



Instructions for authors, subscriptions and further details:

<http://mcs.hipatiapress.com>

## **Changing Affective Economies of Masculine Machineries and Military Masculinities? From Ernst Jünger to Shannen Rossmiller**

Ulf Mellström<sup>1</sup>

1) Karlstads University , Sweden

Date of publication: February 21st, 2013

---

**To cite this article:** Mellström, U. (2012). Changing affective economies of masculine machineries and military masculinities? From Ernst Jünger to Shannen Rossmiller. *Masculinities and Social Change*, 2(1), 1-19. doi: 10.4471/MCS.2013.19

**To link this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.4471/MCS.2013.19>

---

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

The terms and conditions of use are related to the Open Journal System and to Creative Commons Non-Commercial and Non-Derivative License.

# Changing Affective Economies of Masculine Machineries and Military Masculinities? From Ernst Jünger to Shannen Rossmiller

Ulf Mellström

*Karlstads University*

## Abstract

---

This article discusses the affective economy and changing representations of military masculinities with regard to transforming gendered, machinic and digital bodies of integrated (wo)man-machine systems. The self-mechanised ideal of the soldier body that the German writer Ernst Jünger came to formulate has been configurative for generations of military masculinities. Jünger's work speaks directly to an affective understanding and embodied history of masculinity in the military. However, in the current times of virtual warfare, military masculinities are perhaps changing? As war is going cyber and technical wizardry is as valued as the brute strength of self-mechanised bodies, the body of the soldier is being destabilised. The case of Shannen Rossmiller is here working as a contrastive case. Rossmiller is FBI's most regarded cyber counter-terrorist. She seems to inhabit and perform certain forms of masculinities better than her male colleagues.

---

**Keywords:** military masculinities, bodies, machinic, digital, affective economy

2013 Hipatia Press

ISSN 2014-3605

DOI: 10.4471/MCS.2013.19



# ¿Cambiando Economías Afectivas de Maquinarias Masculinas y Masculinidades Militares? De Ernst Jünger a Shannen Rossmiller

Ulf Mellström

*Karlstads University*

## Resumen

Este artículo reflexiona alrededor de la economía afectiva y las representaciones de las masculinidades militares con relación a las transformaciones de género, cuerpos digitales y “maquínicos” de los sistemas de maquinaria masculinos-femeninos. El ideal auto-mecánico del cuerpo del soldado que el escritor alemán Ernst Junger formula ha sido configurado por generaciones de masculinidades militares. El trabajo de Junger se centra directamente en una comprensión afectiva de la historia del cuerpo en el marco de la masculinidad en el ejercito. Sin embargo, en los tiempos actuales de un “warfare” virtual, ¿Las masculinidades militares quizás están cambiando? Como la Guerra está siendo cyber y la hechicería técnica es valorada como la fuerza bruta de los cuerpos auto-mecanizados, el cuerpo de los soldados están siendo desestabilizados. El caso de Shannen Rossmiller se está convirtiendo en un caso de contraste. Rossmiller es la terrorista-cyber más buscada por el FBI. Ella parece que interpreta ciertas formas de masculinidad mejor que sus colegas masculinos.

**Palabras claves:** masculinidades militares, cuerpos, "maquínico", digital, economía afectiva

2013 Hipatia Press

ISSN 2014-3605

DOI: 10.4471/MCS.2013.19

In this paper I will articulate a few lines of thought with regard to a possible changing affective economy of a classical masculine bastion such as the military. My focus will be on the transformation of gendered, machinic and digital bodies of integrated (wo)man-machine systems in the military forces. Different iconographic figures will be contrasted to illustrate the argument of transformation and representations of masculinities (and femininities) closely connected to technology and materiality. My prime focus will be on masculine gender constructions but I will also be concerned with what Halberstam (1998) has called female masculinity.

Throughout the history of patriarchy we have witnessed many different forms of power figurations where bodies, experiences and materiality have been woven together in intricate forms. The affective economy of such figurations/configurations has, however, been surprisingly under-investigated, especially in masculinity studies. Many classical feminist studies (Cockburn, 1983, 1985; Cohn, 1987; Hacker, 1989; Wajcman, 1991) have and still does a better job in having intervened into what can be called ‘hardcore masculinities’, and defined as forms of masculinity that has resisted gendered change and reform, and cling onto traditional patriarchal core values in social communities that exclude women, gay, lesbians and transsexual persons (author 2011a).

In line with many other feminist technology scholars (FTS) (Wajcman, 1991, 2004; Faulkner, 2000, 2001; Oldenziel, 1999) I have continuously argued that understanding technology, engineering, machinery and so forth, is constitutive to masculinity, and a key to understanding patriarchal power relations – i.e. different configurations of the fusion of men/machines, the soma and the technics of masculinity and gendered power relations (Mellström, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2011). Throughout the history of FTS the strong material and symbolic relationship between masculinity and technology has been given a significant explanatory value in regard to the exclusion of women in technological fields and has become a key to understanding masculine dominance. In a number of sociological, historical, an anthropological studies (Cockburn, 1983, 1985; Hacker, 1989; Wajcman, 1991, 2004; Faulkner, 2000, 2001; Oldenziel, 1999) the

“pervasive and durable equation between masculinity and technology” (Faulkner, 2000, p.3) has been confirmed. In these studies, we can observe how technology and the masculinization of power have been intimately connected. In other studies the individual importance technologies have for men, have been verified (Mellström, 2002, 2004; Schyfter, 2009a), and where identification with technology is self-evident. It is taken for granted as it is often part of what it means to be a man; it is part of a masculine script in many different contexts (Mellström, 2003). In these studies technology is shown to be an essential part of many men’s upbringings as boys and connects closely to definitions of what is masculine and what is not. Crucial for such identification is the early socialization with and the embodiment of different machines and technological knowledge and the pleasures derived from this.

Although far to little research in masculinity studies has ventured into this intellectual turf, we now see a new wave of studies that infuse insights of feminist materialism/s into these classical domains of FTS and direct a stronger focus on the entanglements of body, masculinity, materiality and emotional experiences (Balkmar and Joelsson, 2010; Balkmar, 2012; Harrison, 2010, Schyfter, 2009a, 2009b; Olofsson, 2010, 2011; Ericson, 2011).

In this paper I draw, in general terms, on the contributions of these recent works together with Sara Ahmeds notion of affective economy (2004) that in particular brings in the affective dimensions of embodied and hybrid relations between people and machines (see also Scheller 2004). According to Ahmed (2004, p.119)

In such affective economies, emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments. Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective.

The mobilization of emotions within classical masculine bastions such as the military is in addition deeply rooted in gendered homosocial/homoerotic collective practices connected to technologies in various ways. In such practices of masculine fraternity, machines can often be understood as a means of a performative and embodied communication enabling homosocial bonding linkages between peers as well as between generations of men (Mellström, 2003). In other words, in the construction of masculine fraternity, machines become an essential element in the sharing of these relationships. Such inclusionary and exclusionary processes resting on gender complementarity and essentialising gender discourses have traditionally been used to protect certain forms of male exclusivity where images of heroism and bravery are at the core. As a performative ideal for such images it seems that various military masculinities are still firmly entrenched gender constructions, in the midst of transformative sexual politics and change in gender relations, in contemporary societies based upon a legacy of masculine heroism.

However, with the current ‘post-modernisation’ of civil-military relations in which international peace-keeping missions are the main objective for the military organisation rather than defending national borders (see for instance Moskos, Williams and Segal, 2000; Persson, 2011), do we also witness change in the ways that masculinity is configured? Moreover, and more to the point of this paper, in what ways do we, in the current times of technologisation of war and cyber warfare (Poster, 2011), see changing masculine (and feminine) configurations with regard to machinic, digital and bodily experiences and representations? Can we envision alternative representations and narratives?

### **Weaponry and emotional work**

In her seminal work in FTS in the beginning of the 1990’s Judy Wajcman (1991, p.138) states:

War is a paradigm of masculine practices because of its pre-eminent valuation of violence and destruction resonates throughout other

male relationships: relationships to other cultures, to the environment and, particularly, to women.

In her straightforward way of portraying men and masculinity, Wajcman is getting to the core of how much of the radical feminist literary on men and masculinities were formulated at the time. In the power and pleasure dualism that has been a key figure of thought in FTS the last thirty-forty years, explanatory dimensions of control, and domination were often connected to psychodynamic thinking in the 1970's and 1980's. Psychological explanations visualising a phallic imagery deeply buried in the minds of men were, for good reasons, popular. Many feminists were tracing the source of male fascination with war and weaponry to men's needs to substitute for the babies they cannot conceive. As Wajcman notes (1991) "Ironically, the most comprehensive account of this fundamentally radical position is by a man, Brian Easlea..." In his still fascinating and readable book "Fathering the Unthinkable" (1983) Easlea discusses, among other things, how emotions are being mobilised in the development of the nuclear bomb by the Los Alamos group in the Manhattan project, led by Robert Oppenheimer. Besides the calculative and technical rationality employed in making the nuclear bomb, a great deal of emotional work was also going into the project. Easlea's account is full of details how the male scientists were overridden with pleasure and joy in their job and search for technological perfection, how they were celebrating the dropping of the bomb and how exalted they were over the effectiveness of the weapon. The sanitized abstractedness of such emotional work was also the theme of Carol Cohn's work (1987) among defence intellectuals a couple of years after the publication of Easlea's book. However, Cohn was rather interested in how technostrategic discourses helped to reduce anxiety by distancing "the user from thinking of oneself as a victim, making it possible to think about the unthinkable" (Wajcman, 1991, p.140). Both Easlea and Cohn portray worlds where a sexual imagery and patriarchal euphemisms permeates the emotional work of a masculinity based on abstraction, domination and control. It is a form of masculinity that makes strategic decisions and has a hegemonic status within the military (Connell, 1987).

Another form of masculinity in the military is the foot soldiers. It is the generations of men (and subsequently women) who have been slaughtered in the trenches of World War I, who have been killed in the bombings in World War II, the badly armoured afghan soldiers killed by equally badly equipped taliban soldiers in Afghanistan, the highly technologised Nato soldiers in Iraq killed by land mines, as well as all those killed in numerous other wars. It is not the men in positions to take strategic decisions but rather the ones that are the violators and victims in parallel. The division of labour within military forces mirrors disparate versions of masculinity in the civil society based on classed, aged and racial divisions. Expressed differently and more crudely, the ruling class men and working class men (Wajcman, 1991). It is among the latter where constructions of the heroic have been prevalent as an ideological machinery and discourse motivating young men (and subsequently women) to risk their lives and where notions of danger and virility has been at the core of their sense of masculinity.

The balancing point of such discourses is recognised in masculine heroic images, celebrating courageous deeds, and bravery mythologised in collective stories of heroes retold and mediated through collective remembering practices that exemplify the core values of the military occupations. As such, it connects to a longstanding gendered 'leitmotif' in 'western' culture of risk taking and mastering of fear as an ultimate form of masculinity. Whitehead (2002, p.413) conflates this with masculinity as a gendered configuration where the 'doing' of masculinity equals acts of courage, mastering fear, and risk 'management'. And to add a historical note, in the origins of 'western' culture in ancient Greece and the republic of Rome, the citizen was the soldier. Others (women, foreigners, slaves) who could not serve in battle could consequently not become citizens.

The affective economy of masculine subjectivity connected to war, citizenship, heroism and invulnerability is thus a loaded gendered heritage or as Barbara Ehrenreich summed up some twenty five years ago: "Recall that it is not only that men make wars, but that wars make men" (Ehrenreich, 1987, p.26). In the ideological as well as the bodily making of men, the technological and the machinic has been at the centre of this gender complex, not least in the industrial military complex.



### **Integration of the machinic**

Entanglements and integration of machinery and the machinic in the military is, as partly discussed before, a long-standing theme with many lines of thought in relation to power and pleasure, transcendence, eroticism, lust, submission, penetration etcetera. The historian Lewis Mumford (1934) has argued that the very first machine was an army consisting of the soldiers and their weapons as the moving parts. Mumford pointed to how weaponry and the disciplining of individual bodies/soldiers into cleanly working parts, and the military's fostering of automation have contributed to the drive to integrate humans and machines into effective complex systems. No doubt, it also within the military where cyborgian ideals was formulated long before Manfred Clynes coined the term cyborg. As Chris Habes Gray (2000, p.53) puts it: "Cyborgs were a dream long before there were even machines..." As Gray also has documented (Gray, 1993, 1997, 2000, 2001), the pre-cyborgian history is full automatons, golems, homunculus, etcetera. A desire for and fantasy of human transcendence is a common feature for these hybrid creatures. In pre modern history different forms of automatons is without exception connected to different religious pursuits in trying to transgress life in its limited organic corporeal form.

It is however in the 19th and 20th century that automatons is becoming an important part of military machineries although the dream of the invulnerable and indestructible machinic man has been around since ancient Rome and probably well before that. The mechanization of the war and the soldier man walks hand in hand with industrialism and 'scientific management'. The machinalisation of (hu)mankind that Friedrich Nietzsche talked about was also a machinalisation of war in the name of industrial efficiency and technical rationality. The masculine devotion to machineries and the symbolic marriage between men and machines, where also given poignant expression in the art movements of Russian constructivism, Dadaism and Italian futurism. The early 20th century was in many ways an artistic zenith for the fusion of weaponry and masculinity. For instance, for the Italian futurist Marinetti, the modern man was a man multiplied with the machine (Edwards, 1988, p.14). The idea of man multiplied by machinery is also a central theme throughout modernity, ideologically as well as in different forms of

embodied expressions of masculinity. This is what Gray (2001) calls “Man Plus”.

The affectiveness of this long-lived dream of the machinic, and the prosthetic integration of masculinity and weaponry have had many sad moments. Such a sad and truly vitalistic moment in military history is vividly described by the German historian of ideas, Klaus Theweleit in his impressive two volume, (very thick) “Männer Phantasien” (Male Fantasies) (1978), where he examines the psychology of the German Freikorps during WW I. Theweleith depicts the emergence of a new type of man, one with a deeply erotic and ambivalent relationship towards mechanisation. This new man was a creature whose physique had been machinalised, his psyche eliminated – or in part displaced into his body armour. This self-mechanisation doubly achieves a crucial and pleasureable function for the soldier man. It is an affectiveness that in the words of Theweleit interpreting the work of Ernst Jünger (1980, p.162) performs of a self-mechanised masculinity “...whose instinctual energies have been smoothly and frictionlessly transformed into functions of his steel body.” This machinised man with a mechanised psyche and machinalised body should devote his life to the machine. “Yes the machine is beautiful: its beauty is self-evident to anyone who lives life in all its fullness and power. We must imbue the machine with our own inner qualities” (Theweleith, 1980, p.197). In return the soldier man will reach “a higher and deeper satisfaction” (Theweleith, 1980). The ideological and performative function of this self-mechanisation, which Jünger held as the ultimate ideal for the soldier man, is evident. It would motivate him to risk his life in the dreadful existence of the trenches, to find a higher motive in the hopelessness of an endless war. The ultimate goal of affective explosion is according to Theweleit: “The crucial impulse behind the regeneration of the machine seems to be its desire for release - and release is achieved when the totality-machine and its components explode in battle.” (Theweleith, 1980, p.155).

The writings of Ernst Jünger interpreted by Theweleit is a sort of figuration where mechanisation, intimacy and the body are tightly woven together and which has since become a psychological profile and ideal for generations of military masculinities, both in a modern and postmodern descriptive sense. The integrated man-machine ontologies

have just been accentuated since. Or as Gray (2000, p.281) has it: “This long standing incestuous relationship between war, men, and machines may well have finally birthed the psychological reality of cyborgs in the hell of 1917.”

### **Integration of the machinic**

The cyborgised soldier is today a reality in terms of a fully integrated man-machine system. Cybernetics is now the dominant metaphor in the postmodern military. Computers are the most important force, man plus-multiplier, and the cyborg man machine weapons system the ideal (Gray, 1997). Enormous resources are spent on making soldiers into cyborgs. We have seen a technological development where, for instance, (hu)man-machine interfaces have been improved incredibly with information being displayed on windshields, visors, or even broadcast directly into the eyes and ears of weapon operators (Gray, 2000, p.281). Such technological interventions along with shift of focus from war-fighting to peacemaking and from warriors to technologists have profoundly changed the construction of what it means to be a soldier in an ontological meaning – not least in gendered terms. The cyborgisation of the soldier during the 1990’s and 2000’s, and not least the cultural coding, geared towards new forms of masculine identity is pointing towards a less self-fixated self-mechanisation but rather fixing the machinic in virtual warfare.

As Gray (2000) reports, gender categories for the postmodern soldier is not self-evident. A female US trooper in Saudi Arabia told a newspaper reporter “There aren’t any men or women here, just soldiers”. Apparently these soldiers need not be heterosexual either, as gays now serve openly in the military. Gay men serve in about half the NATO armies and secretly in all the others. Gray speculates around the current insecurity of may be caused by the generated by the general crisis of war, an institution that possibly and hopefully is becoming obsolete. Another reason is perhaps the changed mission of the military more broadly, from a reactive organisation to an increasingly proactive one, relying less and less on a classical masculine identity of physical force, easy access to violence, and the direct

subjugation of other men and women. As same-sex relationships now are out in the open, it also connects to a well-known theme of masculine brotherhood and homoeroticism in military history. In comparison to the almost institutionalized misogyny and homophobia of military establishments throughout most the 20th century, it is noteworthy to see that there have been other gendered configurations in the history of military organization. For instance, “The Sacred Band of Thebes, made up of male lovers, was much admired by Alexander the Great and erotic male bonding has been implicitly accepted in many armies since.” (Gray, 2000)

Thus, it seems that war and military operations is no longer an exclusively masculine heterosexual task, if it ever has been, considering the civilian casualties of war. So, with an increasing integration of machinic and digital bodies of integrated (wo)man-machine systems, gender identity is less stable, providing new sources of gendered legitimacy for a changing affective economy of military masculinities. Another destabilising source is the continuous virtualisation of warfare. New forms of information based technical platforms is at the heart of contemporary productions of war and military organisation, including a wide range of activities such as control of media and communication channels, new means for manipulating war propaganda, ‘hacking’ of databases and online networks. In general, ICT’s (Information and Communication Technologies), are through their capacities of democratisation, virtualisation, and transnationalism a source opening up for blurred gender boundaries within the military forces (Peterson and Runyan, 2010; Poster, 2011). The classical binaries of men-women, soldiers-mothers, protectors-protected, aggressive-passive are becoming less bounded as the military actors are being decoupled from their bodies. Identity management is a continuously increasing activity for training and military operations.

The Internet literature has explored many different contexts for identity work (see for instance Turkle, 1995; Boellstorff, 2008; Mellström, 2009). However, the dynamics of these processes with regard to the military is, as Winifred Poster (2011) has shown, still an under investigated theme in the literature on identity management and shifting in the context of websites and social forums. In Poster’s own work, she considers three different domains within the US military where new ways of gender swapping is played out:

In leadership, as the new state info-czars are overwhelmingly female; in training, with the virtual war games where soldiers practice peacekeeping instead of war; and in counter-intelligence, with the activities of cyber-spies who gather information by posing as Iraqi militants online. (Poster 2011, p.7)

With a point of departure in Poster's work, I shall before concluding provide an example where masculinity is at stake in a number of different ways.

### **It's Erin Brockovich meets Lara Croft**

This is how Josh Schreff, who owns the book, movie and TV rights to Shannen Rossmiller's story, characterize this rather unexpected, and nowadays increasingly famous American cyberspy. In the magazine *Wired* (2007) she is described as: "Shannen Rossmiller grew up on a Montana wheat farm. She is blond and slim. Her husband runs a wireless Internet company, and they have three children. After college, she was appointed a local judge in a small Montana town, where she and her family still live and which she'd rather not identify." Rossmiller has used her computer skills and knowledge of Arabic to infiltrate jihadist cells on the Internet. Shocked and traumatized by, and as consequence of 9/11, she taught herself Arabic and has created online pseudonyms, pretending to be sympathetic to Al-Qaeda plotters in order to lure them into revealing information leading to their capture.

In one account Rossmiller writes:

I created my first terrorist cover identity on the Internet on March 13, 2002, to communicate and interact with these targets. In my first chat room sting, I convinced a Pakistani man that I was an Islamist arms dealer. When he offered to sell me stolen U.S. Stinger missiles to help the jihadists fighting the U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan, I used the Persian Gulf dialect of Arabic to ask him to provide me with information that I could use to confirm his claims, such as stock numbers. Within a couple of weeks, the missile identification numbers were in my computer inbox. Stock numbers and the e-mail correspondence in hand, I intended to drive to the closest field office for the FBI here in Montana but was afraid that

the FBI would not take me seriously. What were the chances of a Montana mom showing up at their door with information about an individual in Pakistan who was trying to sell Stinger missiles? Instead, I submitted the information to the FBI's online tips site. (Rossmiller, 2007, p.44).

Rossmiller's tips is said to have helped the FBI break up as many as 200 terrorist plots around the globe. The two biggest federal cases in the U.S. traceable to her investigative work were that of an Alaska pipeline engineer, Michael Curtis Reynolds, convicted in 2007, and the trial of Ryan Anderson in 2004. Anderson was a National Guardsman who now serves five life sentences for treason, convicted of funneling American Army secrets to Al-Qaeda. Her information has also led US forces in Afghanistan to locate Taliban cells, to discover a renegade stinger-missile merchant in Pakistan, and help a European government to identify a ring of potential suicide bombers. One explanation to Rossmiller's success is a fundamental flaw in al Qaeda's famously decentralized organization, which apparently is the absence of a strict hierarchy. This makes it relatively easy for a knowledgeable person like Rossmiller to mix among these groups. Rossmiller has over the years posed as a potential jihadist soldier looking for like-minded. She creates multiple characters and uses her older and more respected personae to invite the new ones into private forums. Rossmiller works the terrorism boards as if she were playing a complex videogame (Hitt, 2007). Her manifold characters come complete with distinct personalities and detailed biographies. Rossmiller is most serious about her characters: "I have a hard time letting go of these guys, because I kinda become them. When you develop a personality, you essentially morph into it. It's hard to let it go" (Hitt, 2007). She is also very meticulous in her work and keeps copies of everything, time-stamps files, as well as taken screenshots. She is reported to have an Excel spreadsheet that details the 640 people with whom she has had contact on these boards since 2002.

Rossmiller's case is interesting for many reasons. It does not least begs the question about intersecting gender and ethnicity identity swapping online as well as what it means for the affective economy of military masculinities, formerly so closely connected to different embodied forms of masculine performativity.

As Poster (2011, p.9) has shown in her work, Rossmiller is in many ways at the intersection of many different understandings that historically have been mutually exclusive in our understandings of military masculinity. “In a geographical sense, the home front of her kitchen is the battle front; she travels globally online while her local position has not changed.” (Poster, 2011). In her daily life she is a rather average American small town woman, while in her virtual life she is a Middle Eastern avatar. She is in parallel an enemy soldier and the patriotic soldier. She is both male and female. She is a violent-seeking masculine jihadist in the chat rooms while at the same time taking care of her children at home, etcetera.

Rossmiller's case raises the issue of who can be a soldier within in times of virtual warfare? For good reasons it seems that one doesn't need to be a man to be a good cyber-soldier. “In fact, as Rossmiller shows, one doesn't need to be a man to be a good masculine cyber-soldier”. (Poster, 2011) Apparently Rossmiller is better at acting as a masculine jihadist than many of her male counterparts in the FBI. To what an extent are women more generally skilled to be cyberwarriors? Is cyber warfare an open gendered space? As it seems, masculinity is no doubt a space open for interpretation in this context. In any case, Rossmiller's case as one of the most successful cyber warriors in (post)modern times, has opened up opportunities for women in counter-intelligence work as well as proving that virtual masculinities are a performative phenomenon that makes it rather irrelevant what sex is behind the screen.

### **Conclusive remarks**

In this text I have through various examples shown how an increasing technologisation of warfare with regard to cyborgian and digital machineries is opening up new gendered spaces within the affective economy of the military. It does not imply that the long-lived dream of the indestructible soldier is evaporating but rather that it is creating confusion over identity, which not least spills over to gendered configurations. The realities of postmodern war and cyborg soldiering are shrinking the homosocial and homoerotic spaces of classical masculine machineries. Cyborgs and virtual avatars can be masculine of

feminine, but also have the potential of being neutered. New possibilities for hetero-social and homosexual spaces have also increasingly challenged the monolithic gendered binary system of the military. In any case it seems that previous simplistic male/female categories cannot stand against shifting gendered desires and actions, new forms of masculinities and femininities in the military forces that comes together with an increasing cyborgisation of bodies as well as the masses of virtual avatars that sustain cyber warfare. This does not mean that the military loses its masculine connotations but that new masculine identities are constructed around mechanisation and virtualisation rather than self-machinalisation, that physical force gives way to fixing machines and acting in the virtual space of informatics and computer-tech wizardry. Admittedly, military cyborgs and avatars are still heavily masculine in their cultural coding, but these new versions seems at least easier to adapt to for women and homosexual men. They might even be better at staging the emotional work that goes into this gendered cultural coding, opening up the affective economy previously so closely connected to male bodies, masculine heroism and bravery. The basic soldier identity is increasingly gender insecure, perhaps "...vaguely male in dress and posture, vaguely female in status, and vaguely masculine-mechanical in role and image." (Gray, 2001, p.58), or as in the case of Shannen Rossmiller, transforming and transcending dominant military masculinities by virtualization. It all begs for the question; Who can be a real man and soldier these days?

## References

- Ahmed, S. (2004). *The cultural politics of emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Balkmar, D. & Joelsson, T. (2010). Den bioniske mannen på autoeroriska äventyr: mäns risktagande i trafikrummet. *Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 5(1), 27-44. Retrieved from <http://www.idunn.no/ts/norma/2010/01/art06>
- Balkmar, D. (2012). *On Men and Cars: An Ethnographic study of gendered, risky and dangerous relations*. Diss, Linköping University: Linköping Studies in Arts and Sciences



- Boellstorff, T. (2008). *Coming of Age in Second Life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cockburn, C. (1983). *Male dominance and technological change*. London: Pluto Press.
- Cockburn, C. (1985). *Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men and Technical Know-How*. London: Pluto Press.
- Cohn, C. (1987). Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals. *Signs*, 12(4), 687-718. Retrieved from <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0097-9740%28198722%2912%3A4%3C687%3ASADITR%3E2.0.CO%3B2-E>
- Connell, R.W. (1987). *Gender and power: society, the person and sexual politics*. Cambridge: Polity in association with Blackwell.
- Easlea, B. (1983). *Fathering the Unthinkable*. London: Pluto Press.
- Edwards, F. (Ed.) (1988). *Futuristisk teater & film*. Stockholm: Författarförlaget.
- Ehrenreich, B. (1987). Iran scam: the real meaning of Oliver North - can a member of the warrior caste survive the horror of peace? , *Ms.*, May, 26.
- Ericson, M. (2011). *Nära inpå: maskulinitet, intimitet och gemenskap i brandmäns arbetslag*. Diss, Göteborg: Göteborgs university. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/2538>
- Faulkner, W. (2000). The power and the pleasure? A research agenda for “making gender stick” to engineers. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 25(1), 87-119. doi: 10.1177/016224390002500104
- Faulkner, W. (2001). The technology question in feminism: A view from feminist technology studies. *Women's Studies International Forum* 24(1), 79-95. doi: 10.1016/S0277-5395(00)00166-7
- Gray, C. H. (1993). The Culture of War Cyborgs: Technoscience, Gender, and Postmodern War. *Research in Philosophy and Technology*, 13, 141-163.
- Gray, C.H. (1997). *Postmodern War: The New Politics of Conflict*. London: Routledge.
- Gray, C. H. (2000). Enhanced Cyborgs and the Construction of the Future Masculine. *Science as Culture*, 9(3), 277-301. doi: 10.1080/713695253

- Gray, C. H. (2001). *Cyborg citizen: politics in the posthuman age*. London: Routledge.
- Hacker, S. (1989). *Pleasure, power and technology: Some tales of gender, engineering, and the cooperative workplace*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Halberstam, J. (1998). *Female masculinity*. Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press.
- Harrison, K. (2010). *Discursive skin: entanglements of gender, discourse and technology*. Linköping: Linköpings university.
- Hitt, J. (2007, July 23). Behind Enemy Lines With a Suburban Counterterrorist. *Wired*, 15(11). Retrieved from [http://www.wired.com/politics/security/magazine/15-11/ff\\_rossmiller?currentPage=all](http://www.wired.com/politics/security/magazine/15-11/ff_rossmiller?currentPage=all)
- Holth, L. & U.Mellström. (2011). Revisiting Engineering, Masculinity and Technology Studies: Old Structures with New Openings. *International Journal of Gender, Science, and Technology*. 3(2), 313-329. Retrieved from <http://genderandset.open.ac.uk/index.php/genderandset/article/view/134/328>
- Mellström, U. (1995). *Engineering lives: Technology, time and space in a male centred world*. Linköping: Linköping Studies in Art and Science.
- Mellström, U. (1999) *Män och deras maskiner. (Men and their Machines)*. Nora: Nya Doxa.
- Mellström, U. (2002) Patriarchal machines and masculine embodiment. *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 27(4), 460-478. doi: [10.1177/016224302236177](https://doi.org/10.1177/016224302236177)
- Mellström, U. (2003). *Masculinity, Power and Technology: A Malaysian Ethnography*. Aldershot UK: Ashgate.
- Mellström, U. (2004). Machines and masculine subjectivity, technology as an integral part of men's life experiences. *Men and Masculinities*, 6(4), 368-383. doi: [10.1177/1097184X03260960](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X03260960)
- Mellström, U. (2009). The intersection of gender, race, and cultural boundaries or why is computer science in Malaysia dominated by women?. *Social Studies of Science*, 39(6), 885–907. doi: [10.1177/0306312709334636](https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312709334636)

- Mellström, U. (2011). Moving beyond the comfort zone of masculinity politics. *Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 1(6),1-4. Retrieved from <http://www.idunn.no/ts/norma/2011/01/art05?textSize=smaller>
- Moskos, C. C., Williams, J.A. and Segal, D. R. (2000). (Eds). *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War*. New York and Oxford: Retrieveddy Press.
- Mumford, L. (1934). *Technics and civilization*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and company.
- Oldenzien, R. (1999). *Making technology masculine: Men, women, and modern machines in America, 1870-1945*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Olofsson, J. (2010). *Taking place - augmenting space: spatial diffusion in times of technological change*. Luleå : Luleå tekniska universitet, 2010. Retrieved from [http://pure.ltu.se/portal/files/5022749/Jennie\\_Olofsson\\_Doc2010.pdf](http://pure.ltu.se/portal/files/5022749/Jennie_Olofsson_Doc2010.pdf).
- Olofsson, J. (2011). Cut out to handle a ladder?: Age, experience and acts of commemoration. *Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 6(1), 5-21. Retrieved from <http://www.idunn.no/ts/norma/2011/01/art07>
- Persson, A. (2011). *Changing boundaries, defending boundaries: gender relations in the Swedish Armed Forces*. Linköping: Linköpings university.
- Peterson, V. S. & A. S. Runyan. (2010). *Global Gender Issues in the New Millenium*. Boulder, CO, Westview Press.
- Poster, W.(2011, May). The Iraqi Jihadist Who Was Really a U.S. Homecoming Queen: The Transformation of Military Masculinities in Cyberwar. Paper presented at the *Conference Men and Masculinities Moving On Again!* of Linköping University, Sweden.
- Rossmiller, S. (2007). My Cyber Counter-jihad. *Middle East Quarterly*, 14(3), 43-48. Retrieved from <http://www.meforum.org/1711/my-cyber-counter-jihad>
- Schyfter, P. (2009a). Tackling the 'body inescapable' in sport: body-artifact kinesthetics, embodied skill and the community of

- practice in lacrosse masculinity. *Body & Society*, 14(3), 81-103.  
doi: [10.1177/1357034X08093573](https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X08093573)
- Schyfter, P. (2009b). *Entangled Ontologies, A sociophilosophical analysis of technological artefacts, subjects, and bodies*, Ph.D. Science and Technology Studies. The University of Edinburgh.
- Sheller. M. (2004). Automotive Emotions: Feeling the Car. *Theory Culture & Society*, 21(4-5), 221-242. doi: [10.1177/0263276404046068](https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404046068)
- Theweleit, K. (1977-1978). *Männerphantasien*. Frankfurt am Main: Roter Stern.
- Theweleit, K. (1980). *Männerphantasien*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowolth.
- Toro-Troconis, M. & U. Mellström, (2010). Game-based learning in Second Life. Does Gender Make a Difference?. *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds*, 1(2), 53-76. doi: [10.1386/jgvw.2.1.53\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jgvw.2.1.53_1)
- Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Wajcman, J. (1991). *Feminism Confronts Technology*. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press and Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Wajcman, J. (2004). *TechnoFeminism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press
- Whitehead, S. (2002). *Men and masculinities: Key themes and new directions*. Malden, Mass: Polity.

Ulf Mellström is Professor of Gender Studies at Karlstad University, Sweden.

**Contact Address:** Direct correspondence to Ulf Mellström at Karlstad University, Universitetsgatan 2, Karlstad, Sweden  
Email: [ulf.mellstrom@kau.se](mailto:ulf.mellstrom@kau.se)