

# MG Episode 1: Spare X Tender Masculinity

## SPEAKERS

Hannah McGregor, Marcelle Kosman

**[Material Girls Theme plays: “Shopping Mall” by Jay Arner and Jessica Delisle]**

**Marcelle Kosman 00:28**

Hello, and welcome to Material Girls, a scholarly podcast about popular culture. I'm Marcelle Kosman.

**Hannah McGregor 00:37**

And I'm Hannah McGregor. And hey, you might know us from the podcast, Witch, Please. Since we finished our read through of the Harry Potter series, we're trying something a little different, but with the same overall goal of digging into the things we find interesting to see how they work.

**Marcelle Kosman 00:56**

In each episode of Material Girls, we're going to choose an object of study. This will be something that's having or has had a moment of popularity. We're going to think through the material reasons for that popularity.

**Hannah McGregor 01:11**

So the episodes will be divided into three main segments. First, “Why this? Why now?” is the segment where we'll introduce the thing in question, and we'll talk about why we think it's interesting and make some preliminary guesses about why it had or is having a moment.

**Marcelle Kosman 01:30**

The next segment, “The Theory We Need,” is where we get scholarly. Hannah and I are both academics by training, and we just can't help but bring in critical theory to make sense of what's happening in the world. So in this segment, we'll introduce the theory or method that we're using to unpack the popularity or success of our objective study, sort of like a primer or intro lesson, so that we're all coming into the conversation on, you know, equal-ish footing.

**Hannah McGregor 01:58**

Once we've got the theory, we head into a segment called “In this essay, I will”, it's a Twitter joke. If you're not on Twitter, you don't know it, but it's great. It's a great Twitter joke. This is where we make our arguments about the episode's topic. So we'll put the theory to work

analyzing specific moments from or about our object of study, like a particular scene or the way it's circulated among audiences. In other words, this is where we turn our hot takes into hot takes supported with evidence and analysis, aka scholarship! **[Hannah giggles]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 02:36

Scholarship! And of course, we'll start each episode with a quick hello because we're very busy and this is the only time we get to hang out. Hi, Hannah!

**Hannah McGregor** 02:48

**[Hannah laughs]** Hi, Marcelle. How, just real quick, just tell me how your day has been.

**Marcelle Kosman** 02:51

I made myself a pizza for breakfast.

**Hannah McGregor** 02:54

Oh, what? Breakfast pizza? Did you do something to make it breakfast-y? Or was it just breakfast-y by virtue of eating it to break your fast?

**Marcelle Kosman** 03:01

It was breakfast-y by virtue of eating it to break my fast, but I did put it in the oven before 10:30 in the morning, so I feel like that is like a legit breakfast. How was your day? How was it? It's 11:52 where you are right now. How did it go?

**Hannah McGregor** 03:18

It's 11:52 where I am now. I had a talk. I was delivering a virtual talk for-

**Marcelle Kosman** 03:25

**[Marcelle laughs]** I thought you were gonna say a taco.

**Hannah McGregor** 03:27

You thought I was gonna say a taco?

**Marcelle Kosman** 03:28

Well, you said I had a talk and I thought you're gonna say I had a taco. **[Marcelle laughs]**

**Hannah McGregor** 03:33

You got confused because you had pizza for breakfast. And you were like, everybody must be having chaotic breakfasts, but not this guy. I had the standard breakfast of weird small vegan

cookies. You know those cookies, like quote unquote cookies that come in a sealed bag? They're like a soft little nug and they're like it's a cookie but like there's too much psyllium husk in it to be what anybody would consider a tasty treat.

**Marcelle Kosman** 04:03

Oh my god.

**Hannah McGregor** 04:04

And now I'm drinking some sparkling kefir beverage. So my insides, who knows what they're gonna do.

**Marcelle Kosman** 04:13

Oh, materiality.

**Hannah McGregor** 04:17

**[Hannah laughs]** Bet you regret asking me about my day now.

**Marcelle Kosman** 04:19

I do!

**[Upbeat interlude music plays]**

**Hannah McGregor** 04:22

Okay, Marcelle. It's "Why this, why now?" time. What are we talking about today?

**Marcelle Kosman** 04:28

Well, Hannah, you know that I love gossip.

**Hannah McGregor** 04:34

Oh same.

**Marcelle Kosman** 04:35

And I am a total sucker for soft boys.

**Hannah McGregor** 04:40

Medium same. **[Hannah laughs]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 04:41

Fair. That's fair. Well, today for our object of study, I want to talk about gossip and soft boys and more. So I would like to introduce to you the memoir, *Spare* by Prince Harry. Hannah. Tell me everything you know about this book.

**Hannah McGregor** 05:01

I know that it is a relatively recent publication. I know that it is a huge bestseller. And I believe very strongly in my heart that it was probably ghostwritten. And I think that there's a scene where he talks about putting the same moisturizer on his frostbitten penis that his mother used to wear? And that that sort of was a weird, a weird moment for him. And that's it for what I know about the content of the book. **[Marcelle and Hannah laugh]** That he had to put moisturizer on his frostbitten wang, but um, I am kind of like a follower, like a B level follower of royal family gossip. Like I've been following the Prince Harry and Meghan Markle scandals. Obviously, you know, I'm pro monarchy. So. No.

**Marcelle Kosman** 06:00

No. You're pro Markle-key.

**Hannah McGregor** 06:04

Well, you know what? I feel really interested in the showdown that is happening right now between the power of American popular culture and the power of British inherited wealth and monarchy. I feel like we had a real like, Oprah versus the Queen kind of moment when it came to like, who gets to define the zeitgeist. And I feel like quite clearly Oprah won. And like, obviously, the monarchy is bad. And then also, I'm like, but is American celebrity culture good? Like, I don't know if I'm ready to make that claim. But yeah, so like, I know context-ish around it. I know a lot about Diana.

**Marcelle Kosman** 06:49

Well, we're gonna talk about that for sure. Because that's the age we are. But before we talk about being geriatric millennials who grew up under the rainbow of Princess Diana celebrity, I want to first just touch on the fact that, like, you haven't read the book.

**Hannah McGregor** 07:08

Never read any books.

**Marcelle Kosman** 07:09

**[Marcelle laughs]** But what I think is really interesting. And the reason why I think this is such a good object of study for us is that it is such a cultural text, that even having not read it, you are aware of the circumstances surrounding it, you know that it's a memoir, right? Like, you know,

so you've got like, all of the kind of culture stuff like, whether it was ghost written, or Prince Harry himself sat down with a pen and paper and, you know, sweated out every single chapter, no way to know. **[Hannah laughs]** You still have specific expectations of like, what the book is and what it does and how people are going to respond to it. Right?

**Hannah McGregor** 08:00

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. It is undeniably a Zeitgeist-y piece of pop culture.

**Marcelle Kosman** 08:06

So having read it, one of the things that is maybe worth noting about the book, is that it's not as scandalous as I had anticipated. The way that I would describe it is the tea is warm, but it's not hot.

**Hannah McGregor** 08:27

Okay. All right. It is not scalding.

**Marcelle Kosman** 08:30

No. No. And overall, it's kind of really sad.

**Hannah McGregor** 08:36

Oh, Jesus, is it about the trauma of mother death?

**Marcelle Kosman** 08:39

Yes. It is.

**Hannah McGregor** 08:36

Wow. Marcelle, we have established I only like *writing* books about the trauma of mother death. I don't like reading them.

**Marcelle Kosman** 08:49

Have no interest. But as much as I think that the trauma of mother death is central to the construction of the memoir, I don't think it is as important to the function and the circulation of the memoir as a cultural text. So we're-

**Hannah McGregor** 09:13

It's not what's making it Zeitgeist-y.

**Marcelle Kosman** 09:14

Exactly, exactly.

**Hannah McGregor** 09:16

So what is making it Zeitgeist-y? Why do you think it's so of the moment?

**Marcelle Kosman** 09:21

Yeah. So I have three approximate clusters of moving pieces.

**Hannah McGregor** 09:28

That's actually the brand of health cookie that I had for breakfast. **[Marcelle laughs]** They're called approximate clusters.

**Marcelle Kosman** 09:37

Well, let's start with the first approximate cluster, which is the least interesting and probably the most akin to the psyllium seed husk. Okay? And that would be succession.

**Hannah McGregor** 09:50

The show? Haven't watched it.

**Marcelle Kosman** 09:52

Not the show, although the show, Oh, we'll talk about succession in another episode maybe someday. Okay. No, I mean, the actual, like monarchical succession, because Granny is dead. Long live the king. William is the heir. **[Hannah laughs]** And Harry, as his memoir explains, is the spare.

**Hannah McGregor** 10:16

So thing one, Queen died, and we all sort of became really aware of the monarchy.

**Marcelle Kosman** 10:22

Totally. Yeah. So the other thing, I think this might be maybe the biggest thing, the biggest moving part. And it's that geriatric Millennials like you, and like me, We're adults now. We're like literal adults, even if our lives are protracted adolescence into perpetuity. We're adults, and we grew up, our childhoods were shaped by Princess Diana's celebrity. And I think it's fair to say that a lot of us were impacted by her death. I don't know about you, Hannah. I remember literally where I was sitting in the living room when I found out.

**Hannah McGregor** 11:07

Me too! Me too, viscerally!

**Marcelle Kosman** 11:10

Yeah. And so the fact that now like prestige drama like *The Crown*, and movies, starring like queer icons, like Kristen Stewart are about Princess Diana, the moments, the years and months leading up to her death, like I think this says a lot about how impactful it was for us as kids, and now that we're grownups, it's like, oh, well, this is part of the defining fabric of the millennial.

**Hannah McGregor** 11:40

Yeah, yeah. And she was such an interesting figure for a sort of moment of shift in celebrity culture, because she was somebody who participated in something much closer to the kind of “hashtag relatable” celebrity culture that would sort of like grow up and become more of a norm, right, that she was, it was, you know, she was the people's princess, she was not like the rest of the royal family who couldn't be less interested in coming across as human.

You know, she had this interest in being a kind of relatable human figure. And I think she used that relatability in some really interesting political ways, right? Like her activism with people with HIV and AIDS. Like, she used her sort of perceived relatability as a way to de-stigmatize people living with HIV and AIDS. But it also means that like her, and I think to some extent, her kids are like these celebrity figures who we, I think, felt like we could relate to in a way that we never did with like, QE2 bless her, not a relatable person.

**Marcelle Kosman** 12:55

No, possibly her affection for dogs?

**Hannah McGregor** 12:59

I was gonna say, the only relatable thing about her? Fondness for corgis, because who doesn't love a corgi?

**Marcelle Kosman** 13:04

And so then add to that the fact that we're basically the same age as William and Harry. William is like, a teensy bit older than you and me maybe by a year, and Harry is a teensy bit younger than us by maybe like a year.

**Hannah McGregor** 13:22

They are our generational peers.

**Marcelle Kosman** 13:24

Totally. So when we were going to school, they were going to school, when we were going to university, they were going to university or being bullied out of going to university by their parents, because they're not the learning type. This is straight out of the book.

**Hannah McGregor** 13:39

I almost did my year abroad at the University of Stirling, because that's where William went.

**Marcelle Kosman** 13:45

You, Hannah, could have been the next queen.

**Hannah McGregor** 13:50

Absolutely not. There's so many things standing in the way of that possibility. **[Marcelle laughs]**  
Wow.

**Marcelle Kosman** 13:57

So like, I think, watching William and Harry grow up, and the way that the media represented them to us played a big role in the way that we kind of think about them as not really, not even as peers, but as like extended family. And I don't know if Americans feel this way, but like, that's kind of how I think of them since Canadians are so weirdly attached to the royal family.

**Hannah McGregor** 14:27

I can't wait to hear what Americans think about all of this, because every time, like I get why we're interested in the royal family, but why do Americans care, like you in a whole war to get rid of these fuckers. **[Marcelle laughs]** But I do understand why the introduction of Meghan Markle into the royal gossip machine has been so interesting to so many Americans because she is an actor. She is an American and she is Black. And so it brings a lot of stuff into the conversation about the royal family that obviously resonates with American culture.

**Marcelle Kosman** 15:09

Totally. Yeah. And I think Harry's marriage, like the announcement of his engagement to Meghan Markle was real, or me at least, it was a real turning point in how he was figured in the media. I really feel like up until that point, he was always represented as, the precocious little brother, the naughty one, the one who's always getting in trouble, because he's the spare. He's like the bad one. You know? William has to be the good and mature and responsible one. Harry gets to be the little scamp who plays pool naked.

**Hannah McGregor** 15:51

A little stinker. **[Marcelle laughs]**



**Marcelle Kosman** 15:54

But then all of a sudden it's like, oh, wait, he is like, in love with Meghan Markle.

**Hannah McGregor** 16:03

Is being in love the opposite of being a little stinker?

**Marcelle Kosman** 16:06

100%. Yes, yeah. For Harry? Totally. Yeah.

**Hannah McGregor** 16:11

There's a third cluster isn't there?

**Marcelle Kosman** 16:13

There is a third cluster. Yeah. So Harry's being in love with Meghan, like so visibly in love with Meghan is kind of what leads me...

**Hannah McGregor** 16:23

[Hannah gasps] Oh, he's a wife guy!

**Marcelle Kosman** 16:24

He's not just a wife guy. He's like... He's a man who believes his wife. He loves Meghan. And he believes Meghan.

**Hannah McGregor** 16:36

Oh, that's interesting. Okay.

**Marcelle Kosman** 16:39

Yeah. So this brings me to the third approximate cluster, the Me Too movement.

**Hannah McGregor** 16:46

Whump whump! Sorry. [Hannah laughs] Okay.

**Marcelle Kosman** 16:49

Hear me out. Okay. So we're, we're in a really weird moment, because the Me Too movement was like, really kind of broiling in like, 2018. And then the pandemic happened and shut down the planet. So like, I think we didn't really get a chance to see how the publicness and the

commonplace-ness of the me too movement would have played out if it hadn't been superseded by an even bigger global crisis, if you will.

So here's what's really interesting about that, Hannah, is that I think that the progress that we might have seen, which has been interrupted, and shoved to the backburner, I think that part of what has made that invisible is the very noticeable shift in the types of masculinity that we're willing to celebrate or willing to continue celebrating. Because one of the things about the Me Too movement focusing on celebrities, is that it created the sense that you can't risk adoring men. It's too risky. I know!

**Hannah McGregor** 18:16

Whew. Oh, say it again to the people in the back.

**Marcelle Kosman** 18:20

The emotional investment in famous men is too risky.

**Hannah McGregor** 18:26

Don't do it. They're just gonna let you down.

**Marcelle Kosman** 18:29

They're just gonna let you down. And we saw this with so many types of men. It wasn't just like one type of man turned out to be, like, chronically abusive. It was that like, you never know, men who you think are perfectly good turn out to actually be like, incredibly hateful perverts, perverts. Not all perverts or hateful. Hashtag-

**Hannah McGregor** 18:55

Hashtag not all perverts.

**Marcelle Kosman** 18:56

So have we stopped loving men? Have we stopped celebrating men? No, of course not.

**Hannah McGregor** 19:05

No, both because we live under patriarchy, but also just because they are 50% of the population of humans on the planet. So I think I'm gonna put aside my well documented misandry for a moment, and say that I do think it is a legitimate stance to love some particular men. **[Marcelle laughs]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 19:25

Totally, totally.

**Hannah McGregor** 19:27

Don't tell any of the men in my life, they will get big heads about it.

**Marcelle Kosman** 19:31

Seriously. So I think that if we look at the types of men who we have rallied around in the post lockdown world, if you will, the types of men who at least I feel comfortable celebrating until they prove me wrong, are men who very clearly seem to like women, who seem to respect differences, and who seem comfortable being wrong and being silly and being vulnerable in public.

So you know, we're not we're not here to talk about all of Hollywood's not yet douchebags. We're here to talk specifically about Windsor castles not yet douchebag. And it's Harry. And I have to say that like a decade ago, I don't know if I would have believed you if you'd told me that I would one day be referring to Prince Harry, as being a soft boy. But here I am. From the moment that Twitter told me there was going to be a Black princess, I have been captivated by how Harry comports himself as Meghan Markle's partner.

**Hannah McGregor** 20:51

Yeah, yeah. Because he is her partner. Oh, yeah. He has her back. And you can tell that he hashtag believes women, because of the way that he has responded to the horrifying racism that she has experienced at the hands of the royal family and the British tabloid media. He very clearly has not tried to pretend it's not true. Like he clearly believes her. And has supported her and taken action to make her life better.

**Marcelle Kosman** 21:29

Yeah. And so like, as the reader of text that I am, I'm like, every single thing that they do as a couple, I'm like looking at it in this big web of like, what it means that a prince is making these decisions, right? And like, even the fact that they named their children, Archie and Lilibet, like, like, nothing about this relationship, or this couple is like, preparing for the throne. They are all in on being a family. And wow, do I love it. I love it so much.

**Hannah McGregor** 22:11

Marcelle, I love to hear about your love.

**Marcelle Kosman** 21:16

**[Marcelle laughs]** Oh, do you?

**Hannah McGregor** 22:17

Yeah, I love to hear about things that you love. But I am dead inside and so can only relate to things through a theoretical lens. So could we theorize this instead?

**Marcelle Kosman** 22:28

Yes, I will do that for you, Hannah. I will.

**Hannah McGregor** 22:31

Thank you, thank you.

**[Upbeat interlude music plays]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 22:36

Well, Hannah, it's not the hero we deserved. But it is the theory we need. **[Hannah guffaws]** Speaking of Batman references, Hannah, do you remember when you first started thinking about masculinities as a plural?

**Hannah McGregor** 22:51

I do. I was a graduate student dedicated to thinking about feminism. And I remember encountering a conference about, you know, post colonial masculinities and just being like, oh, oh, cool. What a fun new way to justify talking about men all the time. Like, all of these people being like, Let's study masculinities. And I'm like, No, thank you, not interested. I will confess, I have come around to the study of masculinities, I think, particularly around becoming like, truly divested myself of like my second wave feminism and coming to understand gender as a significantly more complex thing, than women and men and understanding how like, amongst other things, masculinities might be a thing I too, can access and participate in and take pleasure in, rather than only ever understanding it as like the boot on my neck.

**Marcelle Kosman** 24:05

**[Marcelle laughs]** On your femme femme neck.

**Hannah McGregor** 24:08

The boot on my femme neck. So yeah, yeah, I've kind of come around to thinking about masculinities.

**Marcelle Kosman** 24:16

That rings true for me, too. I absolutely had that same initial response of like, What do you mean, you're turning women's studies into gender studies? What do you mean?

**Hannah McGregor** 24:28

But then we listened and learned and that is the important thing, folks. Not to be right in your first instinct. It's okay. Just listen.

**Marcelle Kosman** 24:39

You'd be amazed at how often listening, just for a sec, you know?

**Hannah McGregor** 24:46

Yeah. Anyway, that's us subtweeting transphobes. So, Marcelle, are we gonna talk about masculinities?

**Marcelle Kosman** 24:52

Yeah, yeah, we are. We are. I want to start by talking about patriarchy. And here's why. I spent a little time reading some of bell hooks' *The Will to Change*.

**Hannah McGregor** 25:05

God, always a good way to spend some time is reading some bell hooks.

**Marcelle Kosman** 25:08

I know, I know. And I have to, I gotta say, like, it's great. She's got nothing but wisdom. But I had a real moment when I was reading her definition of patriarchy, which I will share with everybody. When I was like, Oh, this is definitely from 2004. Like, the language that she uses is dated in a way that will you'll I'll, I'll just, I'll just read it. Okay? So Bell Hooks defines patriarchy in *The Will to Change* as, and I quote, "a political social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything, and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence." End quote, now, Hannah, can you guess? Can you guess what the language is that gave me discomfort?

**Hannah McGregor** 26:10

Yeah, I would say that it's referring to people as males and females?

**Marcelle Kosman** 26:14

Exactly.

**Hannah McGregor** 26:15

Though, I will say in bell hooks' defense, which she doesn't need, because neither of us are attacking her. But sometimes when you are trying to define an oppressive system, you have to, you have to be like, this is actually just part of how this oppressive system works, is that it believes there are these things called males in these things called females. And that one of those things gets to run the world, and the other one is dominated. So it's always a useful reminder to be like, Oh, the whole division of the world into these binary gender categories is itself a function of the patriarchy.

**Marcelle Kosman** 26:52

So I gotta confess that like, when I was thinking about how to approach the theory for this, for this pilot, I really wasn't sure where to go. Because, you know, I don't know who to trust sometimes. And I always trust bell hooks. So that's why I started with bell hooks. And so while I would never use the term, male or female, except to discuss auxiliary cables, I do think that the way that she describes the representation of patriarchy is and remains important.

**Hannah McGregor** 27:34

Okay, so what does she have to say about representations of patriarchy?

**Marcelle Kosman** 27:38

So with respect to pop culture, she talks about a handful of different television shows and movies, and the one that has remained the most culturally present is probably Good Will Hunting.

**Hannah McGregor** 27:51

So she talks about Good Will Hunting?

**Marcelle Kosman** 27:53

She does, yeah, yeah, she talks about Good Will Hunting. So she says, and I quote, "contemporary books and movies offer clear portraits of the evils of patriarchy without offering any direction for change. And until we can create a popular culture that affirms and celebrates masculinity, without upholding patriarchy, we will never see a change in the way that masses of males think about the nature of their identity." End quote.

**Hannah McGregor** 28:24

Okay, so that's a useful distinction between patriarchy and masculinity, isn't it?

**Marcelle Kosman** 28:29

Totally. Yeah, like, you can indeed, embrace masculinity without subscribing to patriarchy as a system. Shocking.

**Hannah McGregor** 28:40

I know I overuse this phrase, but huge if true. **[Marcelle laughs]** And I get this, I get this critique as well, that's like, at the end of Good Will Hunting in the very moment where there is a suggestion that he might be ready to be different, he leaves. He leaves, he leaves and leaving is the thing that makes him different. But then we don't get to see any of the actual, like, tricky business of living a life outside of toxic masculinity. So we've got from bell hooks a definition of patriarchy, does she give us a definition of masculinity?

**Marcelle Kosman** 29:18

Ah, I didn't look for one. I didn't. When I went elsewhere, I went to the library, I went back to the library. So I actually have a whole bunch of snippets of scholars writing about masculinity. So according to Robert Morrell, prior to the 1990s, masculinity was largely and widely understood as singular and as separate from gender. So like there were scholars separate from gender because only women have gender. **[Hannah laughs]** Right? In the same way that only people of color have race, right? It was that same, because it is the norm from which everything deviates. So while there were some scholars writing in the 80s, and the scholars were influenced by feminism, and they were theorizing masculinity as a gender, as an area it really doesn't take off. As an area of study, it doesn't really take off until the 90s. When you know, feminists like you and me were getting mad about it. **[Marcelle laughs]**

**Hannah McGregor** 30:29

Gotcha, gotcha. And we got so mad that they were like, Fine, we'll create an entire scholarly field about it.

**Marcelle Kosman** 30:34

Yeah. So okay, so now I want to introduce Chris Haywood and Thomas Johansson, who give us a definition for masculinity, okay? Singular. So they say and I quote, "masculinity is a relational concept, often used indiscriminately and applied to males of all ages, assuming the same logic of identity and practices of a three year old child with those of a middle aged man." End quote. So what this means is that the term is not an analytical term. It's a descriptive term, and it describes too many things to be an actual description. And that's why it has to be plural. Okay? So Raewyn Connell is credited with the intentional use of the plural masculinities specifically to resist in essentializing, like, quote, unquote, "true masculinity" or some kind of true masculinity that quote "proceeds from men's bodies" end quote.

**Hannah McGregor** 31:44

Oh, good. So masculinities not only allows us to complicate it, but also allows us to de-essentialize it.

**Marcelle Kosman** 31:50

Yes, exactly. Great. Okay, so if we have a whole bunch of different kinds of masculinities how do we refer to the one that really sucks and seems to make everything else shitty? Well, that-

**Hannah McGregor** 32:06

Is it toxic masculinity?

**Marcelle Kosman** 32:07

You know what? It is, but it's not. Its hegemonic masculinity. So hegemonic is like the person with the power. Okay? So hegemonic masculinity is another way of saying the dominant masculinity, the normative masculinity. And it probably won't come as a surprise that people who embody that kind of masculinity feel very uncomfortable being called toxic. **[Marcelle laughs]** So that's why using the term hegemonic masculinity to sort of separate out the toxic behaviors from the behaviors that happen to correspond with power is useful. They're not mutually inclusive, but they're not mutually exclusive either.

**Hannah McGregor** 33:01

Yeah, it's a Venn diagram with a significant amount of overlap.

**Marcelle Kosman** 33:05

Okay, so I'm gonna give you Cliff Cheng's definition of hegemonic masculinity, okay, it goes like this, and I quote, "the hegemonic definition of manhood." And this is really going to blow your mind, Hannah, "is a man in power, a man with power and a man of power." There's more. "We equate manhood with being successful, capable, reliable, in control. The very definitions of manhood we have developed in our culture, maintain the power that some men have over other men, and that men have over women." End quote. Alright, so if we have a general if vague sense of what hegemonic masculinity is, then how are we going to define all of the non hegemonic masculinities? Ooh, sounds like we need another term. We're gonna go back to Haywood and Johansson. Okay. So their interest is marginalized masculinities. Okay? And what counts as marginalized masculinity is quote "located and defined in relation to men that hold cultural privilege. From this perspective, masculinity becomes the resource through which marginalization takes place," end quote.

**Hannah McGregor** 34:32



Okay, we've got a you know, I love the word Ouroboros so I'm gonna say a theoretical Ouroboros that's a snake that's eating its own tail, where it's like, okay, so hegemonic masculinity is the masculinity in power and marginalized masculinities are the masculinities that are excluded or othered by hegemonic masculinity. So that means masculinities that are defined by not being in power, but how do we define them if the way that we define masculinity is through its proximity to power?

**Marcelle Kosman** 35:09

And this is why it's so slippery, right? Slippery sloppy. This is why it's so slippery-

**Hannah McGregor** 35:17

Nope. Slippery slippery sloppy.

**Marcelle Kosman** 35:19

-this is why it's so slippery, sloppy is because you can't, you can't define hegemonic masculinity as one single thing when you don't know when that one thing does not remain the one thing that is powerful over history because what we as a society and as a culture value will change. It might be that one day tenderness is the hegemonic masculinity.

**Hannah McGregor** 35:47

I mean, that's the thing about hegemony is that it is actually not a value judgment, it's just about what is the norm, but that hegemony has a tendency to attract power to it. Right? What is dominant is often what is powerful. And by attract power, I mean, attract political power, attract economic power. And so as we watch our definition of hegemonic masculinity begin to shift, we watch the kind of masculinity that makes money start to shift, we watch the kind of masculinity, because capitalism, baby. So like, there is this way that is worth attending to, as we think about marginalized masculinities of being like, at what point do some of those marginalized masculinities become the new hegemonic masculinity? And how might they start to accrue their own power and their own capital and their own complicity in the upholding of the patriarchy, I guess.

**Marcelle Kosman** 37:07

Yeah. And we also, like, we've got to keep in mind, like, which kinds of men have access to those forms of power and which ones don't, right? Because we often tend to see certain types of masculinity being described as progressive, but those tend to align or be demonstrated or embodied by wealthy white educated cis heterosexual men, right? So like-

**Hannah McGregor** 37:42

A Prince Harry, if you will.

**Marcelle Kosman** 37:43

A Prince Harry, if you will. Okay, one other thing.

**Hannah McGregor** 37:48

Okay. Just one and then we're done.

**Marcelle Kosman** 37:51

And then we're done. So, I don't know if you know this, Hannah, but I take research very seriously.

**Hannah McGregor** 37:56

Yeah, I do know that about you.

**Marcelle Kosman** 37:58

And so in preparing for this episode, I listened to Secret Feminist Agenda, Episode 2.25. "Soft boys aka tender masculinity". And I want to talk about so many things.

**Hannah McGregor** 38:12

This is, sorry for listeners who don't know, that's my podcast that I made without Marcelle, because she was busy. **[Marcelle laughs]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 38:21

So here's why I feel very excited about all of these things. Okay, the hashtag #metoo, which was started in 2006 by Tarana Burke, as a movement to address sexual violence by 2018 was everywhere. It was like a household name. People were writing about it in the Atlantic, it was all over mainstream and social media. Right? Okay. All right. 2018. Also, when you were talking about soft boys and tender masculinity. These two things overlap, which I think is really cool. And the things that you were identifying as being representations of soft and tender masculinities are also things that other people were identifying as soft and tender masculinities. Indeed, they were things that I was thinking back to when I was like, What were those soft and tender masculinities that I first remember thinking about?

I want to quote what you say about John Hodgman of the Maximum Fun podcast network and host of The Judge John Hodgman podcast, okay? So you say, to be a public figure with a significant following, and to be a public figure who has literally every form of privilege attached to you. And to use that platform to model what it looks like to just constantly be learning and

constantly be opening yourself up in very, very gentle and careful ways. It was so touching to me in that moment in the midst of ongoing and horrific news about male violence... In a world where it feels sort of natural to be a little afraid of men, or a lot afraid of men, it is comforting and heartening to have in popular culture, these images of other possibilities, of other ways that masculinity might look, of other things that masculinity might be." End quote.

**Hannah McGregor** 40:24

Oooo! Such a smart lady.

**Marcelle Kosman** 40:27

Beautifully said, Hannah. And also if this is true, about a man who we don't see, because he does a podcast, it is, I think, also we're thinking about when we're talking about a fucking Prince. The Prince of England.

**Hannah McGregor** 40:44

Yes. 100% Oh, my God. Okay. All right, Marcelle. I feel ready to put all this into conversation and just construct ourselves some informed hotpicks.

**Marcelle Kosman** 40:58

Awesome, let's talk about Prince Harry. That scamp!

**[Upbeat instrumental interlude plays]**

**Hannah McGregor** 41:04

Okay, Marcelle, please make an internet joke come to life and tell me your thesis.

**Marcelle Kosman** 41:10

Marginalist masculinities aren't new. But in 2018 we saw a surge of tender and soft expressions of masculinity in mainstream media at the same time that the #metoo movement had reached its boiling point. 2018 is also the year that Prince Harry married Meghan Markel. In this essay, I will argue that the widespread desire and acceptance for tender, dare I say humble, masculinities finally created a media landscape interested in seeing Prince Harry as a person. In a shocking revelation of facts, the Commonwealth's precocious younger brother Prince Harry turns out to be a great role model for cis het white boys everywhere.

**Hannah McGregor** 41:57

I am convinced because- you know, this is material girls and, you know, I'm always convinced by material arguments. **[Marcelle laughs]** I am convinced by your argument about the alignment of

his marriage and the way that it has played out in the media, with the #metoo movement and with this phase in the #metoo movement that was really interested in sort of recuperating tender masculinities.

**Marcelle Kosman** 42:34

Listen, this is what I tell my students, okay? A thesis has to be arguable. So if it's a thesis, somebody needs to be able to say I disagree and here's why. Otherwise, it's just a statement of fact.

**Hannah McGregor** 42:45

[Hannah laughs] Well, I think the thing that I want us to keep complicating this thesis with is the celebrity culture of it all. You know? I can't help thinking about, like the rise of the wife guy, as a type.

**Marcelle Kosman** 43:02

Tell me about this, because I've never heard this term before.

**Hannah McGregor** 43:07

So wife guys are men who build their personalities and their public personas around how much they love their wives. Do you remember when that guy went viral for writing an essay about how he loves his curvy wife?

**Marcelle Kosman** 43:26

No.

**Hannah McGregor** 43:27

Oh my god. This guy wrote an essay about how his wife is a size eight, but he still loves her.

**Marcelle Kosman** 43:34

I'm sorry. A size eight?

**Hannah McGregor** 43:35

Truly like, included photographs. And she was just like not even a remotely fat person. The point being that it was a man being like, everybody, please clap. I love my curvy wife. And there is this dark side to the wife guy. I mean, both that it's like men continuing to occupy a lot of public space to garner a lot of attention, but also the wealth and power that comes with that attention by using their wives in particular rhetorical ways.

**Marcelle Kosman** 44:10

Yeah, I think that if nothing else, what Prince Harry's book is doing is attempting to reclaim his public image. I wouldn't describe the book as being about their marriage. It's a small part of it. Like one of the reasons why I say that the tea is warm and not hot is because he acknowledges a lot of the rumors about his life, about his choices and behaviors and stuff.

**Hannah McGregor** 44:40

The only one I remember well, is that he dressed up as a Nazi for a party once.

**Marcelle Kosman** 44:45

Yes, okay. So this is like the closest we got to some hot tea, is him telling the story and how he was in conversation with Kate and William at the store and was like they've got this outfit and they've got this outfit. I don't know which one to go with. And they were like, go with the Nazi uniform. That's hilarious. Because the themes-

**Hannah McGregor** 45:07

What store?!

**Marcelle Kosman** 45:08

-was the theme. A place in England where Prince's shopping, they must have everything.

**Hannah McGregor** 45:15

[Hannah laughs] You know what? Fair. They don't let me in those stores.

**Marcelle Kosman** 45:18

So the theme of the party was colonials and natives.

**Hannah McGregor** 45:24

Oh, fuck, okay, so there's no good costume at that party.

**Marcelle Kosman** 45:28

No, no, there was no good costume. So like, the details are very much like, Okay, well, William and Kate, were aware of this. And they were part of the decision making process. But because of the way the media figures Harry, it's like, oh, that scoundrel did another naughty thing, when it's part of a bigger culture. Like his choices. So what I would say is like, Harry doesn't come across as defending himself to, like, I didn't read it as him being defensive. It was more like, these people accused me of doing cocaine, I was doing cocaine, I never did cocaine at these places. And the people who said that I was doing cocaine were lying. But I couldn't do a drug

test, I couldn't do a drug test to prove that I wasn't doing it because I was doing it. It's just that I was doing it with these other people and not with the people who... So this is why it's like very much about reclaiming his public images like he, the impression I get is, he's never been allowed to tell his own story. Because people have always been telling it for him. And so now he's telling all the stories, some of them are very boring.

**Hannah McGregor** 46:44

So to continue to, you know, just fucking work to dismantle your thesis, like the terrible little thesis Gremlin that I am-

**Marcelle Kosman** 46:52

**[Marcelle laughs]** But it's especially funny because the premise is “having not read the book, I want to dismantle your thesis”, which is a hilarious premise.

**Hannah McGregor** 46:59

No, it's just more questions, I have more questions. One of the forms of public speech that have characterized the #metoo movement, and what has followed is the male apology. Which is often sort of characterized by a lot of work of contextualizing, and by a commitment to change behavior moving forward. And frequently, those apologies ring profoundly empty, and are transparently part of a project of reputation recovery, that is ultimately, like so many things about making money.

And I feel like I will often get a gut feeling. And I would have to think more about how it is I decide for myself what apologies I believe in which ones I don't. But with the example that you quoted back to me of things that I said about John Hodgman, for example, like, you know, when he makes a mistake, and apologizes and moves forward, it feels real to me, because it's an ongoing an iterative practice of learning in public, which is a thing that I am into. It's the idea that we can make mistakes in public and continue to learn and that we just keep practicing learning out loud, versus apologies that feel rote, like, they were written by a PR person, like they are just part of this reputation cleaning process. So if this book is participating, if *Spare* is participating, to some degree in the genre of reclaiming one's reputation in the wake of #metoo, not in an obvious, like, he's not repairing his reputation from accusations of sexual violence but-

**Marcelle Kosman** 49:09

Right, not like causal, but like-

**Hannah McGregor** 49:13

Yeah, there's a correlation to that genre. Certainly. And that's the sort of context in which, part of the context in which this memoir has emerged. What if anything about it makes it feel convincing to you? Because, you know, when we're talking about a work like *Spare*, really, at the end of the day, we're not talking about Harry as a person. We're talking about the way Harry as a public figure circulates through popular culture, the way that his memoir is itself a piece of popular culture, and it clearly has been received as one that enshrines Harry as this kind of, you know, soft boy figure. So, you know, from your perspective as a reader of it, and as a critic of things like celebrity and rape culture and masculinities, what makes it an effective pop culture moment, rather than one that just reads as as like shallow or empty or rote?

**Marcelle Kosman** 50:22

Yeah, that is such a good question. There are two things that come to mind. Prince Harry reads the book, like he reads his audiobook. And this only makes sense. It's a memoir, it would be weird if somebody else read it. But I feel this way whenever an author reads their own book, particularly when it's a memoir. I feel like I'm in an intimate conversation with them. I think that's the point, right? That's why they do it. So that's both not surprising, but also very powerful and effective. And like, he's not a performer. And so one of the reasons I think why the book is a bit boring at times is because it's a little bit monotonous, like the tone in which he's telling all of these vignettes about his life is pretty constant.

And it can be like, Okay, well, now we're back in Afghanistan, and I can't remember why you left, but now we're back and here's what's going on and Okay. And, okay. And then that happened to you. Like, there's a lot of just documentation, but it feels personal because he's reading it in a way that like, if I were, if I were reading the paper book, if I couldn't do dishes, while he was telling me about his disgusting trench foot, I would probably just skip the whole chapter like, fuck the British colonial invasion of Afghanistan. Like, I don't want to read about this.

**Hannah McGregor** 52:00

Okay, yes, I'm totally convinced by this that the audio book, in particular, really participates in media mode that feels really parasocial, really intimate.

**Marcelle Kosman** 52:15

Very much so very much. So the one that I don't really have the word for is the degree of vulnerability in terms of some of the things that he confesses, and I'm not talking about like talking about his frostbitten penis. The thing that really got me was when he talked about how-this is me, summarizing, this isn't how he frames it- but like, he's never been able to, like learn a skill. So he has been raised to be a prince. He was discouraged from going to university. So he has his high school education. And he was in the military and became a helicopter pilot.

But he can't get a job. Because he doesn't know how to do anything. And not only does he not know how to do anything, but he's like, lived a particular lifestyle where he doesn't know how to do the kinds of like, basic stuff that I think those of us who grew up, like working and middle class, just like had to figure out how to do, you know, because he'd never had to.

And so on the one hand, it's like, oh, yeah, poor Harry. And that's not what I'm trying to say. It's like, Oh, the poor prince. It doesn't come across that way. Like the way that he sort of reveals this kind of really embarrassing fact about himself is like, essentially saying, like, yeah, I would love to not be a sponge on the taxpayers. But my family didn't let me go to school. So like, I didn't get to learn how to do things. I don't know how to program a computer. I don't know how to wash windows, like he doesn't have certain skills. And that's really sad.

**Hannah McGregor** 54:16

That's vulnerable, and also an interesting embedded critique of the sort of strategic uselessness of the monarchy.

**Marcelle Kosman** 54:26

Oh, absolutely. Yeah. He talks a lot in the book about how much he loves his family. And he talks a lot about how, like, he is part of the monarchy, and he does believe in the monarchy, but at the same time, it's also kind of like, but why, though, like, he's not convincing me that the monarchy is valuable. And I wouldn't be surprised if he convinced himself by the end of the book.

**Hannah McGregor** 54:52

**[Hannah laughs]** I mean, one of the reasons why I have found him interesting as a figure is that I think by virtue of who his mother was and who his wife is, that he is really well positioned to be somebody who knows the degree to which the monarchy is fake. And whether or not he is willing to actually get up on a podium and say the monarchy is fake, well, his actions speak pretty loudly, don't they?

**Marcelle Kosman** 55:21

They do. He and his family left England, they left a very cushy lifestyle because it ultimately sucked.

**Hannah McGregor** 55:29

Yeah, and now they-

**Marcelle Kosman** 55:33



I don't know, probably live in a mansion in California. I don't know.

**Hannah McGregor** 55:37

**[Hannah laughs]** Like the true humble every man he is.

**Marcelle Kosman** 55:44

Yeah, we should talk about the prince and princess of capitalism, right? Like we should acknowledge the fact that their celebrity, this couple's celebrity, Harry's celebrity status improvement, via his memoir, via his public stance supporting Meghan in relation to the horrific way that she's been treated by his family, by the British press. It's still Oh, what is it exactly that I'm trying to say, Hannah?

**Hannah McGregor** 56:20

This is the stickiness of what, for example, bell hooks was articulating about the need for cultural models of tender masculinity is that we need pop culture, we use pop culture, it matters in really profound ways for how we see the world and the models that we have of how to move through the world. And also, the “pop” in pop culture is popular. And popularity in late capitalism is also the accrual of wealth. And so we must always be looking at pop culture from the sort of two sides of being like, alright, you know, what really interesting possibilities is this modeling for us? And also who's getting rich? It's not me.

**Marcelle Kosman** 57:15

Not me. Not yet. **[Marcelle laughs]** Just wait till my memoir comes out.

**[Clip from *Material Girls* Theme music plays]**

**Hannah McGregor** 57:25

Thank you so much for joining us for this pilot episode of Material Girls!

We are so excited to be launching this new show that's NOT about Harry Potter but IS in the spirit of our original series, *Witch, Please*. That's why we had to talk about a Harry. If you're here because you enjoyed *that* show we want to say thank you for your support and for giving us the financial footing to create this new show.

**Marcelle Kosman** 57:50

We're still everywhere you know how to find us, on Instagram and Twitter at @ohwitchplease. If you'd like to support us in this new endeavor, please check out our Patreon at

patreon.com/ohwitchplease and find a tier that works for your budget. We are entirely listener funded so your support goes directly to paying our incredible team.

**Hannah McGregor** 58:12

If becoming a Patreon supporter isn't in the cards right now, that's okay! We LOVE when you share the show — Particularly as we build up an audience for Material Girls. Please post about us on social, text your friends and family about episodes they may find interesting, and leave us a review on Apple Podcasts!

**Marcelle Kosman** 58:31

*Material Girls* is a *Witch, Please* Production and is distributed by Acast. You can listen to all of the *Witch, Please* projects on Acast or at ohwitchplease.ca. Our website is expanding every day thanks to our digital projects coordinator, Gaby **[Boing sound effect]** You can also find transcripts, merch, sign up for our newsletter—heck just go check it out. Special thanks AS ALWAYS to our executive producer, Hannah Rehak, aka COACH! **[Sports whistle sound effect]**, to our social media manager and marketing designer Zoe Mix **[Sound effect of record reversing]**, and to our sound engineer Erik Magnus **[Sound effect of chimes]**!

**Hannah McGregor** 59:12

Our Patreon is the heart and soul of this podcast because it lets us do things like pay all those sexy people we just mentioned, so that they can live and pay their rent and eat food. SO at the end of every episode we will thank everyone who has joined our Patreon OR boosted their tier. Which does mean that members of our Faculty Club will only get directly thanked if they boost to the minister's if magic tier which is you know, frankly a slightly unhinged tier, but listen, if you are feeling the need for some personal thanks just ask for it on your exclusive Slack channel because we obviously love you and hurt incredibly grateful for you. We'll tell you anytime you want to hear it.

**Marcelle Kosman** 1:00:04

We'll be back next episode to tackle another piece of pop culture through a whole new theoretical lens. But until then-

**Hannah McGregor** 59:12

Late gators!

**[Material Girls Theme Music plays and fades out]**