patterns such as violence, destructiveness, and machismo, all of which result from the men in question having failed to attain a hegemonic masculine position in society. Parsons identified a trajectory towards "compulsive masculinity" in boys with absent fathers and claimed that their interest in sports is due to their craving to be "tough" as a defense mechanism against "a feminine identification"; hence, "being a 'bad boy' becomes a positive goal" for them (1966, pp. 305–306). Broude, however, characterized this compulsiveness as the result not of "defensive strategies" but "simply represent[ing] the upper end of the continuum of male sex-typed behavior" (1990, p. 104) and thus possibly to fit "naturally" to boys "prone to aggression" (1990, p. 120).

Protest masculinity is also inextricably linked to questions of class. Peter Kaufman and Eli Wolff discuss class and alienation in relation to sports, and argue that alienation leads to mainstream sports subjugating athletes, not as a collective "class" but individually, under capitalism, by making them yield to global markets and manufacture (Kaufman & Wolff, 2010). Thus, if "production", as Marx argues, "creates the consumer" (2005, p. 92) then the person who lacks access to production also lacks access to its fruit, the product to be consumed, and thus fails on both levels of the process, which then accelerates their alienation and, potentially, leads to a protest reaction against modern consumer society. If mainstream sports reinforce the capitalist hegemonic order, as Kaufman and Wolff (2010) maintain, then it follows that alternative sports may be seen as offering at least "subtle practices of resistance"—if not as directly subversive

ones—via reflexive participation that may include the athletes questioning "hypermasculine" identities and "sexist discourses and practices" (Thorpe 2010, p. 199). However, the reasons for the growing popularity of alternative, extreme sports are obviously too complicated to be attributed only to alienation which can partly be seen as a corollary of the diminishing opportunities in the Global North of actualizing masculinity in physical labor. The importance of an individual athlete's reflection on their practice in nature may be another contributing factor. Indeed, Gunnar Breivik claims that extreme sports can be seen "as an opposition and protest against certain aspects of modern societies" through their appeal to "'l'homme sauvage'" who feels discontentment towards modern society's "security and full control" (2010, pp. 260, 263).

Connell originally noted that protest masculinity can be both "frenzied and showy" and "compatible with respect and attention to women" at the same time (2005, pp. 110, 112). This is arguably the case at least with some mountain athletes as well, as Victoria Robinson (2008) in her study on male rock climbers has suggested. She shows how, through participation in an extreme sport, male athletes can share in hypermasculine behavior such as competitiveness and climbing "riskier routes" than others (2008, p. 44). Robinson claims however that such behavior does not exclude the possibility of the male climbers engaging in non-hierarchical dyadic relationships with their partners. Rather, she argues, certain masculine practices in the mountains may in fact offer the possibility to evade such traditionally masculine traits as violence and aggression (2008). This is achieved through what can best be described as a process of sublimation (Freud, 2005; Gemes, 2009; Nietzsche, 1996), where the climbers can enact a "new macho" style that, while arguably still retaining vestiges of hegemonic masculinity, nevertheless represents "a different kind of hard" that could possibly aid in abating violent and aggressive tendencies through participation in a "surrogate" activity (Robinson 2008, p. 50). In other words, if some masculinities have internalized, negative, behavioral patterns, they can potentially be channeled through an alternative (hegemonic) masculinity into less destructive forms.

Walker's (2006) study on a working-class, workplace protest masculine subculture shows how a group that is exempt from hegemony can offer an effective mode of resistance, both to assumptions of hegemonic masculinity and to the traditionally aggressive behaviors associated with protest masculinity. He argues that through forming a counterculture, marginalized individuals can express "a disciplined protest masculinity" that employs group discipline to guard against unwanted, strictly heteronormative and aggressive behavior, (2006, p. 21) and various types of marginalized groups can then within that context attempt to resist hegemonic masculinity. This is done by a process of exposing the essential insecurity apparent in the hypermasculine pose to decipher whether the man in question is able, in Walker's phrasing, to "back his shit up" with competent action (Walker 2006, p. 12). The reason why such a process is necessary in the context of Walker's workplace study, and relevant in the context of research on mountain sports practitioners, is that the men are employed in

work that is potentially dangerous and therefore need to be able to trust their companions with their lives, a situation not wholly unlike the ones that some mountain athletes voluntarily position themselves in. Indeed Robert Fletcher argues that mountaineers, though certainly often a privileged group, frequently frame their practice as a form of "counterculture" and protest against an "alienating" urban society (2014, pp. 91–92). Further, Peter Mortensen discusses early twentieth century physical culture and outdoor recreation such as rock climbing in Jack London's *Valley of the Moon* as a form of "natural training" that disenchanted individuals undertake in order to combat the perceived "physical degeneration" resulting from an urban lifestyle as well as an expression of a "sustainable relationship to the natural world" (Mortensen, 2018, pp. 165, 160).

Laura Martinez-Garcia makes explicit the link between alternative masculinities and mountain sports in her study on changing masculinities and rock climbing (Martinez-Garcia, 2020, forthcoming). She argues that hegemonic and subordinated masculinities may temporarily change places in the liminal location of Yosemite National Park, with masculinities that are subordinated in an urban context becoming new hegemonic masculinities in the mountains until their protest is appropriated by mainstream hegemonic masculinities (2020, forthcoming). Similarly, and also like Martinez-Garcia partially using Beat generation masculinities as points of reference, Joseph E. Taylor III insists that mountain climbing narratives, apart from contributing to discussions on "how people should interact with nature" also often show how subordinated, non-hegemonic and "[non]hypermasculine" masculinities already in the mid-twentieth century sought the mountains and "tuned in, turned on, and dropped out to commune with nature as an alternative to the 1950s buttoned-down hegemony" (2010, pp. 3, 62, 133). It is important to realize here that although hegemony works on the discursive level and originates in the discourses that govern cultural assumptions, these alternative masculinities are nevertheless deeply embodied in the sense that attempting to realize them leads those men into materially very different living circumstances as well as leads them to concretely risk life and limb, so it is useful to conceive of them not merely as performative acts (Butler, J., 1999) but also as embodied ones.

The next section discusses ecological masculinities and material feminisms, and my understanding of them is that they are, although discursively formed, also materially felt and "done." In *Gender Trouble* (1999) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993) Judith Butler examines the limits of what constitutes bodies and bodily practices and to what extent they are discursively formed and maintained. Crucially, despite her radical collapsing of the sex/gender difference and refuting that the body would be "merely material" (1993, p. 167), Butler also seems to anticipate some of the later criticism aimed at her theory (see, e.g., Bourdieu, 2001), by noting that acknowledging the significance of discourse does not lead to abandoning the body altogether. However, Deboleena Roy criticizes Butler's implicit notion "that the body cannot be known outside of inscription of discourse" as "linguistic idealism" (Roy, 2015, p. 841), and material feminists Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman criticize this perceived "retreat from

materiality" as having had "serious consequences for feminist theory and practice" (2008, p. 3) due to it obfuscating the biological fact that

> [w]omen [and men] *have* bodies; these bodies have pain as well as pleasure. They also have diseases that are subject to medical interventions that may or may not cure those bodies. We need a way to talk about these bodies and the materiality they inhabit. Focusing exclusively on representations, ideology, and discourse excludes lived experience, corporeal practice, and biological substance from consideration. It makes it nearly impossible for feminism to engage with medicine or science in innovative, productive, or affirmative ways[37].

Therefore, I argue that social-constructionist views are usefully augmented by the lens that material feminisms offer. Crucially, in terms of enabling actual political change, material feminisms seem more promising than the "performative magic" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 103) offered by purely discursive gender theory in that empowerment through the latter is likely to be achievable for a very select few, that is, those whose intersectional ontological position is that of the white, educated and middle class (similarly to the concept of inclusive masculinity) whereas material feminisms' focus on the body better enables non-elite engagement. The next section therefore proceeds with further discussion on material feminisms and ecofeminism(s) and commences the discussion on ecological masculinities.

3.2 Ecological masculinities and material ecofeminisms

Ecocriticism, under the wide umbrella term of environmental humanities, is the second central theory of the thesis. Both the recent terms ecological masculinities and ecomasculinity—in the singular or plural[38]—can be approached from an ecocritical point of view, as can material feminisms. I do not offer a broad outline of the development of ecocriticism, but offer as a basic definition of ecocritical practice that of Cheryll Glotfelty in the introduction to her and Harold Fromm's fundamental edited volume on the topic, *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996): "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment … with an earth-centered approach" (1996, p. xv). Since its inception, ecocriticism has broadened to also include texts from outside the literature proper, as well as having its share of criticism, for example, for its implicit white middle class focus in its beginnings (Reed, 2002). Reflecting on the wide range of recent and future ecocriticism, Serpil Oppermann has outlined as the scope of ecocriticism

> cultural and literary studies, science and animal studies, ecophilosophy, environmental ethics and history, environmental justice movement, ecofeminism, animal studies,

[37] (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008, p. 4, emphasis in original)
[38] For reasons of inclusivity and in order to avoid confusion when moving between different researchers' work, I use all the terms, usually based on whose work I draw on in the text.

> sociology and psychology, and globalism studies … race, gender, ethnicity, and identity, … global systems of hegemonic power, operations of imperialist systems of political, economic and cultural domination, oppression of nonhuman animals, and of marginalized sexualities and genders, globalization of social injustice, … queer theory.[39]

The scope of contemporary ecocriticism is thus very broad, and the field can therefore address issues from various vantage points. Before I discuss ecological masculinities in detail, a discussion on material ecofeminism on whose foundational work ecological masculinities build is due.

Ecofeminism or, sometimes "feminist ecocriticism" (Oppermann, 2013, p. 30), is usefully delineated by Karen Warren's seminal "boundary conditions" (1990, p. 139). According to Warren, ecological feminism

> [1] [c]annot promote any thinking or acting that embodies a form of a logic of domination [2] [m]ust be contextualist and arise out of felt experiences [3] [m]ust be structurally pluralistic [4] [s]hould reconceive of ethical theory as in-process and that favors first-person narratives [5] [m]ust be inclusivist, especially of the felt experiences and perspectives of oppressed peoples [6] [s]hould be subjectively "biased," recognizing that no ethical theory is unbiased, and striving to achieve better biases [7] [n]eeds to be attentive to and appreciative of traditionally "feminine" values such as care, love, friendship, and appropriate trust [8] should be interested in receiving of humans in terms of networks of historical and concrete relationships and communities rather than in terms of abstract individualism[40].

Warren also outlines the logic of domination that arises from equating women with nature, a central critical assumption of ecofeminist thought. Responding to Warren, ecofeminist Greta Gaard introduces further contemporary boundary conditions in her discussion on how "queer ecomasculinities," so far an undertheorized concept, may show the way for future ecomasculinities to "stand with" those oppressed instead of participating in their oppression (2017, p. 161). Pertinently to a discussion on outdoor masculinities, Warren asks whether "feminist values" and "gender fluidity" through a recognition of "dominant paradigms of masculinity in wilderness and adventure," affecting negatively "men as well as women" could change outdoor recreation demographics and practices and whether "practices rooted in white, male, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied and youthful positions of privilege" truly could create diversity and "inclusivity" in the outdoors (2018, p. 365). Warren is tentatively optimistic in her own answer to her question, which is promising from an ecological masculinities viewpoint, especially as examples of unequivocally equitable and ecological masculinities were not readily forthcoming in my research materials.

Since Annette Kolodny's *Lay of the Land* (1975) Ecofeminism has focused on discussions on the "patriarchal association of women and nature" (Oppermann, 2015, p. 2). Kolodny's seminal work describes how American literature from the 16th[41] century to the 19th century consistently associated land with femininity and

[39] (Oppermann, 2016, p. 16)
[40] (Warren, 1990, p. 139)
[41] It should be noted that both the words "American" and "literature" are understood broadly here as the early texts—that were often accounts of travel experiences—were not

treated it as an object "in terms of conquest" (Rodi-Risberg, 2010, p. 175). Kolodny discusses how early American pastoral in particular depicted the land as a female that awaits her white European colonizers, to quote Thomas Morton in 1632, to "meete her lover in a Nuptiall bed" (Kolodny, 1975, p. 12). Kolodny also notes that if the land is perceived by its male settlers as too easy and forgiving, they saw its "conquest" as being beneath them but how America's "feminine landscape" when it was threatened by the British became "a rallying cry for patriotism" (1975, p. 26). Due to different historical contexts and experiences between America and Europe, their notions of land diverge, but as A.M. Keith has shown, the juxtaposition of land and femininity has been a constant trope also in European literature at least since Ancient Greece and maintained in narratives such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (2009).

The oppression of women in conjunction with nature (for more, see, for example, Buell, 2005; Lahtinen, 2008; Rodi-Risberg, 2010) is perhaps most advantageously understood by using Val Plumwood's master model. It is surprisingly rarely used in critical studies on men and masculinities, and even more infrequently in critical sports studies, but it does nevertheless offer a useful link to ecofeminism. Plumwood connects hegemonic masculinities and the master/slave relationship to the "domination of the sphere of nature by a white, largely male elite" (1993, p. 23) and thus offers an advantageous starting point for dismantling such oppressive structure(s). Plumwood suggests that locating men and women as being "both nature and culture," what Donna Haraway (2003) referred to as *natureculture*, is crucial in this attempt (Plumwood, 1993, p. 35). Consequently, material feminist views (e.g., Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Bennett, 2010; Oppermann, 2016) that place *both* genders as part of nature and conceive of the human ''not as an abstract force acting on the world, but as fleshy beings who are inseparable from their transcorporeal entanglements within the world" are vital (Alaimo, 2019, p. 239). Serpil Oppermann emphasizes, first, the importance of "retriev[ing] the body from the dimension of discourse" in order to concentrate on "concrete entanglements" of human and nonhuman nature, and Olga Cielęmcka and Cecilia Åsberg further stress the importance of challenging "gendered, racialized, ableist, and heteronormative patterns of mainstream environmentalism" (2019, p. 102).

Material feminisms understand matter as agential. Wendy Wheeler argues that "living organisms are much more than information-carrying mechanistic channels; they are bearers of purposes and readers of meanings" (2014, p. 122), a view on living nonhuman matter that Oppermann refers to as "storied matter," that is, the agential capacity of nonhuman matters, including living organisms but also for example glaciers, to tell humans stories of past times (2016, p. 89). For a radically materialistic view of what is perceived as nonliving (hu)man/nonhuman nature(s), the work on the conceived agency of rock by Jeffrey J. Cohen (2015) is important. Cohen argues that rock, or stone, has an agency of its own, and the reason that it is perceived as a nonliving, non-agential,

necessarily written by individuals who considered themselves "American" in any current sense of the word.

entity, is that humans, living in vastly sped up temporality as compared to the seeming immovability of rock and mountains, lack the capacity to fully understand, for example, the interests and movements of a mountain (Cohen, 2015). Similarly, Aldo Leopold already considered that mountains may have interests of their own that are inconceivable to humans (Leopold, 1989).

It may seem whimsical to assign any quality of "life" to rock, and indeed mountains are not "alive" in any of the agreed upon meanings from a scientific perspective[42]. However, definitions of life and agency are partially linguistic conventions, as can be seen in recent discussions on plant "intelligence" (see, e.g. Hall, 2011). If the notion of mountains being alive seems exceedingly esoteric, recent scientific work on and around Castleton Tower, a famous climbing destination in Utah, has found that the rock tower "taps into the earth's natural vibrations … [and] pulsates at about the rate of a human heartbeat," geologist Jeff Moore, the project's leading scientist saying that "[i]t's sort of alive with this vibrational energy" (Klein J. , 2019). Research assistant and rock climber Nathan Richman describes the project's learning of the tower's movement and voice thus: "It was really interesting to learn that they move like that, but I can't say it was a revelation to learn that the mountains and hills breathe … If you spend enough time there, you can see they are moving things" (Klein J. , 2019). As the recent crumbling of mountain ranges across the world shows, the mountains of the world are moving and reacting to human induced global warming (Bertorello, 2019; Hansen, 2019b), and ecologically minded humans, men and women, are needed to offer concrete, material solutions. I have demonstrated in the research articles gathered here how men's feelings of connectedness to mountains and the haptic pleasures they feel when touching the earth are represented in mountain sports media, and that this connected masculinity could be ecologically construed but I assume that due to the so far depoliticized nature of mountain athletes, such representations were not forthcoming. Consequently, below follows a theory and praxis discussion on ecological masculinities that is particularly concerned with future directions.

Ecological masculinities—or ecomasculinities—theory owes much to Richard Twine who recognized hegemonic masculinity's "dominating and alienated relation to nature" (2001, p. 2). Twine therefore attempted to align masculinities with the ethically viable practices of ecofeminism. Specifically, he focused on how explicitly "ecological politics" and practices can be the way "in which (profeminist) men can subvert, albeit indirectly, hegemonic masculinity and then potentially create new, mutually enriching and non-oppressive conversations between men and nature" (2001, p. 6). Quite presciently, he foresaw that men's increased interest in environmental politics could also produce some unwanted downsides. This could happen by providing men a new, traditionally feminized arena, where they could exercise "male dominance" and thus contribute to the "resurfacing of hegemonic masculinity" (2001, p. 6). To guard against this, (pro)feminist masculinities scholarship should start by

[42] However, indigenous peoples as well as Medieval European traditions, have often ascribed agency and "liveliness" (Cohen, 2015, p. 86) to mountains and rocks (Reinert, 2016).

drawing on previous work in ecofeminism and align itself against misogynist climate change denialism as well as techno-capitalist solutions such as those offered by what Anshelm and Hultman (2014) refer to as ecomodern masculinity.

Besides the obviously anti-environmentalist male climate change deniers who may even refer to themselves as "marginalised, banned and oppressed dissidents" (Anshelm & Hultman, 2014, p. 91), ecomodern masculinity provides an alternative, more sophisticated yet equally problematic male response to environmental crises. Anshelm and Hultman (2014) discuss ecomodern masculinity as a mixture of "toughness" and "appropriate moments of compassion and care" (2014, p. 92) and show how it adapts to the demands of hegemonic masculinity by forming one more potentially new hybrid form of hegemony. Hultman discussed this shifting nature of hegemony also in relation to former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and his attempt at embodying an ecomodern masculinity which is in fact more of "a cover up" than an example of a genuinely ecological masculinity (Hultman, 2013, p. 94). The basic tenets of ecomodernity were announced in the "Ecomodernist Manifesto" (Asafu-Adjaye, et al., 2015). Of the manifesto's 18 original signers 15 were men. It is a techno-capitalist declaration that places the "decoupling" (p. 7) of humanity and nature at its center and, despite vaguely claiming to be critical of "capitalism" (p. 28) nevertheless relies on "private entrepreneurship" and "markets" (p. 30) to arrive at its hubristic goal of "reducing humanity's dependence on nature" (p. 9). Unsurprisingly, the manifesto received severe criticism (see, e.g. Latour, 2015). In essence, the contradiction between both ecomasculinity and ecomodernity is arguably analogous to that between protest masculinity and other alternative masculinities and hegemonic masculinity: the latter attempts to adapt and shift its position in order to stay hegemonic, while the former attempts to resist through subversion.

Recent work on ecological masculinities has sought to address both equity and ecology issues. Stephen M. Whitehead expressed feelings of depression and disturbance when he realized how "men's propensity for cruelty and violence is probably the biggest cause of misery in the world" (2006, p. 36), but ecomasculinities scholarship has also recently assembled research that is seen as potentially transforming destructive patterns. Sherilyn MacGregor and Nicole Seymour (2017) draw attention to foregrounding men as a category and beginning a critical inquiry into possible patterns of change from there, while Martin Hultman and Paul M. Pulé[43] offer concrete steps for a process of "masculine ecologisation" through a self-reflexive praxis of deconstructing privileges and encouraging a change into more "caring" masculinities (2018, pp. 37, 163). Sociologist Bob Pease, who has studied (pro)feminist ethics of care (see, e.g. Pease et al., 2018), has also discussed the problematics of engaging especially nonfeminist men in equity and ecology projects, even though, or perhaps precisely because, men are more implicated than women in the environmental crisis and have larger carbon footprints than women (Pease, 2016). Similarly,

[43] Those interested in the genealogy of ecological masculinities scholarship will perhaps find Pulé's earlier work (2007; 2013) of interest.

Hultman and Pulé particularly draw attention to white, wealthy or middle class Western men and specifically conceptions of "industrial breadwinner masculinities" being more heavily implicated than women in the climate crisis (2018, pp. 2, 40–45). Despite this recognition of problematic masculinities, Hultman and Pulé, drawing on empirical sociological material, are adamant that positive solutions are possible.

Although much of ecological masculinities scholarship has so far come from a sociological viewpoint, Rubén Cenamor and Stefan Brandt's recent (2019) work is significant in that it explicitly focuses on (American) fictional and literary representations of ecological masculinities, much the same way as this research project does. Cenamor and Brandt also address the notion that "ecocriticism and masculinity seem to be irreconcilable opposites," and how much of the recent ecological masculinities discussion has discussed "how men have figured as obstacles for the development and freedom of both women and nature" (Cenamor & Brandt, 2019, p. vii). Further, Brandt pays attention to the "glorification of outdoor activities and sports" as indicators of masculinity (2019, p. 1). Further, he notes how the "[p]enetration" and "symbolic defloration" of wild nature [are] important tropes of American outdoor masculinity (3). He is "hopeful" (24) that changing and pluralistic masculinities may change for the better, and gives literary examples of this changing process, such as the men in Cormac McCarthy's novels. Perceptively, Brandt refers to American outdoor men and masculinities, in Leslie A. Fiedler's poignant phrasing, as "innocently destructive children of nature" (Fiedler, 2003, p. 194), a phrase that could arguably also be used for the male mountain athletes under scrutiny here.

As Cenamor and Brandt discuss American literature specifically, it may be useful to note that there are differences as to how notions such as *wilderness* are understood in American and European contexts (other geographical contexts are beyond the delimitations of the study). William Cronon discusses in particular the American concept of wilderness and the paradoxical notion that humans cannot be present in it (1995). This notion relies, however, on a false dualism that assumes that such absence is even possible, as (hu)man-made encroachments into nature are so all-encompassing that we *always* are part of nature, whether nature wants it or not. In a European context, dense habitation of previously "wild" areas dates back much farther than in (North) America, so the notions of "wild" areas as well as of preserving them are necessarily different. To illustrate, the establishment of national parks to preserve pockets of "wilderness" happened much later in Europe than on the North American continent, and contemporary land use regulations between Europe and America vary considerably. In Europe it is seen as a given that the continent's most famous mountains, such as Mont Blanc, are dotted with infrastructure such as ski lifts and holiday homes, whereas in America designated wilderness areas and national parks are under strict use regulations[44]. Also, there are no European

[44] To offer a personal experience, when doing environmental volunteer work in the Gila Wilderness in New Mexico some years back, our trail crew was banned from using any motorized tools. This is one of many regulations that are still enforced (US Forest Service, 2020) and that also affect how climbing activity in those areas is practiced.

wilderness advocates of similar international stature as American (male) conservationists such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt, in many ways an embodiment of traditional masculinity who added to his environmental and women's suffrage advocacy toxic behavior such as warmongering and racism (Klein C. , 2020; Zinn, 2015).

Brandt's discussion on American literature draws especially on the early phases of ecomasculine scholarship gathered in Mark Allister's anthology *Eco-Man* (2004). In it, John Tallmadge studies James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking* series and discusses how nature is represented there as a "scene of heroic action" for men whose aim may be "meat or discovery, victory or insight" but where nature is perpetually set against the protagonist (Tallmadge, 2004, p. 25). Tallmadge also discusses mountain climbing, which he sees as one potential positive male response to nature; he views mountains as "an arena where manhood could be achieved without violence" (2004, p. 20). It is arguably problematic that nature is here implicitly reduced to an arena where some vague notions of seemingly depoliticized masculinity are to be actualized in. In *Eco-Man*, Scott Slovic also hopes for more attention to be paid to "positive, healthy male attitudes" exhibited in environmental texts (2004, p. 72). The attributes that Slovic draws on in this regard though are again somewhat problematically framed as "special male virtues" that he argues need to be analyzed in hopes of finding in them "exemplary" (2004, p. 74) traits that could be encouraged in forming an ethical ecomasculine praxis. Such praxes, however, do not seem to be very simple nor readily forthcoming, especially as long as they remain uncommitted to gender, class, and race equities. For example, although Arne Naess, an environmental activist, scholar, mountaineer and one of the founders of the Deep Ecology movement, espoused "ecofeminism" in his later work[45] (Naess, 2008, p. 311) and had a generally positive influence on ecological thought, Hultman and Pulé address critically his elite status and myopia towards inequities as well as Deep Ecological philosophy's espousing of "'masculine' ways to commune" with nature (Hultman & Pulé, 2018, p. 115). Ecocritical scholarship has been critical towards the perceived lack of rigorous theory and the implicit whiteness and elitism of Deep Ecology (see, e.g. Goodbody, 2014), but Hultman and Pulé (2018) also see some positive potential in it as long as it could genuinely take on board political inequities in addition to caring for nonhuman nature. Therefore political commitment towards intersectional care is what Hultman and Pulé as well as other ecological masculinities scholars have advocated.

To this end, in considering the kind of ecological masculinities that this scholarship could point to, Greta Gaard urges for forms of masculinities that are "consistent with ecofeminist praxis" because she sees that "[h]egemonic masculinity requires an ecofeminist rethinking" that could potentially challenge the "*anti*-ecological" tendencies that masculinities have been constructed on (Gaard 2014, pp. 225, 226, 231, emphasis in original). To achieve this goal, Gaard asks: "What would it mean to redefine, or reconceive, an ecological masculinity?" and suggests challenging masculine "elite consumption patterns," the

[45] "Deep Ecology for the Twenty-Second Century,"2008.

glorification of physical strength, and men's dietary habits, specifically eating meat (2017, p. 163). Meat eating habits, if not completely omitted, have not been foregrounded either in most ecomasculinities scholarship (mine included), Greta Gaard's work being an exception (see, e.g. Gaard, 2010[46]). As Richard Rogers (2008) and Nacima Ourahmoune et al. (2014) point out, without explicitly making the connection to ecological masculinities, meat eating is one form of conforming to the perceived demands of hegemonic masculinity. Laura Wright affirms that "meat is an essential, primal, and inescapable component of heterosexual masculinity" and thus contributes to heteronormative masculinity and the hegemonic masculinity construction as a whole (2015, p. 109) and, therefore, one of the points of deconstruction in the ecological masculinities project. Lauren Rae Hall (2013) has discussed queer vegetarianism as a potential subversive solution to challenge the norm of meat eating, and Chia-Ju Chang and Iris Ralph (2013) have offered Buddhist-feminist ethics of care as a praxis to extend care beyond the human and into the realm of the nonhuman. Although Hultman and Pulé do not foreground diet, they advocate ecological masculinities to become more inclusive towards the LGBTIQA+ community (2018). Greta Gaard, who has worked on queering ecocriticism at large and recently ecomasculinities specifically (2017), has also initiated a discussion on nonhuman animals and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in conjunction with industrial animal farming and nonhuman animals' reproductive rights and, consequently, gendered ethics of eating. Aptly, the next section discusses trauma, nature, and gender, with an emphasis on human trauma but also paying attention to the role of nonhuman agencies in causing trauma.

3.3 Trauma, nature, and gender

Because nature and gender have already been discussed in this Integrating chapter, this section does not reiterate that discussion but instead concentrates on the last missing piece in the theoretical framework, namely, trauma. Psychological trauma, defined by the American Psychological Association as "an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster" (2019), is frequently discussed in fields ranging from literary studies (Balaev, 2012; Caruth, 2013; Zapf, 2016) to cultural and psychological studies (Brown, 2008). Literary trauma theorists Lucy Bond and Stef Craps note, discussing Theodor Adorno's writing on trauma[47], that "literature and art" though potentially transforming trauma into (merely) an aestheticized viewer or reader experience are nevertheless "media through which we can gain privileged access" to important representations of trauma (Bond & Craps, 2020, p. 48). Further, Michelle Balaev and Hubert Zapf have in their work considered extensively pthe

[46] Gaard also connects interspecies justice with Estok's concept of ecophobia.
[47] Adorno famously stated that "[t]o write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Adorno, 1981).

precise role of the relationship between trauma and nature, especially in an American literary context.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is very pertinent to my discussion on trauma in Article 4. PTSD is defined by the foundational publication in psychiatry, the American Psychiatric Association's current, 5th edition, of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-5*), as "[e]xposure to actual or threatened death" or "serious injury" in terms of "experiencing the traumatic event(s)" or "witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others" (2013, p. 271). Among the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, the *DSM-V* lists "observing threatened or serious injury" or "unnatural death" (p. 274). Further, the *DSM-V* lists "reckless or self-destructive behavior" as possible symptoms of PTSD as well as "persistent, distorted cognitions about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event(s) that lead the individual to blame himself/herself or others" and related feelings of "guilt, or shame" (p. 272). All of these criteria and symptoms became relevant in studying the materials for Article 4.

When initiating the dissertation project, I had not intended to write about trauma, as I had not seen it as central to my general research question of representations of masculinities and nature in mountain sports texts. However quite quickly I started paying attention to persistently emerging narratives about what I at the time simply and unrigorously referred to as "the dark side[48]" of mountain sports and their practitioners. I then started noticing the connections of their generally troubled pasts, aspects of alternative or protest masculinity, and trauma, to athletic men's narratives. By "troubled," I refer to emotional distress such as depression, suicidal thoughts, substance abuse, and criminal activity, all of which, depending on the specific context, may either be caused by trauma or lead to experiencing trauma. The context for this was discussed in greater depth in Section 2.2. In Article 3 the concept of trauma had not yet been delineated, and I therefore referred to more generally troubled masculinities and only in Article 4 focused explicitly on the specific aspects of trauma in representations of male mountain athletes.

As discussed in Section 2.1, mountain sports expose their practitioners to situations in which exposure to traumatic events is higher than in most other sports, let alone in everyday activities. This has led to trauma and death becoming frequent tropes in mountain literature as well as contributing to, for example, climbing organizations coordinating support for those who either survive traumatizing events or those who are left behind when their loved ones perish in the mountains. Pertinent especially to professional mountain sports and trauma, Bond and Craps note that contemporary trauma narratives are also "big business" that "informs our leisure and consumer choices" (2020, p. 3). They note the popularity of "dark tourist locations" as an example of the "trauma industry" (2020, p. 3) but travel to sites of deaths in the mountains has at least not yet reached similar volume.

[48] For full disclosure, I was initially inspired by ASLE's (the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) call for abstracts for their 2015 conference titled "Notes from Underground (2014)" with its emphasis on the darker aspects of ecocritical study.

Further, Jonathan Westaway (2013) has discussed climbing deaths via a spatial and geographical analysis that pays attention specifically to the locations of traumatic events, and the American Alpine Club has established a "Climbing Grief Fund" to bolster an "honest relationship with our fragility and mortality" (2019). So, although seeking help after traumatic events has not been a frequent practice especially among male mountain athletes and has been framed as an arguably feminine response to traumatic events (Brown, 2008; Salovaara & Rodi-Risberg, 2019), there does seem to be an awakening within the participant community of the importance of acknowledging effects of trauma.

Mountain sports and trauma are thus intimately linked, and Cathy Caruth's discussion on Freud's pleasure principle is pertinent in this regard. Caruth draws on Freud, who suggests, in Caruth's phrasing, that "life itself began as the drive to death" (p. 6). Freud implied that life, like humans, through being born from matter seeks to return to it in death (Freud, 2010), an idea that has not yet been exhaustively discussed in material feminisms. As with mountain sports, war, with its associations of danger and accomplishment as well as territorial conquest and devastation of nature, has traditionally been a site where masculinities are built (Duncanson, 2015). It has also been the site where they are broken, as long-term exposure to life-threatening traumatizing conditions produces males who are severely conflicted and anxious when they are unable to live up to the expectations of the stereotype of the strong male (Duncanson, 2015). The reluctance of men to seek help for their trauma was explained by Brown as stemming from trauma being seen as an implicitly "feminizing event" (2008, p. 44).

Aside from mountain sports and war, environmental catastrophes have also been studied as causes for (male) trauma in nature. For example, Claire Zara and Debra Parkinson's report on the 2009 "Black Saturday" bush fires (173 dead, of whom 100 were men) in Victoria, Australia, which discusses male trauma in the face of an environmental disaster and how that disaster led to relationship violence with men as perpetrators, is pertinent to my discussion in Articles 3 and 4 on male responses to trauma that include extreme sport being used as a coping mechanism by some men (2013). In relation to bush (and forest) fires and other "natural" catastrophes, it is important to note that nature can serve as an agent of traumatization (see Article 4 for more) by exposing humans to potentially traumatic circumstances. Further, the existential threat of catastrophic climate change can lead to *pre*-traumatic [49] stress for individuals "suffering from anticipatory anxiety about environmental devastation" (Bond & Craps, 2020, p. 130).

Trauma and traumatic events in nature thus correlate on some level. Environmental destruction is linked to mental health issues at large, as is testified by the grief-stricken remembrance of glacier Okjökull in Iceland (Hansen, 2019a), as well as the trauma experienced by indigenous Greenlanders in the face of melting ice, and other associated climate crises (McDougall, 2019). This has

[49] For more on the recently emerging concept of pre-traumatic stress, see for example Bond and Craps (2020, pp. 125–131).

obvious consequences for questions of environmental justice, as it is the affluent lifestyles enjoyed (by some) in the Global North that contribute to causing these changes.

Mountain sports and (male) athletes being implicated in causing environmental damage through their practice has been discussed in this dissertation (see, e.g. Section 1), but in the context of trauma it is important to note the gender and ethnicity-specific nature of some forms of trauma. For example Laura Brown conducts a case study of traumatized Chinese-American climber and skier "Zak" (Brown, 2008, pp. 131–151). Brown discusses "Zak's" experiences of "insidious misogyny" and "insidious trauma" in relation to how he has internalized feminine stereotypes attached to his ethnicity, and how this experience has led him to engage in "death-defying activities" in the mountains, thus finally (ironically) "figur[ing] out how to be a real man, huh?" (Brown, 2008, pp. 134–136). Brown discusses this type of ethnicity-specific and gendered trauma and claims that "sexism places an additional burden on men who are trauma survivors by defining much of the range of response as evidence of loss of masculinity" (p. 146). It is noteworthy here that normative male alexithymia, that is, lowered emotional awareness, can mean that "[i]ronically, becoming more emotionally aware and expressive will, for such men, require a violation of gender norms, which in turn can complicate the recovery process" (p. 148).

With this discussion in mind I have drawn in this Integrating chapter as well as in Article 4 on Michelle Balaev's "pluralistic model" (2012, p. 31) of trauma. Balaev's conception of traumatic experience as experienced pluralistically refers to the notion that it is impossible to point to a single, accepted definition of what kind of experience definitely causes trauma, and what kind of response to a potentially traumatic event is accepted. As Bond and Craps note, definitions of trauma are "unstable" and "slippery" (2020, pp. 4, 5). Balaev also points out how a (literary) "protagonist's culture, social class, nation, gender, ethnicity, family, and relation to a particular place" contribute to how their trauma is represented (p. 38). So, just as there are plural masculinities and genders, and plural spatial locations for traumatic events, there are also pluralities of traumas. I end this brief exposition of the trauma theory that was most relevant to my research with a look at one very specific and even contested type of trauma, namely, perpetrator trauma.

Perpetrator trauma refers to trauma experienced by the *agents* of traumatic events and, as such, it is not surprising that it is controversial, especially as it has at times been framed as potentially removing guilt from perpetrators of violent and/or harmful acts and often studied in the context of the United States military forces (Bond & Craps, 2020; Gibbs, 2014). Bond and Craps discuss how the mere mention of perpetrators of trauma "will inevitably be interpreted as making a dubious case for exonerating perpetrators by considering them 'legitimate victims', which amounts to a betrayal of the *real* victims" (2020, p. 120, emphasis mine). Alan Gibbs further discusses trauma in a war and terror context by criticizing established trauma narrative theories that describe 9/11 as a uniquely traumatizing event that would thus have justified the bombing of Afghanistan

and Iraq and is critical of some "trauma theory" as "not only depoliticizing … but actively aiding the political right" (p. 121). Gibbs thus stresses that granting that agents of violence may indeed suffer from (perpetrator) trauma does not relieve them from guilt, and that the "doubly victimized" position of female trauma victims who suffer from a specific traumatic event in addition to suffering from societal oppression, needs to be consistently analyzed when discussing gendered trauma (p. 191).

Laura Brown has discussed how "white, young-able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian men" are overrepresented in trauma narratives (1995, p. 101), and Alan Gibbs has expressed how he "eagerly anticipates a more pluralistic trauma criticism that … recognises a wider range of representations of trauma" (p. 246), and this Integrating chapter, along with Article 4, has attempted to provide more nuanced understandings of varieties of trauma. In conclusion, it is important to realize when discussing trauma, especially as it relates to the context discussed here, that trauma is simultaneously plural and specific, as well as gendered and context-dependent (Balaev, 2012; Brown, 2008; Salovaara & Rodi-Risberg, 2019), meaning that trauma may be experienced differently by different genders with different bodily and mental attributes in different contexts, whether urban or in the mountains.

4 SUMMARIES OF ORIGINAL PAPERS

In this section, I summarize the four articles that are included in this dissertation, drawing and expanding on the articles' original abstracts. The articles are not presented here strictly in the chronological order in which they were written[50] but rather arranged thematically so that their organization would offer the reader a coherently deepening understanding of the dissertation's topic. This arrangement also allows for a move from the general to the specific, as the articles progress from a rather large data set in the first article through to a case study of one individual mountain athlete and finally to a close reading of mountain sports literature focusing on one specific issue and one specific spatial location. The articles also increase in length, the fourth article being almost twice as long as the first. The arrangement of the articles in this particular order also shows both the author's personal development as a researcher and reflects the rapidly growing body of research on ecological masculinities and mountain sports.

All four articles approach representations of male mountain athletes from different viewpoints and each time use different data sets. Nevertheless, the articles can be seen to develop thematically, and each of them builds on the knowledge gained by reading the previous article, so for those reasons I recommend this order of reading. Due to the variety of research materials and the fact that each article employs slightly different theoretical tools, the specific research questions as well as the details of the research methods vary from article to article. All articles nevertheless contribute to an overall understanding of how male mountain athletes' relationships to the environment are represented, as well as intervening in various discussions on gender, sport, and the environment.

[50] In reality, the writing process of an article-based dissertation is such that, due to the often lengthy review processes in academic journals, various versions of the article manuscripts have been written and resubmitted to editors in a chronologically nonlinear fashion.

4.1 Article 1: "A fine line": Crossing and erecting borders in representing male athletes' relationships to nature

Article 1 examines the relationship between adventure sports and nature using the concept of borders as its point of departure. The article investigates how male athletes' relationships to nature are represented in commercial nonfiction films. My analysis of the subject combines ecomasculinity and Deleuze and Guattari's postmodern theory on the *rhizome* (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005) as central theoretical frameworks for examining how borders are present in the material.

The article shows the presence of two competing discourses concerning the representation of the athletes' relationship to nature. The six films under discussion were divided into two categories according to the way this relationship was represented. First, a masculine discourse consists of competition, commercialism, and traditionally masculine traits such as muscle, boldness, and aggression. Second, a more feminine discourse places more emphasis on representing the athletes' connection to nature and identification with it, as well as depicting a minimalist approach to athletic endeavor and combining elements of play and androgyny in the relationship to nature.

The findings in the article expose a cultural male/female dichotomy extending to how the athletes' relationships to nature are represented in the material, that is, clear male/female borders follow the logic of a "vertical semiotics" (Alaimo, 2001, p. 280) and coincide with clear borders of self and nature, human and non-human, and body and landscape, whereas the blurring of male/female borders follows a horizontal semiotics and coincides with the blurring of borders between self and nature.

4.2 Article 2: "Desire to be connected to nature": Materialism and masculinity in YouTube videos by Salomon

Article 2, a book chapter in a forthcoming anthology (Pulé & Hultman, 2020, forthcoming), partially continues with the same overall theme of Article 1, namely male athletes' embodied relationships to nature, and more specifically asks how the representations of those relationships are entangled with the branding of the multinational outdoor gear company Salomon. As in Article 1, the concept of ecological masculinities is central, but in this article is discussed more in depth, and the discussion is more explicitly political.

The article expounds on Jeffrey J. Cohen's (Cohen, 2015) notion that mountain climbing as an intimate physical practice can affect the practitioner's ecological and ethical views. The article examines how male mountain athletes' practice is represented both visually and linguistically and, further, investigates how Salomon attempts to frame that practice in ecological terms and by so doing brand itself as environmentally progressive. The article uses the three discourses

identified by Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy (McCarthy, 2008a), namely, *conquest*, *caretaking*, and, most importantly to the discussion, *connection*, to outline how masculinities are represented in the material.

The main argument of the article is that Salomon attempts to enhance their environmental credentials by representing its athletes as embodiments of new, seemingly ecological masculinities that are in intimate connection with mountains and nature. These new masculinities appear to dispose of the hegemonic discourse of the conquest of mountains and instead embody an ostensibly gentler, ecological relationship of connection to nature.

To critically investigate the relationship that these masculinities have to commercial interests, the article makes extensive use of literature on branding (Alexander S. M., 2003; Miloch, 2010), and combines that with a discussion on the politics of ecological masculinities as they are framed by, for example Greta Gaard (2017) and Martin Hultman and Paul M. Pulé (Hultman & Pulé, 2018). The article concludes by hoping that more explicitly outlined ecological politics will become more frequent in the ecologization of male athletes.

4.3 Article 3: ”Nature is dope”: Timothy Olson and athletic masculinity in nature

Article 3 extends the discussion of commodifying nature into a critical case study of one specific professional mountain athlete, in this case Timothy Olson’s, attempt to brand himself in terms of a hybrid, ecological masculinity. This article also raises the issue of the relationship of an individual’s troubled past as central in both motivating the pursuit of mountains sports and also in using that troubled past in their personal athlete branding. This discussion then continues in more detail in the last article of this dissertation.

Aside from the discussion on commodification and branding, Article 3 also engages in a discussion on how critical studies on men and masculinities relate to ecofeminism and profeminist ecological masculinities. The article considers various types of conceptual frameworks such as hegemonic masculinity, inclusive masculinity, and hybrid masculinity, as potentially useful theories when outlining ecological masculinities. Further, the article raises issues such as the political implications of a racialized, ableist, and omnivorous sports culture.

The article sets out from the premise that while ecofeminism is an established field within academia, a corresponding field that would study the reasons for the often destructive relationships that some men have to both nature and women has been largely nonexistent until recently. To address this lacuna and initiate the development of a theory that would be supportive of the political agenda of ecofeminism, Greta Gaard (2014) has called for scholars to rethink hegemonic masculinity, arguably the root cause of those harmful relationships, and called for new openings in ecomasculine theory to counteract the damage done by hegemonic masculinity.

This article applies an ecomasculine framework to a critical investigation of the relationship between masculinity, sports, and nature by conducting a case study that investigates the social media profile and athletic brand of professional mountain runner Timothy Olson. The case study focuses, first, on how Olson's athlete brand is located as part of a discourse where men with troubled pasts seek salvation in nature by practicing extreme mountain sports and, second, how Olson's brand as an athlete blends aspects of a "daring" hegemonic masculinity into a "caring," ecological hybrid masculinity. The article concludes by suggesting a deconstruction of environmentally destructive hegemonic masculinity in favor of ecological masculinities. The article offers a process of masculine hybridization as an intermediary step in this process.

4.4 Article 4: El Capitan as a site for male healing from trauma in Jeff Long's *The Wall* and Tommy Caldwell's *The Push*

Article 4 engages further in the discourse of men with troubled pasts seeking healing in nature, and examines the role of trauma specifically in this context. This is a joint article written together with Marinella Rodi-Risberg, my second PhD supervisor. The writing was divided so that I was the lead author and wrote the bulk of the article (amounting to approximately 60 percent of the total work load), and Marinella Rodi-Risberg as my co-author contributed with extensive editing and commenting (approximately 40 percent of the total work load).

The article provides an original intervention into ecomasculinities studies through combining trauma studies with ecofeminist studies, gender studies, and environmental humanities. It also examines gendered trauma in terms of the so far largely unmarked male figure. Further, it considers the under-addressed issue of the contradictory representations of masculinities and nature together with victimhood and perpetrator trauma in popular literature.

The article proceeds from the notion that nature and mountains are commonly represented as places of healing in literature and the media, especially for white, healthy, and middle class men. However, discussions on nature and gender in relation to trauma are rare, and a specific discussion on the representation of male mountain climbers' traumas is missing. Therefore, the article investigates how nature, particularly the famous mountain El Capitan, is represented in Jeff Long's novel *The Wall* (2006) and Tommy Caldwell's memoir *The Push* (2017) as a specific spatial location of healing for male rock climbers, who at the same time are both victims of traumatic events and partially responsible for their occurrence. More specifically, this article places ecofeminist and ecological masculinities scholarship in dialog with trauma studies and analyzes these texts with the aim of showing how representations of trauma relate to those of nature and masculinity. In this analysis, questions of how certain aspects of ecological and hegemonic masculinities relate to representing

trauma, nature, and masculinity are central, as are issues of perpetrator trauma and the non-generic character of traumatic experience.

To sum up, the article shows how representations of nature, trauma, and masculinities in the primary texts converge and reflect a plurality of gendered responses to trauma and healing in nature. Finally, the article's concluding section considers the political implications of representations of healing in the mountains being more frequent when the persons experiencing this healing are white, athletic males.

5 DISCUSSION

This section discusses the significance of the research conducted in this dissertation. First, I evaluate the research and then I consider its implications. Finally I conclude with some final words on the research process and also recommend directions for future research in the field(s) where this dissertation has intervened.

The main aim for the whole dissertation (see 1.1) is *how nature and masculinity are represented in contemporary mountain sports texts (both written and audiovisual).* Therefore the overarching theme for the whole dissertation is the triad of 1) gender, and more specifically masculinity, 2) nature, and more specifically mountains, and 3) sport, more specifically mountain sports, and how that triad is represented in contemporary media and literature, and what conclusions can be drawn based on an analysis of those representations. To arrive at those conclusions, the Integrating chapter has outlined the specific nature of the materials studied, the methods used in the research, the background and context for the analysis and the theoretical framework that enabled a critical inquiry into the subject.

Based on the research conducted, the following observations can be made: First, in both Articles 1 and 2 it can be observed that commercial interests affect how male (and female) mountain athletes are represented in film and video. More specifically, some of these representations attempt to frame these relationships in ecological terms by highlighting the athletes' connection to their environment and also by eschewing traditional hegemonic (hyper)masculinities. Second, both Articles 3 and 4 observed that male mountain athletes' troubled, pasts, traumatized or otherwise, influenced how their relationships to the environment were represented both by themselves and by the other authors of the texts, and even how their motivations to practice their sports were framed. The importance of these two key findings of the dissertation are evaluated in the next section.

The research has been qualitative throughout, and has used limited sets of data to attempt to arrive at generalizable statements on how male mountain athletes and their relationships to the environment are represented in the

research material. Since the triad mentioned above is so under-researched, much of the knowledge gained from the analysis of the material is wholly original. The *Theoretical framework* section (3) of the thesis, coupled with this *Discussion* section (5) has then contextualized this new knowledge and drawn further conclusions based on it.

This chapter develops as follows. In the evaluation section (5.1), I discuss each article separately and consider the new knowledge it has produced. Section 5.2 summarizes the implications of this new knowledge, also taking into account the added understanding of the topic that this Integrating chapter has produced. Section 5.3 then concludes the entire dissertation.

5.1 Evaluation of the research conducted

The Cambridge Dictionary defines *success* as a) *the achieving of the results wanted or hoped for*, or b) *something that achieves positive results* (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). Considering the optimistic point of departure of my research project of hoping to a) gain a robust *general* understanding of male mountain athletes' relationships to the environment, and b) finding some *positive* signs of those relationships, the outcome of the dissertation process cannot be said to have been a complete success. However, it was valuable to realize during the research process that, first, although arriving at a general understanding of the above relationships was not achieved, looking specifically at the *representations* of the relationships was valuable because it forms an important building block for trying to achieve this more widely encompassing understanding at a later stage. Second, although only relatively weak signs of genuinely positive (from an equity and ecology perspective) representations of male relationships were observed, that fact in itself also constitutes valid new knowledge, and points to new directions for research.

Overall, the thesis topic is original, and the multidisciplinary approach of combining environmental humanities research into critical studies on men and masculinities and sports enables fresh insights into the mountains/masculinities/sports entanglement. The ontological question of the author being, first, in a privileged position in society and, second, the epistemic consequences of the author's insider status in the mountain sports community in the choice of research materials and their analysis were discussed in Section 1. To reiterate, the author's situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) brings with it both the disadvantage of a limited overall view but, since the concept of situated knowledge does not easily admit the possibility of an objective and unbiased viewpoint, the specific situatedness of the author also brings with it the advantage of a very distinct outlook on the topic.

Aside from the overall value of researching an under-researched topic, the thesis was successful in being able to produce two specific items of new knowledge. First, the initial two articles bring to the fore the emergence of a new type of hybrid (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014) masculinity. This new "type" of

masculinity (see Section 5.2 for more on the limited usefulness of this) blends aspects of traditional, hegemonic (Connell, 2005) or industrial breadwinner (Hultman & Pulé, 2018) masculinities and at least seemingly more caring and equitable ecological masculinities into a *connected* mountain masculinity. This new masculinity claims appreciation of both women and nature, and expresses an intimate bodily contact with nature. Second, the next two articles identify the importance of male athletes' troubled, even traumatized pasts in representing their relationships to the environment. The articles highlight, again, that truly ecological masculinities cannot be identified in these representations—at least not as long as nature and mountains are framed, even commodified, merely as places of healing for athletic white men—but they highlight also that nature *does* seem to offer a sense of solace for variously injured or wounded, *troubled* men in the mountains. To clarify, I do not wish to imply that connected and troubled masculinities are the only, or even the most frequent, expressions of mountain masculinities elsewhere in mountain sports texts, but that they are two identifiable discourses that had until now not been recognized.

The limitations of the thesis include 1) the delimitation of the final topic into modes of representation, 2) the necessary idiosyncrasy of the chosen research material, and 3) the limited number of research questions that it is possible to ask in academic journal articles. Below, I further evaluate each article's additions to academic knowledge on the dissertation topic, and the new directions identified are then be discussed in the concluding Section 5.3.

Article 1, being both the shortest article here but also studying the largest data set, can be seen as a general introduction to examining male mountain athletes and nature. As to the terminology used in the article, it is evident when reading it with the benefit of several more years' study that both the field and the author have changed between 2015 and 2019. For example, the article refers to "masculine studies" which, although sometimes used, would be more precise had I used "critical studies on men and masculinities." The article also uses the terms "ecomasculine" and "ecomasculinity" in the singular without considering their evident plurality, and does not adequately address the nuances of Martin Hultman's (2013) term "ecomodern masculinity." The scope of research was also still in the process of being defined, and the article refers to "adventure sports" in general, although the actual sports discussed still refer to the same mountain sports as the other articles.

Beyond these unintended terminological obfuscations, the article does manage to achieve a robust result in identifying a connection on the one hand between traditional masculinities represented as standing above nature, women, and other less traditional masculinities and on the other reciprocal representations of women and nontraditional masculinities. The discursive constructions of "conquest" and "connection" are also already present in this article, although their importance is not yet fully articulated. The article's attempt to discuss both the lexical items in the material and the visual aspects of the films creates a sweepingly general overview of the material. Nevertheless, the article does also discuss some aspects of the material in detail, and it is still the author's

view that both visual and linguistic aspects are important when studying audiovisual material. The emphasis on the role of commercial interests in representing male athletes in nature in the article's conclusion anticipates the discussion in Article 2.

The discussion in Article 2 on conquest versus connection (via a caretaking discourse) is discussed in further detail, as is the role of commercial entities when representing male relationships to nature. Overall, terminological accuracy and specificity have developed in this article as compared to Article 1, and Article 2 is also more explicitly political in demanding that masculinities change. The article may be seen on occasion to collapse maleness with masculinity (see Section 3.3 for a discussion on this) but, seeing that the article's focus is on material practices, men cannot be fully separated from practices that are closely associated with traditional masculinity, such as "conquering" nature.

The article succeeds in establishing adequate theoretical sophistication for future discussions on men and masculinities, and how commercial interests hybridize representations of them. The article is also significant in that it is among the first academic discussions on how (some) masculinities are changing towards accepting increased intimacy towards nonhuman nature. The article's inclusion in Hultman and Pulé's forthcoming anthology on men, masculinities, and the earth (Pulé & Hultman, 2020, forthcoming) also facilitates the adoption of these views in larger discussions on men's relationships to environmental destruction.

The changes in masculinities that in Article 2 are discussed in terms of conquest and connection are in Article 3 discussed more from the point of view of hegemonic versus subordinated masculinities. Methodologically, Article 3 differs from the other articles in that the analysis is based on a case study of one individual athlete and not on a set of texts by multiple agents. Basing this case study on an analysis of social media activity contributes to the growing understanding that social media posts qualify as cultural artifacts worthy of academic scrutiny (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016; Morris & Anderson, 2015).

Article 3 fails to discover any new and more viable (as compared to article 2) ecological masculinities in representations of professional mountain athletes but succeeds in bringing into discussion and elucidating the importance of environmental justice issues, diet, class, and race. Article 3 also succeeds in broadening the set(s) of hybrid masculinities under discussion in this dissertation from the new, vulnerable and intimate masculinities into discussing this hybridity on the hard/soft and hegemonic/protest axes. Further, Article 3 introduces the importance of male mountain athletes' troubled pasts in reconfiguring their relation to the environment, and framing the environment as a place of healing.

Article 4 continues discussing the notion of nature as a place of healing that was initiated in Article 3, but focuses specifically on the role of trauma. The commercial aspects of representing male athletes receive less attention in this article because adding the conception of variously "wounded" masculinities in literary trauma narratives assumes precedence. Article 4 is in the author's view

methodologically the soundest of all four articles. That said, this may be partly because the close reading method that incorporates frequent textual citations into close analysis of the text's meanings is so well established in environmental literary studies (Buell, 2005), whereas methods for analyzing social media and videos are less well established, partially because they are more recent forms of media.

Article 4 can be seen as somewhat distinct from the other three articles in the choice of its research material (literature) and its focus on male trauma and nature instead of commodification of nature and masculinity. However this does not in the author's view limit the usefulness of the article in this context, but rather opens up a final avenue into researching vulnerable masculinities. The article succeeds in problematizing simplified notions of traumatized masculinities as well as the role of nature as a place of healing.

5.2 Implications of the research conducted

There are implications both academic and societal in the results of the research conducted in this dissertation. First, the representations of new masculinities identified here need to be critically assessed in future research as well as contextualized in relation to the broader field of critical studies on men and masculinities, and also in relation to contributions to the ecofeminist project. Second, the representations of wounded and vulnerable masculinities should be appraised and contextualized in trauma studies at large, and more specifically when trauma, gender, nature, and sport converge. Lastly, it remains to be resolved whether there are desirable societal impacts that may follow from this new knowledge, such as men's increased self-reflexivity and subsequent profeminist ecologization.

Regarding the first implication on new hybrid or ecological masculinities, an arguably meta-level consideration is due: *What does it matter that these new masculinities are now identified and labeled*? In forming this question, I draw on an experience I had in the 2017 Gender Studies Conference at the University of Jyväskylä. This critical question was addressed to me, almost verbatim, after I had presented my paper on new, hybrid masculinities in Salomon's YouTube videos (i.e., what later came to be Article 2 in this dissertation). The gist of the two-part question was essentially: What is the point of always discovering "new" masculinities, and should not profeminist masculinities scholars engage more in other academic research as well as focus on addressing the societal impacts of gender inequity? Although this question and the ensuing discussion remained informal and only vaguely defined, I consider this issue to be relevant when critically assessing the implications that research on new masculinities begets.

To answer the question adequately, I propose the following. First, there is value in 1) recognizing signs of change, even if that change is only incremental and not as comprehensive as might be hoped for. This change needs to be 2) theorized, and then 3) contextualized in order to 4) support the change in order

to 5) increase chances of achieving masculine ecologization that would 6) contribute positively to both equity and the environment. In this process, the first four steps encompass work conducted in academia, and the last two steps refer to work done outside academia. Regarding the conceptual research process in academia, work on new and hybrid, hopefully ecological masculinities should build on the foundational work so far conducted within ecofeminism. This is because otherwise ecological masculinities scholarship would end up needlessly playing catch-up instead of benefiting from, and contributing to, an already existing body of feminist environmental research.

As for the societal implications of the research conducted here, and specifically in relation to what ecological masculinities could look like, I consider the six steps outlined above to complement Hultman and Pulé's "giving ADAM-n" model of "Awareness," "Deconstruction," "Amendment," "Modification," and "new masculinities" (2018, pp. 231–238) for achieving masculine ecologization. Significantly, the "new masculinities" that Hultman and Pulé refer to are spelled with a lower case "-n", and this inspires me to develop this line of thought in directions away from hegemonic masculinities. Nietzsche's Zarathustra was famously searching for "the overman" (1994, p. 124), a man to wield power over others. I propose that this be seen as the antithesis of the ecological masculinities project; instead of the overman, the focus should be on fostering masculinities that are of service to (all) others.

5.3 Conclusion

This section marks the end of the dissertation process. It has been at times been a difficult but always illuminating journey and I shall next outline some directions where the future may take me and, hopefully, other researchers interested in gender, nature, and sport. These new directions, then, could conceivably have consequences also beyond academia.

Regarding the new type of hybrid masculinities identified in this dissertation, it is significant that at the current stage of research, these masculinities are identified only in the commercial representations studied here. Whether a corresponding discovery can be made in noncommercial representations or indeed "in the real world," requires further study. Nevertheless, this new hybrid stands in clear contrast to clichéd images of extreme masculinities conquering nature. After identifying this new hybrid, it also remains to be investigated further whether it is a genuinely equitable and caring masculinity that attempts to horizontalize hierarchical structures, or whether it is merely another version of hegemonic masculinity trying to stay in the hegemonic position by appropriating some currently desirable individual traits while eschewing actual personal and political change. Based on my research so far, there are some aspects of both visible, though it is also clear that there are attempts at the latter, that is, the normatively speaking more negative of the two.

As to how issues such as trauma, PTSD, depression, jail convictions, and substance abuse affect representations and motivations of male mountain athletes, further work is needed to investigate whether these issues are also visible in non-elite male mountain athletes' lived experiences and how they approach their own activity in nature. Further, establishing privileged masculinities as significant carriers of meaning instead of them going unmarked and implicitly assumed to represent the totality of human responses to trauma, is important for future combinations of feminist trauma studies and critical sports and masculinities studies.

I would also like to point out that although I have in some of the articles gathered here, as well as in this Integrating chapter itself, addressed issues such as race, class, sexuality, able-bodiedness, and issues of environmental justice, these discussions have almost nowhere, including in my own work, been at the center of focus in a discussion on mountain sports and masculinity. Therefore, I would like to explicitly suggest them as future research directions. For example, the work by Catriona Sandilands and Bruce Erickson on queering ecocriticism, including their assertion that "climbing, and other outdoor activities" enable destructive "heteromasculinity" to enact itself on the cultural imagination (2010, p. 3), lays important groundwork, as does the work of Mei Mei Evans (2002) and Sarah Jaquette Ray (2017). Also, because the focus in this dissertation has been almost exclusively on representations of athletic men and masculinities in nature, there seems to be a research gap in studies on representations of women and femininities, not to mention non-binary genders, in the same field. I wish to do some of this work myself when I am "liberated" from the strict confines of the specific research questions of this dissertation, but wish to see others doing more and better work with these matters in the meantime.

Further, since the findings of the dissertation are by no means generalizable to all men, all sports, nor all human-nonhuman contexts, I would like to see an added interest expressed by ecocritical scholars on sports, and from masculinities scholars on nature, to widen the scope of critical inquiry presented here. To clarify, ecocritical scholars might use this study to engage further with critical masculinities studies beyond sports. Greta Gaard (2014) has already done foundational work here discussing, for example, men's commuting and gardening, and I could envision a critical inquiry into men and masculinities in the environmental movement to also have use for this study's findings. The shifting nature of masculinities is already well established in critical studies on men and masculinities but the question of how that relates to the environment may benefit from the contextualization provided in this dissertation. Although this study is only tenuously attached to, for example, queer ecologies, disability studies, and indigenous studies, it is my hope that the sections on ecosexuality, the privilege of white male athleticism, and recreation on conquered land may provide even modestly beneficial insights for scholars in those fields.

Having been extensively involved in the mountain sports community for a number of years, it has become evident to me that environmental issues are important considerations for many in the community. In the early stages of my

research when the dissertation was still expected to contain ethnographic data, I conducted informal interviews with many practitioners and have during the writing process of this very chapter asked the grassroots community online (Mountain Project, 2019) about environmental issues. The responses encourage further study but also highlight how nonpolitical many in the community are, for instance, in terms of their lack of commitment to ecological politics beyond individual consumer choices. Therefore further academic research is needed to investigate the seeming reluctance to address politics in favor of smaller scale personal choices. Despite their environmental *awareness*, few in the mountain sports community seem to be able to "walk the talk." Indeed, politicizing my own practice has not been easy, but this ongoing research process has also contributed to some change in my personal practices and engendered more explicitly political engagement instead of (or, in addition to) more personal volunteer action and consumerist choices. For example, I agreed as a direct result of my deepening self-reflexion during the research process to run in the upcoming municipal elections on an explicitly environmentalist and feminist agenda (Vaasanseudun Vihreät, 2020). In that sense, politicization has in concrete terms succeeded in my case, and I hope to contribute positively to future discussions both inside and outside academia.

To conclude, further academic study on masculinities, nature, and sport is needed, but it is the author's hope that that study would have a spillover effect beyond the confines of producing more academic articles, important though they are, into society at large. Whether or not the new masculinities that have emerged from this study materialize in the real world in any meaningful scale, it seems that in the wake of the current rate of climate change and biodiversity loss, masculinities, along with everything else on the planet, are inevitably facing change. This change may channel into reactionary Trumpian politics and backlash, or alternatively into the kind of masculine ecologization that Hultman and Pulé (2018) have outlined. This may lead to a "crisis" state of masculinities, but then again (straight white) masculinity is notoriously seemingly in a permanent state of perceived crisis (Green & Oort, 2013; Hearn, 1999; Horrocks, 1994; Kalish & Kimmel, 2010; Kimmel, 2017). Crises can, however, be positive states. Indeed, Stephen M. Whitehead has hoped that "a crisis of masculinity . . . resulting in men ceasing to behave violently and abusively towards women, children, other men, animals, the earth itself, would be very welcome" (2006, p. 4). So, if a "crisis" of masculinity is what is required to mitigate the effects of an environmental crisis and simultaneously achieve greater equity, then that crisis is wholly desirable.

SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Väitöskirjan aiheena on luonto, sukupuoli, ja urheilu, ja väitöskirja tutki nimenomaan maskuliinisuuksia ja luontoa vuoristourheiluteksteissä. Vuoristourheilukäsitteellä viitataan tässä tapauksessa kiipeilyyn, ja eritoten vuorikiipeilyyn, vuorijuoksuun (polkujuoksua vuorilla) ja vuorihiihtoon (engl. skimountaineering). Miehet ja maskuliinisuudet ovat suhteettoman suuressa vastuussa nykyisestä ilmasto- ja biodiversiteettikriisistä, mutta vuoristourheilumaskuliinisuuksia ja niiden suhdetta luontoon ei ole tutkittu paljoakaan. Siksi tämä väitöskirja kysyi kuinka luontoa ja maskuliinisuuksia representoidaan vuoristourheiluteksteissä?

Väitöskirjan keskeisen tutkimusongelman tueksi väitöskirjan artikkelit kysyivät neljä lisäkysymystä, joista jokaiseen etsittiin vastausta erilaisten tekstien kautta: 1) Kuinka kulttuurisia sukupuolien ja ihmisen ja luonnon välisiä rajoja esitetään vuoristourheiludokumenteissa? 2) Kuinka miesurheilijoiden ruumiillistunutta luontoyhteyttä esitetään outdoor-yhtiö Salomonin tuottamissa YouTube-videoissa? 3) Kuinka sekä luonto että ammattiurheilija Timothy Olsonin ongelmallinen menneisyys kaupallistetaan sosiaalisen median brändäyksellä? 4) Kuinka miespuolisten vuoristourheilijoiden yritystä parantua traumasta esitetään vuoristokirjallisuudessa, nimenomaan Jeff Longin *The Wall*issa (2006) ja Tommy Caldwellin *The Push*issa (2017)?

Ensimmäisessä artikkelissa tutkittiin ihmisen ja luonnon suhteen rajoja, ja kuinka näissä rajoissa pysyminen tai niiden ylitys vaikuttaa luontosuhteen representoitumiseen vuoristourheilua kuvaavissa teksteissä, tässä tapauksessa kaupallisissa nonfiction-elokuvissa. Toinen artikkeli jatkoi rajojen käsitteestä miesten intiimin luontosuhteen kaupallisiin kuvauksiin kaupallisen toimijan Salomonin YouTube-videoissa ja kuvaa läheisen yhteyden (engl. connected) luontoon keskeisenä käsitteenä vuoristourheilijamiesten luontosuhteen kuvauksessa. Kolmas artikkeli on tapaustutkimus yhdestä vuoristourheilijamiehestä (Timothy Olson) ja hänen luontosuhteensa esittämisestä sosiaalisessa mediassa. Artikkeli nostaa esiin diskurssin miesten vaikean (engl. troubled) menneisyyden kaupallistamisesta ja menneisyyden vaikutuksesta miesten luontosuhteen representoitumiseen. Väitöskirjan neljäs ja viimeinen artikkeli jatkaa miesten vaikeiden menneisyyksien tutkimista ja keskittyy erityisesti trauman kuvaukseen kahdessa vuoristourheilukirjassa (Jeff Longin *The Wall* [suom. *Seinämä* ja Tommy Caldwellin *The Push* [yritys/työntö, ei suomennettu]). Artikkeli näyttää, kuinka luonto, ja erityisesti vuori nimeltä El Capitan, esitetään paikkana, jossa tietyt, varsinkin heteroseksuaaliset ja valkoiset urheilulliset miehet voivat parantua traumoistaan.

Väitöskirjan metodi nojaa teoreettiseen kontekstualisointiin, jossa käytetään kriittistä sukupuolen- ja urheiluntutkimusta, ekokritiikkiä ja traumatutkimusta yhdistettynä multimodaalisen aineiston moniaistimukselliseen lähilukuun. Väitöskirjan avainlöydökset paljastivat, kuinka kaupalliset intressit vaikuttavat uusien, luontoon yhteydessä olevien hybridimaskuliinisuuksien esittämiseen, ja kuinka miesurheilijoiden ongelmalliset tai traumaattiset menneisyy-

det vaikuttavat siihen, kuinka heidät esitetään. Osa representaatioista pyrkii esittämään miesten luontosuhteet ekologisina korostamalla heidän yhteyttään luontoon ja pyrkimällä välttämään perinteisiä hegemonisen (hyper)maskuliinisuuden mallia. Miespuolisten vuoristourheilijoiden traumaattiset tai muuten ongelmalliset menneisyydet myös vaikuttavat siihen, kuinka heidän luontosuhteensa esitetään, ja myös kuinka heidän motivaationsa vuoristourheilun harjoittamiseen esitetään.

Väitöskirja avaa uusia tutkimussuuntia luonnon, sukupuolen, ja urheilun tutkimiselle. Väitöskirja tuottaa kaksi uutta käsitettä, joilla varsinkin vuoristourheilijamiesten luontosuhdetta kuvataan: intiimin maskuliinisen luontosuhteen (engl. connected) kuvaukset ja ongelmallisen tai vaikean (engl. troubled) maskuliinisen luontosuhteen. Väitöskirja suosittelee aiheen tulevan tutkimuksen suuntaavan erityisesti muiden kuin valkoisten heteromiesvuoristourheilijoiden luontosuhteen tutkimukseen, jolloin urheilun ja luonnon suhteesta saataisiin lisää uutta tietoa.

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ORIGINAL PAPERS

I

"A FINE LINE": CROSSING AND ERECTING BORDERS IN REPRESENTING MALE ATHLETES' RELATIONSHIPS TO NATURE

by

Harri Salovaara, 2015

VAKKI Publications vol 4, 77–85

ISSN: 2242-6841

Rellstab, D. & N. Siponkoski (toim.) 2015. Rajojen dynamiikkaa, Gränsernas dynamik, Borders under Negotiation, Grenzen und ihre Dynamik. VAKKI-symposiumi XXXV 12.–13.2.2015. VAKKI Publications 4. Vaasa, (77–85).

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Tämä artikkeli tutkii seikkailu-urheilun ja luonnon suhdetta käyttäen lähtökohtanaan rajojen käsitettä. Se keskittyy erityisesti siihen, miten miesurheilijoiden luontosuhde representoidaan kaupallisissa seikkailu-urheiluelokuvissa. Analyysi yhdistää ekokriittisen teorian kriittiseen miestutkimukseen, muodostaen näin ekomaskuliinisen näkökulman aiheeseen. Materiaali koostuu kuudesta seikkailuelokuvasta. Artikkeli osoittaa kahden vastakkaisen diskurssin läsnäolon urheilijoiden luontosuhteen representoitumisessa: kilpailusta ja perinteisistä maskuliinisuuden merkitsijöistä koostuva maskuliininen diskurssi, ja toisaalta feminiinisempi diskurssi, joka painottaa urheilijoiden yhteyttä ja identifikoitumista luontoon. Artikkeli osoittaa, miten kulttuurinen mies/naisdikotomia vaikuttaa siihen, miten luontosuhde on materiaalissa representoitu.

Keywords: adventure sports, borders, ecocriticism, ecomasculinity, nature

1 Introduction: Ecomasculinity and Borders

This paper examines the relationship between adventure sports and nature using the concept of borders as its point of departure. It specifically investigates how *male* athletes' nature relationships are represented in contemporary adventure films. The analysis of the subject uses both ecocritical theory and theory on gender and masculinities, and this combination forms an ecomasculine viewpoint into the subject. This paper focuses on two things: first, on markers of masculinity and femininity and, second, on how and where those markers as borders are blurred. It shows how traditional, cultural male/female dichotomies extend also to how relationships to nature are represented in contemporary adventure films, i.e. how clear borders between males and females are implicit in them, and how they coincide with equally clear borders between individuals and nature.

In the present context, adventure sports are defined broadly as sports that take place outdoors, i.e. in nature, and that contain at least a moderate amount of risk to their practitioners. The particular films discussed in this paper all depict mountain sports. Although adventure sports participants who do their sports in nature are primarily male, curiously little research has so far been done on the bearing of gender in the formation of adventure athletes' nature relationship, and this paper therefore approaches the topic from the above mentioned "ecomasculine" viewpoint. Ecocriticism itself is an interdisciplinary field "in nature", and feminist theory has often been combined into it to form an ecofeminist theoretical branch. A corresponding ecomasculine branch of theory

is, however, nearly non-existent, and previous research on the relationship between adventure sports and nature scant from either a gendered *or* ecocritical viewpoint. Despite several studies (see, e.g. Bayers 2003; Vainio 2003; McCarthy 2008; Thorpe 2010) on nature, gender, and sports, and the pairing into two of any combinations of them, this researcher is not aware of a single study that would have as its explicit research object all three of them together.

To address the apparent need for further research, and taking into account the specificity of the current sporting context, this paper therefore employs ecocriticism and masculine studies to provide it a hermeneutic rationale appropriate to the relative novelty of the chosen approach. Ecocriticism and masculine studies are both concerned with questions of ethics, and provide effective theoretical tools to investigate the borders between, first, humans and nature and, second, male and female, and combining them into an ecomasculine approach is therefore methodologically useful. However, the very term ecomasculinity is not yet well established, having been tentatively used only by a handful of scholars such as Martin Hultman (2013) who actually uses the rather unwieldy term "Ecomodern Masculinity" (2013: 79), and David Kreps (2010). In addition to them, Mark Allister's *Eco-Man* (2004) does investigate the relationship between nature and masculinity, but not in relation to sports. Therefore, the validity of the term can be problematized from a nomenclatural standpoint, and it could arguably be included under the wider umbrella term of ecofeminism (for a contemporary problematization of "ecofeminism" in favor of "feminist ecocriticism", see, e.g. Oppermann 2013). However, it is arguably precisely this kind of exclusion of masculine viewpoints into nature that indirectly contributes to the hostile relationships to nature that are represented in some of the material discussed below, i.e. it in fact upholds existing binaries where in the pairings of male/female and culture/nature the previous is always higher. If masculinity is consistently associated not with nature but its dialectic opposite, culture, then it is hardly surprising that some masculine relationships with nature are so problematic. Masculine studies have diverged within gender studies from feminist studies to provide a better critical platform for studying masculinities, and R.W. Connell has hoped that masculine "green politics" (2005: 128) could offer resistance to traditional, hegemonic forms of masculinity. The persistence of masculine oppression of both women and nature is well established also within ecocritical theory (see, e.g. Buell 2005: 109; Oppermann 2011: 16). This paper next discusses the above as it pertains to the concepts of space, place and borders.

Space and place are central to ecocriticism, and inextricably connected to borders. Modern ecocriticism studies the material world, i.e., the place in space where actual things happen. Place, and specifically, a "sense of place" is traditionally seen as fundamentally important in forming a sound and ethically viable relationship with the natural world. The reasoning has been that to know a place means an increased likeli-

hood in caring for its nature. The certain "provincialism" that this may whiff of has led some ecocritical thinkers to see place as an outdated and limiting concept. According to Ursula Heise, ecocriticism should instead embrace a borderless "eco-cosmopolitanism" (2008: 59) and think in planetary terms instead of only local ones. She uses the example from Douglas Adams's *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, where the aliens who notify planet Earth of its immanent destruction are amazed that the residents of the planet show no interest in local matters, such as, the building of a new intergalactic highway through the spatial location of the Earth, to illustrate her point that "local" and "planetary" are very much relative terms (2008: 3).

The gendered and "socially constructed" nature of place and its "inherently dichotomous" tendencies are also discussed in a feminist ecocritical context by Christa Grewe-Volpp who argues, echoing Doreen Massey, that thinking about place in sedentary, essentialist terms leads to "the creation of fixed boundaries and the distinction between 'us' and 'them'" (2013: 222). Instead, she argues that in reality the borders of place are "constantly evolving, never permanent or fixed" (2013: 221). Axel Goodbody uses Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the *rhizome* (something that is essentially borderless and always *between*) in an ecocritical context to discuss modern "place-belonging" (2011: 89) and the "subversive and transgressive" (2011: 90) potential of the concept in order to move beyond clear borders and simple dualisms into a "dissolving [of] the boundaries" (2011: 89) between human and non-human. Humans, however, are experts in erecting borders, which is testified by the clear borders drawn between plants and animals, both human and non-human, and the perpetuation of the discourse of "us" and "them" (Mills 1999: 52) that this leads to.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, this kind of dichotomization is not present in nature (2005: 5) because, if the premise of the rhizome is accepted, it does not follow the logic of binaries but instead diverse "semiotic chains" connected to "anything other" (2005: 7), and thus, effectively produces borders that are so porous that their ontological validity may be questioned. Yet, everyday reality opposes this quintessentially postmodern concept, and borders and dichotomies are being produced culturally. Connell, citing Barrie Thorne's ethnographic research, discusses this in describing how already adolescent boys and girls split into "boys' and girls'" sports at school and thus participate in what Thorne called "borderwork" where clear gender borders are created (2009: 15–16). Stacy Alaimo has also written on this "border work" (2001: 280) concept in a film context, arguing that clear borders between human and non-human are the standard in mainstream films with a "vertical semiotics" (where the human is free to float *above* nature), and thus work to reestablish boundaries (2001: 280) whenever they have been questioned by the rhizomatic blurrings of postmodern society and its cultural practices and artefacts that threaten to compromise the solidity of hegemony-producing borders.

2 Discussion: From Conquest to Connection

This paper now discusses the binary discourse concerning the representation of adventure athletes' relationship to nature in the material. The content of the films has been divided into two initial categories according to the way this relationship is represented. This is done fully consciously of the obvious irony of investigating borders by putting up such a dichotomous construct. The findings, however, justify this approach. There exists in the material, first, a masculine discourse that consists of competition and traditionally masculine traits such as muscle, boldness, and aggression, and, second, a more feminine discourse that places more emphasis on representing the athletes' connection to nature and identification with it. In addition to discussing how borders are established in the above categories, this paper also indicates where in these films this borderwork is *not* present, but where the borders between the categories are blurred and form a distinct third category. The discussion takes into account both lexical items and visual imagery present in the films.

The material consists of six contemporary nonfiction adventure films that portray adventure athletes engaging in sports such as mountain climbing, mountain running, and ski mountaineering. All of these variations of mountain sports share common elements of danger, need of physical endurance, and the location: mountains. The films are: *A Fine Line* (2012), *Déjame Vivir* (2013), *Unbreakable* (2012), *In the High Country* (2013), and *Reel Rock 7* (2012) and *8* (2013). This particular material has been chosen for two reasons. First, all six films are very recent, and, second, very popular within the adventure sports field. The films themselves cannot be divided into neat categories based simply on the representations of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, the classification instead follows the dichotomous constructs found within them.

First under discussion are films where a masculine discourse is perpetuated. The samples are from *Unbreakable* and *Reel Rock 7*. Masculinity in these films is produced by representations of tattooed and muscular hypermasculine bodies, possession of hegemonic masculinity through mastering the challenges presented by nature using those hypermasculine bodies as agents of dominance, having high tolerance of pain, and, lexically, using war metaphors to represent nature as an object to be conquered. Alison Butler echoes Laura Mulvey in claiming that "[I]n mainstream cinema […] there is a gendered division of labour which allies the male hero with the movement of the narrative and the female figure with pleasurable spectacle" (2008: 393). This division is present also in the films discussed here: Potential female agency is thwarted from the very start, as "hyperfemininity" as a concept excludes athletic prowess, unlike hypermasculinity.

Besides visual imagery, markers of masculinity are present in these films in purely lexical terms also, starting from the very names of the films and the episodes within them. In *Unbreakable*, the title espouses notions of masculinity and the male body as something hard and unbreachable. The film narrates the events of a 100 mile mountain running race where, once the race is over, only one male athlete stands as victor while others have succumbed. He is the ultimate male: "unbreakable". Richard Dyer has discussed the borders between the male body and nature, and how, in contemporary mainstream culture, a "hard, contoured body" is more physically isolated from nature than a weaker body with less defined "contours", using the clichéd image of the male body set "against the horizon" as an example (2005: 152). He also suggests that this separateness is "important to the white male ego" (2005: 152) and, paraphrasing Klaus Theweilet, suggests that only with such a hard body can the "horror" of an amalgamation with "femininity and non-whiteness" be avoided (2005: 153).

Presented next is a sample of the lexis in the film *Reel Rock 7*. It is divided into four episodes: 1) *la Dura Dura* ("The Hard Hard"), 2) *The Shark's Fin*, 3) *Wide Boyz*, and 4) *Honnold 3.0*. Hardness and masculinity are explicit here, as is traditional conquest discourse in the form of *The Shark's Fin*. The fin in question is the name of a mountain feature in India that has a shape reminiscent of a shark's fin. In the film three Western climbers succeed in climbing it for the first time, and the film's narrative deploys a classic conquest narrative with implicit connotations to trophy hunting and possession of natural entities. Another, more complicated kind of discourse is present both in the name of the episode titled *Honnold 3.0*, and in the content of the episode, where the male superstar climber is represented as a cyborg who/that is impervious to either feminine softness, or human weaknesses such as fear, at all, and is instead an updated version of a climbing machine. Masculinity is marked implicitly in the film's visual imagery, and explicitly in its lexis. The following is a sample of the lexis in the film *Reel Rock 7*, in which the climbers "*have*", "*want"*, "*possess"*, and "*conquer"* climbs and mountains. They also have "*muscle"*, "*balls"*, and "*girlfriend[s]"*; they "*roll like rock star[s]"*; they call other, less masculine people "*candyasses*" but they themselves are "*McGyver[s]"*, and "*explorers born too late*"; nevertheless, "*the summit of the universe welcomes us [them] in*". They are also "*strong, bold, and masochistic*", they "*declare war*", are "*working class*" "*tough guys"*, "*roughnecks*", participate in "*bar fights*", and: "*fuck the pain*". The above illustrates how a distinctly aggressive masculinity in relation to nature is represented here, and how it is explicit even on the lexical level.

The second category shows the presence of a feminine discourse. In the films *Reel Rock 7* and *8*, female climbers are represented as graceful, emotional, and connected to nature. Laura Mulvey's concept of the Gaze can be used in film studies as a "political weapon" (Mulvey 1975: 57) to challenge patriarchy, and in this particular context, to investigate borderwork. The films discussed here invite the male gaze upon the female

climbers, and the women, in Mulvey's terms, act as "bearer[s] of meaning, not maker[s] of meaning" (1975: 58). In the films they are represented as closer to nature than their male counterparts. They dress "light" and look dreamily towards distant horizons with the wind in their hair. When they climb, there is no aggressive music playing in the background; instead, the camera focuses on their graceful movement up the rock. If indeed, as bell hooks claims, "power as domination reproduces itself in different locations employing similar apparatuses, strategies, and mechanisms of control" (2003: 216), then these films and, arguably, the athletes portrayed in them, are agents in borderwork that perpetuates dichotomous gender roles. Further, in *Reel Rock 8* the female climber is assigned the role of *The Spice Girl* whereas the male climbers are referred to as "*the beast*", "*The Sensei*" and "*The Swiss Machine*". To the "*Spice Girl*", traditional rock climbing is "*rather macho*", and "*you need to have balls*" to do it because "*danger is an important part*" of it. Regardless of how brave her climbing is, she is still referred to as a "*small*" and "*cute blond girl*" who is not afraid to laugh, cry, and, dance, when the mood takes her, even while she climbs. The differences in markers of femininity compared to the markers of masculinity are apparent. The reasons for this, however, are not. The fact that the films are made in close collaboration with commercial entities and thus arguably not primarily interested in social or environmental change but in increased profit through the perpetuation of existing dichotomies, seems a plausible explanation, and is discussed further in the conclusions.

Possibly the most interesting category presented here is the third one where the above borders are blurred because it opens up possibilities both for the adventure film genre, and the adventure athlete, to resist dichotomies. As suggested in the beginning of this paper, the concept of the rhizome is a potentially useful tool in investigating borderwork. However, film theorist Alison Butler has criticized its use in challenging male/female binaries, stating that, for example "female action hero[es]" cannot escape "binary gender terms", and she instead prefers Judith Butler's gender performativity theory (see, e.g. Judith Butler 1993: 12–13; 1999: 173–180) as a more suitable theoretical tool (2008: 404). This paper does not consider the two to necessarily exclude each other, however, as not all performative acts correspond with clear binaries. Richard Dyer has shown how even two archetypes of white male muscularity, Tarzan and Rambo, can, despite their clearly contoured physiques, express "closeness to nature" and blur human/non-human borders by blending into their natural surroundings (Dyer 2005: 157). This obviously does not mean that they have necessary transcended borderwork as such, as their ontological starting point is still defined by a privileged, implicitly heterosexual white masculinity, as it is with the athletes discussed here.

All of the films contain instances of border crossings, but the below discussion concerns films where they have the most potential to truly challenge dichotomous constructs instead of merely contributing to the existing binaries. The films' protagonists are over-

whelmingly male. The rare instances of women participating in the blurring of borders happens mainly through representations of them engaging in traditionally male practices in the first place, and even in those instances the transformative potential of the acts themselves is diminished by the actors being firmly placed within the confines of the culturally accepted female sex role.

Male femininity in the films is represented by the male athlete having embodied knowledge of self and body. His body is the opposite of the hypermasculine, muscled body. It is instead almost emaciated, and therefore more vulnerable and able to connect and identify with both nature and women, who are represented as companions, not possessions. In *In the High Country*, mountains are depicted explicitly as "*place[s] to investigate the intersection of landscape and movement*", where "*the borders blur between landscape and self, between human and mountain*", and where the athletes "*do what it takes to immerse [...] in the landscape*". The male protagonist of the film is represented as living a simple lifestyle out of the back of a pickup truck. He does not possess such masculine markers as a girlfriend/family/house. His vulnerability is further foregrounded through soundtrack choices, through showing him taking medicine for heart problems, and painting his blackened toenails. Also in the film *Déjame Vivir* ("Let me Live"), man's connection and identification with mountains is foregrounded, and present is a different type of relationship to women than in most of the other films here. Now the woman is shown as a companion who participates in the same endeavor as the male protagonist of the film. However, problematically, at the same time, the fit and fast men in the film are still compared to "*Ferraris*", and when the Western male protagonists cross concrete international borders to Russia and Georgia, the otherness of the East is emphasized by focusing on poorness, rusted metal buildings, decrepit toilet systems, humorously bad English skills, and calling the Russian competitor of the main protagonist a "*monster*". According to Alaimo, such othering is, through perpetuating the binary discourse of "low" and "high" a contributor to both "border work" and the establishment of a "semiotics of the vertical" (2001: 283).

The title of *A Fine Line* refers to the fine lines of mountains and landscapes, as well as to the fine lines between life and death. Here the male protagonist's connection to nature is emphasized by representing him as a world-class athlete who still trains and fuels by drinking water straight from glacial streams, picking fresh berries, cooling his cheek against cool rock, playing with birds, and chasing mountain goats for pleasure. His body is notably androgynous with less muscle than the hypermasculine climber athletes. Through comparisons between him and mountain goats his connection to nature is represented as being one of connection. Here, finally, is the arrival of a horizontal semiotics where man is represented as part of nature, not its conqueror from above.

3 Conclusions: Questions, Problematizations, and Future Ramifications

This paper showed how clear gender borders reinforce clear human/non-human borders, and how the blurring of those borders facilitates a nature relationship based on connection. From this, two pertinent questions follow: Does adventure media perpetuate existing borders, or can it challenge them? And will the male adventure athlete be able to forge a new kind of male identity and nature relationship through deconstructing some of the borders set between self, nature, and the feminine? If, as sports sociologists Brummett and Kraft claim, sports indeed are central to the building of both social and gender identities (2009: 11–13), then it is of obvious importance what kind of gendered identities, first, are being built, and, second and more urgently, *should* be built. The answer to the first question was already discussed in the context of the films. The answer to the second question is more elusive, but based on the above discussion a tentative answer can be given: ones that do not participate in the perpetuation of hierarchical dichotomies through continued borderwork but instead prefer the non-hierarchical nature of the rhizome as an operational model. If such a paradigm shift should take place, it would arguably also be in the interests of the commercial content providers to conform to the change in their product consumer profile and act in ways that would contribute to the change, not hinder it.

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II

"DESIRE TO BE CONNECTED TO NATURE": MATERIALISM AND MASCULINITY IN YOUTUBE VIDEOS BY SALOMON

by

Harri Salovaara, 2020 (forthcoming)

Men, masculinities and earth: Contending with the (M)anthropocene

DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-54486-7

“Desire to be connected to nature”: Materialism and masculinity in YouTube videos by Salomon

Harri Salovaara

A climber faces the face of the mountain, and in that interface relation unfolds, bringing each into intimacy: fraught, perilous, fleeting, familiar, suspended above the certainty of ground. Something happens in such interfacial zones … generative encounter, an erosion of secure foundation, an ethical moment of connection–forging. (Cohen, 2015, p. 16)

Material ecocritic Jeffrey J. Cohen claims that climbing a mountain can engender ethically invested moments of intimacy with nature. Taking a cue from Cohen, this chapter investigates how male climbers’ experiences of those moments are represented and branded as “green” in contemporary media. Men’s shared moments of physical intimacy with mountain nature have famously been discussed from transcendentalist thinkers such as Henry David Thoreau through to 20th century poets like Gary Snyder[1] and deep ecologists like Arne Naess. It may therefore not be so surprising that even commercial interests have picked up on this notion. Seeking to represent themselves in terms of ecological connection to nature, brands have started to produce content that is appealing also to those consumers who are tired of old clichés of *conquering* nature. Instead, they may find a discourse of *connection* to nature more appealing. Consequently, this chapter explores how contemporary mountain sports media visually and linguistically represent the haptic, that is, multisensory and kinetically and spatially aware, experiences of men in the mountains. The focus will be on the multinational outdoor gear company Salomon’s advertisement videos *Fast and Light* (2015), *Outliers* (2016), and *Kilian* (2016), produced by Salomon on its own Salomon TV YouTube channel. These three videos were selected due to them each presenting specifically male protagonists involved with the same mountain sport(s) and representing Salomon’s recent (2015–2016) branding attempts in ways that invite comparative analysis between the videos.

[1] Indeed, Snyder’s famous poem ”John Muir on Mt. Ritter” (1978) describes an incident where Muir nearly falls off a mountain but is saved through a preternatural physical-spiritual connection with it.

Famous Salomon athlete Kilian Jornet is also present in all of the videos, and this further connects them into a thematic entity. Notably, in connection to specifically male protagonists portrayed as feeling intimately connected to nature in the videos, women have traditionally been represented in mountain sports media as more intimately connected to nature than men (Salovaara, 2015). The main argument of this chapter is that Salomon, a major force in the outdoor recreation business, enhances its brand's environmental credentials by employing its athletes as embodiments of new, seemingly ecological and connected masculinities. These new masculinities appear to dispose of the hegemonic discourse of conquest of mountains and instead embody an ostensibly gentler relationship of connection to the natural environment. That connection, however, is dependent on the often environmentally harmful (and expensive) equipment that the company produces, so the true ecological impact of these new masculinities is arguably negative.

Salomon is owned by the Amer Sports group, a multinational conglomerate who claims to be committed "to reduce the environmental impacts" of its production processes but in reality has extremely meagre environmental policies in place (see Amer Sports, 2019). Salomon-sponsored athlete Kilian Jornet's work in aligning his branding with that of his sponsor illustrates the new type of discourse of intimate connection to nature[2]. In his 2015 article in *The American Alpine Journal*, Jornet explicitly frames his experiences in the mountains by his "desire to be connected to nature … with the fewest layers separating me from my environment" (Jornet, 2015). He attributes his ability to move quickly in the mountains to the lightweight equipment and apparel that he uses, and that the readership knows his sponsor provides him. This he labels as a "new way of attaining[3] the mountain … without materiel [*sic*] that separates us from the land" (Jornet 2015), a seemingly life-affirming direction but nevertheless irrevocably tied to demands of extreme physical fitness as well as the financial means to pursue one's passions in the mountains. Importantly, the demands of fitness and financial means are tied to questions of able-bodiedness, class, ethnicity, and also, since mountain sports often take place in land appropriated for recreational use from indigenous cultures, questions of environmental justice (Evans, 2002;

[2] For reasons of linguistic pragmatics, I will use the words "nature" and "environment" throughout this chapter.

[3] Catalan native speaker Jornet's original meaning may have changed in the translation of this text, and I interpret the word "attain" to refer to "reaching" or "approaching" the mountain. Other interpretations are also possible, including ones implying conquest.

Ray, 2017; Salovaara & Rodi-Risberg, 2019; Wheeler, E.A., 2013). However, discussion on these issues is rare within mountain sports communities, let alone in mountain sports media relying on profit.

The affects of climbers and mountaineers who in concrete terms touch, temporarily inhabit, and move on rocks and glaciers have so far rarely been foci of research, but Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy's book *Contact: Mountain Climbing and Environmental Thinking* (2008) brings those affects, and the narratives that mountain climbers themselves produce, to the foreground. McCarthy introduces three prominent discourses in mountaineering narratives: "conquest," "caretaking," and "connection". A "conquest" discourse may be seen to reinforce hegemonic patriarchal power structures and, as such, to be a wholly negative response towards the mountains, and the environment in general, and the "caretaking" discourse is tied to modes of thinking that see nature as a resource to be protected for human use. But, significantly, the Salomon videos discussed here specifically attempt to frame their male athletes' relationships with the implicitly ecological notion of a multisensory "connection" and identification to nature. Significantly, this is on the surface level congruent with recent work on ecological masculinities, especially as it is informed by deep ecology: Martin Hultman and Paul M. Pulé stress the importance of valuing "psychospiritual relationships with other-than-human nature" to let us "know, feel, trust, and identify with Earth as part of ourselves" (2018, p. 226). Pulé has also advocated ending men's "self-aggrandisement" and "isolation" from women and nature (2013, p. 27), and Greta Gaard (2014, p. 236) in turn suggested sustainable practices such as cycling and gardening as means to directly connect men with the earth. Notably, intimate connection to nature is not characteristic of traditional masculine socialisations but is more frequently associated with women (Twine, 2001; Wörsching, 2007).

This chapter will proceed by discussing the videos' portrayal of Jornet and the other Salomon-sponsored athletes' intimate, connected, relationships to nature as well as the masculinities they portray as follows. Immediately below, the section titled "Branded Masculinity" investigates the relationship of Salomon's "green" branding and masculinity. According to Susan M. Alexander (2003), particular styles of "branded masculility" (p. 551) promoted in advertising media socialize men into specific gender performances by means of "[v]isual representations" (p. 540). As sports and branding expert Kimberly S. Miloch points out, if visual branding is done skillfully, the customer buys a company's product not to

"satisfy a particular need" but to buy into the "meaning" that the, arguably incidental, product represents (Miloch, 2010, p. 4). Following the discussion on branded masculinity is an analysis of the three videos, discussing how Salomon's marketing videos represent the athletes' relations to nature in each of them individually. The analysis notes especially the videos' escapist notions of freedom and wildness as well as their seemingly ecological notions of simplicity, intimacy, and tactile connection. This analysis is followed by a theoretically and politically oriented discussion that brings together material feminist and phenomenological research as it relates specifically to the empirical analysis of masculinities and mountain nature.

"Branded masculinity": The male body in contact with nature (Presented by Salomon®)

Salomon markets itself as a producer of lightweight equipment that enables "fast and light," "cutting edge" outdoor pursuits. These pursuits are not compatible with traditional images of hypermasculine men "conquering" mountains in military fashion, carrying heavy equipment and being aided by excessive amounts of gear and technology. This contradiction is important for how Salomon positions itself in the field of outdoor sports. To promote sales to as wide a customer base as possible, the videos acquiesce to changes in what Raewyn Connell refers to as hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) and its relation to production; masculinity in the twenty-first century is no more defined solely by what a man *does*, that is, produces, but by what he consumes (Alexander, 2003; Barber and Bridges, 2017), and what Salomon is offering its customer base is, in Barber and Bridges's terms, "transformation through consumption" (2017, p. 39). In terms of the success of Salomon's marketing campaign, their new direction in branding seems financially successful, as their net sales have increased by over 100 percent since 2010 (Amer Sports, 2017) This naturally also reflects the general rise of the popularity of outdoors sports but may also reflect how successfully the videos position the viewer as a consumer ready to buy more things (Breivik, 2010).

The cultural coding of the female as part of nature and the male as part of culture is firmly established in ecocritical theory but men engaging in intimate connections with nature run against that settled dichotomy. These videos, however, show the male athlete as ostensibly part of nature, and nature itself endowed with a "moving energy" (Salomon TV, 2015). To enhance sales of its lightweight apparel and shoes by acknowledgeing changes in

masculinities, Salomon's marketing material seems to sever the ties between hegemonic masculinity, conquest of nature, and outdoor equipment. Somewhat similarly, although in a different context, the recent Gillette advertisement attempts to address changing men and masculinities by challenging toxic masculinity (Gillette, 2019). The misogynist and heterosexist backlash aimed at the video also serves as a useful marker of male resistance to notions of change (Benwell, 2019). Instead of products for conquest-oriented masculinities, Salomon offers products suitable for a new kind of "hybrid masculinity" (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014), an athletic yet sensitive masculinity that no longer isolates itself from nature in heavy boots, thick layers of clothing, and an array of technologically sophisticated equipment but instead professes a desire for intimate contact with it. It should be noted that although the videos proclaim that it is preferable to eschew isolating oneself from nature, the purchasing of the exceedingly expensive lightweight apparel that Salomon markets is inextricably linked to what Greta Gaard calls "elite consumption patterns" and therefore only available to a select minority of the wealthy population in the Global North (2017a, p. 163).

In Salomon's videos the male athlete is, in the McCarthian sense, in intimate *connection* with the mountain environment and is, at least implicitly, concerned with environmental issues. This is a rather new departure for the brand, as they have previously not been known as an environmental leader in the field. However, their new brand narrative is decidedly more environmentally oriented. *Guilt Trip*[4] (2016), for example, where glaciologist Alun Hubbard is attached to a group of skiers in an attempt to study climate change, and where the sponsored athletes each in turn commiserate on global warming and their own complicity in it, is an explicitly environmentalist short film with an almost exaggeratedly masculine cast including only one woman. As Ourahmoune et al. (2014) have shown, there is a connection between hegemonic masculinity and environmental destruction but also some hope in sustainable brand narratives to provide a "prism through which ideas of inequality and injustice can be analyzed and fought" (2014, p. 1). However, reliance on a capitalist model, no matter how "green," to solve environmental ills, is precarious at best, and Martha Wörsching (2007) has criticized purportedly "green" outdoor brands for being inherently "unsustainable" while at the same time providing men a fantasy of "escape from an all-too-complex urban social reality into a natural wilderness of primordial innocence" (p.

[4] *Guilt Trip* is mentioned here to provide context for Salomon's positioning as an environmentally credible brand but is not discussed further.

219). John Tallmadge sees similar escapism in James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking* series. He discusses how it represents nature as a "scene of heroic action" for wild men whose aim may be "meat or discovery, victory or insight" but where nature is perpetually set against the protagonist who is only moving through it (Tallmadge, 2004, p. 25). Tallmadge also discusses mountain climbing, which he sees as one potential positive male response to nature. Tallmadge views mountains as "an arena where manhood could be achieved without violence" (2004, p. 20). However, mountain nature is here implicitly reduced to an arena where vague notions of masculinity are to be actualized in, and the "intrinsic value" of nature in itself is harnessed in service of this, both in *Leatherstocking* and the videos discussed here (Naess, 2008, p. 28). The fantasy of male escapism from urban society is also a recurring feature in the Salomon videos, although contrasting the natural environment with the urban environment is only implicit. More explicitly declared are the oft-used tropes of simplicity, freedom and wildness, as well as both physical and spiritual contact with nature, including concretely touching and feeling the mountains.

The Salomon videos discussed here are approximately 15 minutes long: *Fast and Light* runs for 15 minutes and 18 seconds, *Outliers* for 12 minutes and 26 seconds, and *Kilian* for 13 minutes and 55 seconds. They are artfully crafted in such a way that product placement is done relatively discreetly. *Fast and Light*, *Outliers*, and *Kilian* all share the protagonists' stated desire to move quickly and in a lightweight, intimate manner on mountains, and, predictably, feature Salomon gear in a prominent role in fulfilling that desire. The presence of Salomon's most famous athlete, *National Geographic*'s "Adventurer of the Year 2014 and 2018" Kilian Jornet, is another common thread in the films. In *Fast and Light*, he frequently appears as a (mostly) silent figure shown running in the mountains as a kind of embodiment of the "fast and light," minimalist philosophy promulgated by the film's "elder statesmen" protagonists, Bruno Brunod, Fabio Meraldi, and Mario Giacometti. In *Outliers*, Jornet's presence is only alluded to; the film advertises the products that his active social media presence has promoted but never actually shows Jornet himself, only his teammate Michel Lanne and mentor Jordi Tosas. These two films effectively work as the first two parts of a trilogy that concludes with *Kilian*, a film explicitly about Jornet and his relationship to the mountains.

Jornet's athletic personality is thoroughly tied to his performances in the mountains. These performances, including extremely fast ascents of the biggest mountains on earth, are

often timed, and they are well-known in the mountain sports community and partly among a wider audience. His masculinity, however, is not that of the typical "jock" nor that of a rugged outdoorsman for whom "loving nature" is, in Timothy Morton's words, "enslaved to masculine heteronormativity" (2010, p. 279). Although Jornet certainly possesses traits such as outdoor skills and an able body that Morton (2010, p. 279) gibes, as well as being obviously competitive and fit, qualities that Gaard sees as being negatively implicated in male dominance (2014, p. 227), his thin frame, soft features, and outspoken love of the mountains destabilize possible kneejerk reactions to an athletic, competitive sporting persona. As Garry Whannel has shown, both the male sport star's perceived morality (in Jornet's case his seeming espousal of some environmentalist ideas) as well as looks is decisive in "commodifying" them as marketable personalities (194, p. 2003). Further, Whannel has discussed how various masculinities, being as they are in constant flux, are always either experiencing "declining significance" or alternatively "emergent importance," and how companies are in constant search of "figures with market appeal and dynamic images with positive connotations" (2003, pp. 29, 37). Attaching to an ecologically aware masculinity that can in certain communities be of "emergent importance" seems like a logical strategy for a company that aims to sell its wares to a consumer base that can be expected to be at least superficially interested in such relatively novel forms of masculinity. This new, connected masculinity is depicted in the material as wishing for intimate and caring connection to nature but this wish is in reality simultaneously in tension with actual material harm done to nature through the consumerism implicitly advocated in the videos.

Fast and Light is the first of the three videos analyzed here. Origin stories are attractive to consumers, and *Fast and Light* lays the foundations for Salomon's position at the forefront of fast mountain movement. The benefits of moving fast in the mountains are not explicated in the video but experienced viewers may empathise with alpinist Colin Haley's justification for moving fast and light: "[c]arrying little and moving fast is to emulate the experience of a wild, roaming animal … I am more envious of a lynx or a fox than I am of a mule" (Haley quoted in Ives, 2016, p. 11). Fast and light movement in the mountains is also preferable from a practitioner's viewpoint in terms of being exposed for less time to the natural hazards encountered in the mountains. Fast movement is also inherently different from a kinetic point of view as compared to slower movement, and demands different kind of presence from the practitioner, which in turn produces a different affective response.

Fast and Light depicts (s)aged, thoughtful, and sensitive men who, in idyllic pastoral settings share with the viewer their views on mountains and nature. The film's protagonist Bruno Brunod, Fabio Meraldi, and Marino Giacometti are "skyrunning" (mountain running as branded by the International Skyrunning Federation) legends, and the principal theme of the film is an entanglement of the beauty of nature and how that beauty is attainable by using the lightweight, simple, equipment that Salomon provides. The beginning of the video uses shots of bright sunshine high up on the mountains alternating with shots of ambient mist down in the valley, and the initial protagonist, Marino Giacometti, is symbolically interlinked to mountain nature by likening him to an Alpine chough who is shown in close-up flying against a mountain backdrop while Giacometti is running up the mountain.

Predictably, Salomon running shoes are an essential part of the process of pursuing unity with nature: for Giacometti,"to see a beautiful mountain," awakens a desire to climb it "by the simplest means possible using my legs and a pair of shoes". Moreover, for Bruno Brunod, going to the mountains seems to arouse a feeling deep inside him. He declares that there is virtue in simply putting "your shoes on" and go[ing] into the mountains. *Try* the trails, *look* at the mountains, *listen* to the marmots, *watch* the mountain goats, *feel* the stillness of the mountain lakes, the silence" (emphases mine). *Fast and Light* and the other videos discussed here promote the notion of mountain sports being a *multisensory* practice that allows for a direct meeting with nonhuman nature through seeing and feeling. Throughout Brunod's soliloquy, the film plays images of Jornet wearing a pair of red and black high-end Salomon running shoes while running in the mountains. Jornet is frequently present in the background imagery of the film, which uses his star power to put the words of the "elders" into a marketable context. Mountain nature in the film is a source of strength, and seemingly apart from the fragility of the nature of the lowlands. Fabio Meraldi extols it in terms reminiscent of deep ecological thought as being "a moving energy … the true strength of the Earth," a strength that is possible to understand only "by running, by feeling the energy that it emenates." Arne Naess discussed climbing, and its "simple joy of rhythm and movement … and the appreciation of lichens, rocks and stones, flowers, animals, the sky" rather similarly to Meraldi but, importantly, contrasted his climbing activities to those "risk- and competition-colored images of climbing propagated by the mass media" (Naess, 2008, p. 60). This implies that personal experiences of feeling connected to nature in the mountains

are tainted by commercial interests that attempt to frame such experinces in service of more sales.

As discussed above, Alexander (2003) and Wörsching (2007) have investigated corporate marketing interests and varieties of masculinity in their works. Alexander recognizes the corporations' desire of "maintaining some aspects of traditional gender roles to ensure continued markets for their products," but maintains "they also serve as agents of social change by creating new consumer markets" (p. 536). This relies on a market where consumers are provided "with the correct answer or product in articles and advertisements" (p. 551). Wörsching, in her analysis, draws an unambigious dividing line between the kinds of consumer marketing directed at men and women. She asserts that marketing of outdoor and mountaineering gear to women highlights the sport's "pleasurable, healthy, playful, nurturing, and sustainable" qualities while marketing to men addresses them as "real men" and highlights masculine traits such as conquering and battling as well as "risk taking, and (latently violent) domination of the body and the natural environment" through which a man's "hegemonic status" is reinforced and (re)claimed (p. 216). As of this writing, Wörsching's analysis is only a decade old but this type of masculinity seems already outdated, at least in *Fast and Light,* and also in light of the Gillette advertisement discussed previously. This hints at commercial operators, quite perceptively, pursuing changes in masculinity in hopes of increased profits.

In *Outliers*, the second video of Salomon's "trilogy", Salomon athletes Michel Lanne and Jordi Tosas further advance Salomon's marketing strategy of simplicity, connection, and lightweight apparel and footwear. The film illustrates the change in addressing (male) consumers and mountain sports enthusiasts. But, although the men featuring in the film are again portrayed in very sensitive and empathetic terms, expressing these seemingly feminine traits is arguably easier for them because they also profit from certain hypermasculine traits that they implicitly embody. Lanne, for example, is depicted flying in helicopters in his work as a mountain rescue professional, and the film takes advantage of established Hollywood clichés of showing slowmotion images of high octane and high tech work. Although rescue work could be aligned with the important goal of increasing men's care towards others (Hultman and Pulé, 2018), this care in *Outliers* is framed in masculinist imagery. However, as in the other videos, hegemonic notions of masculinity are balanced by expressed softer sentiments: Lanne states that to him, a life in the mountains is "simple," and running is a

"truly humble" way to approach them. For him, mountains represent "reality," and are "the driving force of my life,"a force that he can feel in his "heart" and "guts". His mountain man personality is throughout the film contrasted by showing him amidst an idyllic family man scene with his young daughter and his newfound maturity of approaching the mountains in less risky ways than before. This is part of his "freedom," something "we all have," Salomon convinces us, if we only invest in the right brand.

For Tosas, the other protagonist in the film, going to the mountains in a "fast and light" style "respects the mountain" because, he claims, it is inherently "much gentler on the mountain." In the film, he further explicates his philosophy of fast mountain travel in terms suggestive of sensuality, even sexuality: "[f]ast and light is a connection with the mountain. It's a relationship between it and you. I can really feel the stones. I can feel the snow. I can really touch the mountain all the time. There is no technology in the way." Conveniently, the excessive amount of fossil-fuel driven research and development that went into the making of Salomon's lightweight gear is backgrounded here, as is the fact that Salomon's high tech gear enables Tosas to feel this connection. However, Tosas's sensual description of his practice could also be read in ecosexual terms. Ecosexuals, as defined in the *Ecosex Manifesto*, strive to love the earth "madly, passionately, and fiercely," to "caress rocks" and "save the mountains" (Stephans & Sprinkle, 2014). Sarah Ensor is appropriately sceptical of some ecosexuals' "green hedonism" being capable to truly address environmental ills, and Tosas's intimate connection to the mountain is therefore best approached critically (Ensor, 2018, p. 151). In *Outliers,* Tosas describes his connection to the mountain as "natural evolution," and the film's ending positions Salomon as a pathfinder in this endeavor: "we're just at the beginning". Even though Jornet is absent in the film, he is still implicitly present in it via the products that the film promotes, his contact with the people in the film, and the mountain landscape of the Mont Blanc Massif where he has both built his celebrity status within the mountain sports community but also become the emdodiment of intimate, not only discursive but bodily connection to the mountains[5].

[5] Ironically, Jornet himself is keenly aware of how he is being used by his sponsors: "[we] are now on the era of personal branding, we are all not any more only *a person* but brands who need to act to be liked on a global social world. Myself the first thing I do when I finish a activity is to post my trainings on movescount and Strava, tell my feelings on Twitter, post a nice picture on Instagram and say something stupid and *existential* on Facebook" (2015, grammatical errors in original). Further, a recent film of him depicts him divulging self-

The third video of the "trilogy" discussed here is *Kilian*. The film portrays a curious double entendre: on the one hand, it allows Jornet, the main (and male) protagonist to again express his appreciation of the mountains as a "playground" where he can "feel wild," but on the other hand that privilege to experience the mountains in this "wild" way is implicitly enabled by his girlfriend Emelie Forsberg, a highly accomplished athlete in her own right, but who is in this film shown in a domestic role as a gardener and cycling supporter of her boyfriend in his grand mountain adventure. As an ironic antithesis to Greta Gaard's wish for ecomasculine men to engage in cycling and gardening activities (2014, p. 236), this role in *Kilian* still falls to the woman. The film seems to imply that a man cares for the mountains, not for the domestic sphere.

To sum up, all of the films discussed here are thoroughly depoliticized in gender issues, and therefore only seem to reinforce old notions of mountains as playgrounds for masculine men, even in the presence of recent materials showing women competing with men in the mountains (Dream Lens Media, 2019). There are of course no grounds to doubt Jornet's caring extending beyond the mountains, but the implied message of the film does not support such an analysis nor support interpreting the films' values in either profeminist or ecologically congruent ways. This is not to diminish the personal practices of the men in the videos, many of whom seem to genuinely connect with mountain nature, but on a systemic level, the videos still rely on perpetuating capitalist notions of mountains as a "playground" where successful and affluent males can temporarily retire for some "me time." From here, I discuss how to theoretically understand the videos' claims of intimate connection with the mountains, and what to make of those claims politically.

Discussion: Ecological masculinities and material feminisms

Much of the grounding for new/ecocritical/feminist/vibrant materialisms[6] relies on the biological notion that nonhuman bacteria and viruses constitute a significant proportion of the

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destructive thoughts and feeling "dirty" in part because of his work as a professional, sponsored athlete (Montaz-Rosset & Serra, 2018).

[6] All materialisms within the environmental humanities rely on feminist thought and the work in Alaimo and Hekman's *Material Feminisms* (2008) so the term *material feminisms* is

human body and genome and influence our actions (Bennett, 2010; National Institutes of Health, 2012). Therefore, acknowledging the agential power of these entities is at the heart of feminist materialisms (Oppermann, 2016). Pertinently to the current discussion of mountain climbers, Cohen argues that the act of climbing (concretely, the act of touching rock as a climber) enables the climber to feel in nonhuman nature a "dynamism" (Cohen, 2015, p. 11). In *Ecological Masculinities* (2018), Hultman and Pulé discuss the material feminist discourses and their theoretical basis and, drawing on Greta Gaard (2017b), lament their hitherto emphasis on theory instead of political action. Further, I have argued elsewhere that to dismantle Trumped up (pun intended) and harmful boundaries between men, women, and nature, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *rhizome*, which forms the network where different "assemblages," that is, "ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant material" (Bennett, 2010, p. 23) appear, would be a useful concept in studying men's relationships to nature (Salovaara, 2015). While the usefulness of "rhizome-theory" to material feminisms is often acknowledged (Kerridge, 2017, p. xv), the theoretical understanding of male-female-nature "entanglements" (Iovino and Oppermann, 2012, p. 76) should not prevent critically examining why it is precisely men in the global North who are disproportionately complicit in environmental destruction (Pease, 2016). Martin Hultman states this complicity quite simply: "men are the big problem" (Hultman, 2016, p. 2). Further, privileged men who have the disposable income to buy expensive and resource-intensive outdoor gear and travel internationally to feel "connected to nature," indulge in acts that are arguably directly harmful to the environment, whatever their stated motivations. As Serpil Oppermann and Serenella Iovino point out, humanity is not a unified monolith all equally implicated in the environmental crises but gender, ethnicity, and class, among other things, all affect the level of our complicity (2017).

Although white, middle class men may be seen to be the main culprits in causing global environmental destruction (Hultman and Pulé, 2018), it could theoretically still be possible to change the narrative by engaging men directly with nature, not as an "environment" nor a "natural resource" but as a place to feel connected to earth. According to Cohen, the physical sensation of touching rock may for some individuals cause an "epistemological shift" that reduces ideas of human singularity and separateness from nature,

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mostly used in this chapter in favor of, for example, *vibrant matter*, *new materialisms*, or *material ecocriticism*.

to nonsense (2015, p. 43). This is not meant to bestow an intentionality to stone but instead to recognize the concrete, material effects it may have on humans (Cohen, 2015, p. 46). Alan McNee discusses mountain climbers' experiences of connection in the mountains and argues that they are

> primarily embodied, physical ones, gained through the act of climbing rather than the act of pure seeing … an encounter with mountain landscapes in which the human subject experiences close physical contact —sometimes painful or dangerous contact, sometimes exhilarating and satisfying, but always involving some kind of transcendent experience brought about through physical proximity to a rock face, ice wall, or snow slope. It is haptic rather than tactile, because it involves not just skin contact but sensations felt through the whole body, and very often the sensation of movement through the landscape and awareness of one's own position within that landscape. (McNee, 2014, pp. 12–14)

In other words, the mountain affects how the man perceives his place in the world. Oppermann sees nature's power of "making things happen" as congruent with the human ability to construct narratives of how things in the world happen. She argues that matter is "storied" and that the effects of climate-induced glacial retreat, for example, may be seen as "stories about the earth's changing climate, blending global warming with political anxieties and social changes" (2016, pp. 89, 95). Therefore, what kinds of stories matter and are told, matters.

Many of the significant assumptions in the material feminist discourses were already vocalized in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy (1993; 1995) more than five decades before "the material turn was well established in cultural (eco)criticism" (Iovino and Oppermann, 2012, p. 75). Further, Iovino states that expressing joy in simply "feeling" and "touching the mountain" concedes how information flows "through bodies" and directly affects the experiencing subject (2016, p. 21). Phenomenological philosophy in this context is applicable because it acknowledges the materiality of our bodies and thus allows for the understanding that, as eco-phenomenologist Monika Langer puts it, "consciousness is thoroughly corporeal" and "subjectivity" can therefore never be "distinct from bodily being"

(2003, p. 116). According to Langer, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy provides a "nonreductionistic, nonanthropocentric" awareness of nonhuman nature that allows for various ethically viable reactions to nonhuman nature (2003, p. 116). In this eco-phenomenological view, nature is no longer a "stage" but "an actor" (Klaver, 2003, p. 160). Just as the materiality of the human is recognized, so is the coeval agency and "specific materiality of stones" whose agency does not diminish by the "cultural articulations" that humans confer *on* them or by the "practices" that humans engage in *with* them (Klaver, 2003, p. 161). In *Eye and Mind* (1993), Merleau-Ponty even claims that the body can only exist when there is a specific type of meeting, a certain sparkle, between the one who sees and touches and the one who or, *what*, is seen and touched (p. 15). Representations of such intimate and embodied meetings are frequent and foregrounded in the Salomon videos discussed here.

Axel Goodbody claims that the root cause of the current ecological crisis is our "alienation from the body and our feelings" (p. 66). In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1995), Merleau-Ponty claims that to *be* a body, *any* body, is "to be intervolved" with nature and its processes (p. 82). In this view, the "affective life" of the human body and the relation between the body and the rest of the world is that of "a system" where the body and "the world together form a human-nonhuman assemblage of mutually constitutive subjectivity" (Merleau-Ponty, 1995, pp. 154, 203). Human perception of nature is for Merleau-Ponty thus not a prerequisite of the existence of nature. However, for him the "meaning" of nonhuman entities such as "[a]n unclimbable rock face, a large or small, vertical or slanting rock" lies in the meaning that the human actor projects on them, and this is the particular "significance in things" that Merleau-Ponty grants nonhuman nature (Merleau-Ponty 1995, p. 436). In Bennett's terms, this may be seen as the assemblage of the human endeavoring to climb the mountain and the individualistic, more separate, "thing-power" of the mountain itself (2010, p. 2).

To illustrate the connection between climber and mountain, both Bennett and McCarthy refer to Thoreau's famous recounting of his ascent of Mount Katahdin (*Ktaadn* in Thoreau's spelling). Arriving on the summit of the mountain, Thoreau feels an "uncanny

presence" of wildness[7] (Bennett, 2010, p. 2) that McCarthy interprets not as a feeling of terror but as one of "connection," a "breakdown of the human/nature binary" (McCarthy, 2008, p. 12). Feeling in awe on the summit of Katahdin, Thoreau momentarily identifies more with genteel society than the "men nearer of kin to rocks and to wild animals" whom he envisions inhabiting the mountain (Thoreau, 2008, p. 180). For a short, fleeting moment, he experiences an epiphany where "this matter" of his own body has suddenly "become so strange" to him that he seems to feel nearly possessed by the material world when he is finally in "*Contact! Contact!*" with the "*actual* world" (p. 181, emphases in original). To acknowledge the strangeness and implicit "darkness" of connecting with a mountain, in Morton's terms, a "*strange stranger*," is, however, arguably easier in literary texts than in the commercial content discussed here (Morton, 2016, p. 160, 18, emphasis in original). The nature of commercial media dictates that aesthetic values in Salomon's videos are always subordinate to monetary values. Highlighting the "weirdness" (Morton, 2016, p. 7) of human-nonhuman encounters would most likely be counterproductive for the purposes of Salomon's marketing scheme.

It is safe to say that commitment to gender equality is not a salient feature of any of the films but that they do portray a sense of commitment to mountain nature. As such, they can be interpreted as expressing attitudes of biophilia and geophilia, both of which share a resemblance though the former is more committed to expressing solidarity to biotic others and the latter to abiotic "life" forms. In Stephen R. Kellert's (1993) usage, biophilia expresses an ethical basis of human-nonhuman relations whereas Cohen enunciates geophilia as a "forging of alliance and embrace" with the earth's very crust and the stones that it consists of (Cohen, 2015, p. 252). Kellert explains the "biophilia hypothesis" (Kellert and Wilson 1993) to consist of nine biological ways of relating to nonhuman nature: utlilitarian, naturalistic, ecologistic-scientific, aesthetic, symbolic, humanistic, moralistic, dominionistic, and negativistic. Simon C. Estok has been vocal in his criticism of the hypothesis because he sees that it "fails to explain why environmental crises are worsening" and also fails to "encompass the complex range of ethical positions that humanity generally displays toward the natural environment" while also falsely producing "a single point" instead of "a spectrum condition"

[7] See, for example, Robert Bly's *Iron John* (1990) for more on Jungian male archetypes and how the mythopoetic men's movement attempts to access men's wildness through experiences in nature.

that Estok sees to more appropriately describe current human attitudes towards nature (2017, p. 10). Instead of biophilia as a useful heuristic, Estok offers his concept of "ecophobia" because it better captures the "hatred" and "fear" that much of humanity seems to feel towards nature (2017, p. 12).

Estok is especially critical of including a "dominionistic" attitude, "the desire to master the natural world" (Kellert, 1993, p. 56) as one form of biophilia because he sees it as continuing a discourse of nature as something to be "conquered" (Estok, 2017, p. 10). However, according to Kellert, biophilia may also manifest as a "naturalistic" relationship towards nature, and this "tendency may simplistically be regarded as the satisfaction derived from direct contact with nature" and the "intimate experience" that is available for those who venture open–mindedly into nature. He specifically sees "climbing" as one possible activity through which such direct contact may be experienced (Kellert, 1993, p. 46). In Salomon's videos, the "dominionistic" (Kellert, 1993, p. 56) attitude that Estok criticizes is not apparent on the surface level. They do not follow a discourse of conquest, and do not seem to regard nature as an adversary. Bestowing a certain agency to nonhuman nature and expressing a desire to be intimately connected to nature are seemingly on the biophilic end of the biophilia-ecophobia spectrum yet promoting industrially produced outdoor equipment, which through its manufacturing and distribution processes is unambigiously complicit in destroying the very places where that equipment is to be used, they participate in a process not dissimilar to any (other) ecophobic human practice.

When famed veteran mountain climber Conrad Anker was recently interviewed, he lamented the silence on climate change and environmental issues among mainstream sports personalities. Indeed, although some professional sports organizations and their athletes may occasionally take political stances against, for example, racism, active and vocal insistence on the importance of fighting against climate change or biodiversity loss are exceedingly rare. Anker further surmised that due to mountain climbers having a "direct connection" to nature and the mountains, that connection "permeates who we are," and perhaps enables more realistic perspectives on the supposed exceptionality of humans and, indeed, allows for the conspicuously materialistic observation that "we *are* carbon" (Ives, 2017, emphasis mine). This may be so but, again, despite this privileged position or, perhaps precisely because of that, (male) mountain athletes are not flocking to the defence of the environment. This implies internalized indulgence: Since mountain athletes rely on their privilege to adventure

in the mountains, especially professional mountain athletes may be reluctant to voice even implicit criticism towards their sponsors, regardless of their sponsor being implicated in environmental harm. So, even though mountain athletes rely on the environment not changing so drastically that they would not be able to indulge in their mountain pursuits, their very practice contributes to said change.

Although the desire to conquer is sadly alive and well in many mountaineers and the discourse widespread in malestream media, according to McCarthy[8], there are also many mountaineers who actively denounce an acquisitive "conquest" mode of approaching mountains and instead align with a "caretaking" attitude towards them. The caretaking discourse, as discussed by McCarthy, is based on environmentalist attitudes, but problematically, also implicitly treats the mountain environment as a "resource" (2008, p. 108) to be managed. The caretaking discourse is congruent with how Bennett has framed "environmentalism" as part of a green consumerist movement (Bennett, 2010, pp. 111, 114). Bennett bases her analysis of different ecological attitudes to earlier work by Guattari and comes to the profound conclusion that environmentally-minded individuals in fact act out the roles of consumers bestowed upon them by a powerful capitalist ideological "assemblage" that produces a certain "psychosocial self" that sees environmentalism as a viable personal project of self-actualization (Bennett, 2010, p. 113). Such a psychosocial self, having had their "bodily affect" appropriated into a green consumer self can act in ways that are both consistent with their environmentalist self and the capitalist system without feeling the kind of cognitive dissonance that engaging in an implicitly hostile conquest discourse would produce (Bennett, 2010, p. 114).

Extending Marx's famous parable that production both "creates the consumer" as well as "the manner of consumption" to mountain climbing, (Marx, 2005, p. 92), the circular assemblage of the Salomon production company and brand becomes clearer: by producing the "need" to move quickly in the mountains, Salomon creates a customer base looking for certain kind of products, and it then becomes financially viable to use environmental

[8] McCarthy's findings are significant because they run counter both to some male mountaineers' hypermasculine posturing as conquerors of mountains as well as mainstream media's uncritical reiteration of such attitudes. My personal experience interviewing mountain athletes for a research project supports McCarthy's notion that ecological attitudes are more prevalent in actual practicioners of the sport than mainsteam media reporting would indicate.

"resources" to make the product that the newly created customer base then may use in a "natural resource" such as the mountains. As Stacy Alaimo claims, green, environmentalist attitudes become "just another consumer choice" available for the environmentally conscientious consumer (2010, p. 92). Further, Bennett argues that if we humans accept the discourse of being consumers instead of political actors, then we will not be able to stage truly alternative and effective resistance to capitalist, profit-driven consumerism that merely poses as "green" while at the same time being implicated in the destruction of the very greenery it claims to be devoted to (2010, pp. 113–114).

To offer an alternative to a consumption-based attitude to the environment, Bennett suggests that espousing "vital materialism" instead of environmentalism would allow us to see ourselves as *part of* various natural processes and not as *consumers of* a resource; in other words, to live not "on earth" but "as earth" (Bennett, 2010, p. 111). According to Bennett, to "horizontalize" and thus reframe human-nonhuman relations in such a way could alter our current, destructive, practices where especially the populations in the global North continue to "produce and consume in the same violently reckless ways" as before (pp. 112–113). In other words, though environmentalist consumers have a "psychosocial self" that resists the exploitation of natural "resources" and is thus obviously preferable to an overtly exploitative mindset, in Bennett's view environmentalist consumers are nevertheless not materialistic *enough* to accomplish a change in human-nonhuman relations. Instead, the perpetuation of the imagery of *man* raised above and apart from nature as its consumer continues to contribute to what Alaimo has termed "semiotics of the vertical" (2001, p. 283). However, Salomon's recent marketing videos, at least on their surface, resist such simple semiotics, and Kilian Jornet's personal athlete brand, for example, has for several years aligned with a more "horizontal semiotics" where human-nonhuman relations are presented more in the form of an assemblage, or, rhizome than as a vertically aligned hierarchical structure (Salovaara 2015, p. 83).

McCarthy's work on mountain climbing and the environment would seem to support Bennett and Alaimo's views. Drawing on thinkers such as Thoreau, John Muir, and Terry Gifford, he discusses the long tradition in mountain climbing of seeing nature not as something hostile to conquer or something feminine and inert to manage but profoundly as a companion and subjectivity with which "climbers are fundamentally intertwined" (McCarthy, 2008, p. 169). In this discourse of multisensory "connection" climbers are "connected" to

their environment, in tune with "the overlap between the human and the world," and can *hear* "the ice speak" (p. 169). According to McCarthy, climbing provides an ideal vehicle to move past Cartesian dualisms: the "intense physical attention" that the climber must extend to "ice or rock" forces an individual to "experience nature" directly and to "know it as more than the passive resource our culture of consumption" represents it as (p. 170). Such sentiment is, perhaps surprisingly, fairly prevalent among contemporary professional climbers who insist on not being "adrenaline junkies" hooked on ever bigger and more dangerous challenges in the mountains but instead seeking an "intimate relationship" with nature (Caldwell, 2017). Even so, the individual ecological sentimens of climbers and athletes, laudable as they may be, remain largely depoliticized and thus do not offer obvious departure points for widespread change.

Summary: "Men are still the big problem"

In this chapter I have explored the emergence of new representations of connected masculinities through the lens of mountaineering and mountain sports by employing theories of material feminisms and phenomenological philosophy to investigate how Salomon's commercial videos represent the embodied experiences of male mountaineers "in nature." The key discovery was that although the videos do present glimpses of intimate male connection and caring towards nature, they do not in themselves offer very useful guideposts for what Hultman and Pulé describe as "masculine ecologisation" (2018, p. 37). However, as the popularity of outdoor sports keeps rising, and correspondigly the revenues for companies producing equipment for those sports increase, the role of men and masculinities "in nature" is also inevitably changing. This would offer willing companies an avenue to engage with broader fronts of new masculinities but since companies operating within the capitalist system rely on ever-increasing sales and production, that avenue also seems inherently problematic.

In an attempt to enhance the brand's environmental credibility and, perhaps to "naturalize" the gear that it sells, Salomon attempts to display the male athletes and their bodies as *part* of nature, not *above* nature: The videos represent the male body's interaction with the material nonhuman world with which it is in physical contact as a "natural" activity for men in tune with their bodies and its surroundings. That said, the visually most evocative

imagery in the videos still often relies on cinematic shots of men skipping across knife-edge ridges silhouetted against the sky. The most germane question that follows from this is whether we can infer based on the above discussion that the commercial videos represent a more general trend towards increasd connection in man-nature relationships or whether they merely reflect the company's clever and inclusive branding. Sadly, the latter seems more likely.

Although there are weak positive signs of changing masculinities in relation to the earth in the videos and in society at large, men still remain "the big problem" and their practices in nature and in society at large need to be politicized and analyzed beyond exclamations of connection on the surface and *de facto* destruction deep down. To achieve that, novel forms of living, in Bennett's terms, "*as* earth", are needed (2010, p. 111, emphasis mine). Arne Naess, often admired for connecting his environmental and mountaineering practices into a comprehensive whole, said that "human stupidity and hubris and a lack of intimate feeling for the environment result in human catastrophes," and that "modesty" and "understanding ourselves as part of nature" and mountains are vital when striving for authentic ecological being (2008, p. 66–67). Indeed, Naess may provide a useful point of comparison for discussions of contemporary mountain athletes. Naess was a prolific mountaineer as well as being instrumental in developing deep ecology. He was also explicitly political and was arrested for participating in environmental protest. However, he was also a very privileged individual who was at times myopic towards gender, class, and ethnicity issues, and relied on his physically fit body to experience the mountains, similarly to the representations of men in the videos discussed here.

As Raewyn Connell points out, many men and masculinities are heavily implicated in environmental destruction but this is not a biological, "material," trait but one borne of socialization and therefore one that it is possible to change (Connell, 2017). Martin Hultman, in his keynote speech at the Rachel Carson Center's workshop on masculinities and the environment in 2016, stressed that "[w]e need to make men a marked category as well as creating a possible exit politics for men who want to change" (Hultman quoted in MacGregor and Seymour, 2017, p. 12). McCarthy claims that just as the Romantics changed peoples' views of mountains, so can new understandings of climbers in nature inspire new ways to connect with nature (2008, p. 12) but I hesitate to consider athletes and mountaineers as avatars of true change: Even though the subtle positive glimpses may be encouraging,

moving ever faster and lighter in the mountains still does not get us "far enough fast enough" towards masculine ecologisation. Instead, each individual male mountain athlete acknowledging their own privileged position and acting, through the old "personal is political" adage from that realization towards better equity and ecology, could perhaps make sure that there is enough mountain nature to enjoy for future generations of individuals across the gender and species spectrum. Crucially, this realization should rely not only on their personal enjoyment but on acknowledging the intrinsic value of nonhuman nature.

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III

"NATURE IS DOPE:" TIMOTHY OLSON AND ATHLETIC MASCULINITY IN NATURE

by

Harri Salovaara, 2020 (forthcoming)

ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment

"Nature Is Dope": Timothy Olson and Athletic Masculinity in Nature

The emergence of ecofeminism in the last four decades has coincided with the development within critical studies on men and masculinities (CSMM) of various types of conceptual frameworks such as hegemonic masculinity (Connell), inclusive masculinity (Anderson), and hybrid masculinity (Bridges and Pascoe). Ecofeminism, or "*feminist ecocriticism*" (Oppermann 20, emphasis in original), allied with environmental justice ecocriticism (Adamson and Slovic; Sturgeon), has elaborated on the study of oppression by recognizing its intersectionality, and new material ecocriticism and feminisms (Alaimo and Hekman; Iovino and Oppermann) have highlighted how that oppression centers on bodies. However, even though Connell discussed green, environmentalist masculinities already in 1995, and Anderson, Bridges, and Pascoe have since offered critical frameworks for challenging unequal social relations and could thus act as potential allies to the ecofeminist project their contributions are not widely used within that paradigm. While ecofeminism can be seen as an established field within academia, a corresponding field that would study the reasons for the often destructive relationships that some men have to both nature and women has been, until recently, largely nonexistent. To address this lacuna and initiate the development of a theory that would be supportive of the ecopolitical agenda of ecofeminism, Greta Gaard has called for an "ecofeminist rethinking" ("Toward" 226) of hegemonic masculinity which is arguably the root cause of those often destructive relationships that some masculinities have towards nature. Gaard therefore invites new openings in eco*masculine* theory to counterbalance the "*anti*-ecological" ("Toward" 231, emphasis in original) basis of hegemonic masculinity, and this theoretical gap in feminist ecocriticism is where this specific study intervenes. To countervail the anti-ecological foundation of hegemonic masculinity, this article will, then, examine current theory on

masculinity and nature and, further, relate that theory to a critical case study of the social media profile of American professional mountain runner Timothy Olson. The main argument is that Olson's athletic brand is constructed as a hybridized masculinity that blends aspects of hegemonic and ecological masculinity.

Responding to Gaard's urging for more ecomasculine theory requires a rethinking of male responses to nature. Some responses were outlined already in Mark Allister's edited collection of essays, *Eco-Man* (2004). However, the book is explicitly not focused on bringing forth theory but more on initiating a discussion. In it, Scott Slovic, for example, hopes for more attention to be paid to "positive, healthy male attitudes" exhibited in environmental texts (72). The attributes that Slovic draws on in this regard are "special male virtues" that he argues need to be analyzed in hopes of finding in them "exemplary" (74) traits that could be encouraged in forming ecological male practices. Also in *Eco-Man*, John Tallmadge provides climbing mountains as such a form of a positive male response to nature: he sees mountains as "an arena where manhood could be achieved without violence" (20). Although it is somewhat problematic that nature is here implicitly reduced to an arena where some vague notions of masculinity are to be actualized in, non-violence and appreciation of nature are arguably very much more preferable to their counterpoints, and even Hultman and Pulé in *Ecological Masculinities* designate "climbing a mountain" (242) as one potential practice for men to contemplatively engage with nature.

This article also attends to the distinct dearth of research on the nexus of men, nature, and sport by bringing feminist ecocriticism in dialog with other fields of research. Previous research on mountain and extreme sports, whether it is in sports studies (Mackenzie), sociology (Breivik), psychology (Delle Fave et al.), or masculinity studies (Messner) has largely neglected the

significance of nature to the participants and focused instead on issues such as flow states, competition, risk, and adrenaline (Brymer and Gray). This is understandable in instances that concern indoor extreme sports such as mixed martial arts but surprising when similar exclusion occurs when the object of study concerns outdoor sports practiced in nature. Gender, and masculinities specifically, have been studied in conjunction with mountain sports (Bayers; Robinson; Thorpe) but there are only rare instances (Brymer and Gray; McCarthy; Salovaara; Wörsching) when relationships to nature form the explicit focus of research. This lack may stem from the fact that ecocriticism, the main theoretical framework in studying representations of nature, has historically not been overtly interested in masculinities (not to mention sports) but has instead sought to analyze representations of nature and those representations' gendered aspects based on an ecofeminist hermeneutics.

The case study in this article discusses how Timothy Olson's athlete brand is located as part of a discourse of individuals with troubled, traumatized, and sometimes violent pasts seeking salvation in nature by practicing sports such as mountain climbing, mountain running, and ski mountaineering. When it is men like Olson seeking this salvation, the kinds of pasts they carry with them are commonly associated with protest masculinity, an injurious and exaggerated form of working-class masculinity (Connell). Although Vera Norwood lamented women's exclusion from wilderness leisure activities continuing at least "into the twentieth century" (343), there are also recent examples of women seeking salvation in wild nature, as exemplified by Cheryl Strayed's bestselling memoir *Wild*. However, no equivalent concept of protest *femininity* so far exists.

The material for this case study consists mainly of a selection of Olson's social media posts collected in 2016 as part of ongoing research on male mountain athletes and

representations of their relationships to nature. The main focus is on social media updates made on Facebook and Twitter. Olson's 2016 social media posts are complimented when necessary by some especially pertinent ones from 2015 when they relate to the main argument, as well as by some examples of social media content (blogs, interviews, and YouTube videos) produced in 2014 and 2015 by the mountain running community as well as by some of Timothy Olson's sponsors. Further, some examples of current practices of representation in the mountain sports media are briefly discussed in order to contextualize the case study. Timothy Morton's ideas of masculine performance in "Queer Ecology" (2010) are drawn upon, and throughout the discussion, the case study also employs Paul Pulé's notions of "caring" and "daring" as a useful heuristic. This is done recognizing the fact that any kind of neat division into a dialectic binary is ultimately impossible, and that therefore also drawing on the notion of hybridity is useful.

The article shows how Olson blends aspects of "hard/daring" hegemonic masculinities into a "soft/caring," ecological hybrid masculinity. It should be noted that although the concept of hybridity allows for hybrid genders among other forms of hybridity, in a sporting context, strict binary sex and gender constructs are still in place, and the concept of hybrid masculinity as outlined by Bridges and Pascoe has so far also been mostly confined to a discussion of cis men. In Pulé's usage, then, "caring" refers to cis men "whose masculine identity is dedicated to the greater good of life on Earth" (23) and whose practice supports ecofeminism, and daring" refers to male behavior characterized by "hubris and hegemony" (17) as well as the "malestream tradition of isolation, competition, aggression and self-aggrandisement that underpin and pervade malestream norms" (27). Although Olson's brand incorporates many "caring" traits, such as an involved and nurturing fatherhood and an appreciation of nature, it also contains "daring" characteristics, such as excessive competitiveness and meat eating. Therefore, even though the

inclusion of CSMM viewpoints into the study of men and nature has recently gained some ground (Hultman and Pulé; MacGregor and Seymour; Pulé), the inclusion of an environmental justice perspective is also needed to formulate an ecomasculinity that can build on ecofeminism's foundational work (Gaard *Critical*). Accordingly, when analyzing Olson's athlete brand and discussing its "caring" and "daring" elements, questions of race, class, ability, and diet are also considered, and the (pro)feminist, potential alliance concepts of hegemonic, protest, inclusive, and hybrid masculinities, as well as Val Plumwood's "master model" (Plumwood, *Feminism* 23), used. This article will proceed by discussing Olson's hybrid, ostensibly ecological masculinity and noting where the type of masculinity that he portrays in his social media activities allies with ecomasculine and ecofeminist goals while also noting the many points of friction.

"American Tarzan": Ecology and Hegemony in Constructing Timothy Olson's Masculinity

Timothy Olson is an American professional mountain runner who specializes in running ultra (i.e. longer than a marathon) distances on mountain trails. He is white, 35 years old, and married with two children. Due to his visible social media profile and competitive success in his sport he has received enough sponsorship from multinational companies (such as Adidas, The North Face, Subaru, EPIC/General Mills, etc.) to enable him to practice his sport professionally. Recently, he also participated in a reality TV show called "American Tarzan" on Discovery Channel where he was shown barely clad running through jungle and climbing vines and rocks. Olson is a popular athlete within the mountain running community. His arguably inspiring background as someone who "made it" to a successful affluent life after hard times, his athletic success, good looks, presentable family, and white but tanned and tattooed skin, all contribute to

it and make him into an easily identifiable role model for fans and nonprofessional white, middle-class athletes.

An able white body and physical fitness are integral to Olson's masculinity, and it is important to make visible the privileges that allow white, straight, able-bodied men like Olson to enjoy outdoor recreation and even make it into a successful living. Elizabeth A. Wheeler has discussed how an "able, muscular, young, and male" body is linked to appreciation of mountain nature and "moral superiority" (555). She also points to current societal discourses that define "some [able, often white male] people as closer to nature than others" and thus, through their privileged position more able to achieve "ecological consciousness" (553). Although part of the reason for oppression of both women and nature has been their persistent linkage, a similar linkage of white, able-bodied men being the ones who go into wild nature as a leisure activity and African Americans preferring urban leisure, also exists (Haile; Mills). James Edward Mills calls this "the adventure gap" (95): The gap exists due to historical, ethnic, and, class reasons, and includes African Americans' collective memories of traumatic events in rural and wilderness areas. Although Olson's background places him closer to working class than middle class, his success later in life means that he is accepted as part of the white middle-class American dream of an affluent life with extensive leisure time outdoors.

Olson is thus in many ways an embodiment of hegemonic masculinity. As a concept, hegemonic masculinity outlines a form of (implicitly white) masculinity that is heterosexual, financially successful, controlling, unemotional, psychologically separated from any kind of weakness, and whose central function is to uphold its own hegemonic position and exercise control over all women, all nonhuman nature, and those men who do not conform to its requirements. It thus follows the same "logic of domination" (Warren 128) as Plumwood's

master model. Val Plumwood's master model is not frequently discussed in the CSMM field, but it does provide a way to connect CSMM with ecofeminism, especially considering that hegemonic masculinity relies on the same logic of master and slave where "domination of the sphere of nature by a white, largely male elite" (Plumwood, *Feminism* 23) coincides with the domination of women and most men. Hegemonic masculinity is thus an ideological representation of masculinity that is directly beneficial only to a select minority of men and not something that corresponds with the reality of the majority of men (Connell; Connell and Messerschmidt; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill). Hence, it effectively functions as a large-scale system of oppression that encompasses the vast majority of the planet's human population as well as oppressing its nonhuman nature.

Timothy Olson, as a 35-year meat eating professional athlete can certainly be seen to conform to the specifications of a hegemonic "master male". As Laura Wright asserts, "meat is an essential, primal, and inescapable component of heterosexual masculinity" (*Vegan* 109), and the practice of eating it thus upholds masculine hegemony. To counter this, Plumwood suggests that, for "a critical ecofeminism," it is important to place both men and women as "part of both nature and culture" (35) and in this way contribute to more equitable and "plural" identities (189). Such plural identities would allow "'real men'" to be something besides "young able-bodied rational productive heterosexual meateaters," as Gaard describes current societal expectations for men wrapped within the master model (*Reproductive* 120). Plumwood elaborated on the master model later in *Environmental Culture* (2002), where she discussed the role of "cultural media and ideals" within the master model in advancing "identification with the rich and successful 10 per cent who are winning" (21). However, as Gaard explains when delineating possible paths towards ecological masculinities, it is necessary to consider the role of

the powerful white males and offer modes of "deconstruction" of master identities for them "to stand with–rather than on top of" those oppressed (*Critical* 161).

Aside from its hegemonic connotations, Olson's athlete brand also presents a curious hybridity of primitiveness and modernity, of hardness and softness, of a troubled past and a wholesomely branded ecological present. It includes elements such as representations of environmental awareness and respect towards women but also utilizes his often-recounted (Lutz; Olson "My Path"; Olson "The North Face") backstory of drug use, jail time, and depression. Olson's athlete brand includes many of the same attributes that masculinities scholars Anshelm and Hultman describe as ecomodern masculinity such as "toughness" mixed with "compassion and care" (92), but its style is such that it does not easily conform to the "modern" elements of ecomodernity: long hair, beard, body hair, extensive nature-themed (trees, animals, etc.) tattooing, and frequently posing shirtless are stylistically closer, for example, to the hairy wild man that mythopoet Robert Bly argued should serve as the new male archetype, or even an eco*primitivist* masculinity. While Olson's masculinity can be seen as a hybrid between hardness and softness and hegemony and ecology, it nevertheless remains mostly binary in terms of sex. In terms of gender, however, the stated appreciation of nature can be seen as a form of hybridity. As Richard Twine has shown, men who show interest in the environment are already, compared to their environmentally oblivious counterparts, "seen as less manly, slightly emasculated" (3). As such, their ontological starting position is implicitly already in a state of hybridity, in ambiguity. This has been a fundamental problem in attempting to interest large numbers of men to be environmentally caring and nurturing: such practices are seen as "soft," that is, not "*cool*" by the malestream.

Masculine hybridization may have either positive or negative repercussions to gender equality as well as to the environment. This depends on whether a hybridized masculinity genuinely contributes to equity between men, women, and nature, or whether the hybridization is merely an appropriation of current, socially acceptable norms. Bridges and Pascoe claim that negative forms of hybrid masculinities consist of "identity projects" that appropriate aspects of various marginalized "Others" (246) and thus simultaneously both "reproduce" gender inequalities and "obscure this process" (247). As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue, hegemonic masculinity is constantly shifting and evolving through always conforming to current cultural trends to remain in a position of hegemony. In this attempt, a fluid, hybridized identity may be useful. However, Bridges and Pascoe also recognize that positive forms of hybridity have "incredible potential for change," and that this potential, if it could be recognized and channeled towards not just "shifts" but instead "challenges" to "systems of power and inequality," has great transformative promise (256). Since all masculinities are necessarily hybrids in one way or the other, ecomasculine practices, if they are to contribute to ecofeminist goals, should align with the latter type of hybridity.

"Dark Times in My Life": Protest and Salvation in Nature

Olson's Twitter account confidently claims that, "[r]unning by the lake always makes everything better" (@timmyolson_run "Running"), and his athlete brand frequently relies on an aesthetic where nature is depicted as a place of healing, where a "man with a past" can reinvent himself. In this representation of masculinity, "Nature is dope" (@timothyallenolson "Nature"), and the supposedly intoxicating, "dope," effects of immersion in nature can in Olson's case be seen as a proxy for actual drug use. Wörsching, analyzing the relationships between masculinity,

nature, and outdoor sports, discussed how nature is often in contemporary brand advertising represented as ranging "from the benign to the most dangerously challenging form, expressed in a wide spectrum of 'hard' and 'soft' aesthetics" and deduced that, ironically, this may be due to the tensions that arise when outdoor sports that implicitly represent "the experience of an unspoiled, natural environment" also contribute to "the erosion of this environment itself" (208). Olson's social media feed rarely represents nature as a place of hostility and danger or, in Timothy Morton's words, as "rugged, bleak, masculine Nature" (279), but it inevitably portrays it as a stage where, through arduous physical action, psychological healing may incur. Mei Mei Evans has discussed how "(heterosexual white) men doing battle against Nature … to claim or reclaim their manhood" (183) works to "re-naturalize" masculine relationships to nature (191). This "re-naturalizing" is then implicitly beyond sexualities, ethnicities, and genders other than those of Olson's.

Nature is in Olson's social media profile also represented pastorally as an earthly "paradise" (@timmyolson_run "Back"). Olson is not alone in envisioning nature thus: Representations of male mountain athletes in contemporary mountain sports media often include references to traumatic and disturbed pasts that are at times aligned with trajectories common to protest masculinity. A necessary result of hegemonic masculinity is that the vast majority of masculinities are left outside of it, and Connell names one faction of these "cast-outs" as representing what she terms protest masculinity, that is, an exaggerated, violent, destructive, and working-class hypermasculinity that needs to be channeled into some sort of, often exaggeratedly masculine, activity. Sports sociologist Gunnar Breivik has claimed that extreme sports can function "as an opposition and protest against certain aspects of modern societies" (260) through their appeal to "a 'l'homme sauvage'" that feels discontentment towards modern

society's "security and full control" (263). Previously, Haywood and Mac an Ghaill have also connected men's sporting practices to representations of "middle-class protest masculinity" (68), and Messner has suggested that "extreme sports" may in some instances function as a "backlash by white males" (319) who see their dominance as under threat. As such, sports can and should be seen critically when assessing whether their practitioners can contribute to emancipatory projects.

Mountain athletes frequently position themselves in protest against society and have a fondness for presenting themselves as not fully belonging to established society but rather inhabiting its margins. For them, the high mountains represent "the only place[s]" possible to express their allegedly "anarchistic beliefs without fearing the police" (Jornet "Speed"). They may also claim to "choose a different kind of life" (Jornet, *Run* 15) that is "[l]ike a hard drug," (Jornet, *Run* 22) or position themselves as "dirtbag[s]" living in an "emotional/psychic wasteland" where climbing offers the only foreseeable vehicle to attempt to gain some kind of "freedom" (Dorworth). They may even see themselves, and the climbing community in general, as consisting of "misfit athletes" who see some inherent value in voluntary "suffering" (The Enormocast "Episode 64") in their self-stated quest to transcend mundane everyday life.

It is not only the athletes themselves, however, that may wish to present themselves thus and employ nature and "wilderness" as part of this process. The mountain sports media also participates in the romanticization of the countercultural "dirtbag lifestyle". Even accomplished professional climbers may claim to draw inspiration from the Beat Generation-inspired "rucksack revolution" and choose to live outdoors amongst nature "on the fringes of society," do hard drugs, fight with the police, and risk their lives on a regular basis, as in the popular nonfiction climbing film *The Valley Uprising*. Timothy Morton claims, regarding the story of

Christopher McCandless, also known as "Supertramp" and made notorious in Jon Krakauer's book *Into the Wild* (2007) that McCandless, who died on a self-imposed wilderness retreat that shares similarities with the "renegade" climbers' voluntary flight to nature, made an attempt at "escaping civilization and its discontents" but only ended up acting out "its death instincts" (280). To Morton, such actions are "suicidal" but, paradoxically, to try such "disappearing into Nature" automatically also means a fantasy of "control and order" and an aspiration to reiterate the "myth of the self-made man" where "love, warmth, vulnerability, and ambiguity" are erased (280). As Richard Dyer has shown, the act of seemingly disappearing into nature may be harnessed to commercial purposes to represent a white male protagonist's "closeness to nature" (157). However, no matter how clichéd and hackneyed this "escape" into "closeness" with mythical "Nature" with capital N may be seen, it is also frequently and publicly performed by mountain athletes, Olson included, and in that context in fact presented as a way out of a destructive and suicidal lifestyle.

Further examples of masculinities seeking redemption in nature include former soldiers like Gediminas Grinius with diagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) who have since found peace in mountain running (Altra Running; Powell); or, have attempted re-entry into post-war life through mountaineering since returning from war zones (The Enormocast "Episode 44"); they include famous civilian climbers like Tommy Caldwell who have been kidnapped by "Islamic militants" and had to fight their way to freedom, suffering the "aftershocks" of that experience (Jackson 10). Mountain runners suffering from issues such as depression also regularly and explicitly refer to the comfort gained from practicing their sports in nature (Marion; Shannon), so Olson seeking of healing in nature is not unique but an established discourse within the community.

Nature as a place of salvation for a troubled male is exemplified in the YouTube video produced by Olson's previous sponsor The North Face: "The Road to UTMB® - Timothy Olson" (The North Face). The video shows Olson amidst his preparations to run the ultrarunning race UTMB (Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc) in the French Alps. The video makes use of Olson's backstory of drug abuse and jail time and retells the story as part of The North Face marketing campaign on YouTube preceding the 2014 UTMB. The video shows Olson sitting in a sauna, sweating and looking dejectedly into the camera while through a voiceover he tells the audience of his past: "there were definitely these dark times in my life…taking lots of drugs…pretty close to overdosing." The video then shows how he has symbolically risen from this low life (the perceived mental anguish and sweating in the sauna here works as an allegory to his personal problems and drug withdrawal symptoms) up into the mountains where the narrative proceeds to complete this mini-journey of enlightenment in nature through experiencing its beauty first-hand. Here, nature is represented as a place of escapist beauty where the rugged Alpine mountains work as a backdrop to the brightly clad athlete who in consecutive shots sports the brand's latest collection of apparel while running through lush mid-mountain scenery that consists of flowers and abundant greenery. Olson's narrative voice recounts how "running has been somewhat of a lifesaver to me…running has been just a really healing thing for me," and through the voiceover he tells the viewer that the motivation for mountain running is "to enjoy nature and enjoy that silence inside." Olson's personal problems are thus commodified by using nature as the vehicle for perceived transcendence. In Bourdieuan terms, he has succeeded in "convert[ing] symbolic capital into economic" (Thorpe 195) but to interpret the video as simply yet another example of a "daring" male attitude towards nature would neglect the declared appreciation of nature.

“#wildandfree”: Social Media Constructions of Timothy Olson as Family Man and Omnivore

Timothy Olson’s social media profile portrays the image of a successful and ecological family man. In Twitter, Olson considers “[e]ach step, a gift from the earth” (@timmyolson_run “Each”). However, Olson’s Twitter account also plays with imagery of the successful business man: for the successful professional running hero, being out in nature is “[j]ust another day at the office” (@timmyolson_run “Just). Pulé, echoing Plumwood’s discussion of the “Man of Property and Business Man” (Plumwood *Environmental*, 32) claims that “heroism” and “material gain” (36) are central to an ethics of daring, and that they contribute to locating some men in “the most powerful of positions … at the expense of marginalised men, women and Nature” (136). Again, however, the data resists interpreting Olson’s brand exclusively in “daring” terms, especially when Olson repeatedly expresses his unequivocal love for nature and his family: “For me, a lovely day is any day I awake [*sic*] up, set positive intentions, kiss my family and touch the earth” (@timmyolsonrun “For”). Being a family man (for more on fatherhood as a “masculine style,” see Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 10) is an important part of Olson’s brand. His family is regularly featured in the commercial material produced in conjunction with him, and his four-day old child was also harnessed as part of the marketing campaign of The North Face on Facebook (with a picture of the four-day old): "’Where the mountains at?’ First words spoken by this 4 day old sporting his The North Face #thermoball monster onesie. It's hard to be 6lbs...and crushing it! Go get em son #neverstopexploring #wildandfree” (@timothyallenolson ”Where”). It can be argued, using Timothy Morton’s terms, that by conflating nature and the nuclear family in such a manner, “[l]oving Nature thus becomes enslaved to masculine heteronormativity” (279). In a similar way, Bruce Erickson has discussed

how “the production of heterosexuality” is implicated in the “fetishizing” (313) of seemingly benign yet often damaging relationships to land.

Olson’s masculinity on social media is also closely allied with an omnivore diet and its inherent hegemonic associations. He is one of the “faces” of the marketing campaign for EPIC Bar, a “protein bar designed as nature intended” (EPIC Bar). In 2014, he appeared in a social media marketing video, “Timothy Olson Is EPIC”, for the product. The video is an almost carnivalesque blending of clichéd elements such as a whistling tune reminiscent of a Sergio Leone Western, Olson chewing on a straw of grass, running shirtless in slow motion with the bison (that are later processed into “natural” food products), cooking for his family, and proclaiming platitudes such as “the land provides us everything that we need” (EPIC Bar). In 2016 when EPIC Bar joined multinational food giant General Mills, Olson did voice his concern on the ethical implications of this; nevertheless, he stayed loyal to his sponsor and stated that he is “still honored to stand by them” (@timothyallenolson ”Big”). When EPIC Bar “launched” their newest product, a “GLUTEN FREE” protein bar made of “100% GRIZZLY BEAR” on April Fool’s Day 2016, Olson enthusiastically promoted the “Sweet new snack from @EPICbar for your next adventure. #liveepic eatepic #eatthebeardontletthebeareatyou” (@timmyolson_run “Sweet”).

Timothy Morton claimed that in “[l]oving Nature” there is “scant space for humor, except perhaps a phobic, hearty kind” (279). Indeed. How are the previous conflicting attitudes and practices to be interpreted, considering that Rogers (2008) and Ourahmoune et al. (2014) showed how eating meat upholds hegemonic masculinity, and Gaard’s discussion of meat animals’ reproductive rights shows factory farming as a horrible, perverse reproduction of “natural” food that “vegetarian ecofeminists” (“Reproductive” 121) must stand against? Is it possible to exhibit

a "caring" attitude towards nature and one's family while at the same time enthusiastically promoting the eating of other families and embracing the "daring" implications of competition and professional "outdoorsmanship"? Olson's decision to style himself as a meat eater may be due to vegans being seen as "feminized" because meat is "heavily coded as masculine food" (Wright *Vegan* 31). Wright has also shown how veganism is in the West perceived as "oppositional to and disruptive of a capitalist system" ("Introducing" 727), and Olson's sponsors would arguably not be pleased with such associations. Wright maintains that despite the proliferation in media of "hegans," that is, male vegans, being a man who abstains from meat is still considered to be "unnatural" (*Vegan* 108) because "meat is an essential, primal, and inescapable component of heterosexual masculinity" (*Vegan* 109). Curiously, the strong cultural linkage between meat and a "natural" masculinity may even induce Olson to continue to designate himself and his athletic brand as suitable to an omnivore "taste".

Conclusions

This article set out to discuss one specific case of a purportedly ecological and egalitarian masculinity, which turned out in closer inspection to have many problematic attributes. It also became evident that, for ecomasculine theory to be able to offer anything of value to the efficacy of ecofeminism, it needs to address questions of race, class, and environmental justice. As the case study shows, a practical example of true ecomasculinity is still missing within the mountain sports context at least, and more "caring" attitudes and practices are needed to accompany the fledgling theory. As vegetarian rock climber Alex Honnold has recently shown, it may be possible for male mountain athletes to at least combine promoting public equality work and an ethical diet (@alexhonnold). Significantly, Karen Warren has discussed outdoor recreation,

specifically rock climbing, as a way to commune with nature in a caring, not conquering way. Although Sturgeon explicitly linked rock climbing, at least when practiced by men in ads, to "dominating nature" (29), there are also other, more intimate and ethically viable ways for men to connect with nature while rock climbing (see, e.g. Brymer and Gray; Cohen 19–66). Although CSMM is liable of always "discovering" new *types* of masculinities and not always making the connections to how those types may advance gender and other equalities it may still be relevant to pursue further these new kinds of expressions of masculinity. As two recent works in ecomasculine theory (Hultman and Pulé; MacGregor and Seymour) both stress, it is useful to consider masculinities inclusively as plural instead of singular, and outline a variety of different kinds of exit politics for men.

For Greta Gaard, attributes such as "physical strength" and "competitiveness" ("Toward" 227) are implicated in masculine domination of women and nature. In that light, the examples discussed above, specifically related to the commodification of nature, may certainly be seen in very critical light. The aim of this article was not, however, to focus solely on these negative aspects of masculinities performed in nature. The hybrid masculinity that Olson represents is unquestionably problematic in some of its manifestations. However, as Bridges and Pascoe stated, hybrid masculinities also have "incredible potential for change" (256). It may therefore be worthwhile to investigate further into different hybrid masculinities' potential to act as alternative, environmentally even slightly more enlightened models of masculinity than, for example, traditional forms of hegemonic masculinity. This should, however, be done being wary of the shifting nature of hegemonic masculinity which tends to always be capable of staying in a hegemonic position through its ability to change. As an antidote to this, Duncanson offers a "[d]ismantling" of hegemony through replacing stratification and hierarchy with "equality,

mutual respect, or empathy" (244). This way, "traditionally disparaged, feminized traits" of masculinity could form new "'softer' or hybrid masculinities" (244). This would arguably be congruent with the kind of ecomasculinities that have so far been suggested. Gaard, for example, suggested that being a "gardener" and "eco-activist" and using a "bicycle for transportation" would be viable ways for masculinities to be ecological ("Toward" 236). Hultman's suggestion of "ecopreneurship" (6) as an example of ecomasculinity, being that it is tied to the exigencies of capitalist modes of production is decidedly more of a hybrid response, yet perhaps also necessary, and further practical ways to deconstruct, modify, and make amends are outlined in Hultman and Pulé's *Ecological Masculinities*. In short, to dismantle hegemonic masculinity and drive towards more ecologized masculinities, all of the above hybridizations should be included as means to do so.

In conclusion, although there is little doubt that the kind of "soft" and "caring" ethics that, for example, Hultman and Pulé advocate is the most ecological and equitable way to realize masculinity, a large-scale emergence of such masculinities in the current era of political and societal polarization seems unlikely. It may therefore be useful in the interim to make a strategic attempt to include as wide a variety of masculinities as possible into discussions of more environmental practices, even if those practices are not *per se* "perfect." An inclusive, ecological masculinity should strive to include not only those men who by their education, ethnicity, and wealth already enjoy a privileged position in society but also those whose socioeconomic position is closer to the traits commonly associated with protest masculinity and whose only (though substantial) claim to privilege may be the one offered by their gender.

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IV

EL CAPITAN AS A SITE FOR MALE HEALING IN JEFF LONG'S THE WALL AND TOMMY CALDWELL'S THE PUSH

by

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Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment
vol 10, 162–178.

ISSN 2171-9594

El Capitan as a Site for Male Healing from Trauma in Jeff Long's *The Wall* and Tommy Caldwell's *The Push*

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Abstract

Nature and mountains are often represented as places of healing in literature and the media, especially for white, healthy, and middleclass men. However, discussions on nature and gender in relation to trauma are rare, and a specific discussion on the representation of male mountain climbers' traumas is missing. In this article, we are interested in how nature, particularly the famous mountain El Capitan, is represented in Jeff Long's novel *The Wall* (2006) and Tommy Caldwell's memoir *The Push* (2017) as a specific spatial location of healing for male rock climbers, who at the same time are both victims of traumatic events and partially responsible for the development of those events. More specifically, this article places ecofeminist and ecological masculinities scholarship in dialog with trauma studies and analyzes these texts with the aim of showing how representations of trauma relate to those of nature and masculinity. In this analysis, questions of how certain aspects of ecological and hegemonic masculinities relate to representing trauma, nature, and masculinity are central, as are issues of perpetrator trauma and the non-generic character of traumatic experience. Ultimately, we show how representations of nature, trauma, and masculinities in the primary texts converge and reflect a plurality of gendered responses to trauma and healing in nature.

Keywords: El Capitan, nature, trauma, masculinity, Jeff Long, Tommy Caldwell.

Resumen

La naturaleza y las montañas se presentan a menudo como lugares de curación en la literatura y en los medios de comunicación, especialmente para los hombres blancos, sanos y de clase media. Sin embargo, las discusiones sobre la naturaleza y el género en relación con el trauma son escasas, y falta una discusión específica sobre la representación de los traumas masculinos de los montañistas. En este artículo, estamos interesados en cómo la naturaleza, particularmente la famosa montaña El Capitán, está representada en la novela *The Wall* (2006) de Jeff Long y en la memoria *The Push* (2017) de Tommy Caldwell como una ubicación espacial específica de curación para escaladores masculinos, quienes son simultáneamente víctimas de eventos traumáticos y parcialmente responsables del desarrollo de esos eventos. Más específicamente, este artículo coloca en un diálogo el ecofeminismo y las masculinidades ecológicas con estudios de trauma, y analiza estos textos mostrando cómo las representaciones del trauma se relacionan con las de la naturaleza y la masculinidad. En este análisis, las preguntas sobre cómo ciertos aspectos de las masculinidades ecológicas y hegemónicas se relacionan con la representación del trauma, la naturaleza y la masculinidad son fundamentales, como lo son las cuestiones del trauma del perpetrador y el carácter no genérico de la experiencia traumática. En última instancia, mostramos cómo las representaciones de la naturaleza, el trauma y las masculinidades en los textos primarios convergen y reflejan una pluralidad de respuestas de género al trauma y la curación en la naturaleza.

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Palabras clave: El Capitán, naturaleza, trauma, masculinidad, Jeff Long, Tommy Caldwell.

Nature is often imagined and represented as a place of healing where people can 'get away from it all' and enhance their psychological wellbeing. These representations are also widely present in climbing and wilderness narratives that show people healing from their troubled pasts in nature. Examples of this include climbing novels such as Clinton McKinzie's *The Edge of Justice* and James Salter's *Solo Faces*, and nonfiction like Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild*. In popular media imaginings, nature even has the power to heal people suffering from trauma by exposing them to evocative landscapes and empowering them through physical stress to a sense of accomplishment (Brandon). Those for whom this healing is available and who benefit from it in these representations, however, do not represent just any generic segment of the population, but are strikingly often white, athletic, relatively affluent and implicitly heterosexual males. As Stacy Alaimo in *Bodily Natures* notes, posing "nature as a place to escape to, as a place of psychic healing or transcendent moments," objectifies that nature as well as the "working-class bodies" whose labor enables that healing (34). Mei Mei Evans, for her part, has shown that "constructions of nature" only really "empower [….] heterosexual white men" (181, 191), the implication here being that the epistemic questions of environmental justice, including race, class, and gender and even subjectivity, are significant in this context.

Paradoxically, however, while risky activities in nature such as climbing may be empowering after traumatic experiences, they also have another close relationship to trauma as they expose the participant to potentially traumatizing circumstances. The definition of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by the American Psychiatric Association in their *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition (*DSM-5*), reads "Exposure to actual or threatened death" or "serious injury" in terms of "experiencing the traumatic event(s)" or "[w]itnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others" (271). Yet, as psychologist Laura Brown indicates, it is not always automatically apparent what represents a threatened death or serious injury: neither adventure sport participants themselves nor the audiences witnessing these events experience them as traumatic. Instead, while risking their lives practitioners describe their experiences as "exhilarating" (*Cultural* 96). Indeed, anthropologists Alan Abramson and Robert Fletcher say about rock climbers that "their practice routinely embodies … the sense that death as well as pleasure is a standard possible outcome of each and every move" of climbing (4) and view the practice as a form of "deep eco-play." "Deep play," originally a concept of utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, in anthropologist Clifford Geertz's usage refers to playing a game "in which the stakes are so high that it is […] irrational for men to engage in it at all" (87). Further, as psychologist Erik Monasterio has shown, the reason that adventure sports participants find their activity so "rewarding" often relates to a feeling of "connectedness to nature and respect for the natural environment" ("The Risks"). Therefore, overly simplistic interpretations of what constitutes a traumatic event and the participants' underlying motivations, or, indeed, the

narrative representations of said events and motivations, inevitably fail in addressing this complex issue.

The convergence of (some, binary) masculinities with healing and empowerment in nature through adventure sports, on the one hand, and the intrinsic relationship between such activities and PTSD, on the other, is a fruitful starting-point for asking how nature, masculinity, and trauma together influence how each in turn is represented. In this article, we take two popular American books on trauma and mountain climbing, Jeff Long's horror novel *The Wall* (2006) and Tommy Caldwell's memoir *The Push* (2017) as our primary texts, and aim to show how going out in nature and climbing mountains is represented as a gendered practice of healing, and how one specific mountain, El Capitan (Tutocanula in Miwok), is framed both as a site of male empowerment from traumatic experiences as well as a site for reliving perpetrator trauma (meaning, the trauma that perpetrators of pernicious acts may experience). In examining how hegemonic and ecological masculinities relate to these representations, we refer to R.W. Connell's definition of hegemonic masculinity as a an idealized and unrealistic, politically oppressive notion of what it means to be a man, and complement that with recent work by Martin Hultman and Paul Pulé, and Sherilyn MacGregor and Nicole Seymour on ecological masculinities. In our analysis, we combine this recently emerging ecological masculinities scholarship with ecofeminist research and contemporary literary trauma studies. Representations exist in our primary texts of both hegemonic hypermasculinities (mainly in *The Wall*) and attempts to at least partially deconstruct them (mainly in *The Push*). Although the rocky wall of El Capitan in Long's novel is often depicted in ecophobic terms, Simon Estok's appellation for "irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world" (208)*, The Push* manages to contrast that viewpoint with one of *geo*philic affection that "recognizes matter's promiscuous desire to affiliate with other forms of matter" (Cohen 27), in this case a rock climber's affection for the rocks he climbs. We argue that in *The Wall* and *The Push* representations of nature, trauma, and masculinities converge and reflect a plurality of gendered, at times hegemonic and at other times more ecological, masculine responses to trauma and healing in nature. Our argument thus challenges monolithic conceptions of trauma and masculinities, and so contributes to a refiguring of nature and masculinities in mountain climbing narratives.

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"If I Fell to My Death, at Least the Pain Would Be Gone": Trauma, Place, and Gender

The Wall and *The Push* are part of the mountaineering and climbing book genre but represent different literary categories, the former being a novel and the latter a memoir. We chose these two works in large parts because they both have at their center the issues of unresolved trauma, masculinity, and the same spatial location, El Capitan. In other words, they address the same concerns and consequently not only welcome an examination across genres, but can therefore also inform a discussion that entails all three issues at once.

The Wall and *The Push* are trauma narratives in that they deal with traumatic events and responses to such experiences. True to the middlebrow mountaineering and

climbing book genre, however, they do not exhibit the experimental literary techniques, postmodernist aesthetics, and political dimensions of paradigmatic trauma narratives such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*. Nevertheless, in *The Trauma Question*, trauma scholar Roger Luckhurst has recognized also popular fiction as a significant place for representing trauma. Moreover, as Hubert Zapf notes in *Literature as Cultural Ecology*, trauma is not only "central to the human experience," but literature, being capable of a "self-reflexive staging of complex dynamical life processes," also "has a special sensitivity and affinity to trauma" (207). Although Zapf focuses on fictional literature, he also acknowledges that "autobiographical narratives of trauma victims" can become important sources of "literary treatments" (210). Although we must be cognizant of the genre differences in analyzing a work of fictional literature, together with a memoir, the two books provide a rare synchronicity of different types of trauma in relation to gender and nature. As Zapf asserts, trauma narratives can serve as the locus for investigating how the human and the nonhuman are intertwined, both as agents and victims of trauma and therefore sharing an "agency" in a "continuity of trauma and victimization" (34). Indeed, in both *The Wall* and *The Push*, the roles of human and nonhuman actors as "victims" and "perpetrators" of trauma are volatile. In addition, says Michelle Balaev in *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels*, "the protagonist's culture, social class, nation, gender, ethnicity, family, and relation to a particular place" (38) are all contingent on their subjective experiences of potentially traumatic events. Therefore, the protagonists' gender, race, and class as well as the physical location are important here.

In both *The Wall* and *The Push* the male protagonists and their relation to trauma are ambivalent; they are white, successful males who willingly have put themselves in positions to experience traumatic events, yet those very characteristics expose them to a different type of experience of trauma than individuals from less privileged groups. As Brown has shown, "[p]ressure on men to be manly […] can create high risks for behaviors that lead to trauma exposure, such as […] reckless sporting activities" (*Cultural* 133). Although traumatic events themselves may not be gendered, "scripts and schemata about gender roles" (132) are inevitably part of the response to trauma. As Judith Butler has discussed, such scripts can work as "reiteration[s]" of norms that regulate gendered practices and "binarisms" (Butler, *Bodies* 42) and thus function as a "regulatory practice that seeks to render gender identity uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality" (Butler, *Gender* 42). Because men, in order to conform to the heteronormative ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Connell), are expected to be tough and not show weakness, this trauma of the privileged undoubtedly has different characteristics than trauma experienced by those less privileged. Further, the protagonists are implicated in the etiology of their own trauma when they put themselves in harm's way. They are also implicitly involved in causing damage to the natural environment through a practice of altering the rock they climb on and all the associated damage that an excessively consumerist and affluent Western lifestyle produces. Long and Caldwell's narratives also represent similar masculine responses to trauma in that the protagonists do not actively seek help from the psychiatric profession for their trauma but instead turn to the

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mountain El Capitan for their "counseling." Brown notes that masculine norms informed by misogyny may not only aggravate men's difficulties but also hinder their ability to seek help (*Cultural* 133), and in our primary texts the avoidance of professional help can be read to both express a traditional Western masculinity and an implicit critique of the psychiatric profession.

The Wall is a horror novel that has male friendship, rock climbing, and the famous 3000-ft granite "big wall" formation of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park at its center. As a genre, horror fiction is essentially a "representation of what terrifies and disgusts" (Wisker 5). Significantly for our discussion, "[f]eminist critiques of horror" may reveal the "cultural constructions" that contribute to women's "constricted roles" and thus support their dismantling (Wisker 32). Aside from its horror elements, it is only incrementally revealed in *The Wall* that trauma will also play a major role in the development of the events. Trauma and horror also feature as topics of climbing novels elsewhere. *The Ice Soldier* by Paul Watkins, for example, recounts a traumatic experience in the mountains in WWII and traces a war veteran's attempt to cope with that trauma through a journey back into the mountains. Michelle Paver's *Thin Air*, on the other hand, is a mountaineering ghost story set in the post-WWI Himalayas where a group of mountaineers slowly unravel the traumatic past of the previous expedition to the area, and conjure past ghosts to the present.

The Wall narrates a story of two late middleage affluent white males, Hugh Glass and Lewis Cole who, "like old warriors […] were returning to their battleground" (38) in an attempt to relive past glory on the walls of El Capitan. They frame this attempt in masculinist terms as a "little Viagra for the soul" (57). Hugh, the main character of the novel, is a geologist at British Petroleum, unknown at the writing of the novel for the 2010 catastrophic Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Hugh is also the namesake of the nineteenth century frontiersman and later eponymous hero of the 2015 film *The Revenant*, and his last name, "Glass," can be read as Long's signaling Hugh's about-to-be-unraveling, fragile masculinity. His partner Lewis is described as "the Great Ape" (34) who, in preparation for their climb, has resorted to "testosterone shots" to gain muscle (39). As the novel progressess, they are joined by Augustine, a SAR (search and rescue) climber employed by Yosemite National Park (Ahwahne in Miwok) and referred to as "Tarzan" (44). They are to attempt to rescue a group of female climbers. As Hugh asserts, these "Trojan Women" (102) have attempted to climb a new route on the wall and consequently "reached too far" (103), or, "flown too close to the sun" (113). Gradually, it is revealed that both Hugh and Augustine suffer from a past of perpetrator trauma where they have abandoned their partners to die (Hugh his wife in the desert and Augustine his climbing partners in the mountains).

The Push, classified by its publisher as the memoir of professional mountain and rock climber Tommy Caldwell, has many characteristics of a classic autobiography. It follows the author's journey through childhood to later adversity and eventual triumph and fame in a rather conventional way, but it also makes use of certain literary devices such as occasional unchronological narration, and focuses on the intimate emotions of its

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protagonist.[1] Because of the inherently close relationship between trauma and adventure sports, it is not surprising that *The Push* is not an outlier in the genre of real-life mountain climbing narratives. Exposure to and suffering from trauma have been frequently and famously brought to the limelight, from such bestsellers as Joe Simpson's book *Touching the Void* that describes Simpson's arduous and traumatic self rescue and his climbing partner's perpetrator status in the event, to Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* that relates the events and aftershock of the infamous 1996 Everest disaster that led to the demise of eight mountaineers. Male mountaineers' trauma narratives have also been successfully commodified by professional male climbers. A recent example of this is Cory Richards who was featured in Devon O'Neil's *Outside Online* article "To Get to the Summit Cory Richards Had to Lose It All." The article reiterates the clichéd conception of a "tough-guy mountaineering culture" that is "hypermasculine" and intolerant of acknowledging any effect of being exposed to traumatic events and being "macho—chest pounding and high fiving and fist bumping" (O'Neil).

The storyline in *The Push* is one of a socially awkward and frail boy growing into adulthood and athletic prowess in the shadow of a hypermascline bodybuilder and outdoorsman father. The narrative arc goes through three traumatic events. The first, and arguably most significant, traumatic event is when Tommy, along with his then-fiancee, Beth Rodden, and two other climbers are kidnapped and taken hostage by Islamic militants on a climbing trip to Kyrgyztan. Tommy and his companions experience several trying days and witness violence, but in the end manage to escape when Tommy pushes one of the captors off a cliff, thinking they are leaving him for dead. Years pass before he discovers that their abductor survived the fall, but the traumatic experience has already affected his psychological wellbeing. The second trauma he experiences in the book is losing his left index finger, a crucial "tool" for a professional rock climber, in a table saw accident. These traumatic incidents, especially the kidnapping, leave seemingly permanent scars on the relationship between Tommy and Beth: Although they marry after the traumatic Kyrgyztan incident, they later divorce. The divorce, the third traumatic event in *The Push*, leaves Tommy reeling, and seeking to self-medicate on the wall:

> If I allowed myself to venture onto those walls unroped, I would enter a utopia, ultimate absorption in the thing I loved most, total commitment in a world devoid of heartbreak. And if I fell to my death, at least the pain would be gone, too […] Climbing was my life. It had helped me through hard times […] I also knew that hard physical labor always seemed to be my best therapy. (Caldwell 178-179)

Whereas in *The Push*, the protagonist heals from his trauma, gaining both spiritual happiness and material wellbeing as a result of his long-term and close connection with El Capitan, in *The Wall* the protagonists' masculine hubris (re)victimizes them.

[1] We refer to Caldwell by his surname when we draw attention to him as author of the memoir and by his given name, Tommy, when explaining his position within the book.

Pluralities of Traumas

Trauma is specific, not generic: It "does not happen to a generic human being" (Brown, *Cultural* 7), nor is it initiated by a generic being, human or otherwise. The main protagonists in *The Wall* and *The Push* are mountain climbers. This group, according to Monasterio, Yassar Alamri, and Omer Mei-Dan, exhibit "significant temperament and character differences" compared to "a normative population sample" (218). Trauma is both experienced and represented differently depending on the different identity groups involved in the process. In this, we draw on Michelle Balaev's "pluralistic model" (31) of understanding trauma, that is, the notion that there are a variety of trauma responses instead of a single "official" one. Trauma is also not gender-neutral: as Brown points out, it "is a feminizing event; trauma renders its targets weak, helpless, confused, and emotional, all characteristics that are associated with the target group of femininity" (*Cultural* 44). The specificity and plurality of trauma is evident in how it is represented in *The Wall*. First, the very ontology of trauma is made light of by labeling it as something unserious. In the masculine climber jargon of the novel, trauma is described as merely another "epic," as something that goes into climbing's "hall of fame" despite of, or rather *because* of, "the death of partners, the loss of toes and fingers, madness, terrible privations, the whole nine yards" (190). Second, the novel also paints a picture of a world where reactions to a traumatic event are expected to be starkly different whether one identifies as male or female: when Cuba, one of the "Trojan women," at the moment of her would-be-rescuers reaching her, first emits "the hoarse cry of a carrion bird" (261) and is moments later "screaming like a banshee" (265), Hugh understands her reaction. After all, she has just spent days clutching on to her friend Andie's dead body whose eyes the "birds had taken" (265). However, when Augustine reacts violently and apparently irrationally to finding his ex-lover like this, Hugh first thinks he has "no excuse" (267) to act in such manner. Only grudgingly does Hugh acknowledge that "his shattered faith and the sight of his lover turned into that horror" perhaps after all "counted" (267) as a stressful enough event.

Among the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, the *DSM-V* lists, for example, "exposure to war," "being kidnapped, being taken hostage, terrorist attack," and "observing threatened or serious injury" or "unnatural death" (274). However, in *The Push*, the narrator implies that the memories of their kidnapping and witnessing of extreme violence "haunt" only his then-fiancee Beth. Caldwell writes that it is only because her "parents figured we needed professional help" that they eventually go see a psychologist (108). Tommy, however, is initially "startled and stunned" when they are compared to "rape victims" by the psychologist. Only later does he understand that the psychologist treated them as trauma victims (108). Indeed, *The Push* implies that only the third significant traumatic event of his life, namely his wife Beth leaving him, seems to "push" him over the edge, truly into the territory of trauma. Losing his finger, he admits to feelings of "psychological trauma" (124) but only after his divorce, when staying in Yosemite in the shadow of El Capitan, does he admit suffering "*from a tornado of depression*" and "*nightmares* […] *of dying*" (160). Significantly, he himself makes the connection between his spatial location

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and psychological state: "*What brings you to a place where you dream of your own death*?" (160). Caldwell constructs a narrative of healing: Tommy's decision to battle his trauma by dedicating his athletic life to being the first to climb the "Dawn Wall"[2] of El Capitan can be seen as a symbolic act of rising (or, climbing) up from the psychological ashes of a dark, feminine, and earthy trauma into a light, masculine, and transcendent athletic achievement.

Aside from the effect that trauma victims' gender has on their traumatic experience in *The Wall* and *The Push*, their dual positions as both perpetrators and victims of trauma are significant textual elements in the narratives. In *The Push*, Tommy is partially accountable for his divorce, and, albeit unwittingly, he certainly cuts off his finger himself. The most striking and narratively dramatic instance of traumatization, however, is undoubtedly when he, as a kidnapping victim, pushes one of their assailants off a cliff and for many years from that moment on thinks of himself as a killer. Just as with Hugh in *The Wall*, who suffers from perpetrator trauma because of his role in his wife's death, the related symptoms, as mentioned by the *DSM-V*, of "[r]eckless or self-destructive behavior" (272), are acutely felt by the protagonist in *The Push*, as is evidenced by his anguished seeking of solace in dangerous climbing. Throughout *The Wall*, Augustine and Hugh suffer not only from traumatic experiences in the mountains, but also from their own roles as initiators of those events. While Augustine's role in the past of leaving his friends to die in the mountains is that of an unintentional perpetrator, it is hinted throughout the novel and finally revealed at its end that Hugh in fact not only "lost" his wife Annie in the desert, but intentionally abandoned, that is, killed her. In the novel, Hugh's dual role as victim and perpetrator reaches its apex as nature seemingly conflates the victims in his traumatized mind, when he first searches for and then finds his friend and climbing partner Lewis hanging from ropes on the wall:

> It had been like this in the desert as he [Hugh] trekked out from Annie [...] step by step calculating his exit from madness [...] He didn't like the wide-eyed surprise on Lewis's face. It made him look foolish. And the snow packing his mouth brought back Hugh's nightmare of Annie with the sand pouring from her throat. He put his back to the abyss. They were gone. (Long 352-353)

Transferring victim status onto perpetrators of violence has historically been in the interest of institutions (such as the US military) that rely on their members to perform acts of violence (Gibbs 161), and the study of perpetrator trauma has therefore understandably been "a neglected area of literary trauma studies" (Rodi-Risberg, "Problems" 118). Alan Gibbs hasDSM stressed the importance of a critical study of perpetrator trauma. He has emphasized that although "the projection of sufferer or victim status" to those who themselves have caused trauma has often implied an attempt at "the minimising of responsibility for one's actions" (161), just acknowledging and studying the phenomenon does not absolve perpetrators of guilt (168). As Marinella Rodi-Risberg stresses, there are "ethical as well as political implications" when analyzing representations of trauma ("Problems" 110), and in analyzing the portrayals of white

[2] A feature film documenting the climb, *The Dawn Wall*, directed by Josh Lowell and produced by the Red Bull Media House in association with Sender Films, was released in 2017.

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athletic males and their perpetrator trauma it is crucial to consider them in relation to Gibbs's assertion that women and men suffer differently from perpetrator trauma because women are already "doubly victimized" (191) on account of their oppressed position in society.

In *The Wall*, the focalization is throughout from Hugh's point of view, and the reader is initially led to feel sympathy for him. Like Gibbs and Rodi-Risberg above, Hubert Zapf has problematized the "ethical relevance" (209) of literary trauma narratives, especially when they are concerned with focalization from the perpetrator's viewpoint: discussing Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* and the scene where the male protagonist Tancred cuts a wound in a tree (who is in fact his lover Clorinda whom he has accidentally killed), Zapf notes that what "appears ethically relevant in this scene is that even though the perspective is that of the agent of traumatization, the crusading [male] knight, the narrative attention and the reader's empathy are drawn to the fate and voice of the [female] victim" (214). Rodi-Risberg indicates that this scene adds a material element to trauma and is suggestive of male violence against women and nature ("Writing" 31, 188). Trauma is caused simultaneously to the natural world which "becomes a metamorphic other of the female heroine" and to Clorinda (Zapf 214). As Alaimo reminds us, material nature "is never merely an external place but always the very substance of our selves and others" (158), and the confluence of trauma, gender, and nature described here is also evident in *The Wall*. Although Hugh's perspective is prioritized and his power often made to seem somehow "natural," the novel implies that this has dire consequences. From the beginning of the novel Hugh and Lewis are introduced to the reader in ways designed to make them feel sympathetic. As the narrative evolves, however, and the reader is led through Hugh's interior soliloquy of his deteriorating marriage and his extreme reaction to it, the reader's sympathy shifts to his wife, and Hugh is made responsible for his actions.

In the climax of the novel, while Hugh has been able to lead Augustine and Cuba up and off the wall, he is left face to face with Cuba, who is throughout the novel described by Augustine as a "witch." The reader is led to believe that this is perhaps only a sign of a misogynistic attitude towards a non-white, possibly non-heterosexual, and capable woman. However, problematically, at the novel's end, the narrator suggests that Cuba indeed may be a "witch." Throughout the novel, she has been described as an "other" with the skin color of either "smoked meat" or "dark tea" (Long 257) as compared to the white, athletic males all around her. In the end, she symbolically assumes the role of the magical and vengeful female out for her "pound of flesh" (286), a strangely Shakespearean "weird sister" (336), and simultaneously a personification of "Mother Nature", who in the end slaps down the hubristic male from off her. The novel ends with Hugh in free fall down the wall after Cuba has cut through his rope. Although horror fiction often aims to (re)establish order, when that order is inherently unethical, a "radical horror writer" may eschew tradition (Wisker 10). Even though Long may not be a politically radical author, this "harmony without restoration of the status quo" (Wisker 36) can be read as an implicitly feminist critique of misogyny. Like the ghost of Colonel Chabert, the eponymous character in Balzac's 1832 novel, as discussed by Cathy Caruth, "does not return […]

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precisely as a human being claiming his rights but as a cry for humanity emanating from someone not yet recognized as human" (Caruth 25), Annie emanates as a spectre in the form of Cuba and claims, finally, to be heard as a victim. It should be noted that the trope of the ghost was also used in Paver's mountaineering novel *Thin Air*, where the character of Arthur Ward, though male, functions in a similar role as Cuba. The ghost trope has been traced to Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Gibbs notes how her usage of the "trauma as haunting […] has been excessively and sometimes inappropriately borrowed by later trauma writers seeking similar effects" (76). In this sense, *The Wall* (and *Thin Air*) tread waters familiar from other trauma narratives, although the political function of the ghost is different in *The Wall* in that the ghost represents a female victim of male violence.

Significantly, while the *DSM-V* lists "[p]ersistent, distorted cognitions about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event(s) that lead the individual to blame himself/herself or others" and related feelings of "guilt, or shame" (272) as symptoms of PTSD, only Hugh's cognitions have been distorted, as he has until the end not been able to face what he did to his wife. Although Hugh had sought to heal himself from his perpetrator trauma on the wall, it is only Augustine, the younger and (more) innocent of the two who in the end receives any healing from nature: only he "looked cleansed. Reborn" (373) near the end of their ordeal, while Hugh was still incapable of either remorse or redemption.

Pluralities of Natures

We have so far mainly addressed the representation of the human element of trauma. Nature, or "the wall" and its multispecies community, is depicted in our primary texts not only as a victim of arguably traumatic human actions, but also as both an agent of healing and a source of traumatization. El Capitan is the spatial location of events, and in both books additionally reflects white masculine viewpoints of nature as at times benevolent and at other times malevolent. As Balaev has shown, representations of nature in American trauma fiction rely on the construction of an "environmental ethos" that "forms a geographically specific contextual factor of place," and this construction extends to "the representational contingencies of trauma, memory, and the self" (xii). In this light, the "wall" of El Capitan produces in the protagonists of Long's and Caldwell's books, in Balaev's terms, "a physical arena where the individual engages the self and the past" (63), and where physical "interactions with the landscape" allow the protagonists to work through their respective traumas (28). As Thom van Dooren, Eben Kirksey, and Ursula Münster point out, "human lives and ways of life cannot take place and be described in isolation" (2), but we must consider them as contingent upon each other. As with the pluralities of trauma, there are also various modes of representing nature in Caldwell and Long's books, for instance, in terms of the multispecies natural "entanglements" (van Dooren et al. 2), that is, the coeval agencies of human and nonhuman actors, involved. In *The Push*, the existence of nonhuman agents, apart from the wall itself, is curiously neglected, even though Yosemite Valley is rich in fauna. In *The Wall*, however, there are a rich variety of nonhuman agents that act on the novel's human protagonists: frogs and

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mice chew the climbers' ropes, and later, as there is a forest fire raging beneath the wall, Hugh and Lewis behold a "whole food chain" that "unfolded" beneath them as "bats," "swallows, swifts, jays, and nutcrackers flocked upward" (173) in an attempt to escape the flames.

The forest fire, which functions as the dramatic culmination of the novel's midpoint, is started by a traumatized Vietnam war veteran, Joshua. He is accused by Hugh and Lewis of stealing the dead body of one of the fallen women, "the sick bastard" (Long 87). Joshua is a thoroughly "other" man likened to an animal "living in caves and animal dens, eating tourist leftovers and downed game, foraging for nuts and berries" (49). He is thus the antithesis of the hypermasculine big wall climber protagonists. As the forest fire develops, more and more animals escape it up the wall onto the same rocky ledge where the climbers are. As they do, they constitute a tacitly acknowledged multispecies community.

> It was a miserable day. The brown pall obscured the sun. More animals climbed onto the ledge. The species now included lizards, mice, and a scorched squirrel. They tried to give the squirrel some water, but the thing acted rabid. The fire had driven it insane. When it tried to bite them, Lewis kicked it over the edge, and then anguished about killing a fellow survivor. (Long 177)

The squirrel is both an acute foreshadowing of the fate awaiting Hugh as well as a poignant reference to the now seemingly chronic and worsening forest fire situation in California. This section of Long's novel apparently anticipates the dire effects to the multispecies community that unmitigated climate change causes.

In *The Wall*, Nature, and "the wall," especially, while sometimes represented in terms of affection, is at other times seen to take on an agency of its own. It is cast in the role of a willful, malevolent actor intent on causing traumatic events. The killing of the squirrel notwithstanding, nonhuman animals are generally depicted sympathetically, especially as compared to the looming presence of the wall of El Capitan. El Capitan is both the "arena" where the male climbers attempt to actualize their masculinity and heal from their traumas as well as the literal "wall" standing in the way of their doing so. In *The Push*, on the other hand, the wall enables the abjection, the pushing away, of the narrator/protagonist's trauma and thus acts as an agent of healing. Hubert Zapf, discussing Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, describes the novel as dealing with the tensions "between biophobic and biophilic energies" (199), and similar tensions can be found between the depictions of the wall in our primary texts. In *The Wall*, El Capitan is in Hugh's guilt-ridden and slowly deteriorating mind seen in paranoid terms as a semi-conscious "conspiracy of nature" literally "hunting them" (313). Estok has offered his concept of ecophobia as a more fruitful concept than those of biophilia (Kellert and Wilson) and biophobia (Ulrich) because ecophobia enables more effectively linking fear and hatred of nature with "homophobia and racism and sexism" (Estok 208), seeing that they all rely on the ontology of white heterosexual masculinity being above the feminized terrain of nature. Such connections are indeed evident in *The Wall*, where El Capitan is at turns described as a "monstrosity" out for "prey" (82, 84) or, indeed even "the devil" (152) "eating them alive" (363). Although Hugh recognizes the wall as "alive" and "abound[ing]

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with energy and life forces" (207, 210), from the novel's outset he rejects the paternalistic notion of El Capitan and nature as female: "People talked about Mother Nature. Mother, hell. One false move and you ended up in its belly" (17). For Hugh, El Capitan is something that is simultaneously (monstrously) inhuman and (anthropomorphically) agentic.

In *The Push*, the perspective is more biophilic, even geophilic (Cohen). For Tommy, El Capitan seems feminine and reminiscent of both a female lover and a tender Mother Earth:

> After all these years the view of the wall above still leaves me breathless. I lay my hand on the cool stone and run my fingers along its surface. Then I lay my cheek on the wall and turn my eyes skyward, a ritual I have performed hundreds of times, paying homage to creation. I close my eyes and thank El Capitan for being here. Then I ask her to keep me safe through this journey. (Caldwell 293)

Tommy even supposes that his second wife Becca thinks of El Capitan as essentially his "mistress" (237). Contrary to some of the representations of the exaggerated masculinity of rock climbing in *The Wall*, Tommy is adamant that the wall is not something to battle against or conquer; rather, climbing it requires, "working with it, not against, the rock" (Caldwell 240). Hugo Reinert's discussion of the Sámi people's reverence of certain charismatic large rocks referred to as *Stállu* shows how stones have in some cultures been "recognized as powerful entities—capable not just of transacting with humans but of forming bonds and entering relations, gifting petitioners with luck and material benefits in return for appropriate offerings" (97). The offerings gifted and received in our primary texts vary dramatically. Reinert discusses how "lifelong relations with particular stones" (97) can be beneficial to the human half of the bargain, which is the case with Tommy in *The Push* because of his longstanding "relationship" with El Capitan. For Hugh, Lewis, and Augustine such rewards are not forthcoming, and in the end El Capitan "punishes" the men for their arrogance: Augustine narrowly escapes with his life, but is (re)traumatized, after "turning to stone and ice, dissolving into mist […] like a myth where humans petrified or turned into trees or animals" (343).

Pluralities of Masculinities

The protagonists' white athletic masculinity influences both how they see nature and how traumatic events that take place therein affect them. This identity category, however, while seemingly singular, is in truth an "unavoidably complex and pluralised" one (Hultman and Pulé 2). Past trauma studies has focused so extensively on (certain) male responses to trauma that Brown has criticized the field for highlighting the experiences of "white, young-able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian men" at the expense of excluding the experiences of those outside those categories ("Not Outside" 101). Critique of masculinist and ableist culture also resonates with recent interdisciplinary work on disability studies and environmentalism. Sarah Jaquette Ray indicates that "adventure culture's investments are not just racial, gendered, elitist, or imperialist; they fundamentally hinge on the fit body," and so the emphasis on fitness disregards "the category of disability" against which the risking, adventuring body is

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defined (33, 36). Paradoxically, Ray suggests that adventuring bodies in fact risk disability due to their desired "environmental transcendence requir[ing] this corporeal experience" (36). Elizabeth A. Wheeler has voiced a similar critique of the notion that "the acquisition of ecological consciousness" through mountaineering requires a fit and able, usually male and heterosexual body and thus places "some people as closer to nature than others" (553).

In critical research on human-nonhuman relations men have traditionally been conspicuously absent to the point of leaving them "categorically unmarked" (MacGregor and Seymour 10). This is despite Richard Twine's assertion that hegemonic masculinity is deeply rooted in a "dominating and alienated relation to nature" (1). Emerging work on ecological masculinities has therefore taken on board the critical tools of ecofeminist work and started to both critically investigate "masculinities as plural" (MacGregor and Seymour 11) and outline ways for them to challenge and dismantle hegemonic assumptions (Hultman and Pulé).

Ecofeminist Greta Gaard has insisted that environmental justice aspects are vital to the deconstruction of hegemonic masculinities (*Critical*), and offered non-damaging outdoor practices such as cycling and gardening ("Toward") as means that could facilitate men "to stand with—rather than on top of" those oppressed (*Critical* 161). Although sport has often been seen as a field that reifies hegemonic masculinity and its "celebration of danger, risk and competition," sociologist Victoria Robinson, who has studied masculinities and rock climbing, is critical of such blanket statements (106). She argues that the willingness to practice a risky sport like rock climbing can also be the result of wanting to "resist and transform" established masculine praxes (161). Therefore, there are ethico-political advantages in a critical study of rock-climbing masculinities, especially as feminist trauma scholar Jennifer Griffiths has shown that a(nother) way for trauma studies to be politically relevant is to emphasize trauma's relation to "masculinity itself" (182) and gender's relation to power.

Even further ethical implications of studying representations of trauma emerge when the objects of study are implicated in the birth of the traumatic events. After all, the male rock climbers in our study choose to do things and go to places where traumatic events are likely to occur. In a twist on the misogynist justification of rape (i.e., gendering public places as male and excluding women from them by excusing rape and saying that the victim "should not have walked there, drunk, in that bad neighborhood at night and dressed like that, etc."), we might say that all of the (male) trauma victims in *The Wall* and *The Push* are at least partially "to blame" for their being victimized. Unlike, for example, soldiers suffering from PTSD who, often, did not choose to go to places where traumatic events are likely to happen, these rock climbers willingly put themselves in harm's way. Moreover, despite waxing lyrically about the beauty of the pristine mountain landscapes, their very presence in that environment arguably contributes to the destruction of not only that specific place, but to the environmental catastrophe at large (Wörsching).

Representations of masculinities in the primary texts are never simple and static but contestable and volatile, consisting both of hegemonic hypermasculinities and efforts at deconstructing these. For example, although Hugh is depicted in increasingly

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unflattering terms as the narrative in *The Wall* develops and his role in his wife's death is elucidated, this portrayal is also accompanied by the narrative voice becoming more critical. Moreover, although Caldwell expresses caring and equitable ideas in his memoir, there is also an implicit understanding that for being a successful professional athlete, his wife's nearly unquestioning support is expected.

The lack of gender equity in *The Wall* is conspicious, and throughout the novel, the male climbers' attitudes to women are characterized by misogyny. Hugh and Augustine are portrayed thinking that the "Trojan women" are belongings of the men (151). Augustine's interior soliloquy depicts the women as having "trespassed beyond some border" even though "they must have known they didn't belong here" (216). He even considers the women's climbing ambitions as merely wanting "to show the world how big their balls were" (220). Moreover, Augustine manages to remarkably associate his own trauma with El Capitan by describing the route of the "Trojan women" on it as "an open wound" (213). "Wound", the literal meaning of trauma, here acts as a powerful allegory of the men's desperate journey up the wall while trying to stay independent, masculine men against the feminizing effect of being trauma victims. For Hugh, the attempt to retain his masculine autonomy, "not giving yourself away" was even the central motive for killing his wife, and "to purge the impulse" of performing "Samaritan acts" (306) was for him an essential requirement of realizing his masculinity.

In the novel's climax, Hugh has to finally embrace his feminine side and relinquish his hubristic sense of separateness. He is an oil company geologist and thus literally an embodiment of "toxic" masculinity, but at the dramatic peak of the novel's climbing action, when he leads himself and Augustine up the wall on the "Trojan women's" elusive route, Hugh has to symbolically become a woman to be able to trace the female climbers' path. His comfortable privileged masculinity is at a loss in the "*female labyrinth*" (223) that the "Trojan women" have created up the wall, which has "erased all his reference points" (234). Already at the beginning of the novel, Hugh has been uneasy about feeling uncharacteristically "illiterate with the land" when planning their climb (23). As Rodi-Risberg has discussed, "the observing position from which landscape has historically been viewed within Western geographical discourse has been masculine (and white and heterosexual)" (*Writing* 187). Here in the novel, when Hugh's normal ontological position and practices are questioned, he must reflect on his own embodied masculinity to find his way out of the "labyrinth."

The solution comes to Hugh as he realizes that as "a guy, he was naturally inclined to muscling moves", but only by accepting the need to climb "delicately" and using "finesse" will he be able to climb up (Long 247). Although it is temporarily empowering for Hugh to get in touch with his feminine side, automatically equating delicateness with femininity is not without its problems, as "cultural male/female dichotomies" (Salovaara 77) in representations of climbing can have negative, self-perpetuating repercussions to gender equity and, as Hultman and Pulé state, thus lead to reinforcing "stereotypical gendered differences" (197). As an example of current, culturally sterotypical assumptions of masculinity, Hultman and Pulé refer to the notion that "being a real man is being the one who penetrates, not the one who is penetrated" (9). The implicitly

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feminizing event of being penetrated is in Hugh's mind merged with the idea of being "gaping open, utterly vulnerable" (366). During a night spent in their hanging tent platform on the wall, the ghost that haunts them on their climb is felt by Hugh to be moving beneath the tent floor: "Hugh felt it crossing his rump […] It poised beneath his anus, and he felt open" (366). Hugh's fear of being anally molested by the ghost is only dissolved after terrified, violent resistance, at the end of which each of the climbers "separated into animal solitude" (367) for the duration of the rest of the night.

In *The Push*, Tommy exhibits a masculinity that shares some of the hypermasculine elements found in the characters in *The Wall*, but that is also decidedly different in that there are explicit declarations of appreciation for the women in his life. Tommy also emphasizes the role of nature in molding his masculinity in a positive direction by claiming that he was "shaped by the mountains into a man who can love" (336). However, like *The Wall, The Push* discusses the environmentally damaging practice of placing metal bolts in the rock for protection as implicitly feminine, as opposed to the "machismo" (Caldwell 47) of using removable, "natural" pieces of protection. The hypermasculine, macho, notion of bolts as the epitome of cowardice and degenerated masculinity, is evident in first Hugh's, then Lewis's musings in *The Wall*, where "pure" rock may be seen as a metaphor for "pure" femininity, ripe for picking for the male conquerors, but also acts as a symbol of the protagonists' environmental ethos.

> Chicken bolts […] the work of pretenders to the throne […] the drilling of even a single bolt […] an event very close to statutory rape […] Many climbers had backed off from routes rather than despoil them with a bolt, preferring to leave the rock pure for those with more talent […] To him [Lewis], bolts weren't just an eyesore, they were evil. They were the Machine, the paving of the American frontier, the cowardice of urban weaklings." (Long 94-95)

Significantly, when Hugh and Augustine arrive at the belay station of the "Trojan women," Hugh describes the profusion of bolts at the scene as irrevocable evidence of the women's deteriorating mental state and "[p]aranoia" (257), as an embodiment of an essentially female terror and irrationality. The implication here is that relying on the inherent safety of the bolts is undoubtedly less manly than being more autonomous, indeed frontiersmanlike, and placing one's own protection.

In conclusion, the representations of privileged, white athletic heterosexual men's trauma and their responses to it vary on a spectrum ranging between the hegemonic and, at least moderately, ecological. Further, because the convergence of trauma, nature, and, specifically, masculinity, has been neglected in previous studies, this convergence needs to be made more conspicuous, and men marked more explicitly as a category. This ultimately has both ethical and political ramifications because *whose* trauma is represented and *how* matters (Rodi-Risberg, "Problems" 110). Therefore, overly simplistic notions of masculinity and trauma need to be further problematized, and the shifting, at times agentic and at other times more objectified, role of nature, considered. In studying these representations of masculinity, and eventually also other, nonbinary genders, combining trauma studies with ecofeminist and ecomasculine scholarship promises to be a productive locus of action. This is especially because it enables examining

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the portrayals of healing processes, in our case specifically from trauma, as both gendered and localized.

Submission received 20 December 2018 Revised version accepted 13 July 2019

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