

The Suit Maketh the Man: Masculinity and Social Class in *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (Vaughn, 2014).

Much has been written about masculinity and suits, and authors refer to the bespoke suit as being at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of men's clothing (Galilee, 2002; Hollander, 2016; Edwards, 2004; Johnson, 2014; Barry and Weiner, 2017). This article outlines the ways in which suits are synonymous with masculinity (Hollander, 2016), examining the sometimes, paradoxical nature of suits worn by men of all social classes, and for different reasons (Gallilee, 2001). For example, hegemonic men wear suits in a bid to convey power, arguably, by rendering the wearer uniform in appearance so that the focus is more on what a hegemonic man might say and do, rather than how he might look. Moreover, the uniformity of suits is a means by which men of a lower social class, demonstrate aspiration to a higher social class and might effect hegemonic power through wearing them. Despite extensive research, there is little attention paid to the way in which the *bespoke suit* is represented in media or popular culture. This article examines the role of clothing in the main characters in the film *Kingsman* (Vaughn, 2014), with a particular focus on the contribution that the bespoke suit makes to the masculinity of the bodies of the individuals within the film, which is to elevate the body of the wearer from quotidian to tailored, the fitting of which allows for better representation of a man's body. It will explore representation of middle-class masculinity, hegemony and embodiment in the film, addressing the idea of whether wearing a bespoke suit can help a man transcend the boundaries of 'chav' masculinity, which is depicted as male subordination, and rise into middle class hegemonic masculinity through the character of Gary 'Eggsy' Unwin (Taron Edgerton).

Keywords: hegemonic masculinity, bespoke suits, embodiment, social class, chavs, gentleman.

Introduction

In the much-parodied scene in *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (Vaughn, 2014), the character of gentleman spy, Harry Hart (Colin Firth), dressed beautifully in a bespoke tailored suit¹ takes on a group of sport-clothes wearing 'chavs' in a memorable fight in a dodgy London pub. Before the audience realises exactly what is about to unfold, the camera shows Harry from the back, as if he is about to leave the pub, when he is bolting the doors so that no-one leaves, and homes in on his clothing. Harry's suit is double-breasted, grey pinstripe with twin vents in the back of the jacket, and he sports a navy tie and pocket handkerchief. The suit is cut to fit his body without tightness and has large, square shoulders, a cinched waist, and he stands like a mannequin, with a well-defined gap between his waist and his arms, poised and ready to spring into action.

Harry's clothing, and that of the other men are in direct contrast with each other and denote the different social classes which they occupy. The group of six men collectively wear 'leisure' sport clothing, commonly worn by resting athletes and adopted by young, often working-class people and 'chavs' as a collective uniform (Mason and Wigley, 2013). Habitual items of clothing associated with this particular social group are loose, 'bomber' style jackets, hoodies, polo shirts, and jogging trousers to enable unrestricted movement, in shiny, quick drying fabric, frequently emblazoned with popular sport branding. In contrast with this clothing, Harry's suit is dark and well fitting. Yet it is cut in a way that allows for superlative

¹ Designed for Firth by costume designer, Arianne Phillips.

movements in all directions without constraining him, strikingly so that throughout this fight scene, and others, the jacket always remains buttoned up.

The scene is memorable for several reasons. Firstly, as it challenges what the viewer believes might be about to unfold, which is that Harry's appearance connotes that he is not a practiced fighter, as his suit suggests 'gentleman', and that he will get beaten up by the chavs because he is outnumbered by them. Instead, of course, the fight commences in an extremely exaggerated manner, using fast and slow-motion shooting, with Harry taking down all six men with aplomb, and secondly, it suggests that rather than impeding his movements, it is the suit which allows Harry to fight in such a manner. A higher social class is embodied in Harry's appearance, against that of the group of 'chavvy' men – he is wearing glasses which implies intelligence, and he appears to be underdressed for a fight, which he proceeds to win based on his skills at martial arts, quick thinking and deployment of his umbrella, which affords far more than keeping the rain off. It transpires that Harry is not the mild-mannered, besuited civil servant enjoying a quiet pint of beer in the wrong place at the wrong time that he first appears to be. Rather, he is Galahad, member of the secret British spy organisation, The Kingsmen: a group of people formed to fight evil and save the world, while also being immaculately dressed as gentleman.

Although much has been written about the relationships between suits and masculinity with authors suggesting that suits are a paradoxical outfit (Galilee, 2002), yet that their simplicity conveys sex and excitement (Hollander, 2016), moreover, they are the epitome of masculinity (Edwards, 2016) and a means for marginalized masculinities to convey hegemonic power through hybrid masculinity (Barry and Weiner, 2017). Fundamentally suits are signifiers of hegemonic masculinity and the bespoke suit is being top of the hierarchy of suits and men's clothing. Yet there is little attention paid to what is being represented in terms of masculinity with a *bespoke suit* (Hollander, 2016) and its appearance in popular culture. In online lists of the 'best suits in films', which regularly feature such films as *American Gigolo* (Schrader, 1980), *North by Northwest* (Hitchcock, 1959) and *Skyfall* (Mendes, 2012) it is the *tailored* and bespoke nature of the suits, whether they are Armani, Tom Ford, or Doug Hayward, that makes them appear so stylish, and so 'gentlemanly' because they exactly fit the bodies of the men who are wearing them (O'Hara, 2015). Moreover, there appears to be a distinction to be made between the meaning behind bespoke and tailoring. Hollander refers to tailoring as 'the whole range of tailored jackets trousers, waistcoats, overcoats, shirts and neckties' (2016: 1), whereas bespoke when referring to suits, is when something is made to fit the body. When a suit fits the body exactly, the 'imperfections' of men's bodies, whether it's Cary Grant's slightly humped back (Everest in O'Hara, 2015) or shorter legs, the way that a bespoke suit is fitted, even these physical 'flaws' are tailored out, so they are not noticeable (Hollander, 2016). Rather than appear as a man in a readymade suit, men in bespoke suits appear as gentlemen as the suit signifies a class of people who can afford to have their clothes handmade for them.

Therefore, this article will analyse the representation of the bespoke suit in the film, *Kingsman: Secret Service* (Vaughn, 2014) and examines the ways in which it allows one of the main characters, 'Eggsy' to transcend a lower-class, 'chav' identity, depicted as a subordinated and marginalised man, and to adopt the identity of a masculine 'gentlemanly' hegemonic identity, and superhero by donning a bespoke suit, and therefore entering the world of the Kingsmen. This article seeks to examine the contribution that a bespoke suit makes to hegemonic masculine identity, while diminishing the chav appearance of other characters in the film, and suggests that the main narratives of the film is to demonstrate the power of the suit and the ways in which it allows the character of 'Eggsy' (Taron Egerton) to transcend the lower social class that he identifies with and transcend towards the men who wear them as 'gentlemen'.

The article outlines the ways in which suits are synonymous with masculinity (Hollander, 2016, Edwards, 2016), examining the paradoxical nature of suits in relation to the way they can be worn by men of all social classes, and for several different reasons (Galilee, 2002). For example, hegemonic men wear suits in a bid to convey power, arguably, by rendering the wearer uniform in appearance so that the focus is more on what a hegemonic man might say and do rather than how he might look. Moreover, the uniformity is a means by which men of a lower social class who wear suits demonstrate aspiration to a higher social class and might affect hegemonic power through wearing them. Therefore, the two-piece suit, when worn by a man acts as a means by which hegemonic power might be accessed. The film *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (Vaughn, 2014) focuses on the bespoke tailoring of suit and the way in which the nature of bespoke elevates the position of the wearer from quotidian to tailored, the fitting of which allows for better representation of a man's body.

The association with a masculine identity, that of the 'gentleman' is the crux of what is being explored here and the article examines the way in which the traditional man's suit affords a form of masculine capital and the way in which is it possible to both adopt and become a gentleman. Chav identity is examined, especially the way in which this particular form of identity acts as a binary against a gentlemanly appearance, and argues that while for some people chav is a better type of identity than nothing, for others, such as Eggsy, it is a temporary state, and own which is possible to escape from.

This article will begin with a historical overview of the suit, its genesis, and the way in which it has been adopted by men in order to reflect hegemonic values of power and uniformity. It will also address the notion of the 'chav' and the way in which that moniker has seeped into British consciousness and media as a performance of a kind of lower-class identity, and the importance of certain types of clothing to the identity of chavs, which allows them to differentiate themselves through class-based performance. The article will then address the representations of chav and gentleman in the film and the ways in which the bespoke suit affords a sense of male supremacy and belonging.

Suits and Masculinity

Much academic writing on suits focuses on suits as being part of the continuum of men's fashion, which changes due to fluctuation in economics, culture and gender (Hollander, 2016; Gallilee, 2002), but seldom do bespoke suits, embodiment, tailoring and social class seem to feature at the centre. The focus of a number of authors is about masculinity and fashion, with authors crediting the 80's as a time when traditional ideas regarding masculine identity were being questioned and defining the nascent relationship between consumerism and masculinity. Edwards (2016) for example, examines the idea of masculinity as a 'marketing tool'; Nixon (1996) refers to an increased availability of men's appearances and spectatorship in consumer culture, especially in advertising and the heralding of magazines for men (Mort, 1996). And Mort highlights the convergence of fashion and advertising in men's magazines.

However, despite the rapidity by which fashion and trends in clothing change, both seasonally and over time, the suit, in its purest form, as jacket and trousers, is credited by several authors (Hollander, 2016 et. al) as being 'the most successful and enduring fashion garment ever devised' (Blackman, 2009: 2), and has remained in its basic form for hundreds of years. Blackman (2009) argues that its enduring quality is a consequence of the fact that it can be subject to variation, in cut, style, texture of cloth, for example. The genesis of the two-piece suit for men emerges in the 17th Century, because Charles II of England and Scotland, despite being nicknamed the 'merry monarch' who relaxed rules after the puritan regime

which England had been under, still desired to appear more streamlined and sombre (Harvey, 2008).

“Merry as he was, and although brought up in France, he reacted against the colours and ribbons of Versailles. He thought men’s dress should be more simple, sober and dark. Being King, he believed he could lead this change and he actually did so. He appeared in court in a long dark coat with buttons from top to bottom, and the courtiers who smirked to see him look so strange soon found it wise to “follow suit”, for he had just invented the suit (Harvey, 2008: 28).

Arguably, Charles II needed to differentiate himself from courtiers in contrast to the dandified fashion for men at the time, and Harvey (2008) suggests a need to differentiate between French and English appearance, due to the difference in political climate between these two countries of the time. Moreover, this also suggests the influence of powerful figures, such as monarch’s appearance on the populace. Hollander (2016) and Kaiser (2012) refer to the plainness and simplicity of the two-piece suit as a way that men could disassociate themselves from more elaborate clothing. In order to suggest greater affinity and fealty to the King, and subsequent monarchs, by the end of the 18th century, the suit was representative of a shift away from highly decorative clothing for men, the popularity of the ‘dandy’ notwithstanding (Harvey, 2008) which was associated with femininity (Hollander, 2016). Therefore, masculinity became synonymous with plainness of dress, which became personified in the suit.

Severe probity once again became the sartorial message even of kings, and bespoke tailoring relied for its distinction on subtle cut and the fine texture of its dim fabrics even more than on it, as the fashion in masculine bodily shape became less emphatic. Colors for men became more somber; but it was still the case until late in the century that formal daytime wear for urban gentlemen, whether they were dukes or solicitors, businessmen or politicians, was usually made using different cloth for the coat and pants (Hollander, 2016: 80).

Thus, the two-piece suit allowed for the formalization of masculine identity, but also representative of a range of identities, such as dominant western cultural, colonial and powerful.

Part of the process of creating modern nations was the development of style-fashion-dress that represented modernity and nationalism alike. The hegemonic look epitomizing British national identity, for example, was the male business suit. It was not a coincidence that this suit was also associated with White, upper middle-class masculinity. Or, perhaps, more accurate, it was a style that was not associated with exotic or colonized others, “Oriental” influences, the working classes, or women. (Blackman P. 63)

Now the opposite of plain clothes and suiting in particular, was not simply associated with femininity or exigencies of fashion, but fancier clothing became considered as ‘othered’ and very much removed from dominant British masculine hegemony.

One issue emerges as being significant when considering the purpose of the suit and its relationship to masculinity, is that the suit has the power to simultaneously standardize masculine appearances, while elevating the status of the wearer (Galilee, 2002). The two-piece men’s suit is a staple/fundamental item in many men’s wardrobe, and it acts as a means by which men can display both authority and style. Arguably, suits have such a habitual presence in everyday life as to make them unworthy of comment or investigation. However, there are several facets regarding the suit that make it more exceptional than it

first seems. Suits are significant in both their simplicity and ordinariness, and paradoxically, their complexity of style and tailoring. Suits initially appear to act as a means for some men to create distinctions between themselves and other men, and to distance themselves from women (Hollander, 2016) but in a contradictory manner, suits can also have a homogenising effect on wearers (Galilee, 2002). Wearing a two-piece suit is as suitable for the investiture of the President of the United States, as it is for a young man attending his first job interview (Hollander, 2016), but as Edwards suggests ‘...the suit still maketh the man most completely. It remains a potent symbol of success, virility and maturity, and the one ensemble from a man’s wardrobe that still looks incongruous on a boy’... (2016: 22). Yet, a young boy in a suit suggests a ‘man in waiting’, and the suits signifies a manly trajectory for a young boy to aspire to. Hollander (2016) has extensively documented the history of the male suit and firmly equates it with both sex and social class.

Arguably, contra Hollander (2016) the two-piece suit is also representative of the *lack* of diversity in men’s clothing. Whereby, despite the dynamism of fashion, the influence of trends, such as men wearing skirts for example (Carreno, 2013) and the democratization of clothing, where clothing might be used to represent different social classes of men, fundamentally, the two-piece suit remains the same: a jacket and a pair of trousers. Occasionally, designers play with the two-piece concept, such as replacing shorts with trousers, fitted v’s oversize, the addition of a waistcoat making a three-piece suit, playing with colour in suits, such as British designer/tailors, Oswald Boateng and Spencer Hart, and the use of luxurious fabrics in the suits made by Welsh-based designer/tailor, Nathan Palmer. Yet, despite efforts to apply trends in order to create distinctions between different kinds of suit, fundamentally, the suit remains an outfit which principally consists of trousers and a jacket, and despite the dynamics of fashion, and the impact that this may have on men’s clothing in general, the suit remains a staple and still dominates in representations of male authority figures. ‘To adapt a phrase from Le Corbusier, ...the suit is a machine for living in, close-fitting but comfortable armour, constantly revised and reinvented to be, literally, well suited for modern daily life’ (Blackman, 2009 :1). The simplicity of the suit is where its power lies – the simplicity of a bespoke suit, which evens out physical deficiencies or lack of symmetry, allows for the focus of attention to be on the person wearing the suit, rather than on the suit itself. Arguably, the ubiquity and quotidian nature of the of the suit leads to its absent presence (Leder, 1991) as it fades into the background, allowing the wearer to transcend their clothing, what we see is a hegemonic man, rather than a nice suit. What becomes important is what men wearing suits have to say and what they do, rather than how creative they are in relation to their dress, or clothing as a form of decorating the body, which has feminine, and therefore less powerful implications (Hollander, 2016). As suits define/ denote a sense of status and importance, there is a hierarchy of suits with readymade, off the peg suits at the lower end of the hierarchy, to bespoke, tailored suits, at the top.

The power of suits, and the seriousness which they signify, was part of a class-based gibe in 2016 from the then clean-shaven Prime Minister of Great Britain, Eton and Oxbridge educated, David Cameron, who’s social class was evident in his embodied appearance and his accent, and the be-whiskered Leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn. While it could not be argued that Jeremy Corbyn was of a much lower social class than Cameron, given that he attended a grammar school, in contrast with Cameron, he left at sixteen, with few qualifications, and did not go to University. Hence any cultural or economic capital that he gained might arguably be of a lower quality than that embodied by Cameron. Moreover, arguably, Corbyn’s liberalism is evidenced in his penchant for light coloured suits and a salt and pepper beard which stands in contrast with Cameron’s suited and booted smooth face and manner. In a debate in the commons, Cameron directly criticised Corbyn’s appearance and demeanour, suggesting he was a less serious politician because of his appearance than

he might otherwise be. 'The prime minister said his mother would advise the Labour leader to "put on a proper suit, do up your tie and sing the national anthem"' (BBC News, 2016).

Latterly, portrayals of hegemonic masculinity both in media representation, and in real life, has shifted again, away from the formality of the tailored suit, towards more informal, causal jeans and t-shirts (Morgan, 2014). The term 'suit' is now often used as a pejorative term to refer to 'dull executive types in the 70's (Harvey, 2008: 42), and 'corporate' allegiance, rather than 'groovy' individualism and entrepreneurship, evident in the casual clothing of business people such as Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg (Rahman, 2016) which signifies them as being unencumbered by the 'rules' of business and reinforces their roles in the creative industries. Yet 'Suits' is also the title of a popular Amazon television series about a top New York lawyer, Harvey Specter (Gabriel Macht) taking on a brilliant con man, Mike Ross (Patrick J Adams) as a lawyer in his firm. Ross gets away with impersonating an actual lawyer as he is brilliant, but moreover, because he dons the eponymous 'Suit' (Scott, 2011—present), which allows him to fit in to the law system. The title of 'Suits' however suggests that this is a film about men and the masculine world, and although women feature in the series, they are sidekicks rather than main characters.

Therefore, the paradox of the use of suits and what they portray remains. For some men, the suit is a distraction, and wearing it suggests that they are something that they are not. It is also possible to use the suit as a costume, a chimera even (Johnson, 2014), in order to represent of a certain type of identity and a means of attaining something that a person is not but could become. Moreover, the masculinity portrayed in *Kingsman: Secret Service* (Vaughn, 2014) which is contingent on representing men of honour and the suits being symbolic of this honour, could arguably be a reaction against the more casual ways that male hegemony are represented by people such as Zuckerberg. It is to the film *Kingsman*, that this article now turns.

The film *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (Vaughn, 2014), is partly written and directed by British director, Matthew Vaughn, and is loosely based on the comic books, *The Secret Service Kingsman* (2012) by Mark Millar and Dave Gibbons. Vaughn previously collaborated with Millar on the film *Kick Ass* (Vaughn, 2010), and the characters in *Kingsman* (2014) have much in common with Superheroes from the DC or Marvel World, in as much as the characters switch between people living everyday lives who morph into specific outfits in order to become 'heroes', and they employ gadgets with special powers. In *Kingsman* (Vaughn, 2014), the clothes are bespoke suits from a (fictional) Saville Row tailor, which are therefore quotidian rather than the more exotic, and elaborate costumes associated with other fictional characters such as Batman or Superman. Essentially, *Kingsman* (Vaughn, 2014) is a film about an individually sponsored M16 organisation, a 'secret service' run by white middle class British 'gentlemen' and is a parody on James Bond and other such secret service genre films. The narrative follows the identification and championing of a group of young recruits in order to replace a member, Lancelot (Jack Davenport), who manages to get himself killed on a mission. The new recruits are championed by existing members of the secret service, and through various means, Harry Hart chooses Eggsy, whose father sacrificed his life to save Harry's on a previous mission. While training the potential recruits takes place, the safety of the world is being threatened by Valentine (Samuel L Jackson). The content of the film is standard 'good saving the world from evil' fare and it is an obvious parody of films in a similar genre, the focus on the suit as an accessory is a new spin on the James Bond type gadgetry that is commonly depicted in the superhero spy genre.

The film stars Colin Firth, who is no stranger to this kind of filmic parody. For example, he starred in the remake of the film *Gambit* (Neame, 1966), originally featuring Michael Caine (who coincidentally also stars in *Kingsman*), the quintessentially cockney, in his 60's slim fitting suits, and the remake of *Gambit* (Hoffman, 2012) demonstrates 60's styling in terms of

the suit. While Firth spends much of the film in a dishevelled state, some of the marketing posters portray him in a black tuxedo and bow tie, Ipcress File style glasses, referencing Michael Caine's suits in the original film. In the *Bridget Jones* films (Maguire, 2001; Kidron, 2004; Maguire 2016), Firth is also renowned for playing Englishman, Mark Darcy, a reference to his upper- class Mr Darcy character that he played in the popular British television series, *Pride and Prejudice* (Birtwistle, 1995). Firth expertly displays a weary patina of Englishness which has won him many nominations and an Academy Award. Moreover, his tall and slender body shape and size affords him the ability to wear suits with nonchalance, making him the perfect actor to reference 1960's *Ipcress File* (Furie, 1965), era Harry Palmer/Michael Caine slender suited-chic, in his academy award winning portrayal of George in the Tom Ford vehicle *A Single Man* (Ford, 2008) (Church Gibson,2012). Indeed, almost in reference to Harry Palmer, and Michael Caine, Firth has played several characters called Harry in *Gambit* (Hoffman,2012) *Mamma Mia* (Lloyd, 2008) and both of the *Kingsman* (Vaughn, 2014:2017) films. The name Harry, which in the United Kingdom, is synonymous with royalty, and Firth himself also appears to embody the quintessential middle-class gent, both as a person and as an actor. Yet Firth is from a remarkably middle rather than upper class background, and is keen to refute the idea that he is a quintessential Englishman, as the following quote suggest:

Through my film work, I've tended to represent precisely the kind of Englishman that I'm not – the repressed figure of mythology...My generation weren't saying, I can't wait to grow up so I can put on a pin-stripe suit and go to an office. They were piercing their ears and learning to play the guitar. If you want to define a modern Englishman, you might as well look at Keith Richards, John Lydon or Ray Winstone, rather than John Major or Prince Charles (Firth, imdb, no date).

Upcoming Welsh actor, Taron Edgerton, plays Gary 'Eggsy' Unwin, his moniker connoting chavviness, which serves as a class-based contrast with that of the other Kingsman candidates: Charlie (Edward Holcroft) Roxy (Sophie Cookson), Digby (Nicholas Banks) and Rufus (Jack Cutmore-Scott). Arguably, Eggsy is the 'gentleman in waiting', anticipating his transcendence from the rough habitus of London housing estates and into the splendour of the Kingsmen, on meeting Harry and witnessing his expertise at fighting. In contrast to Firth, Egerton's chavvy appearance – the baseball hat turned backwards, and bomber jacket, belies an extremely taught and defined muscular physique which stands in contrast with his car stealing, and chavvy accomplices. Instead his physique references his past as a failed military recruit and signifies the possibility of his transcendence from chav to Kingsman. Yet it is not clear where the time and effort for his buff body comes from given his chavvy habitus and people who he is compelled to hang out with. *Kingsman* (2014) is the breakthrough film for Edgerton who had only appeared in bit parts in television and very small film roles prior to this.

Seasoned actor Samuel L Jackson plays Valentine, the evil element determined to conquer the world. In concert with Eggsy, Valentine also wears expensive sports clothes, but that is where the similarity ends, as unlike Eggsy, Valentine is no chav. Corresponding with real-life people such as Mark Zuckerberg (Rahman, 2016), the character of Valentine doesn't need to embrace hegemonic masculinity by wearing a suit – he is highly educated, which has made him powerful, and rich, which gives him economic capital, and therefore has much in common with hegemonic masculinity of scientists, and other hegemonic men (Morgan 2014). Which means he has no need to dress to impress.

Valentine is a paradoxical character – a man dressed for leisure, but busy trying to destroy the world. Despite wearing clothes which put him in line with chavs, comfortable jogging bottoms, baseball caps worn backwards– Valentine is a luxury brands man and clearly understands the difference between sports branding favoured by chavs, and comfortable clothing. His sports clothing is Ralph Lauren, soft pale colours and fabrics, possibly

cashmere, worn for comfort rather than Burberry, an iconic brand beloved of the English chav (Mason and Wigley, 2013) or one of the more common sport clothing – which demonstrates his cosmopolitan identity as a villain, rather than British Chav status as demonstrated by Eggsy and his friends on the estate and down the pub. Yet Valentine does display some tendencies which might position him as chav. When he invites Harry round for supper, they have had

Yet there is some suggestion that Valentine might have come from a lower-class background, or that his wealth allows him to be uncaring about food and status and allows him to have what he wants. Moreover, Valentine is American (the perfect foil to British Gentlemen) where class status and identity developed in a very different manner to Great Britain) which was evidenced in the fact that most American people dressed in similar clothing, whatever their social status (Crane, 2000). In the following excerpt from the film, Harry Hart visits Valentine, at his house and Valentine has prepared dinner, which turns out to be McDonald's fast food.

Harry Hart: I'll have the Big Mac, please.

Valentine: Great choice. But nothing beats two cheeseburgers with secret sauce. Goes well with this '45 Lafitte.

Harry Hart: A classic pairing. And may I suggest Twinkies and a 1937 Chateau d'Yquem for pudding?

Valentine: I like it.

In this quotation, there is a little sparring between the characters, who both try to share their knowledge capital through wine.

From a Chav to a Kingsman

One of the main narratives in the film is a play on Pygmalion, where a man takes an ordinary woman and turns her into a beautiful one. The myth is an allegory of male power over women, which is a common trope in films. Pygmalion makeover films are extremely common and one of the most iconic ones, which Kingsman itself references is *My Fair Lady* (Cukor, 1964), which uses the British class system to demonstrate what a lower-class woman could 'become' when taken in hand by an upper-class man. In *Pretty Woman* (Marshall, 1990), as it is set in America, where class is harder to define, the twist on this tale is that Vivian (Julia Roberts) is a prostitute who businessman Edward (Richard Gere) falls in love with when he gets her to 'pass' as his posh girlfriend. Present, but much rarer, are portrayals of men being made over by women, such as in the film *Sydney White*, where the eponymous freshman character Sydney (Amanda Bynes), gives her nerdy housemates a makeover so that they become much less nerdy and far more acceptable, and noticeably more attractive members of the university. Even more rare, is the male on male makeover. Most noticeably present in the film *Rain Man* (Levinson, 1988), where hotshot Charlie Babbitt (Tom Cruise) attempts to pass his autistic brother Raymond (Dustin Hoffman) off, as being a much more socially 'acceptable' than his behaviour allows. In order to do this, Charlie puts Raymond in a beautifully fitting suit, which acts as a chimera of acceptability.

Kingsman: The Secret Service (Vaughn, 2014) is another male on male makeover, but one which is considerably more rooted in the British social class system. The masculinity inherent in *Kingsman: Secret Service* (Vaughn, 2014) is arguably a reaction against that of James Bond and his imperial ways (Little, 2017) and refers to a more romanticised time of Knights, Round Tables and damsels in distress. Patriotic to a lost time, pre-war and globalisation, when a chap knew which kind of shoe went with which suit and for which occasion, in this film, having an eye for detail is more of a higher social class status than the

way in which it was traditionally associated with femininity (Hollander, 2016). The masculinity presenting the bodies of the Kingsmen as opposed to the bodies of Eggsy (and his pub friends) contains essences of James Bond, but also refers to such characters as Lord Peter Wimsey, the aristocratic detective character created by Dorothy L Sayers.

Kingsman depicts an upper class, posh Englishness, as opposed to Britishness – not only through product placement, iconography, red telephone boxes and black taxi cabs, and obvious English, ‘country house’ locations. Moreover, this kind of Englishness is also for sale through the Huntsman online shop (the real Saville row Tailors shop where *Kingsman* is filmed) which sells a ‘*Kingsman*’ range– a traditional type of English, bespoke, tailoring.

The portrayal of the ‘British gentleman’ as a form of masculine identity and stereotype and the way in which that might be attained through wearing a tailored suit is highly reflected in the *Kingsman* films, and Smith (2014) refers to an increase in representation of the English gentleman as a form of masculine identity, which is mainly used in advertising and popular culture (Smith, 2014: 392). This form of representation has emerged in the post-millennial landscape of popular culture which has been dominated by representations of the British ‘posh’ gentleman, evident in characters who are frequently played by British actors, from either upper class or aristocratic backgrounds, such as Benedict Cumberbatch, Tom Hiddlestone and Eddie Redmayne.

In the film, Harry Hart manages to persuade the apparently lower-class Eggsy to train to become a Kingsman, and in order to do so, he appeals to Eggsy’s potential in relation to his dead father. Hart chides him on his lack of prowess, despite his apparent potential, and at blame here is the apparent downgrading of Eggsy from hard working class to low achieving chav identity. The term ‘chav’ is a ‘derogatory term originates from the Romany word for child, ‘chavi’ (Jones 2011: 2), which has come to suggest that people of a lower class need to be taken in hand and cared for, or, more frequently, that they lack responsibility and frequently do not work, are often poor, and therefore do not identify with a more hard-working class identity. Jones who has written extensively on chavs as a social class, and finds that the idea of chav denotes anti-social behaviour, violence, bigotry and negligence both of themselves and, if they are parents, often of teen-age, of their offspring (Jones, 2011). Chavvy habitus leads to anti-social behaviour, but clothing has become a specific identifier, a subculture even, based on flashy, brash consumerism, not used in any ironic sense, and enjoying lower class-based things while aspiring to something not associated with their lack of money: designer brands.

This newly formed subculture’s central tenet is consumption...and it bases its identity on fashion and clothing symbols, which distinguish the chavs from other groups of youths. Two of these symbols are the Burberry design check and baseball cap. ...track suits and certain designer brands are also symbols of being a chav (Mason and Wigley, 2013: 173).

While Mason and Wigley refer to this form of class-based identity as being ‘newly-formed’, arguably, now it has become entrenched in British society as being a popular signifier of an underclass. Therefore, ‘chav’ identity is easily spotted, and is easy to identify in *Kingsmen: Secret Service* (Vaughn, 2014).

In order to recruit him, Harry Hart rescues Eggsy from a police cell after been caught stealing a car, and sits him down for a heart to heart.

Harry Hart: Your father was a brave man. A good man. And having read your files, I'd think he'd be bitterly disappointed in the choices you've made.

Gary 'Eggsy' Unwin: You can't talk to me like that.

Harry Hart: Huge I.Q. great performance in primary school. And it all went tits up. Drugs, petty crime, never had a job.

Gary 'Eggsy' Unwin: Do you think there's lots of jobs going round here, yeah?...snobs like you, judging people like me from your ivory towers with no thought about why we do what we do. We ain't got much choice, you get me? And if we was born with the same silver spoon up our arses, we'd do just as well as you, if not better.

Eggsy refers to habitus in this quotation, the lack of opportunities that certain kinds of habitus affords, and an acceptance that living in certain parts of the world and country can affect a person's worldview as well as opportunities. Hart mentions the 'choices' that Eggsy has made while he, in turn, suggests that the choices Hart refers to such as drug dealing and stealing cars still act as a form of capital in a culture of necessity.

Working-class lifestyles and taste follow the aesthetics of necessity, as opposed to the more refined and distanced taste of the middle class. Taste is a reflection of the class hierarchy; ideas of "good" or "bad" taste are largely determined by members of the middle class, who use their dominant class position and socio-economic advantage, including the various forms of "capital" (social, economic, and cultural) to impress their worldview on society as a whole. Bourgeois taste contrasts with working-class taste" (Deeming, 2016: 439).

Moreover, there is a suggestion in Harts comments that Eggsy was once in a more dominant, perhaps respectable, working class position, which has slipped because of the death of his father and the poor choices made by his mother. Once he has recruited Eggsy, the first part of the initiation of The Kingsmen, is being fitted for a bespoke suit. On entering the tailors, they find that the place they need to use is occupied. As Hart suggests: 'One does not use Fitting Room Two when popping one's cherry'. Being fitted for a suit, 'popping cherry' could refer to leaving behind a chavvy habitus and being given an opportunity to transcend beyond current social class or becoming initiated into the ways of a gentleman, as it is likely that Eggsy has never even worn a suit, let alone had one hand made for him. As Foster suggests, 'wearing the business suit or a tux requires class entitlement and signifies either employment or idle wealth. It also signifies a willingness to play the corporate game and to believe in the reality of class' (Foster, 2005: 45). This point is further iterated by Harry Hart: Now, my point is that the lack of a silver spoon has set you on a certain path that you needn't stay on. If you're prepared to adapt and learn, you can transform.

Yet unbeknownst to Harry, what allows Eggsy to transcend to Kingsman, is a performance of a hybrid class identity, where he appears as a 'gentleman' but uses his chavvy 'street smarts' to outwit Valentine and his followers, one of whom happens to be the head of the Kingsmen, Arthur (Michael Caine). Therefore, while Eggsy is embodied as a chav, transcends class by donning the suit, gaining cultural capital but also hybridizing his class by employing chav knowledge.

The film is awkward in its depiction of women, but there are attempts to make them more equal to the men. For example, in the competition for a replacement for Galahad, it is the sole woman, Roxy, who wins the role over the others to become the new Kingsman, Lancelot, when she is asked to shoot the dog she has been nurturing. When Eggsy is asked to do the same, he cannot bring himself to, having developed a rapport with his pug dog (which he mistakes for a bulldog), which might be one of the few close relationships and unconditional love he might have in his life. The bullets in the guns are blanks of course, and

Roxy wins the role because of her ability to carry out orders, whereas Eggsy's questioning of the action makes him seem both lacking in the requisite backbone, unable to take orders under pressure, and liable to act randomly which might lead to death.

Women are also objects, to be rescued and to have sex with, Princess Tilde (Hannah Anstrom) and villains blindly following orders, such as Gazelle (Soufia Boutella) or hapless victims of male control, lacking agency, like Eggsy's mum (Samantha Womack). Ironically the character of Roxy wins the competition to become the new Galahad and gets to wear a bespoke Kingsman suit. But the suit has a different effect on her and appears to be an allegory of power. Although she wears the Kingsman suit, Roxy has to work by Merlin's (Mark Strong) rules and is compelled to go off in a balloon and shoot at a satellite, which contributes to saving the world. Yet Roxy looks afraid and awkward while Eggsy saves the earth below, by inhabiting his suit, both transcending his social class and bringing his chavvy ways with him. It's Eggsy who gets to be the hero in the film, while Roxy is left dangling. While Eggsy transcends his social class in his suit, it does not allow the woman to gain a place amongst the powerful men in the same manner.

It can only be imagined what Hilary Clinton might have worn had she become the President of the United States of America. Would she have gone the route of the men, a business style suit, or donned a version of the longer length jackets and trousers, the 'pantsuits' that she favours? While Madonna sexualised the man's suit, she customised it so that her femininity was enhanced rather than diminished, playing with and challenging binaries of masculinity and femininity and Hollander (2016) refers to the power of women who adapt suits in this manner. Angela Merkel, one of the world's most powerful women, habitually wears a trousers suit, but the effect of a woman in a suit has several consequences. Firstly, a woman in a suit is a chimera of power, she is aping what men have, rather than experiencing power and being able to demonstrate influence. Secondly, as trousers suits are inherently masculine garments, they never fit a woman's body in the way they do men's and women's bodies appear bulky and problematic, and they fail to do justice to the powerful elements of women. Therefore women in suits are performing power, rather than actually having it.

Conclusion

This article has examined the representation of the bespoke, tailored suit in the film, *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (Vaughn, 2014). While arguably, the suit has much in common in this film as the suits in such films as the James Bond franchise for example, much fighting occurs in suits, it is the use of the suit as a vehicle to transcend social class that is of interest here, and the means by which the suit allows the character of 'Eggsey' to transcend his lower class, 'chavvy' background to become a Kingsman, once removed from a Superhero. The suit is also a signifier of hegemonic masculinity and that is also represented in the film, while much has been written on the homogenising effect of the suit, the bespoke suit is differentiated from readymade suits by virtue of being made to fit the body of the wearer. In doing this, any imperfections in the body, which might detract from hegemonic power, is 'corrected' through good tailoring. Foster refers to upward mobility in media representations as being part of the 'American Dream' (2005: 48) which refers to getting onto the conveyor belt of consumerism and demonstrating identity through conspicuous consumption. But in Britishness, it is social class that is at stake - yet in Kingsman, upward mobility for Eggsey will be a problem until he capitulates to the requirements of the Kingsman, which requires him to be a gentleman at all times. However, towards the end of the film, while it is the suit that has got him into position, it is Eggsey's street acumen which saves the day and therefore the world from the evil clutches of Valentine's villainy. The bespoke suit and personal accoutrements demonstrated in

Kingsman refer to what the Galahad character (Colin Firth) suggests is that 'manners maketh man' – what he appears to mean by this is that hegemonic man is aligned with certain codes of dress and conduct that need to be adhered to at all times, lest they be mistaken for chavs, or not 'gentlemen', which would mean a reduction in power.

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