



BASTARDIZED CHIVALRY: FROM CONCERN FOR WEAKNESS TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of chivalry, alternatively termed benevolent sexism, is frequently studied in terms of its importance to and impact on women. This essay looks at the evolution of the concept from its medieval beginnings to when it later branched into two distinct forms; military chivalry and romantic chivalry. It summarizes the nature of romantic chivalry and reviews some key findings of recent studies, including men's embodied experiences of romantic chivalry in relation to psychosocial health. The essay concludes that romantic chivalry is a sexist convention and asks whether it's time to de-genderize its principles of operation.

Keywords: chivalry, benevolent sexism, gynocentrism, entitlement, masculinities, men

“Chivalry, as understood by Modern Sentimental Feminism, means unlimited licence for women in their relations with men, and unlimited coercion for men in their relations with women. To men all duties and no rights, to women all rights and no duties, is the basic principle underlying Modern Feminism, Suffragism, and the bastard chivalry it is so fond of invoking.” – (Bax, 1913, p. 141)

In 1913 English barrister Ernest B. Bax observed that chivalry had undergone an alteration or, as he understood it, a corruption from its earlier intent of *deference to weakness*. (Bax, 1913). He contended that the original definition was no longer current since in its modern application the question of a person’s sex took precedence over that of weakness proper. Instead of chivalry being directed to the care and protection of children, frail elders, the disabled, or the wounded in battle as in earlier times, Bax understood the new chivalry as being confined strictly to “sex privilege and sex favouritism pure and simple.” (Bax, 1913, p. 100).

The claim of chivalry being redirected along predominantly sexual lines is confirmed by most modern dictionaries, for example in the Cambridge Dictionary which defines it as ‘Very polite, honest, and kind behaviour, especially toward women.’ (Dictionary C, 2015). Following in the footsteps of Bax the following essay will explore the gendered facets of “bastard chivalry,” focusing on its promotion of sex-favouritism and associated impacts on male health.

THE EMERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE OF ‘TWO CHIVALRIES’

The earliest meaning of chivalry referred to a code of behaviour followed by medieval knights of Europe, the word itself being derived from Old French *chevalerie*, from medieval Latin *caballerius* meaning ‘horseman’ (Dictionary O.E., 2008). As Bax observes;

“The term meant originally the virtues associated with knighthood considered as a whole, bravery even to the extent of reckless daring, loyalty to the chief or feudal superior, generosity to a fallen foe, general open-handedness, and open-heartedness, including, of course, the succour of the weak and the oppressed generally, inter alia, the female sex when in difficulties... [O]nly a fragment of the original connotation of the word chivalry is covered by the term as used in our time, and that even that fragment is torn from its original connection and is made to serve as a scarecrow in the field of public opinion to intimidate all who refuse to act upon, or who protest against, the privileges and immunities of the female

sex." (Bax, 1913, pp. 100-101)

The variation referred to by Bax can be traced back to an emerging culture of courtly love and its harnessing of chivalry to new ends, which in the West is a development of the twelfth century. According to historian Jennifer G. Wollock of Texas University, "the idea that love is ennobling and necessary for the education of a knight comes out of the lyrics of this period, but also in the romances of knighthood. Here the truest lovers are now the best knights." (Wollock, 2011, p. 42).

In that historical context chivalry was subjected to a new contextual application, taken up by an emerging culture of courtly love in which men were taught to direct their chivalric cares, concern, protection, obedience, and service exclusively to women (Alfonsi, 1986). Over the course of two centuries there emerged two distinctly differentiated versions of chivalry: a continuing military chivalry with its code of conduct and proper contexts, and a romantic chivalry complete with its code of conduct and proper contexts.

It is difficult to pinpoint when the culture of romantic chivalry constellated and found relative independence from its military forerunner, but the evidence of troubadour poetry, romance fiction (Yalom, 2012), and etiquette manuals (Cappelanus, 1990) detailing the elaborate conventions of romantic chivalry attest to its emergence by the end of the twelfth century. Central to that revolution was the imperial patronage of Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter Marie de Champagne who together elaborated the military notion of chivalry into one of servicing ladies.

Prior to the twelfth century romantic chivalry did not exist as a gendered construct; it was in the Middle Ages that it developed cultural complexity and became the ubiquitous and enduring cultural norm we inherit today. The following timeline details the birth of romantic chivalry along with significant historical events that promoted its survival:

1102 AD: Romantic chivalry trope first introduced

William IX, Duke of Aquitaine, the most powerful feudal lord in France, wrote the first troubadour poems and is widely considered the first troubadour. Parting with the tradition of fighting wars strictly on behalf of man, king, God and country, William is said to have had the image of his mistress painted on his shield, whom he called *midons* (my Lord) saying that it was his will to bear her in battle, as she had borne him in bed.

1152 AD: Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Queen Eleanor invites poet Bernard de Ventadorn to compose songs of love for her and her husband, Henry II. The songs lay down a code of chivalric behaviour for how a good man should treat his “lady,” which Eleanor employs in an apparent attempt to civilize her husband and his male associates. Eleanor and other noblewomen began to encourage poetic narratives that set expectations on how men should act around them (School of Life, 2011).

1168 – 1198 AD:

The romantic chivalry trope is elaborated and given imperial patronage by Eleanor and her daughter Marie. At Eleanor’s court in Poitiers Eleanor and Marie embroidered the Christian military code of chivalry with a code for romantic lovers, thus putting women at the center of courtly life – and in doing so they had permanently changed the face of chivalry (McKnight, 1994).

Key events are:

- **1170 AD:** Eleanor and Marie established the formal Courts of Love presided over by themselves and a jury of 60 noble ladies who would investigate and hand down judgements on love-disputes according to the newly introduced code governing gender relations. The courts were modelled precisely along the lines of the traditional feudal courts where disputes between retainers had been settled by the powerful lord. In this case however the disputes were between lovers (McKnight, 1994).
- **1180 AD:** Marie directs Chrétien de Troyes to write *Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart*, a love story about Lancelot and Guinevere elaborating the nature of romantic chivalry. Chrétien de Troyes objected to the implicit approval of the adulterous affair between Lancelot and

Guinevere that Marie had directed him to write about and failed to finish it, but later poets completed the story on Chrétien's behalf. Chrétien also wrote other famous romances including *Erec and Enide* (McKnight, 1994).

- **1188 AD:** Marie directs her chaplain Andreas Capellanus to write *The Art of Courtly Love*. This guide to the chivalric codes of romantic love is a document that could pass as contemporary in almost every respect, excepting for the outdated class structures and assumptions. Many of the admonitions in Andreas textbook are believed to have come from the women who directed the writing (McKnight, 1994).
- **1180 – 1380 AD:** In two hundred years the culture of romantic chivalry spread from France to become instituted in all the principle courts of Europe, and went on to capture the imagination of men, women and children of all social classes. According to Jennifer Wollock (2011), the continuing popularity of chivalric love stories is confirmed by the contents of women's libraries of the late Middle Ages, literature which had a substantial female readership including mothers reading to their daughters. Aside from the growing access to literature, chivalric culture values spread via everyday interactions among people in which they shared the ideas.

The aristocratic classes who first developed the romantic chivalry trope did not exist in a vacuum. The courtly themes they enacted would most certainly have captured the imaginations of the lower classes through public displays of pomp and pageantry, troubadours and tournaments, minstrels and playwrights, the telling of romantic stories, and of course the gossip flowing everywhere which would have exerted a powerful effect on the peasant imagination (Wright 2014).

It is possible that those of even lower classes adopted some assumptions portrayed in the public displays, such as the importance of chivalrous behavior toward women and perhaps a belief in women's purity and moral superiority. Certainly by the 1600s and beyond, the adaptation of romantic chivalry by lower classes was in full career, as evidenced by Lucrezia Marinella who provides an example of Venetian society from the year 1600:

It is a marvelous sight in our city to see the wife of a shoemaker or butcher or even a porter all dressed up with gold chains round her neck, with pearls and valuable rings on her fingers, accompanied by a pair of women on either side to assist her and give her a hand, and then, by contrast, to see her husband cutting up meat all soiled with ox's blood and down at heel, or loaded up like a beast of burden dressed in rough cloth, as porters are.

At first it may seem an astonishing anomaly to see the wife dressed like a lady and the husband so basely that he often appears to be her servant or butler, but if we consider the matter properly, we find it reasonable because it is necessary for a woman, even if she is humble and low, to be ornamented in this way because of her natural dignity and excellence, and for the man to be less so, like a servant or beast born to serve her.

Women have been honored by men with great and eminent titles that are used by them continually, being commonly referred to as 'donne', for the name donna means lady and mistress. When men refer to women thus, they honor them, though they may not intend to, by calling them ladies, even if they are humble and of a lowly disposition. In truth, to express the nobility of this sex men could not find a more appropriate and fitting name than donna, which immediately shows women's superiority and precedence over men, because by calling women mistress they [men] show themselves of necessity to be subjects and servants (Marinella, 1999).

While popular recognition of the 'two chivalries' ran concurrently over several hundred years, the notion of military chivalry would eventually be relegated to obscurity in popular discourse as described in the observations above by Bax and evidenced by definitions in modern dictionaries.

IDEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF ROMANTIC CHIVALRY

Romantic chivalry is alluded to by alternative terms such as benevolent sexism, romantic love, gentlemanliness, courtesy, gallantry, heroism, or simply chivalry. The practice has roots in what some scholars have referred to as chivalric 'love service,' (Bennett, 2013) a ritualized form of devotion by men toward women popularized by troubadours in the Middle Ages. The earliest conceptualization of love service borrowed from the vocabulary of medieval feudalism, mimicking ties between a liegeman and his overlord; i.e., the male lover is referred to as *homo ligius* (the woman's liegeman, or 'my man') who pledged *honor*, and *servitium* (service) to the lady via a posture of feudal homage. The lady was addressed as *midons* (literally 'my lord'), and also by *dominus* (denoting the feudal Lady) (Alfonsi, 1986). These practices form the ideological taproot of modern romantic chivalry.

The conventions and indeed the lived practices of romantic chivalry celebrated first among the upper classes made their way by degrees eventually to the middle classes and finally to the lower classes – or rather they broke class structure altogether in the sense that all Western peoples became inheritors of the customs regardless of their social station. Today chivalry is a norm observed across the majority of global cultures, an explicitly gynocentric norm aimed to increase the comfort, safety and power of women, while affording men a sense of purpose and occasional heroism in addressing that same task (Wright, 2014).

C.S. Lewis referred to the growth of romantic chivalry as “the feudalisation of love,” (Lewis, 2013, p. 2) making the observation that it has left no corner of our ethics, our imagination, or our daily life untouched. He observed that European society has moved essentially from a social feudalism, involving a contractual arrangement between a feudal lord and his vassal, to a *sexual feudalism* involving a comparable contract between men and women as symbolized in the act of a man going down on one knee to propose marriage (Wright, 2014).

EDUCATION IN CHIVALRY THROUGH THE USE OF SHAME

The education and transmission of chivalry from generation to generation is overseen by parents, teachers and peers, and is reinforced by a plethora of culture-mediums including social media, mainstream media, political narratives, romance novels, music, cinema and the arts. Through these mediums romantic chivalry is internalized by young girls and boys as models of expected gendered behaviour.

An early example appears in the 1825 volume *The History of Chivalry or Knighthood and Its Times*, describing the education of a boy in the expectations of romantic chivalry. The author tells that in Medieval Europe the intellectual and moral education of boys in the chivalric code was given by the time they turned seven years by the ladies of the court:

“From the lips of the ladies the gentle page learned both his catechism and the art of love, and as the religion of the day was full of symbols, and addressed to the senses, so the other feature of his devotion was not to be nourished by abstract contemplation alone. He was directed to regard some one lady of the court as the type of his heart’s future mistress; she was the centre of all his hopes and wishes; to her he was obedient, faithful, and courteous.”
(Mills, 1825, pp. 32-33)

To illustrate such education we are provided an anecdote of a young boy named Jean de Saintre,

page of honour at the court of the French king. A Dame des Belles Cousines enquired of the boy ‘the name of the mistress of his heart’s affections’:

The simple youth replied, that he loved his lady mother, and next to her, his sister Jacqueline was dear to him. “Young man,” rejoined the lady, “I am not speaking of the affection due to your mother and sister; but I wish to know the name of the lady to whom you are attached par amours.” The poor boy was still more confused, and he could only reply that he loved no one par amours.

The Dame des Belles Cousines charged him with being a traitor to the laws of chivalry, and declared that his craven spirit was evinced by such an avowal. “Whence,” she enquired, “sprang the valiancy and knightly feats of Launcelot, Gawain, Tristram, Giron the courteous, and other ornaments of the round table of Ponthus, and of those knights and squires of this country whom I could enumerate: whence the grandeur of many whom I have known to arise to renown, except from the noble desire of maintaining themselves in the grace and esteem of the ladies; without which spirit-stirring sentiment they must have ever remained in the shades of obscurity? And do you, coward valet, presume to declare that you possess no sovereign lady, and desire to have none?”

Jean underwent a long scene of persecution on account of his confession of the want of proper chivalric sentiment, but he was at length restored to favour by the intercession of the ladies of the court. He then named as his mistress Matheline de Coucy, a child only ten years old. (Mills, 1825, pp. 32-33)

The pressure applied to the boy of this account, including shaming responses for his non-conformity, provide testament to the pressures that accompanied, and continue to accompany, deviance from the dictates of romantic chivalry. Education of this kind is common on social media today where read commentaries about “unchivalrous” males who by their failures become the subject of mockery and shame (a Google search for *unchivalrous* co-occurs with the word ‘shame’ 54,900 times; ‘ashamed’ 23,400; ‘pathetic’ 31,000; ‘loser’ 14,500; and ‘unmanly’ 9,960 times respectively). (Google, 2018)

A recent example of a shaming narrative serving as an educative prompt appeared in the online *Conservative Woman* (Perrins, 2018). The article recounted an incident from the year 1989 when 25-year-old gunman Marc Lépine entered the École Polytechnique armed with a semi-automatic rifle and ordered the males and females to form into separate groups. He then began killing several women and injuring some of the men. The author lamented that these men “abandoned” the women in an “act of abdication” that would have been unthinkable in previous,

more chivalric periods of history. The author admits she was “pretty shocked that the men left,” and finally blames “the collapse of protective masculinity” as a preventable factor in the deaths of those women.

Regarding younger children, a search for chivalry and related terms such as “knight” “damsel in distress” and “princess” in the children’s section of Amazon Books website (for ages 2–12) generated over 10,000 results, revealing that a fascination with medieval gender roles remains popular with children and their parents today, a result that can be multiplied with the addition of teenage and adult books in the same genre (Amazon, 2018). One example titled *Noisy Knights* (for boys aged 2–5) shows pictures of a distressed damsel menaced by a fire-breathing dragon (the book includes a battery operated button to make her scream in audio) (Taplin, 2010). The text asks the reader if he knows of any knight who might be brave enough to save her, a question clearly designed to lead young male reader to volunteer service, imagining himself stepping into a position of danger to protect the damsel and reduce her distress.



Figure 1. *Noisy Knights* (Taplin, 2010, P. 5-6) invites young male readers to identify with a ‘damsel-saving’ knight

Romantic chivalry is further popularized in video games and Disney movies, for example, which are bestsellers among children in the digital age. Many themes of romantic chivalry appear charming in isolation from their real-world implications, a delight to the imagination, however as the field of narrative psychology likes to remind; our identities consist of such stuff as dreams are made: the stories that children and adults absorb are the stories they *enact*, and in this case

there is potential for men and boys to enact them to the neglect of their health, their safety, their dignity and larger human potential (Wright & Elam, 2017, p. 29-31).

BENEVOLENT SEXISM

In the field of sociology chivalry remains a much-researched topic, though renamed and problematized under the heading 'benevolent sexism.' According to P. Glick *et.al* (2000), the attitudes tapped in the Benevolent Sexism Scale are closer to medieval ideologies of chivalry than they are to other modern social or political movements. Benevolent Sexism (often shortened humorously to 'BS') is rooted in the traditional culture-structures guiding personal relationships between men and women and is not an outcome of contemporary politics, even when reinforced by political discourse and encoded in legislation (Glick, *et.al.*, 2000).

Benevolent sexism is described as the expression of reverence and care toward women while promising they will be protected and provided for by men, and is thus experienced subjectively by women as an agreeable form of sexism (Hammond, *et.al.*, 2014). Moreover, research has shown that these attitudes objectively *do* benefit women because men who express agreement with benevolent sexism are generally more caring, satisfying, and positive relationship partners (Hammond, *et.al.*, 2014).

In their study aptly titled *The Allure of Sexism*, Matthew D. Hammond *et.al.* (2014) researched whether a sense of entitlement to special treatments—a central facet of narcissism based on feelings of superiority and deservingness—was linked with endorsement of benevolent sexism by women across time:

'If women endorse benevolent sexism because of the individual-level benefits it offers, then women's endorsement of benevolent sexism should vary depending on dispositional differences in psychological entitlement. Psychological entitlement is a core facet of narcissism, which encompasses feelings that the self deserves nice things, social status and praise, and beliefs of the self as superior, highly intelligent, and attractive (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline & Bushman, 2004; Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006; Emmons, 1987; Miller & Campbell, 2010). The model of narcissistic self-regulation characterizes psychological entitlement as manifesting in efforts to gain esteem, status, and resources (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Campbell et al., 2006; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Such efforts include adopting a superficially charming, confident, and energetic approach to social interactions (Foster, Shrira, & Campbell, 2006; Paulhus, 1998), taking personal

responsibility for successes and attributing failures to external sources (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998), and acting selfishly to secure material gains even when it means exploiting others (Campbell et al., 2004; Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005).’ (Hammond, et.al., 2014, p. 2).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the study found that a psychological sense of entitlement in women does mediate endorsement of benevolent sexism. Moreover, the researchers theorized that characteristics of narcissistic entitlement – those which drive resource-attainment and self-enhancement strategies – are the same qualities that promote women’s adoption of benevolent sexism:

‘First, benevolent sexism facilitates the capacity to gain material resources and complements feelings of deservingness by promoting a structure of intimate relationships in which men use their access to social power and status to provide for women (Chen et al., 2009). Second, benevolent sexism reinforces beliefs of superiority by expressing praise and reverence of women, emphasizing qualities of purity, morality, and culture which make women the “fairer sex.” Indeed, identifying with these kinds of gender-related beliefs (e.g., women are warm) fosters a more positive self-concept (Rudman, Greenwald, & McGhee, 2001).

Moreover, for women higher in psychological entitlement, benevolent sexism legitimizes a self-centric approach to relationships by emphasizing women’s special status within the intimate domain and men’s responsibilities of providing and caring for women. Such care involves everyday chivalrous behaviors, such as paying on a first date and opening doors for women (Sarlet et al., 2012; Viki et al., 2003), to more overarching prescriptions for men’s behavior toward women, such as being “willing to sacrifice their own well-being” to provide for women and to ensure women’s happiness by placing her “on a pedestal” (Ambivalent Sexism Inventory; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Thus, women higher in psychological entitlement should be particularly enticed by benevolent sexism because it justifies provision and praise from men as expected behavior and does not require women to reciprocate the reverence or material gains, which men provide.’ (Hammond, et.al., 2014, pp. 3-4).

While the Hammond study describes the sense of entitlement by women in terms of narcissistic motivation, it is more accurately termed *gynocentric* based on the exclusively gendered context, i.e. woman as center of the relational contract who feels deserving of benevolent gestures from men and boys. While deservingness is an integral feature of narcissism, the concept of *gynocentrism* provides more specificity than does narcissism because women may not feel entitled, for example, to special treatment by non-intimate males nor by other women

(as compared to an individual scoring high on standard narcissism scales), reserving instead the sense of entitlement for intimate gendered relationships. The gendered context of women's sense of entitlement is confirmed by studies showing that women tend to score lower than men on global narcissism scales (Grijalva, *et.al.*, 2013), however such measures fail to take into account the exclusively gendered domain in which benevolent sexism operates and in which the level of female narcissism may be much higher.

A 2018 survey of 782 female subjects found women believe male partners displaying benevolent sexist attitudes are more willing to protect, provide for, and commit to them, which in turn rendered those men more attractive. Interestingly, feminist women were just as likely as non-feminist women to prefer benevolently sexist men over more egalitarian men regardless of whether they rated themselves as high or low feminists. High feminists rated the benevolent sexist men as more patronizing and undermining than did low feminists, but felt the positive sides of benevolent sexism outweighed the negatives (Gul & Kupfer, 2018).

SOCIETAL CHIVALRY

Beyond the relational sphere, chivalric customs are utilized to facilitate more empowerment of women via the initiatives of national and international governing bodies. This can be witnessed for example in anti-violence campaigns such as the White Ribbon initiative in Australia which asks men to “Stand up, speak out, *and act*” to ensure the dignity, safety and comfort of any women, even strangers, who might find themselves in real or imagined danger (Seymour, 2018).

We witness it again internationally in the HeForShe campaign initiated by UN Women Ambassador Emma Watson, who in her introductory speech appealed to feminist oversight of gendered matters six times, and then to the importance of men offering their chivalric support to women's empowerment: “I want men to take up this mantle. So their daughters, sisters and mothers can be free from prejudice... I am inviting you to step forward, to be seen to speak up, to be the ‘he’ for ‘she.’ And to ask yourself if not me, who? If not now, when?” (Watson, 2014).

Chivalry operates outside the interpersonal sphere in which men have traditionally given up their seats in buses, whereby governments are now providing seats for women in legislative assemblies and in boardrooms via quotas. Similarly the act of a man opening a door for a woman

is now enacted by governments who open doors for women into universities and workforces via the practice of affirmative action (Wright, 2017). Indeed chivalry has arguably been exploited to meet objectives of women's empowerment since at least the time of Bax, who in the year 1887 contended that "It is all very well to say they [feminists] repudiate chivalry. They are ready enough to invoke it politically when they want to get a law passed in their favour – while socially, to my certain knowledge, many of them claim it as a right every whit as much as ordinary women." (Bax, 1887, p. 114-121).

NEGATIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR MEN AND BOYS

Men and boys who enact chivalric masculinity may pay a considerable price in the process, psychologically, socially or physically. Romantic chivalry emphasizes protection of women (Dictionary Y, 2018), thus men are placed in danger of being injured, maimed or killed when "intervening" in difficult situations such as those evoked by the White Ribbon initiatives, or while working in the male dominated professions of military, police, and firefighters for whom acts of benevolent sexism are celebrated.

The masculine norm of stoicism (Murray, *et.al.*, 2008) involving the repression of emotion and the cultivation of indifference to pleasure or pain serves maintain men's chivalric focus on women's assumed need for support, protection and male deference. Conversely, if a man or boy becomes focused on his own emotions, pain, pleasure or needs, he risks being viewed as a poor protector and provider (i.e. less chivalrous), which will be likely met with social shaming if not outright violence as modes of punishing transgressions and encouraging compliance.

The gendered morality of chivalry dictates that men and boys receive less compassion and assistance than their female counterparts (Eagly & Crowley, 1986), are more likely to be viewed as suitable targets for infliction of violence, pain and other harm (Feldman-Hall, *et.al.*, 2016), are more likely to receive harsher legal penalties than women for offenses (Curry, *et.al.*, 2004), and conversely perpetrators of crime *against* males are more likely to receive lenient sentences as compared to those who perpetrate crimes against women who receive the longest sentences (Curry, *et.al.*, 2004). Males who suffer disability or mental illness are more often stigmatized and treated with less 'chivalric' compassion or positivity than their female counterparts (Whitley, *et.al.*, 2015). The differential gender outcomes in these examples demonstrate that romantic chivalry fosters a 'sympathy-deficit' toward males and their issues, and a conversely heightened

concern for women's issues. This gender-preferential bias has been referred to as *gynosympathy* (Wright, 2016), a practice that negatively impacts men's willingness to seek help and assistance when needed (Eagly & Crowley, 1986).

The employment of traditional sex-role strategies (inclusive of stoicism and chivalry) increase the likelihood of male depression (Addis, 2008; Batty, 2006, Liljegren, 2010, Oliffe, & Phillips, 2008), anxiety, stress, and poorer health behaviors (Eisler, *et.al.*, 1998), suicide (Houle, *et.al.*, 2008), and accidental death (Stillion & McDowell, 2002), however the precise degree to which chivalry contributes to these outcomes requires further research.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The chivalry surveyed in this essay is both sexist and gynocentric in nature, one that demands men provide numerous psychological gratifications and material benefits to recipient women. Enactment of chivalric behaviours may also provide secondary benefits for men and boys, such as increased social/peer approval and greater access to female romantic partners (Hammond, *et.al.*, 2014). The chivalric role offers heterosexual men a life-map to guide their social behaviour while providing a sense of self based on service to women. This in contrast to socially disapproved identities such as 'unchivalrous' males, voluntarily confirmed bachelors (Holland, 1959), or alternatively to gay or transgender men whose identities are not built on service to women (Polimeni, *et.al.*, 2000; Nagoshi, *et.al.*, 2008).

Men adhering to chivalric behaviour are rewarded with social valorization, and in the more extreme examples are praised as selfless "heroes" for which medals are awarded by mainstream social institutions. On the negative side of the equation there may be a lack of recognition for ongoing sacrifices – chivalry as rote expectation, an assigned role, codified and reinforced with shame. In both adhering, and in failing to adhere to the dictates of romantic chivalry, the cumulative psychosocial burden on men may be considerable – including negative mental and physical health impacts as outlined above.

In an age of equality one might ask what continuing relevance has romantic chivalry? If we follow the definition of chivalry in the Cambridge Dictionary as a "very polite, honest, and kind behaviour," is it still necessary to add the usual adjunct "...especially by men toward women"? Omission of the gendered framing shifts the emphasis toward extending a universal politeness,


honesty, and kindness toward all peoples, reviving the older sense of chivalry from which romantic chivalry originally diverged to become the dominant or “bastardized” meaning.

Such an amendment would free men and boys to discover a variety of non-gynocentric masculinities, and revive the notion of ‘common courtesy’ as a basis for reciprocal service and devotion between men and women. Mainstream commenters occasionally pay lip service to the idea of de-genderizing chivalry (Waldman, 2013), but until such time as that sentiment is actualized in popular culture we might conclude with a rephrasing of Emma Watson’s HeForShe proposition and ask, “I am inviting you to step forward, to be seen to speak up, to be the “we” for “all.” And to ask yourself if not me, who? If not now, when?”

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