

5-2010

Embodying the Current Middle Ages: Gender and Performance in the Society for Creative Anachronism

Chelsea Lewis

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/honors_etd



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Embodying the Current Middle Ages: Gender and Performance in the Society for Creative Anachronism

By Chelsea Lewis

Undergraduate Thesis

Louisiana State University, May 2010

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I have to thank Megan Matthews who first introduced me to the SCA. Without the generosity, patience, kindness, and participation of many others, this research would not be possible. So, I would like to formally thank everyone in Shire Wyrngeist, Greenshield, Nova, the Kingdom of Gleann Abhann at large, and any other Scadian who assisted me in this long, strange journey through the Current Middle Ages.

Special thanks to Lisa & Joe Stevenson, Rachel Keane, Scott Gelpi, Les & Keeshea Rogers, Rendy Breaux, Lasair, Lord Nigel, Lord Manfred, and Sir Elesar & Lady Marion for their continued support and assistance. Additional thanks and infinite appreciation to all those who submitted the photography used in this presentation. Finally, I'd like to thank my committee for their advice, guidance, and patience.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	1
Introduction	4
Towards a Theoretical Framework	4
Leisure Studies, Play, Role-playing, Historical Re-enactments	5
Performativity & Embodiment.....	8
The Mundane vs. The Medieval.....	12
Methodology.....	14
Difficulties of Collaborative and Critical Ethnography.....	16
Chapter 1: Welcome to the Current Middle Ages	20
History.....	20
Geography.....	22
SCA Culture 101	24
Honor, Chivalry, and Courtly Love	24
Performing Personae	26
Mundainties	27
“Playing the Game” and “Stepping Up” Your Play.....	29
Periodness.....	30
Social organization	32
Chapter 2:.....	33
Manning Up: Embodying Masculinity in the Current Middle Ages	33
Embodying Royalty: It’s Good to be the King	37
The Knight: But Does He Dance?	43
Barbarian: Where’s the List Field and Where Can I Get Some Mead?	49
Conclusion.....	51
Chapter 3:.....	53
Beautiful Ladies: Embodying Femininity in the SCA	53
The Queen: Jewel of the Kingdom.....	56
The Truly Honorable Lady	61

The Amazon	62
Conclusion.....	67
Appendix I: Glossary.....	69
Appendix II: Event Descriptions	71

Introduction

Many see the body as a living canvas. From the tattoo artist to the interpretative dancer, the body is a medium of expression, both artistically and personally. In fact, the body is our most immediately available resource for expressing ourselves as individuals who also belong to various groups, classes, and communities. Throughout our lives we encode our bodies and control our bodily movements, actions, voices, and cover our bodies in ways that reflect who we are or who we want to be. Furthermore, we intend for our bodies to be “read,” and we “read” others’ bodies, the meanings that have been ascribed to them and that are demonstrated through them.

This research examines embodiment, historical re-creation, and gendered performance in the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), an international medieval historical re-creation society. The purpose of this research is to use an ethnographic approach to analyze identity within the SCA and how SCA participants embody multiple identities in a postmodern context. The first chapter is an introduction to the SCA in general and is intended to familiarize the reader with important SCA concepts, terminology, and types of organization. Chapters 2 and 3 analyze embodiment within the SCA, the former focusing on masculinity, men, and masculine archetypes, and the latter focusing on femininity, women, and feminine archetypes. Finally, the concepts and observations described in the first three chapters will be discussed and analyzed in the conclusion. Limitations of this research and suggestions for future investigations will be addressed in the conclusion.

Towards a Theoretical Framework

Developing a theoretical framework can be an organic, on-going process beginning after an initial literature review, continuing throughout fieldwork and in-depth research, and is finally

revised or fine-tuned during writing and analysis. Throughout my own fieldwork experience and analytical process, I began to notice patterns of behavior and speech as well as repetitious tacit and explicit references to a variety of concepts which, together, revealed how gender in the SCA is constructed through performance and performativity. Appropriately, I have chosen to structure my analysis drawing on performance and performativity theories. Other relevant theoretical perspectives are discussed below due to the repetitive reference to the SCA as “play” and the SCA’s resonance with leisure studies, historical re-enactment groups, and costumed role-play. Obviously the SCA incorporates, to varying degrees, aspects of each of these fields. However, gendered embodiment in the SCA is better understood and analyzed through a performance/performative lens. My thesis focuses on gender and embodiment, both of which are implicit in performance, and hence, make this theoretical perspective germane to my analysis.

Leisure Studies, Play, Role-playing, Historical Re-enactments

Several publications focus on historical re-enactments as “serious leisure pursuits” and playful engagements (see Hunt, 2004; Goncu & Perone, 2005). Stebbins describes serious leisure pursuits “as offering a prime opportunity for self expression, self-identity enhancement, and self-fulfillment” (1982:253). Goncu *et. al.* observe that “people do not stop pretend play when they become adults...pretend playing exists throughout the life but the contexts and the manners in which symbolic representations are expressed” often change (Goncu *et. al.*, 2005:139). *Scadians*¹ (used to describe themselves and each other as SCA participants) will often describe themselves as “hobbyists” or their participation in the SCA as “a hobby.” The SCA has created a world in which participants can practice their hobby, express their identities, and feel fulfilled. In

¹ See the glossary in Appendix 1 for definitions and descriptions of italicized terms.

addition, many *Scadians* describe their involvement in the Society as “play” or “playing the game.”

The SCA also resembles role-playing to some degree. Lindley & Eladhari’s (2005) analysis of LARP (Live Action Role Play) reveal some tacit characteristics of SCA performativity. “LARP consists of a kind of performative multitext,” and can result in “the highest levels of immersive and emotional experience” (2005:2, 3). Adult costumed-play is pleasurable because of “the ingenuity and artistry that goes into creating one’s *persona* and... the co-performative act” (Fron, Fullteron, Morie, Pearce; 2007:14). Like role-playing, the SCA is a performative multitext. Its medievalist (re-)creations are based upon a selective blend of academic research, fantasy literature, mass media (movies, television series, etc.), and the sci-fi-fantasy culture that emerged in the 1960s. Perhaps the SCA bases its enactments on the Middle Ages because of the vast amount of available images and ideas (accurate or inaccurate) in addition to the era’s remoteness from the present. The Middle Ages are popular because “the feudal structures, dynastic struggles, and...narrative forms...can easily be lifted out of historical context and generalized into...fantasy and science fiction” (Trigg, 2008:101) in the contemporary context. Cramer (2005) explains:

The communal medieval world they [*Scadians*] have created...gives SCA members a canvas on which to paint their fantasies. While SCA members study medieval history, often intently... their concepts of the medieval are contemporary, informed by the many different Middle Ages.... The SCA represents a type of medievalism unto itself.... (99)

At this point, it is important to highlight the similarities and differences between the SCA and historical re-enactment. The SCA enacts the “Current Middle Ages” (CMA) rather than re-enacting history (McEwan, 1993:21). The SCA scrupulously blends medieval and contemporary objects and philosophy to create the CMA. Through meticulous re-creation of certain objects, *Scadians* “create a simulacrum of the Middle Ages, enforcing authenticity to a created particular,

‘Current Middle Ages’...a copy without an original” within which participants live in “a utopian authentic experience” (McEwan, 1993:8). This obviously differs from the goals of historical re-enactment groups which re-enact specific (and documentable) eras, individual lives, and events based on a particular historical narrative. Although the SCA does value historically documentable authenticity, the Society neither describes itself as a re-enactment group nor claims to re-enact anything. Rather, the SCA creates history anew, incorporating contemporary elements and transforming this historical-contemporary mash-up into a separate and unique world known as the Current Middle Ages.

However, some aspects of historical re-enactment do resonate with the SCA. For example, re-enactors “present past events as though they are contemporary and thus make history alive” (Coles & Armstrong, 2008:2). Similarly, the SCA makes the CMA come alive by actually living it, even if only temporarily. Other scholars analyze the psychology of historical re-enactment, the role of postmodernity and industrialization in re-enactment, and the creation of heritage during re-enacting, and the arguments are revealing about the SCA, its membership, and its activities (Agnew, 2007; Hall 1994; Radtchenko, 2006; Bowen, 2009). Rory Turner’s (1990) description of historical re-enactors’ material culture could, with a few changes of words, describe SCA:

The items are tangible objects that embody the world of the past. They are props that re-create the past as a lived context.... Tactile, sensual, aesthetic, the material culture of reenacting persuades the experiencing body of the re-enactor that he can participate in the Civil War. Re-enactments set up two intersecting frames of ‘reality,’ one shaped by the contemporary ongoing present, and one generated by the records of history and reconstituted through the objects, actions and space (125).

Like Turner’s re-enactors, the SCA employs a “play identity,” which can be more meaningful than other identities and “transforms the re-enactor into someone else...and someone more fully himself” (126). For example, one’s identity as a Knight may be personally more

meaningful than one's mundane identity as a teacher or basketball coach. Similarly, for a group of individuals who may only know each other in the SCA context, others' SCA identities will be more meaningful than the mundane alternatives. This becomes obvious when one notes that many SCA participants do not know the mundane names (or any other non-SCA details) of individuals they may have played with for over 10 years. Should these individuals meet each other at the bank or grocery, they will greet each other using SCA markers. A more in-depth explanation of the primacy of the CMA over the non-SCA world will be discussed in a subsequent section. For now, it is important to understand that SCA participants often feel they can more easily or more freely "be themselves" at SCA events or around other *Scadians*.

In addition, objects are "infused with value in a relationship both personal and social" and, collectively, create an aesthetic of authenticity (127). In another paragraph we see a strong correlation between historical re-enactment and the SCA:

Re-enacting...is a pleasure structure, a voluntary creation shared by those who...feel a resonance with any of the significances re-enacting might have.... For some it is a political statement...an affirmation of cultural identity, a...game, an opportunity to go camping and get drunk with friends, an alternative to a dreary existence, a 'thing to do' in a social set, or a fascinating window on a world they know from books and photographs (Turner, 1990:130).

Performativity & Embodiment

Performance and performativity theories are germane to any analysis of the SCA.

Although many SCA members would describe their participation in the organization as play, they are really play-acting, replacing the script with the "SCA culture" and simultaneously functioning as audience and actors. Cramer (2005) and others studying the SCA (Erisman, 1998; Lee, 2005; McEwan, 1993; Simmons, 2008) rely heavily on performance studies in their analyses. One approach to performance theory is, using Goffman's work (1956, 1961,

1974,1979) as a theoretical foundation, to analyze human interaction in terms of framed intentionality, social feedback, and self-reflexive behavior modification. In each of these processes, gender and embodiment are implicit.

Similarly, SCA acts are also performative, and Hall's concise discussion of the performativity of language can also be extended to include body modification via *garb* and voicing: "the performative...does not describe the world, but acts upon it – a way of 'doing things' with clothing or words (2000:1). According to Hall, performative acts are governed by certain conventions, but structure and hierarchy are also emergent in these actions (2000:2). Through performative actions, such as wearing the Crown or changing into *garb*, SCA participants simultaneously constitute and conform to the CMA world in which they embody their alternate SCA identities. These identities and their embodiments are not created or enacted in a discursive vacuum, and Hall (2000) calls for a more in-depth critical analysis of how individuals manipulate ideology in the continuous reproduction of gendered bodies. Butler (1990) also draws on the performative nature of language as it functions in gender reproduction.

Gender is an essential aspect of identity and is constantly performed and embodied. Butler (1988:521) argues that "the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts." She explains that because the body does not possess any essential gender essence, gender must be constantly written onto bodies. In sum, we gender our bodies and come to know our own bodies and those of others as gendered through the regular repetition of a historically situated "*corporeal style*, an 'act'...which is both intentional and performative, where 'performative' itself carries the double-meaning of 'dramatic' and 'non-referential'" (1988:521-522).

West & Zimmerman's (1987) work on "doing gender" complements Butler's work and fills in a few theoretical gaps. First, if one recognizes that gender is performed, one must also realize that these performances are embedded in all other categories of performance. Further, performances are not one-way streets of expression. Gender as performance (indeed all performances) is interactional; all parties involved operate as both an audience receiving and critiquing performances and as actors "doing" and held accountable for their genders (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Although Hunt (2008) writes about living history and reenactment organizations in general and not the SCA specifically, his analysis of male identity within these groups is relevant to a discussion of gender, and specifically masculinity, in the SCA. Historical reenactment offers "opportunities for masculinities to be explored, negotiated, and reconstructed...where actors forge a collective mythological and imagined masculinity and...establish boundaries with...the feminine...as a response to the contemporary crisis of masculinity" (Hunt 2008:462). The desire to return to what many *Scadians* call a "simpler" time is symptomatic of the perception of a modern masculinity under siege and likely contributes to the Middle Ages' (and other historical eras perceived in similar ways) popularity in general. Furthermore, re-enactors – male and female – construct their identities through performance which "involves the use of the past with its...myths, discourse, and visual adornments for contemporary purposes at the individual level of identity that is...a largely collective pursuit" (Hunt 2008:464).

Embodiment is implicit in the theoretical perspectives outlined above. The body is the material medium through which we perform our inner selves. In other words, "the body is the physical vehicle" for the self which is "the social entity we learn from, debate with, and remember when the body is not present" (Crawley, Foley, Shehan, 2008:50). Furthermore, the

self is derived from the social setting, and individuality is secondary to our status as social beings. All performances of the self are “filtered” by gender, and we are held accountable for our gender performances via our bodies. “Selves are performed and presented in all social situations. It need not be the exact same self in each situation because each situation may call for a different presentation” (Crawley *et. al.*, 2008:54).

Gender performance in the SCA, as I later argue, is structured by idealized masculine and feminine archetypes, such as the Knight or the Amazon (see Figures 1 and 2 below). I have chosen these are terms to describe the six idealized “characters” (the King, the Knight, the Barbarian, the Queen, the Honorable Lady, and the Amazon) on which SCA participants appear to structure their performance and interactions with others in the CMA context. Some of the terms are used in the SCA to refer to rank or official titles in the Society’s hierarchy (such as the King or Honorable Lady). However, in this writing only references to specific individuals (such as King Felix) refer to the authoritative rank. All other instances refer to my analytical nomenclature. None of the archetypes are associated with a specific type of persona, rank, or position in the SCA. Furthermore, I chose “Barbarian” and “Amazon” because of their salience in the SCA vernacular, and they are not in any way official SCA titles or ranks. For example, men will sometimes joke that they are acting like “mercenaries” or “barbarians.” Similarly, I have read and heard about “tribes” of women in the SCA who call themselves “amazons” even if they do not participate in combat.

Individuals constantly shift their performances and embody different types of masculinity or femininity depending on context, frame, social situation, and personal goals (both short- and long-term). Moreover, the identities enacted in the SCA, as Cramer (2005) elaborates, are layered and coded multiple times, characteristic of identity construction of any individual in

contemporary society (29). Belk (1998), Hunt (2008), Miller (1998) all analyze the embodiment of gender in different historical re-enactment societies. In their analyses, the body is coded with clothing (*garb*, what the SCA calls its specific style of costuming) and the actions and postures of the re-enactors are structured and controlled in order to act out or embody their identities as mountain men, civil war soldiers, and living historians.

The Mundane vs. The Medieval

The distinction between the contemporary world and the Current Middle Ages is sometimes muddled by inconsistent language. I have chosen to separate the historical medieval era, the contemporary moment, and the Current Middle Ages. In order to distinguish the historically medieval era from contemporary SCA's re-creations, I will refer to the former as "medieval" or the "Middle Ages" and the latter as "period" (used by Scadians to describe people, objects, garb or any other re-creation or enactment that is coded as being part of the SCA) or the "Current Middle Ages." Similarly, I will refer to modern, non-SCA contexts and objects as "mundanities" or use the descriptive "mundane" (terms used in the SCA to describe modern objects, clothing, or non-SCA people). My use of these terms also reflects typical usage and the appropriate meanings in the SCA by *Scadians*. Although the Current Middle Ages selectively blends elements of both the Middle Ages and mundane society, its enactments and creations are unique phenomena that are not found in any other context and should be analyzed on their own terms.

Analyzing any society "on its own terms" requires a certain amount of separation from other social units that may or may not be real or imposed by the investigator. In situations in which it is very difficult to identify the boundaries between societies, worlds, or frames of reference, it often seems, at the very least, imprudent to imply any form of separation actually

exists between one society and another. The SCA is one such context in which two distinct social worlds exist (the CMA and the mundane world), and the usefulness of an analysis which isolates these worlds from each other is not immediately apparent. However, such a separation can be necessary and, as Boellstorff (2008) demonstrates, highly useful in analytical pursuits.

Boellstorff's ethnography is fundamentally concerned with the difference (if any) between the material actual world and the virtual world of Second Life, an online multi-user "game." He defends his methodological decision to conduct ethnographic research exclusively in the Second Life, saying that "as virtual worlds grow in size, ethnographic research in them becomes more partial and situated, much like ethnographic research in the actual world" (Boellstorff, 2008:63). Furthermore, Boellstorff reminds us that all forms of technology, from the printing press to the computer, have been used to make and remake actual-world "selfhood, community, even notions of human nature" (2008:63).

Like Second Life, the SCA has created a new separate world – the Current Middle Ages, and in this world SCA participants have developed their own type of sociality which "references the actual [mundane] world but is not simply derivative of it" (Boellstorff, 2008:63). In much the same way virtual worlds reference the actual world, the CMA reference both contemporary and historical ideas, events, and material culture. All of this takes place within a CMA context, and any differences in SCA sociality (for example, between citizens of different kingdoms) will only be observable at SCA events, in the CMA context.

Like Boellstorff, I decided to conduct fieldwork exclusively in the Current Middle Ages, that is, all of my participant-observation was done at SCA events. Two focus group interviews were conducted in a mundane context, but all the participants were long-time SCA friends and nearly everyone engaged in some sort of SCA-related activity during the interview (for example,

one person painted silk banner, several women were embroidering garb, and one man cleaned and repaired his armor while we talked). My decision to reserve all ethnographic fieldwork to SCA events or exclusive SCA participant gatherings also reflects many *Scadians*' preference for the CMA over the mundane world. Briefly, many *Scadians* express strong feelings that the Current Middle Ages and participation in the SCA is more important (on a variety of levels) than the mundane world. Although many interesting and relevant inquiries could and probably should be made regarding the relationship between the mundane world and the CMA, the reader should keep in mind that this is not my primary goal. Rather, I attempt to describe gender, embodiment, and performance as they are uniquely framed by the SCA.

Methodology

The data and analyses presented in this writing are the products of a year-long ethnographic study conducted at SCA events via participant-observation fieldwork and formal and informal interviews. During the course of this research, I attended between fifteen and twenty SCA events including but not limited to: fighter practices, business meetings, local shire events, kingdom events, and inter-kingdom events (wars).

This research combines data collected during fieldwork (coded in field notes) with data from ten interviews ranging in style from informal and organic "conversations" to more structured and semi-structured exchanges. I recruited participants using a snow-ball method. Sometimes, I asked current participants to identify others who may be interested in the research, but more often than not, I benefitted from current participants' unprompted initiative in introducing me to prospective participants. All featured names are pseudonyms and any resemblance to currently registered SCA names is completely coincidental and unintentional.

Interviews include one-on-one and focus groups and were conducted in both mundane and SCA settings. I audio-recorded, transcribed and reviewed all interviews with participants in order to allow for their increased control over their representations as well as increase the possibility for collaborative ethnography. I sent any subsequent edits to transcripts (for grammar or clarity, for example) to participants for approval and additional input. The majority of my data analysis was done independently, although I frequently contacted or held meetings with various participants in order to clarify certain passages in my field notes or get a better idea of general participant perspective on my observations and conclusions.

When beginning this fieldwork, I made a conscious decision to attempt to limit the number and conspicuousness of any unnecessary *mundanities* I may bring to any given SCA scenario. This included material objects and, to some degree, behavior and verbal communication. Admittedly, I often fell short of this goal. For example, while I opted to refrain from photography during events, I used a recording device to record any interviews whether they were conducted at an event or not.

My presence was likely framed as “the researcher” or “the student” for the entire duration of my participation. However, at some point some individuals also began referring to me as their “newest member,” signaling that I had somehow, at least partially, moved into a different category.² My shifting status, from researcher to new member and back, definitely impacted the results. At times, perhaps, my questions seemed like those of a “newbie” just discovering the SCA. In other moments, my analytical perspective became more apparent, as more than one person mentioned to me. Overall, I feel SCA participants are accustomed to a certain level of

² Recently, members of the local chapter have begun asking me about if I have decided on a persona and SCA name and encourage me to develop a persona and SCA identity since, as one person told me, I will always be known as “the student.”

curiosity and inquiry from mundane folk, and my presence was likely not too problematic or foreign.

Difficulties of Collaborative and Critical Ethnography

During the course of this project, I produced several preliminary papers which I shared with as many of my participants possible. Because many of my participants lived across the state (a few lived in other states/kingdoms), I relied heavily on electronic means of dissemination. And, while I attempted to demonstrate my openness, even intense desire for feedback, many participants had little to say about my writing. In a few instances, I was approached by several participants who had received and read several of my writings, but even these types of encounters did not result in in-depth discussion. Indeed, most people were quick to tell me that my writing was good, and not as willing to push the subject further.

I was often disappointed by such responses and what I perceived to be a symptom of SCA culture: extreme politeness. At this point I had begun to feel that the connections I started forging in the beginning of the fieldwork were turning into more meaningful relationship, many close friendships. The lack of a more critical response from people I considered to be close friends initially caused me to question the nature of our relationships in the first place. Eventually, I concluded that participants' busy lives and the lack of immediacy symptomatic of electronic communication were more responsible for a lack of collaboration than anything else.

Unlike traditional ethnography, which is conducted in some foreign, "isolated" society, I was not completely immersed in the CMA, mostly because the Current Middle Ages only exist during SCA events (which are held most weekends). I did have to learn a new culture and a new language; I experienced culture shock early in my fieldwork. In addition, and despite the fact that my participant-observation only took place on the weekends, I was not immune to other effects

of ethnographic research. The relationships I developed with some of my participants affected my research, indeed affects this very writing, in other often more serious ways. Many, if not most ethnographers develop close relationships with some of their research participants. The nature of ethnographic research and immersive participant-observation often results in such close relationships between researcher and participant, and a whole body of literature has developed revolving around this and related issues of collaborative research and critical ethnography (for a discussion of collaborative ethnography, see Lassiter, 2008; Breunlin & Regis, 2009; and Regis & Walton 2008).

In addition to my struggle to locate collaborative practice in my research process, I also experienced (and still do experience) personal difficulties in reconciling my training and education as a feminist anthropology student, the relationships I developed during fieldwork, and the contradictory feelings I started to feel about the SCA. The manner in which I chose to address these issues varied, and, indeed, the repetitious revision of this very writing significantly impacted my ability to come to terms with my personal feelings about people I knew in the SCA, my intellectual demands to honestly analyze the Society, and the cognitive dissonance inherent in such an endeavor.

My fieldwork experience allowed me to become close to some individuals, and I soon realized that some of my participants (possibly many of them) disagreed with what I feel to be central not only to my work in anthropology but also my personal identity: feminism. I often sensed participants' hesitation, particularly in one-on-one interviews, to openly state their stance in relation to feminism. In many ways, the discomfort I and, no doubt, my participants felt is similar to the feelings commonly experienced by many Americans during political discussion with strangers or formal acquaintances. Further complicating the issue, I often avoided asking

explicit questions regarding participants' pro- or anti-feminist perspectives, and this likely stems from a neophyte or (to use a more SCA-appropriate term) "newbie" anthropologist sensitivity to unnecessarily influencing interviewees and participant alienation.

Another complicated aspect of my fieldwork experience was my enculturation into the SCA culture. The SCA as a social entity has developed an extremely effective socializing system. Individual members voluntarily occupy a special administrative position called the *chatelaine* and are responsible for welcoming new SCA participants or SCA-curious mundanes. This includes introducing the newbie to other *Scadians*, explaining the basics of SCA culture, procuring "loaner garb" for the person's first event, providing research resources, assisting in registration, and other aspects of event attendance (for example, finding appropriate tenting or cabin space), and working in any other capacity to quickly integrate the person into the local group.

Being officially welcomed into the SCA can be overwhelming for the newbie. There are numerous and unfamiliar names to remember, and the language is foreign-sounding. The subtle differences between different coronets leave many new people unsure if they should bow, curtsy, or even verbally greet such individuals. Events are fun and entertaining, but one is not quite sure where to go, what to do, or where one "fits in" in such a tightly-knit group. I experienced many of these sentiments and situations, and culture shock was definitely an obstacle I had to overcome. However, the SCA event is a largely friendly and helpful place to be, and I quickly found myself getting goose bumps during particularly emotional speeches at court or feeling a tug at my heartstrings when I saw children donning helmets and carrying shields to the "Bopper field" (children's heavy combat fighting done with lightweight shields and large, soft, foam swords).

I was often very aware of these feelings, especially when my behavior or emotions completely contradicted my typical, mundane behavior or my feminist perspective. I often found myself wondering why I smiled so much at men during events, and I noticed that nearly every aspect of my behavior was different during events. It is clear that, from the beginning of my fieldwork, I was performing in the SCA as much as SCA participants were. It was not until later in my fieldwork, during a conversation about a particularly annoying drunk man in the tavern, that I realized that, initially, my “special” performance was framed by my perception of the SCA as a hyper-polite society.

Whether I was attempting to avoid offending others or simply “acting” to fit some SCA role I had imagined is not clear to me, but I do know that, after this conversation, I began acting more like my mundane self (but with a cleaner mouth). This did not, however, render me immune from continued enculturation into the SCA. In fact, I feel that it increased and intensified after I stopped trying to consciously control my behavior, and, perhaps, it is because in doing so, I was more able to overlook the contradictions between my mundane personality and my SCA personality.

Later, when I first began this writing, the contradictions were revealed in full, vivid color. I admittedly struggle throughout this writing to find a way to make critical and feminist analysis of the SCA while still maintaining my new found loyalty to the Society. If I seem hesitant to confront the SCA on certain terms, I am. If the reader feels that I am asking for leniency, I am not. I am simply attempting to make my struggle to find a balance between meaningful critical analysis and deep personal involvement and appreciation for the SCA.

Chapter 1: Welcome to the Current Middle Ages

History

The Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) describes itself as “a nonprofit educational organization devoted to study of the Middle Ages” (SCA: 2001, xxii). The organization began as a medieval gala in 1966 at Berkeley, California. The party attendees wore garb, organized a tournament, and crowned a Queen of Love and Beauty. The event ended with a procession up Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley “protesting the twentieth century.”³ The party was so enjoyable and successful that soon another tournament was planned. The name “Society for Creative Anachronism” was a consequence of serendipity when, in order to reserve a park for an event, a founding member quickly came up with the name. Later, the SCA and its *Dream* would quickly spread across the United States via sci-fi-fantasy conventions and word-of-mouth. In 1968 the Society for Creative Anachronism was incorporated as a non-profit educational organization complete with a 501(c)(3) tax exemption.⁴

Today, official SCA members number in the tens of thousands, although a far greater number participate in SCA events without obtaining official membership (to receive official membership individuals must pay yearly dues, select and register a unique historically possible name for their *persona*, and develop a unique personal “coat of arms” called a *device*). *Scadians* populate nearly all continents, including a small shire in Antarctica that is part of the Kingdom Lochac (Australia and New Zealand). To date, there are nineteen kingdoms spread throughout the world, the newest of which being Gleann Abhann (Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Memphis, Tennessee).

³ <http://history.westkingdom.org/Year1/FirstTournament.htm>, accessed April 27, 2010

⁴ <http://history.westkingdom.org/Year0/index.htm>, accessed April 27, 2010

Although my research was limited to the geographic area of the Kingdom of Gleann Abhann, I attended the same large inter-kingdom event twice which allowed me to meet, observe, and converse with SCA participants from all over the Known World (including one *Scadian* from Europe). Such large events also allowed me to make general observations of SCA demographics. What I observed was overwhelmingly white, middle aged, and mostly male. As one person remarked in an informal interview, “We recreate white American heritage [in the SCA]” (April, 2009), and this certainly shows in participation and membership. Whatever exclusory implications this statement implies will be discussed in later sections, but it is worth noting that the majority of SCA participants are white.

Many of my participants expressed anxious feelings about dwindling or in some cases, nonexistent, youth (generally referring to college-aged people or teenagers) participation in the SCA. Unfortunately, my own observation of the SCA confirms this fear. I met few people who appeared or revealed themselves to be near my age (at the time of this writing, 22 years). Roughly, the average SCA participant is between 30 and 50 years old. There are, however, small armies of children who are being raised in the SCA, and I did meet several people in their mid-thirties who were, as they described, “raised in the SCA.” Another person commented that “we are starting to develop multi-generational SCA families” (conversation, March 2009). Overall, the SCA is generally white and middle-aged. Men tend to participate in greater numbers than women but not overwhelmingly so. Based on my observations and rough head counts during events, I have concluded that SCA membership shows a gender bias favoring men, and the ratio of men to women is approximately 3:2.

SCA participants generally engage in some sort of historical research of the Middle Ages. In order to structure and guide their pursuits, participants develop historical *personae*. The depth

of historical research and intensity of SCA play varies widely, but the general goal is to re-create the Middle Ages, “not as they were, but as they should have been.”⁵ This erases the less-palatable aspects of the Middle Ages, namely deadly war, disease, social inequality, and oppression, and emphasizes ideals of courtly love, honor, and chivalry as romanticized by the Victorians.

Geography

The SCA organizes the *Knowne World* (see Image 1, below, for map) into *kingdoms*, *principalities*, *cantons*, *baronies*, and *shires*. *Shires* are the smallest unit of organization, and the *kingdom* is the largest. These divisions have minimum population requirements but are not limited by mundane geographical boundaries. As membership at all levels fluctuates, the *Knowne World* is re-mapped to reflect the changing demographics. To date, the *Knowne World* consists of nineteen kingdoms.



Image 1: Map of the Known World. The darker areas represent Kingdoms.

⁵ The original source of this phrase is unclear, and it is published in nearly every SCA publication (official and unofficial), in addition to being widely used by Scadians.

This research is specific to the local SCA chapter in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, within the Kingdom of Gleann Abhann (pictured below in Image 2). However, Cramer (2005), Erisman (1998), Lee (2005), McEwan (1993) and Simmons (2008) all conducted research in other kingdoms, and their observations and my own allow me to make some general conclusions of the SCA. In this writing, I use “SCA,” “the Society,” or “the Society for Creative Anachronism” to refer to the SCA in general in much the same way “America” or “the U.S.” is used to describe the collection of cultures and ethnicities in this country. Each kingdom has developed its own flavor of the Current Middle Ages. Different kingdoms have different traditions, customs, demographics, and essentially, different cultures which are influenced by the region of the United States which composes the kingdom as well as the interests and desires of the SCA populace.



Image 2: Map of Gleann Abhann and surrounding kingdoms.

SCA Culture 101

Although historical research is a major component of the SCA, it is not, by any stretch of the imagination, the most important aspect. Indeed, honor and courtly love (and a few other virtues) as idealized by nineteenth century authors would be exceptional candidates for the SCA's sacred tenets. In addition, *persona* development, game play, and the ever so elusive yet seductive *Dream* need further explanation.

Certainly, there is a diverse spectrum of opinions in the SCA regarding these concepts, and the follow paragraphs are intended to provide readers with a basic familiarization with each. They are in no way representative of what every SCA member thinks or feels. Furthermore, I want to call the reader's attention to the fact that hundreds of concepts and topics, ranging from broad ideas to the minutia of SCA *Corpora*, which could, and probably should, be included here. I have selected the following because of their salience in any, possibly every, experience in the Society, regardless of personal opinion. Every paying member assumes a *persona* with which all others, paying members or not, must interact on some level. Everyone who participates in an SCA event or gathering will have to grapple with what it means to be honorable or chivalrous.

Honor, Chivalry, and Courtly Love

Honor, chivalry and courtly love: these are probably the most frequently heard words in the SCA. The *Knowne World Handbook* lists a ten commandments of sorts – the code of chivalry – as a foundation for appropriate conduct:

1. Treat your inferiors in rank, knowledge, or experience in the Society as if they were your equals; treat your equals as if they were you superiors; treat officers as representatives of the King; and treat the King and Queen with the reverence due your sovereigns.
2. Use medieval forms of address.
3. Be faithful to your lord and your word.
4. Gentlemen, honor all ladies.
5. Ladies, remain worthy of all honor.

6. Touch no man's goods unasked; give and receive with grace.
7. Be gentle to the stranger.
8. Raise your sword, but not your voice.
9. Let the slain man tell if he be slain.
10. Reverence the King and Queen (1992:29).

The code of chivalry is probably the only aspect of the SCA re-creation widely admitted to be historically inaccurate, possibly the least of all other re-creations. In a conversation at *Gulf Wars*⁶ (a large annual inter-kingdom event hosted by Gleann Abhann and held on private land in Mississippi). Sir Peyre and his wife Lady Constantina spoke with me about the performance of these ideals in the SCA. Peyre explained that their romanticized ideal of chivalry is based on the Victorian nobility espoused in their literature about the medieval era, “but the Victorians got it wrong. They were all about the pomp and ceremony” (Sir Peyre, conversation, March 2009).

The SCA re-creates the “middle ages not as they were but as they should have been.”⁷ Cramer elaborates: “To members of the SCA this usually means the Middle Ages without plague, religious intolerance, or real war” (2005:3). The SCA thrives in the Current Middle Ages which is neither contemporary nor medieval. This fact becomes glaringly apparent after browsing the multitude of websites and publications dedicated to documenting the SCA's history, lineage, and royal genealogies or noting that 2010 is also year Anno Societatis XXXXIV.⁸ In this context then, whether or not the values the SCA holds near and dear – honor, chivalry, courtly love, etc. – are romanticized, historically accurate or invented traditions is

⁶ See the “Event Descriptions” in Appendix 2.

⁷ This is a phrase that is repeatedly used by the majority of *Scadians* in reference to what they do in the SCA. The original source is unknown, although it is featured in the *Knowne World Handbook* as well as many other SCA publications and affiliated websites.

⁸ Literally “44th year of the Society,” referring to the 44 years of the SCA's existence.

irrelevant.⁹ What is significant is that these concepts are central to the SCA, its mission and purpose, and participants' experience of the Current Middle Ages.

Performing Personae

A key aspect of the SCA experience is the development and the performance of a *persona*. "The concept of using a different name and behaving as a different persona [adds] both authenticity and fantasy to this world" (Lee, 2005:11). The basic components for selecting and developing a *persona* are: gender, time period, location, name, and social class. Once this basic information has been decided, a biography is generated. Some choose to develop a detailed genealogy and account their *persona*'s life and family history in great detail. Others have simpler, less temporally deep biographies.

Personae are dictated by individual preference and several factors influence their development. An interest in a particular time period, personal heritage, geographic region, artistic style, occupation and other factors influence *persona* choice. "Within the SCA, people had the chance to literally recreate themselves. In many ways, their social class and background did not matter. Skills, talents and interests that might be socially discouraged elsewhere were looked upon favorably...within the SCA community" (Lee, 2005:26). The primary factors determining development are what an individual is capable of doing and what one is willing to do. For example, one may desire a *persona* of upper nobility, but perhaps the individual lacks the skill, resources, or patience to re-create the highly detailed garb of the upper class. In this case, the person may choose to develop a *persona* from a slightly lower socioeconomic class or different time period or culture that requires fewer resources and financial investment to achieve a *period* (a term used to refer to historically accurate representation) look.

⁹ See Hobsbawm & Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. (University of Cambridge press: New York) 2003.

Officially, *personae* are intended to help members structure their research of the Middle Ages and nothing more. Because of this, there is extreme variance in the level of *persona* development and performance. Some individuals think of their *personae* as alternate, possibly exaggerated aspects of their mundane personalities, while others embrace their *personae* as entirely new identities. Some members may devote large amounts of time and resources to re-creating in meticulous detail the garb, armor, and material possessions their *personae* could have had in a given period. In terms of performance, some have well-developed *personae* complete with an accent, posture, and individual tastes apparently distinct from the mundane personality's preferences. Others may choose to act essentially as their mundane-selves and simply answer to a medieval name (Lee, 2005:12).

In an interview, Sir Galfrid described what influenced his *persona* of choice, a 14th century Englishman: "I've always been in love with the concept of the knight in shining armor.... In order to do that [persona], I needed something English" (Gulf Wars, March 2009). Sir Galfrid's *persona* was developed according to a few specific, romanticized and emotional images of the Middle Ages, namely the English knight ready for battle, atop his steed and clad in "shining armor." What this image (and others) means for Sir Galfrid and other SCA participants can and should be investigated. However, this issue does not lie within the scope of this particular research. Rather, this research will investigate how SCA participants embody the "knight in shining armor" and other gendered archetypes.

Mundanities

Personae are the starring characters at SCA events, which are attended mostly by other SCA members who "stage their performances solely for other participants with no audience from outside the group" (Cramer, 2005:11-12). At first glance, the SCA appears to be highly insular.

The society lacks a highly public profile, especially on the national level. Events are barely advertised to the public at large and the SCA requires all participants – official members or otherwise – to “make a reasonable attempt” at a period presentation in order to enter and participate in events and activities. This is not to discourage others from participating or to hide from the rest of society. Sir Edmond and Lady Lianor explained:

Edmond: What we have tried to do with the SCA events, which is probably one of the key difference between an SCA event and a ren fair [Renaissance Fair], is that we try to keep the entire environ as much within the medieval flavor as we can. And, that means that we don't have ‘civilian’ [air-quoted] spectators.

Lianor: It's the difference between re-creationists and for-profit business because all the ren fests are for-profit businesses, and you can participate as little or as much as you would like. With an SCA event, there's usually a minimal requirement that you make an attempt. (interview, April 2009)

Put another way, the SCA tries to limit the presence of *mundanities* as much as possible. *Mundanities* can refer to objects or people, and they “harsh the dream,” as many SCA members would describe the intrusion. As uncreative anachronisms, *mundanities* remind players that what they are trying to create in earnest is not a reality elsewhere, is incomplete in its representation, and only exists in a contemporary context. SCA participants hide *mundanities* from each other and from themselves. However, *mundanities* are often necessary to the contemporary lifestyle which makes participation in serious leisure activities or hobbies such as the SCA possible in the first place.

Many *mundanities*, such as eyeglasses, wheelchairs or bathroom facilities, are generally treated as necessities and are easily ignored. Cars, on the other hand, are seen as a necessary evil, and parking is often relegated to the extreme outskirts of the event site. Many people are slow to move out of the path of a vehicle, especially when dressed in garb. If I had to park my car close to someone's camp in order to unload my own camping equipment, I always asked for

permission. Nobody explicitly to me to do so, but the annoyance many *Scadians* feel for cars is often quite palpable.

“Playing the Game” and “Stepping Up” Your Play

“This, as I said before, is actually a kids’ game that we, as adults, play really, really well” (Sir Galfrid, interview, March 2009). The perception of the SCA as a game and participation in it as play is one held by all members, but playing in the SCA is more than just a group of people pretending they are kings and queens, knights and ladies. “Playing the game” involves intense, thorough research that can rival academic pursuits in medieval studies; behaving in accordance to the rules and ideals celebrated by the SCA; pursuing deeper, more meaningful goals of the SCA (arts and sciences, becoming a peer, serving one’s kingdom and the Society, etc); upholding the *Dream* (an ambiguous term, generally referring to the SCA’s attempt to enact the CMA) of the SCA; and living and sharing the *Dream* with others.

Thinking of the SCA as a game should neither proscribe the SCA as strictly fantasy pretend-play nor should it be mistaken for traditional historical re-enactment that focuses on re-enacting specific lives and events. SCA members take great care to document their presentations, whether behavioral or material, as *possibly* existing within a given period. As was noted above, the SCA creates a new time, the Current Middle Ages, a simulacrum. An SCA event is a utopian time warp where aspects of both the Middle Ages and contemporary society are applied in accordance to the *Dream*.

Many members who are considered to play at a high level are generally more concerned with historical documentation. The progression from the *stick-jock* (a person who engages in heavy combat exclusively for sport) to pursuing in-depth research of one’s *persona* is often referred to “stepping up” or “leveling up.” When individuals step up their play, embodied

performance is emphasized as they alter (often improving) their *garb*, attitudes, conduct, and interactions in the SCA. Ortissa and Colban (married, SCA members for over 20 years) both agreed that they began to focus more on their play once they both entered the non-royal *peerages*. Colban was *squired* to a *knight*, and later Ortissa became a laurel's associate:

Ortissa: That red belt [symbol of a *squire*] changes things. All of a sudden people are looking at you, seeing you.... That's when I started doing more research and trying to find out exactly, accurately, what you [Colban] would have worn.

Colban: There's a real difference between trying to dress historically accurate and [wearing] tunics and combat boots..... Over the last ten years, we've been much more focused on trying to re-enact rather than just wear funny clothes and swing a rattan club.

Chelsea: So would you say that there's pressure to step up your play?

Ortissa: The more you do the more prestige and influence you have.

Colban: It's not influence, it's recognition.... The whole way the society's put together now there is a lot of peer – not like knight or laurel – but other-member pressure to travel more and have better armor and have better garb. (interview, April, 2009).

Periodness

Because the SCA is not strictly a re-enactment group, the definition of historical accuracy is sometimes vague and somehow still complicated. There is a difference between “looking period” and “being period.” The most obvious manifestation of this is the difference between the “ten-foot-rule” (how historical accuracy is judged in non-competitive SCA interactions) and the strict documentation-centered evaluation of historical accuracy in arts and sciences (A&S) competitions (venues for artisans and crafts-people to display their work for the populace who votes on a winner). Looking *period* characterizes much of the SCA environment. Regarding garb alone, many individuals look very *period*. Whether or not their particular outfit style, colors, or material can be documented is not immediately obvious. Being *period* refers to in-depth knowledge of one's historical era and exhibiting this knowledge through garb, personal

possessions, armor style, fighting presentation, and possibly speech. For example, Anthonia (SCA participant for over 10 years) used her research on pottery to explain standards of being *period* and historically accurate:

I have several pieces of pottery that are kind of wedge-shaped that I have not been able to document in ceramics. I've been able to find images of glass vessels having that shape, but I can't document a ceramic vessel in my time period. So, I was doing my research on kirdles [medieval dresses], and I came across a French illumination, 1520s, of a woman wearing the right kind of kirdle. But, she also happens to be holding a ceramic cup exactly that shape in a two-tone glaze! I'm not happy with anything unless I can prove it either from primary or secondary sources. A secondary source being something that was actually painted in that time period or I am physically looking at a photograph or piece in a museum. I can say 'that's I want to re-create (interview, May, 2009).

While Anthonia's standards may be atypical for a variety of reasons, they provide a good example of one manner in which *periodness* is achieved. Regardless of whether one "looks" *period* or actually "is" *period*, *periodness* in general can refer to the SCA as a simulation. In this sense, looking and being *period* can be the same thing. "Garb in the SCA does not mark people as being 'medieval' so much as it marks them as being in the SCA." (Cramer, 2005:169). Because the SCA is not a living history or re-enactment society, it has enjoyed developing a particular SCA "style" or *periodness* that refers to the Current Middle Ages more than any historical era. Colban's observation summarizes this concept perfectly:

C: You see so many people just wearing SCA garb, and there's a real difference between trying to dress historically correct and the guys that just wear tunics and combat boots. You see knights that wear this kind of vintage 1990 SCA gear rather than something that a 14th century person would wear (interview, April 2009)

The SCA style, like many other aspects of the Society, is based on blend of images both historical and contemporary ranging from 12th century paintings to archaeological find, block buster films to fantasy literature. "Period" or "periodness" can and is used to refer to historically accurate re-creations as well as the aesthetic code which marks individuals as SCA enthusiasts.

Social organization

“The Royals” refer to the current *King* and *Queen*¹⁰ of a kingdom, as well as the Royal *peers*. Similarly, “the Crown” refers to the position or title of King or Queen in general and not to specific Royals. For example, the *populace* swears fealty to the Crown, not to specific individuals. The Royals often act as the executive power of a kingdom or principality. In other kingdoms, Royals function more as symbolic figureheads, and in this situation seneschals assume more responsibility and ruling power. Royalty are not chosen democratically but rather through combat in *Crown List*. Officially, the King and Queen share power and authority equally regardless of who is the *sovereign* or *consort*.

The SCA recognizes three non-royal *peerages*: *knights*, *laurels*, and *pelicans*. All three can take on peers-in-training to engage in a formal relationship characterized by the *associate's* selfless service, learning, and advancement within the Society. The SCA also recognizes many other non-peerage orders which generally have specific duties and functions. Induction into any *order* or *peerage* is widely recognized by SCA members as a long, difficult but prestigious process. The SCA rewards members of the general populace for their hard work and dedication via a plethora of awards and honors. Receiving such an award or honor is synonymous with gaining rank in the society much like induction into an *order*, being knighted, or winning *Crown List* results in promotion. Collectively, Royals, *peers*, *orders*, and the awards system compose the complex hierarchy of the SCA.

¹⁰ Here, referring to the authoritative and ceremonial Royal offices and not the analytical nomenclature.

Chapter 2:

Manning Up: Embodying Masculinity in the Current Middle Ages

The SCA culture, like any other culture, allows members to base their enactments of CMA in the form of *garb*, objects, period environments, bodily affect and movement, and language and voice on a set of ideal personality and body types. An overwhelming number of possible candidates exist from which to select these archetypes. It is highly likely that, were the task of selecting the most important archetypes given to any one hundred SCA participants (accompanied with a comprehensive list of possible choices, of course) as many as ninety-nine different groupings would be received. Multiple factors would cause such wide variation, including individual level of play, commitment to the *Dream*, rank or position in the Society, frequency of participation in the SCA, history of participation, age, sex and gender, *mundane* factors, and the initial interest in the SCA.

I have selected three archetypes, or embodiments of ideal masculine performances, the King, the Knight, and the Barbarian, to analyze gender, embodiment, and performance/performativity in the SCA. My ability to conceptualize multiple CMA masculinities in this way is evidence of the multiplicity of masculinity in other contexts (like the mundane world, online virtual worlds, or even the global matrix of masculinities). Conceptualizing multiple masculinities has been useful in analysis of mundane gender constructs (see Kimmel 2010), and the same is true for my analysis of gender in the SCA. Masculinity (and femininity) is intersected with class, race, ethnicity, and age, and it is this intersectionality that creates multiple, uniquely embodied masculinities (Kimmel, 2010:xviii).

I could have easily chosen many other groupings to analyze masculine embodiment in the SCA, but these three particular archetypes are the most complete regarding their incorporation (or rejection, as is sometimes the case with the Barbarian) of the SCA's code of chivalry. None of the archetypes is intended to refer to particular *personas*, individuals, or even specific ranks or positions in the SCA. The King, the Knight, and the Barbarian are states of mind and body men are constantly navigating according to context and situation.

The Triangle of CMA Masculinity (Figure 1, below) illustrates how participants' performances shift between the different masculinities. Indeed, an individual may constantly shift between these throughout the duration of one event and, of course, during a lifetime of participation in the Society. However, the diagram also reveals the impossibility of fully embodying two or more roles at once. For example, I spent many late nights socializing at popular venues (such as the Green Dragon Tavern at Gulf Wars or at parties), and I often observed many men switching between their Barbarian portrayals and their Knightly incarnations the second the Queen entered the vicinity (becoming the Barbarian again when she left).¹¹ The point is that only one role can be occupied at a time.

The theory of (gender) performativity is inherent in this model because it allows individuals to engage in a system in which their sex, gender, and embodiment are not mutually independent and "shift constantly depending on the performative, which is to say social and political, context of the body" (Morris, 1995:574).

¹¹ Of course, some may not feel the need to switch between the Knight and Barbarian in this situation.

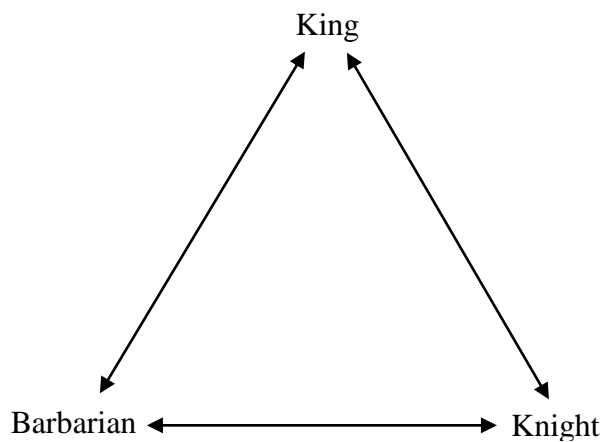


Figure 3: Triangle of CMA Masculinity

Another important characteristic of these archetypes is that they are not reserved exclusively for the CMA. In other words, SCA participants carry their CMA identities with them and often embody them in non-SCA contexts. For example, to be a “good” knight (and to be knighted in the first place) individuals are expected to live according to the chivalric code even in the mundane world. Many men described opening doors for women or treating mundane people with more respect or courtesy than usual as examples of living by the code. Another man told me about a situation that took place at a public parking lot in which he opened the door of a carload of (unknown) women that had immediately parked next to his vehicle. He said that, in response, one pleasantly surprised woman whispered, “so, it’s not dead!” (interview, March 2009).

Interestingly, while *Scadians* expect participants to incorporate aspects of the SCA culture and chivalric code into their *mundane* identities, they do not explicitly acknowledge that the *mundane* should or could influence SCA identities and their enactments in the same way. This is perhaps due to the widespread perception of the SCA as morally superior to the *mundane*. Regardless, gender and identity in the CMA are obviously layered and complex, and the embodiment of these identities is equally layered and influenced by contemporary and historical elements to create a unique CMA flavor.

As noted above, material objects are essential to historical re-creationists. They are inanimate materializations of the past and persuade the re-creationist that he is living in the Current Middle Ages. The collection of objects which comprises one's *kit* is not only a historical marker but also symbolizes one's commitment to the game, one's rank or other Society affiliations, and, ultimately, what kind of man one is (or wants to be) in the CMA.

By engaging certain objects, men change their behavior and bodies. For example, fighters using heavy wooden kite shields and short swords will often assume a stance that compensates for the extra weight held in front of their bodies. Their backs are straight, slightly leaning backward, and their weight is sunk into their pelvises. Knees are bent, and the legs and the lower torso are loose and ready to follow through during a swing of the rattan in order to strike a powerful blow. Heavy fighters consciously train and shape their bodies in order to conform to what is perceived as a "natural" fighting stance which makes sparring with these weapons more efficient and effective. Men's habitus, their socialized bodies which are shaped by an internalized social structure, is central to embodying masculinities in the SCA (Faubion, 1995:31).

Whether held at fighter practice (which are most often held in public parks, university grounds, or parking lots), where the mundane public can catch glimpses of the fighters, a tournament, or a battle at war, SCA combat is always being watched by somebody: the populace, consorts, field marshals, and, of course, the Royals. As performances, combat involves embodiment. I address this in more detail in my comparison between so-called "heavy" fighters and the supposedly more agile rapier fighters below.

Although the styles differ, *garb* and *regalia* is the primary and most fundamental means of coding the body; it is transformative as well as performative. Moreover, certain types of *garb*

require a deliberate and distinct change in bodily movement and composure. For example, handmade *period* soft-soled shoes change a man's gait and stride. While a man may clomp around camp in modern tennis shoes, his feet well protected against sharp rocks or sticks and insulated against the elements, after changing to soft leather "turned-toe" shoes or moccasins he will tread more gently but with purpose.

Finally, in the privacy of the *period* Viking A-frame tent and after shedding tunics and trousers, belts, chains, and crowns, the body is exposed as a medium for expressing masculinity. Men control their bodily movements in specific ways even when free from the burden of armor and combat (bowing and dancing, for example), and their bodies become material records of their masculinities. Voicing is also significant in somatic performances of the King, Knight, or Barbarian.

Embodying Royalty: It's Good to be the King

Frank tapped me on the shoulder and grabbed me from my bench in the center of the Green Dragon Tavern. I had been conversing, laughing, sampling meads and wines, and engaging in general merry-making when he told me that he had someone for me to meet. This was early in my fieldwork, and there was always someone I had to meet. Frank directed me to a man standing near the bar. He was barely taller than me. He stood in a wide stance, hands in front of him, gesturing as he spoke to his conversation partner. The man sported a full yet tidy beard, and wore a heavy cloak trimmed in ermine and a pointy hat.

I had seen a lot of point hats that night, and the finer points of rank identification were not yet clear to me. I kind of stared blankly at this man, whom I knew was somehow important, for a second. It was strange to me that I was standing only a few feet from him, clearly intent on getting his attention, and he all but ignored me. It wasn't until Frank said, 'King Malik, this is Chelsea...' and continued with a description of my project that the man, the King, turned his attention to me. I think I shook his hand, maybe I said something. I can't quite remember because I was so quickly dismissed with a nod and a wave. Frankly, I was turned off, but Frank smiled, laughed and said, "You just gotta meet the King, right?" Apparently, I had missed something. (from Gulf Wars, March 2009)

[...]

I couldn't really see much at this court, since I was standing in the back of the entourage, barely escaping the chilly rain that had been pouring down for the entire day. I could just see the

tops of Gleann Abhann's Crowns (which were sitting directly in front of me, though with a few bodies in between) and the profiles of Ansteora's Royals whose thrones were centered on the dais. Court had been in session for a while, and I could tell that the Ansteoran King would address the populace soon because the Herald suddenly started passing him handfuls of black stones. This wasn't like any other regalia that I had seen before, but I knew that if it went into a Royal hand it was going to be presented accompanied by some sort of speech. Soon the Herald called new members and first-timers into the Royal presence. I had been particularly impressed with the Ansteoran Herald's voice, specifically how loud, assert, yet eloquent he was. The address the King gave was equally impressive and full of colorful language. He truly spoke "forsoothly." I surveyed the faces currently in the immediate Royal presence; some looked bored or were expressionless. Others were obviously admiring and touched by the King's words and token of community. (from Bordermarch Melees, October 2009).

The king is the most significant and influential masculine archetype. Like other Royals, the King is an embodiment of the *Dream*. Whether at *court*, on the *list field* (tournament field), or in the Green Dragon Tavern, any event is as much about watching and experiencing for oneself as it is about watching the King watch the *tournament*, *bardic circle*, or *court* ceremonies. Participants can embody Kingly masculinity without actually holding the ruling office. As explained above, embodying any one of the masculine archetypes, regardless of the similarity between the analytical nomenclature and SCA rank, has little to do with administrative office in the Society. Kingliness is a demonstration of power and authority, social ranking (not necessarily royal standing), and influence. There are many venues available for embodying Kingly masculinity, such as the battlefield into which the King leads troops or the tournament over which he watches. I have focused on the more ceremonial aspects of Kingly embodiment because they dominated my fieldwork experience and are opportunities for the majority of the populace present to view and critique the King's masculine performances.

The King is an exceptional fighter, a battle leader, and the epitome of chivalrous and honorable behavior. He is also richly adorned and clothed in fine garb. He is aware of his

nobility and the service owed to him. When asked what “the king” meant to him, Lord Charles responded:

Lord Charles: Well, to me, it’s kind of the representation of what the SCA is, you know. Somebody who’s reached that point, that pinnacle of their SCA career that they can be king¹² tells me that they’ve done a lot: service for the kingdom, for the group, and they’ve worked in the society [SCA]. It’s really hard to describe because it’s not like the reverence of a real king. It’s just a figure head or the epitome of what the SCA is all about (interview, November 2009).

In many ways, the King is the embodiment of one CMA masculinity and the SCA itself. Kings represent their kingdoms and the SCA at large. They embody both in their rich, expensive garb, fine jewelry; elaborate mugs, confident postures, and dramatic speech.

In the first scenario described above, although I did not immediately recognize who Malik was, everything about his appearance and behavior indicated that he was someone of significance. My initial distaste for being blown-off quickly turned to embarrassment as I learned more about the SCA and its hierarchy. In hindsight, I should not have been surprised; people are constantly vying for the Royals’ attention. Embodying Kingship is being aloof, visible but not necessarily immediately accessible. The SCA’s list of “courtly manners” creates a buffer around the King called the *Royal Presence*, an literal extension of the King’s body into the immediately adjacent space:

[it] extends around...the Royalty, Their thrones (and possessions), and is a sphere in which they can conduct business. Generally speaking, the royal presence extends from the royal person to six feet in all directions at all times. When the thrones are occupied, the royal presence also includes the area in front of the thrones to a distance of 30-40 feet (or to the far end of court or the far side of the lists field). Acknowledge (bow, curtsy, etc.) the royal person if you must pass within the royal presence.¹³

Next to behind-the-scenes administrative duties, attending *court* is probably the most significant Royal obligation. Every event involves at least one *court* ceremony during which the

¹² Kings are selected via a special tournament called Crown’s List in which only heavy fighters may participate.

¹³ <http://www.antir.sca.org/Pubs/ATH/7courtmanners.html>, accessed April 27, 2010

King (and the Queen) will address the populace, administer awards, and make general announcements. *Court* is somewhat scripted; the order in which awards are granted is decided beforehand, and the *Herald* reads scripted lines and *scrolls*. Although modern vernacular is the language of choice on the dais, there is a Royal effort to make *court* feel more formal by alluding to medieval language (which is no doubt heavily influenced by voicing featured in popular sci-fi-fantasy films). *Heralds* are often considered to be the Crown's voice, and their announcements and the flowery language read from *scrolls* helps to create a formal, *period* atmosphere.

Kings perform their authority and omnipotence via a serious tone of voice and the "Royal lexicon;" words such as "grace," "valor," "honor," "chivalry," and "service" are frequently used and reinforce the *Dream*, assuring the populace that it is real and attainable. During special ceremonies like knightings or *Laurel elevations*, the King will often make a lengthy, inspiring speech sometimes rehearsed, other times improvised. These orations have the power to bring the populace to tears or riotous applause and show how the King is embodied through voicing. The performativity of language, in Austin's classic sense of "doing something rather than merely saying something" (1999:240), is a significant part of the King's embodied (masculine) performance. In other words, Kings emerge through their use of language; men embody the King when they use specific speech indices to code themselves as such, and they literally do specific actions – in this case making themselves into Kings – with their voices and words.

Coronation, a particularly theatrical ceremony, is one of the most important Royal appearances for two reasons. First, the current Crown will be holding its final *court* and, in Gleann Abhann, performing a Royal death scene. I attended *Coronation* in 2009 and was amused by the death of Their Royal Majesties Petr and Margareta, who were turned into zombies by their

entourage halfway through *court*.¹⁴ Second, *Coronation* marks the Heirs' ceremonial ascension to the throne. The King-to-Be has already demonstrated his readiness on the *Crown List* field; at *Coronation* he must demonstrate his worthiness for the throne. *Garb* is crucial in this respect.

Nearly every royal couple enlists a team of talented (and somewhat self-sacrificing) costumers to design, sew (usually entirely by hand), and embellish new sets of *garb*. This is more than your simple T-tunic and pants. At *Coronation*, Felix processed into the court hall wearing a new blood-red wool cloak bordered in silk and featured immense amounts of finely detailed embroidery and precious stone embellishments covering the entire back half and the bottom five inches across the hem. Some of the embroidery was of a phrase written in runes that literally wrote Felix's Kingliness onto his body: "This is the cloak of Greenshield: Maker of War, Taker of Women, Destroyer of Dreams, Killer of Kings. Blessed is he in the eye of Odin."¹⁵

The aggressive and violent tone of this description is symptomatic of Felix's Viking persona and reputation as a leader. It is also worth noting that this cloak was made by a woman, and the inscription is based on her historical documentation of Viking embroidery, spirituality, culture, and clothing as well as Felix's personality and reputation. For example, "taker of women" to allude to Felix's flirtatious nature and reputation as somewhat of a playboy. The lines "Destroyer of Dreams" and "Killer of Kings" refers to the most recent Crown List, during which Felix defeated several opponents who had been Kings several times. The back of the cloak was dominated by silk silhouettes of a fighting ram and antelope (the former a symbol of Gleann

¹⁴ The Royal Death at coronation seems to be a unique Gleann Abhann tradition, although it is likely that other Kingdoms incorporate this sometimes comical (as is the case above), sometimes dramatic and emotional performance as part of coronation. The death scene described above was meant to be entertaining and funny (and it was), and after court, the Former Crowns processed out of the hall to Michael Jackson's hit "Thriller." The death scene is sometimes elaborate, other times simple, often planned out in advance, and is explained to the audience via a short narrative read by the herald sometime during the Crowns' last court.

¹⁵ Felix is master of Household Greenshield. Here, "Greenshield" is referring to Felix, not the household.

Abhann and the latter is Felix's *device*) finished with hand embroidery. His tunic was royal blue and also featured silk embellishments. Fingers were covered in rings, and a ceremonial dagger hung at his belt. Such elaborate *garb* was meant to impress the *populace*, show them that their new King was powerful and descendant from Kings.

Though scripted, the King's speech show that he is confident as well as eloquent, committed to the *Dream*, and ready for the task of ruling the kingdom. The following excerpt of the *Coronation* script demonstrates how Felix used language to embody Kingship:

Felix: I, Felix, by right of arms, do lay my claim as Heir to the Ram throne. Let any who would dispute my claim bring forth their witnesses and oath makers as I have brought forth mine.

Knights: No man here disputes your claim. The succession is yours by right. Take up the symbol of your claim and ascend the Ram throne. [Felix is crowned]

Felix: By word and deed I do claim the Ram throne. Godi, the succession is not complete. Call forth Muriel, heir to the Rose Throne of Gleann Abhann. She who is my inspiration, light of my life and chosen consort. She, who is descended from queens. Send runners and call forth Her Excellency Muriel. (*Coronation*, script 2009)

In this passage, Felix is assertive and challenging; he gives orders and speaks with authority over, even if devotedly, his Kingdom and Queen. All of these characteristics of Felix's voicing are classic performativity of language (Austin, 1999). Writing on the relationship between language, gender, and power, Gal notes that "a speaker's utterances create her or his identity" (1995:171). By announcing his claim to the throne, Felix literally transforms himself into a King, and the Knights participating in the exchange were also "doing with words" by acknowledging Felix's right to the throne. The *garb* described above is also performative; it transforms his body into that appropriate for the King, and this transformation is completed with his crowning.

Throughout this court ceremony Felix, and everyone else present, were involved in a performance during which each person simultaneously occupied the roles of actor and audience member. Successful performances such as the court ceremony described above are dependent upon an understanding of “performance as a mode of spoken verbal communication” and the actors’ assumed “responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. This competence rests on the knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways” (Bauman, 1975:293).

The Knight: But Does He Dance?

The second corner of the Triangle of CMA Masculinity is occupied by the Knight.¹⁶

Gleann Abhann has between 40 and 50 knights; Society-wide the knights number in the thousands. Knights are members of the *Order of the Chivalry*, a combat-oriented association. Only heavy fighters become knights, and other “light weapons” fighters (rapier fighters and archers, for example) are recognized for their skills in separate *orders*. Achieving knighthood is a long process involving a period of squire-ship in which an individual (male or female) is servant and pupil to a knight. Only knights can create other knights, and knighthood is a serious and prestigious status in the SCA and is accompanied by an immense amount of responsibility. I asked Lord Henri (SCA participant for over 10 years) about his knighthood:

My first interest in fighting was not to become a knight. A Knight in the Barony of Axemoor approached me, maybe six months after I had started playing, and asked me if I wanted to squire to him and train to be a knight. That’s the first time I started thinking about it, and I said, “ok, let’s try a shot at knighthood.” You can’t be a bore and, just because you’re a good fighter, get knighted. You have to have the social graces that would accompany the Victorian idea of chivalry. You have to make the effort to travel to improve your technique and for them [the knights] to get to know you as a fighter and as

¹⁶ Here, “Knight” and “Knighthood” refers to my analytical nomenclature. I use “knight” and “knighthood” to refer to the official SCA rank and those individuals who have been granted that status via a knighting ceremony.

a person. You go to events, to court, and you go to the feast afterwards. You do a lot of schmoozing with your superiors.

It took me five years, that's the standard for knighthood. Once you achieve Knighthood, you're expected to not only maintain that level of gentility, you have to maintain that level of play.... You need to be this kind of mentor. Knights also give service to the kingdom. In fact, when you swear your oath you're basically saying that you're giving your services to the people of the kingdom. By continuing to do that you maintain your reputation. (interview, October, 2009)

The common perception of Knighthood in the SCA is that Knights are not made but recognized. Clearly these men are expected to perform for an audience of their peers as well as the populace at large. Kapchan's description of performances as "aesthetic practices – patterns of behavior, ways of speaking, manners of bodily comportment – whose repetitions situate actors...structuring individual and group identities" is particularly relevant here (1995:479).

These performances occur in a homosocial space where men perform for and on each other (in *Men and Masculinity*, Kimmel 2001:33-34). The knighting ceremony is a public initiation rite in which the knight-to-be is recognized for his ability to demonstrate the "appropriate" masculinity (in *Men and Masculinity*, Sabo & Panepinto, 2001:78-80). Publicly inducting men into the *Order of the Chivalry* implies that some men, those who embody less-than-knightly masculinities, are rejected from this prestigious men's group. This process supports hegemony by marginalizing certain masculinities, penalizing men for their inability to conform to some ambivalent standard, and, finally, robbing these men of their ability to participate in the SCA's royal hierarchy (thus, diminishing their power, authority, and ability to fully engage in the government).

In an interview at *Gulf Wars*, Sir Asad noted that "most of the young fighters are all striving for knighthood, and if you're going to strive for knighthood then you have to start living those chivalric ideas of the Arthurian legend" (2009). Knighthood is somehow inherent in some

people but must be learned and groomed in others. In both instances, however, it must be embodied:

In most kingdoms a candidate for knighthood is told of his or her impending elevation so that he or she can make preparations. Often new suits of clothes are sewn for the occasion and new accessories...might be prepared, all so the new knights can look the part. Like many things in the SCA, knighthood is about appearance (Cramer, 2005:263).

Like the King, the Knight's *garb* signifies him as such. A few pieces of *garb* and *regalia* are reserved for Knights alone: the white belt, the gold chain or collar, and spurs. These accoutrements are bestowed upon the Knight during the knighting ceremony and are worn for the duration of the individual's participation in the SCA. Some even wore their gold chains mundanely, reminding themselves of their noble expectations and aspirations. Knights are expected to possess a complete and coherent *kit* that is appropriate for their *persona* and within their financial means. As noted in *Corpora*, persons eligible for knighthood will "have demonstrated support...of the Society by being as authentic in dress, equipment and behavior as is within their power" (SCA, 2009:20).

In a society that is dominated by various forms of weaponry, the Knight makes himself identifiable in another way: an explicit lack of weapons. During ceremonies such as *court* or knightings, knights do wear ceremonial live-steel weapons. However, knights generally go unarmed otherwise. "Their chains and belts are signs not only of their rank but also of their martial abilities, and they have no need to stress their masculinity by wearing a lot of pointy objects" (Cramer, 2005:269).

From the very beginning of the SCA, knights were and still are based on an idealization of the aggressive yet gentle, noble Knight clad in shining armor, loyal to his liege and dedicated to his lady. Interestingly, embodying the Knight seems to be suited for a certain type of *persona*. Several people expressed mixed feelings about fellow *Scadians* with non-European *personas*,

and one person described non-European *personas* as “handicaps” on success (i.e., gaining rank and elevated position) in the SCA. The SCA’s gender feedback loop, similar to the one used to Crawley *et. al.*, informs participants “about bodies and what are deemed appropriate gender expressions” with the goal of enticing them to behave in certain ways (2008:30).

For example, Sir Peyre initially took on a medieval Japanese persona, not uncommon in the SCA but still relatively rare and definitely exotic. In a conversation regarding knighthood and periodness, one person commented that Peyre never received a lot of “attention” or recognition until he assumed a second persona, this time the more common 14th century European nobleman. In a game where Knights are imagined after those of King Arthur’s round table, a samurai warrior seems out of place, and Sir Peyre had to change more than his clothes in order to embody the Knight and achieve the rank. Although Sir Peyre’s knighting ceremony paid homage to his primary Japanese persona (he was knighted with a katana), he had to assume a separate persona name and device, create a new kit and fictitious personality that would allow him to embody the hegemonic image of the Knight.

As fighters, Knights’ bodies are extremely important in their performance of Knighthood. “Embodied selves are not only sites for mediating language and experience, they are also where subjectivity meets objectivity, since we live our life *as* our bodies, but these bodies also become objects other than (or ‘othered from’) our selves [sic]” (original emphasis; Lewis, 1995:222). The Knight’s body is trained and conditioned for armed combat, and Knights are exclusively heavy fighters (fighting with some variation of the sword and shield).

Heavy combat is generally seen as powerful, exhausting, dangerous, and brutish. The pejoratives “swinging a stick” and “stick-jock” are used to describe heavy fighting and the individuals who engage in it. Similarly, the Knight is imagined to have a body that is shaped by

this type of fighting: big, powerful, perhaps scarred but otherwise capable and, if necessary, forceful. Spencer's analysis of mixed martial artists' habitus and the production of a specific type of body via "body callusing" and "the actual acquisition of embodied knowledge" through repetitive sport activity reveals how (male) athletic bodies are consciously manipulated according to a variety of gendered expectations (2009:119-120). Fighters are very conscious of their bodies, and I heard more than one man comment on a desire to "get back down to a fighting weight."

If Knights are heavy and powerful, Rapier fighters, on the other hand, are considered to be "light weapons" fighters. They are described as graceful and agile. Instead of becoming Knights, Rapier fighters are inducted into the Order of the White Scarf. Individuals are recognized for their skill on the (rapier) field and are presented with a white sash or scarf to symbolize this. This is obviously an attempt to equate the Rapiers with the Knight, however the feminization of the Rapiers' skills and bodies is obvious. The proscription of these symbols to rapier fighters is an obvious move to delegitimize them, and it begs the question: "if skilled rapier fighters are to be considered on par with Knights, then why the need for a separate set of material symbols?"

In addition, to date no kingdom chooses their crown by any other combat but heavy fighting. This means that, men who are exclusively rapier fighters (or other light weapons experts, for example, archers) will never be able to rule as King, thus effectively excluded from the SCA's power hierarchy. Whereas Knights become Kings, or at least have the opportunity to, rapier fighters become the Queen's protector and servant, holding a high office but still aligned with femininity. Again, hegemonic masculinity is being reproduced in this CMA context. Hegemonic masculinity is a complex set of social processes in which multiple masculinities are

continuously jockeying for position; certain masculinities are marginalized and dominated by others (Connell, 1995).

Knights are not completely free from the threats of emasculation. Indeed, *SCA Corpora* and the *Dream* itself, reveal how many men struggle to reconcile mundane masculine constructs with those framed by the CMA which emphasizes gentility and civilized, courtly behavior. Officially, Knighthood requires advanced martial arts skill and a demonstration of the “skills desirable at and worthy of a civilized court...including but not limited to literature, dancing, music, heraldry, and chess” (SCA Corpora, 2009).

Certainly many other knights across the *Knowne World* practice a wide variety of crafts including inkle loom weaving to poetry writing, but I have yet to meet a dancing Knight. I do not doubt that many knights engage in traditionally (in the CMA and mundanely) “feminine” crafts, but I do think they are unique and rare individuals who are embodying a more traditional conceptualization of the *Dream*. Engaging in the gentler aspects of Knighthood also seems to be secondary to armed combat. For example, I know of one man – a knight – who is very talented and enjoys spinning various fibers into thread or yarn for embroidery or sewing. He initially took up this craft because he was unable to compete in tournaments due to injury.

Service to the kingdom and cultivating periodness seems to be fairly attainable and agreeable to most knights, but the finer arts seem to be elusive or distasteful, dancing in particular. At one *bardic circle*, a knight played a guitar for a dance lesson. After the initial lesson was over, King Felix suggested that the knight participate in the dance since, as a Knight, he should be a proficient dancer. He laughed and quickly fabricated an excuse for why he could not join the other dancers. This individual’s evasion is not difficult to understand. For a man who has spent years grooming his body as an efficient fighting machine, dancing would be somehow

foreign, as if the quick and, dare I say graceful, movements involved in combat were nothing like the tactical dance moves of a medieval waltz.

Barbarian: Where's the List Field and Where Can I Get Some Mead?

Finally, the Barbarian enters to complete the Triangle of CMA Masculinity. Like the King and the Knight, the Barbarian does not refer to a specific type of *persona* or an individual person. The Barbarian is a type of masculinity that is performed through the same means as others: *garb*, combat, social behavior, etc. If masculinity is understood as a homosocial construct created (and enforced) by men, for men (in *Men and Masculinity*, Kimmel, 2001:33-34), the Barbarian is often the least challenging for many men to embody and reconcile with mundane gender constructs. However, the Barbarian does challenge what is honorable and chivalrous as described by the *Dream*. For this reason, the Barbarian is often reserved for the battlefield, all-male fighter practices, or in the tavern after most of the lady-folk have retired. The Barbarian may wear silks or rough tunics made from synthetic materials. He chooses to fight in tennis shoes or more period moccasins, and he may hold various ranks and wear a *circlet*. The Barbarian is not necessarily a *stick-jock*, although he is dangerous and a person of whom one should be wary. In sum, the Barbarian is a state of mind and body, which, like other CMA masculinities, is reflected regardless of *garb* (or lack thereof).

If the Knight's body is powerful and controlled, the Barbarian's body is dangerous and unruly. He is an effective fighter in the way that a train is an effective automobile bulldozer. The Barbarian is not necessarily a large man, but he behaves as if he is the largest man on the field. He often lacks control and needs to be checked by his comrades. For example, during a battle at *Gulf Wars*, a male spectator called my attention to a large heavy-duty brass ring that was riveted to the back of one fighter's armor. Apparently, this was necessary so that his fellow fighters

could pull him off of opponents or hold him back from premature charging. Obviously a tongue-in-cheek joke (who knows if this man actually needed such restraint) but the ring along with his size and fighting ability coded him as a Barbarian.

Unlike the Knight, the Barbarian is almost always armed and prepared for war-making. Typical of many of the events I attended, during *Coronation* I spent the better part of one night laughing, conversing, and drinking in the Green Dragon.¹⁷ One of the tavern's patrons, a man I only met a few times but recognized nonetheless, was stripped to the waist and had five or six live-steel weapons tucked into his belt and the waist of his sweatpants. Later, he would engage in a few rounds of a popular drinking game in which two opponents hold a mug full of beer in one hand and a bamboo sword in the other. The opponents fight and attempt to keep their drinks from spilling. Admittedly, the tavern has a playful atmosphere and engaging in such behavior is common, but this individual was using the combination of live weaponry, drunkenness, and violent gaming to embody Barbarian masculinity even if in an appropriate setting.

Conversely, the Barbarian has an equal capacity for merry-making and entertainment. He enjoys the wide selection of home brews available in the SCA and imbibes heavily. He may drum around the fire pit for belly dancers or sing at *bardic circles*. I witnessed more than one man entertain crowds with humorous though somewhat lewd songs yearning for the days of his lusty youth or seeking personal affirmation in a larger-than-average member. These songs were popular, elicited much laughter and applause, and were enjoyed by all. But, they were neither the romantic ballads of the Knight nor the inspirational Royal speeches before court.

The Barbarian can be problematic in that he challenges and often rejects SCA culture, specifically the concept of chivalry. On the battlefield, for example, men embody barbarians when they "rhino hide" or fail to call their opponents' fair, killing blows. In other high-stakes

¹⁷ A tavern at the Gulf Wars site in Lumberton, Mississippi.

situations, like *Crown List* or even drinking games, Barbarians emerge as competitive, motivated men who will hit hard, drink more, or contest other's success. Men who embody the Barbarian challenge the validity of honor and chivalry as imagined in the Current Middle Ages, they are transgressive and question the legitimization of the *Dream* the SCA creates.

Conclusion

Hegemonic masculinity is a set of gender practices that embody "the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy" and is perceived to guarantee the domination of men over subordinate women (Connell, 1995:77). Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity is founded in an understanding of multiple masculinities and the idea that speaking of a singular masculinity "is to risk positioning one version of masculinity as normative and making all other masculinities problematic" (Kimmel, 2010:xviii). The SCA's hierarchy is ripe with hegemony, and the processes that support hegemony bestow power and authority on some men while revoking power from others.

In some sense, the SCA reproduces mundane masculinities and the hegemonic system in which they operate. However, my observations revealed the Society's cognitive struggle to reconcile mundane gender constructs and power relations with its own gender practices framed by the Current Middle Ages. In analyzing how knights come into being we reveal underlying, tacit hegemonic processes. Knighting and crowning ceremonies are the most obvious cultural devices used to privilege certain types of masculinities over others, and the men who are recognized in these ceremonies are complacent to hegemonic masculinity in the CMA context.

On the other hand, the Barbarian is the most transgressive of the CMA masculinities as well as the most conforming to mundane gender constructs. Chivalry is somewhat ambiguous, but most agree that chivalrous behavior involves selfless service, respect and honoring others,

treating women “appropriately” (what this means will be discussed below), and “playing nice” on the *list field* or anywhere else during an event. The Barbarian rejects this concept of chivalry in a number of ways. Sometimes, men justify their Barbarian embodiments with historical research on the nature of medieval chivalry. Many men told me that the SCA’s chivalric code was nearly completely ahistorical and romanticized, and they would continue to explain that medieval knights were more often than not violent, corrupt “bully barons.”

SCA masculinities reproduce aspects of mundane hegemonic masculinity, but conducting fieldwork exclusively in the CMA context reveals that the SCA also rejects other characteristic of mundane gender constructs. Sometimes, men (and the women who also participate in the hegemonic processes) struggle to reconcile the two, especially when the differences between CMA masculinities and mundane masculinities are foregrounded (for example, when men live by the chivalric code in the mundane world). I also suggest that, when examined on its own terms, the Current Middle Ages engages in a different style of hegemonic masculinity in which dominant or privileged masculinities are often contradictory to their mundane counterparts.

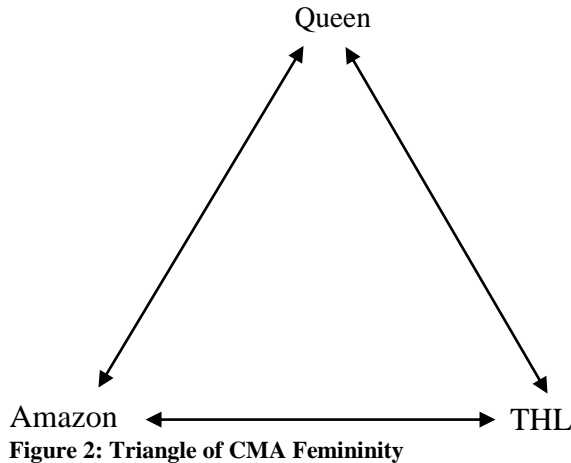
Chapter 3:

Beautiful Ladies: Embodying Femininity in the SCA

Unfortunately, the SCA does not publish demographic information on its paying members, and there is no precise way to estimate the number of female participants. However, women do have a significant presence at events as well as in the hierarchy of authority and power in the SCA. Women occupy many roles in the SCA, from administrators to royal figure heads, fighters to artisans, and their presence is necessary in order for the SCA bureaucracy to function and for the CMA to truly come alive. But, the CMA is also based on a *Dream* that robs women of their voices and agency, turning them into beautiful yet mute symbols of love, honor, chastity, and nobility, objects worth admiring and, more importantly, fighting for. The positions women have carved out for themselves simultaneously resist this image and indulge in it.

Although the multiplicity of masculinity is a popular academic discourse and area of study, femininity has not enjoyed the same level of theorization or investigation. It seems strange that the problematic nature of referring to a singular masculinity is widely recognized but it seems to be appropriate and even acceptable to speak of a singular, encompassing femininity. Perhaps this increased attention to the minutia of masculinities is symptomatic of gender hegemony in which men are dominant over women. Regardless, the existence of multiple femininities and their interaction in another hegemonic process needs to be recognized and addressed. Schippers responds to this call and describes a hegemonic femininity that is “confined to power relations among women” and that works in conjunction with hegemonic masculinity to “serve hegemonic masculinity, from which it [hegemonic femininity] is granted legitimacy” (2008:88).

As in the preceding chapter, I have selected a triad of femininity (Figure 2, below) composed of three archetypes representing different feminine embodiments and performances in the SCA. I argue that, much like mundane gender hegemony in which “idealized *quality content* of the categories ‘man’ and ‘woman’” reveal the “hegemonic significance of masculinity and femininity,” (Schippers, 2007:90), CMA femininities are often defined as or against ideal categories (those composing the triangle of CMA femininity). Femininity is embodied in much the same way as masculinity: via *garb*, action, movement and posture, and language and voicing. The Queen is the ultimate expression of CMA femininity. She is powerful and just and tempers her sovereign’s authority, but she is also the jewel of the kingdom: beautiful to behold and to one be coveted and protected. Next, the Honorable Lady (THL) corresponds to the Knight. She is dutiful to her administrative and ceremonial positions in the SCA. A THL demonstrates her worthiness of the courtesy and chivalrous behavior given her by the Knight in a variety of ways (discussed below). Finally, the Amazon is the feminine answer to the Barbarian. She is flirtatious, sexy, and teasing but (mostly) untouchable. She shimmies and dances, titillating men and women alike, and embodies a raw feminine sexuality that is aroused by rhythmic drumming around the fire. She is also a fighter whose presence on the fields is problematic for more than just her male opponents.



Like men, women use *garb* and decoration, body movement, and voicing to embody the Queen, THL, or Amazon. Miller's (1998) surveys of costuming re-enactors reveal that "comfortable clothing was one reason why these women enjoy costuming" (55). However, comfortable *garb* is subjective and relative. Some women are comfortable in more restrictive styles such as late-period Elizabethan or *cotehardies* (medieval gowns which are sometimes extremely tight to support the bust). Others prefer looser tunics and Viking apron dresses or Middle Eastern *garb*. *Persona* and personal preference influence *garb* choice but so does the desire to embody a type of femininity.

Beauty and sexiness are important to all three categories but are embodied in different ways. The Queen's power and status makes her attractive as does her lavish clothing and luxurious possessions. She is arguably less sexualized than the other archetypes, mostly due to her historical role models, Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria, two queens who cultivated images of the chaste, pure, and maternal monarch. The Amazon is the most sexualized, and she constantly refers others to her corporeality via her *garb*, dance, combat, and flirtatious attitude. Somewhere in between these two lies the Honorable Lady, often demure and coyly flirtatious, she is beautiful and sexy but modest in both respects.

Women have many public and private opportunities for their gendered performances including many of the same scenarios as men: *Court* and *Coronation* for the Queen, the tournament and A&S competition for the Honorable Lady (although, generally in a vastly different capacity than the Amazon), and the drumming circle, battlefield, or tavern for the Amazon. Of course, these are not the only available spaces for performance, and women surely embody and perform various feminine archetypes in all possible SCA contexts and environs.

The Queen: Jewel of the Kingdom

The air was warm and electric as we all waited for the ceremony to start. In a matter of minutes the now empty Gleann Abhann thrones would be filled by a new King and Queen, and the populace was fidgety with excitement. The central aisle was bordered by rows of benches which had long since been filled and coveted by those who were forced to stand by the wall or towards the back of the hall. Of course, standing in the back also had its perks: you got to see the Royals first, up close, if you peeked while you bowed (and everybody peeks). Finally Pavel walked in and announced the presence of Felix, Heir to the throne, who processed in, followed by his men at arms. After Felix was crowned, he summoned Muriel, soon to be his Queen.

If I had been impressed at the reception Felix received when he entered the hall, I was genuinely surprised at the populace's reaction to Muriel's entrance. Although everyone bowed to Felix, they prostrated themselves in front of Muriel. I heard garb rustle and grunts as people stooped even lower to honor their Queen. The whispers that were heard during Felix's crowning were immediately silenced by Muriel's presence, and I had to stand up to see what the hell was going on. The atmosphere had totally changed, and, bowed as I was, I couldn't see why. When I saw Muriel, the reason for the populace's response was obvious. She was truly Queenly. Dressed in richly embroidered tunics, her shoulders covered with a long-hair sheep skin. Several strings of precious stones and glass beads hung from her chest, and her fingers were burdened by many rings. Although I recognized her grace and grandeur it wasn't until later that I understood why the populace reacted in such a reverent manner. (from Coronation, 2009)

If the Royals are on display to be seen, then the Queen is one to be revered. As the passage above illustrates, even in the presence of the King, the Queen often commands more attention. This heightened sense of awareness of the Queen's royal presence requires a certain kind of performance of the women wishing to embody this feminine archetype. Like the King,

the Queen is expected to be accessible, address others in a certain way, and represent the kingdom through her conduct and appearance.

The Queen's garb – which has been painstakingly sewn and embellished by an army of craftspeople – demonstrates her nobility and worthiness of the throne. Her jewelry, the way she styles her hair (in this particular instance, long braids of real human hair were purchased to create a period Viking style hairdo), her basket containing her mug or embroidery or weaving (carried by a Lady in Waiting) all materialize her Queenliness. Usually the *consort* and not the *sovereign*, the Queen was often described as the “most ceremonial” title in the SCA because she has been defended and honored in her *sovereign's* victory. However, Queens do have autonomy from the King. They will be respected and honored appropriately without the King's presence as Lord Henri explains:

LH: If you look at Queen Elizabeth or Queen Victoria: this is a woman who ruled a vast empire with an iron fist. So, we have that idea in our heads, too. You don't look at your crown as just a consort of a guy. You look at her from a different context because she will go to events on her own, not just with the king, and she's afforded all the respect of “the crown.” A lot of huge rough-and-tumble knights who will [say] “oh how ya doin' your majesty?” [informal tone] will make a real point of bowing to her majesty. We see her as the ultimate female in this kingdom.

C: What would make a good Queen?

LH: I like to see a queen who's personable, who's articulate, who's graceful, who dresses well. You don't want a slob up there on the throne. You want somebody, because this is your representative to the SCA world, and because in the SCA world we all have the same standards, you want your representative to the SCA world, your crown, to look better than all the rest of them. So, you don't want a slob up there.

C: What does that mean, the “ultimate female”?

LH: Well, we already have the idea of how we treat women: absolutely respect, courtesy, honor, to your spouse and any woman in the SCA. Well, the Queen is the representative of all femininity, you might say. She is the woman in our kingdom. It's not that you're giving respect to her simply because of the title “Queen.” They're the alpha dog in femininity. The Queen, more so than the King, represents the ceremonial aspects to me.

She is the ultimate representation of femininity in the kingdom. (interview, October, 2009)

Unlike some CMA masculinities, which seem to contradict mundane gender constructs, CMA femininity is actually a nearly identical reproduction of mundane femininity. Schippers cites hetero-desire as the “ontological essence of gender difference” on which the “relationship between masculinity and femininity” is founded (2007:90). In this way, “the possession of erotic desire for the feminine object is constructed as masculine and being the object of masculine desire is feminine” (Schippers, 2007:90). Although the Queen’s body is chaste, she is also severely objectified. When Lord Henri described the Queen as the “alpha dog of femininity,” he was recognizing the Queen’s very real power and authority but also her primary role as an object to be “looked at” even if honored and respected.

A tradition born in the very first SCA event in 1966, when the first Queen was crowned, the Queen is the embodiment of SCA ritual and ceremony, a nearly iconic figure. There were several occasions in which Muriel (a former Gleann Abhann Queen and SCA participant for over 10 years), needing to escape the CMA lime light for whatever reason, gestured to her entourage by pointing to the coronet, and dramatically removing it and placing on a table or chair. The crown was off, and Muriel was, partially, transformed back to her original, non-Royal state and no longer required constant attendance (although the entourage still escorted her to the bathrooms). This is an excellent illustration of the transformative and performative power of objects and garb.

Voicing and speech is also an important aspect of embodying the Queen. She uses the royal lexicon, speaks eloquently and often flatteringly of others. She often sings, and as the head patroness of the arts and sciences, her speeches are expected to be creative and inspiring. In less formal situations, like at the tournament or edge of the battlefield, the Queen will be more candid

though still aware of her status. One story was recounted to me about a Gleann Abhann Queen who inspired troops to fight their opponents and “make them cry like little girls.” The ultimate consort, the Queen is honored by all of her fighters and Knights, and arouses their strength and courage.

In addition to the characteristics listed by Lord Henri, Queenly obligations include Royal gift exchanges, attending Queen’s Teas, and presiding over all A&S events regardless of expertise or knowledge of a particular craft or period. In the SCA, the Queen should demonstrate her generosity and hospitality to visiting Royals, and gift-giving is the easiest and most efficient means, though probably the most costly, means of doing so. Reciprocity is imperative in the Royal gift exchange, and the system is intended to allow Royals to demonstrate both their grace and humility by accepting gifts and their wealth and generosity through giving lavishly.

Although it is understood that Royal gifts are from both the King and the Queen, it is often the Queen that assumes the majority of the responsibility for selected, wrapping, and presenting the gifts. Many people, men and women, (Royalty or not) had long discussions about the administrative responsibilities of the Queen. One woman and former Queen performed a filk song (a mundane pop song re-written with SCA-specific lyrics, often satirical or comical) which expressed a woman’s anxiety and determination “to survive” reigning as Queen and all of the responsibility associated with the office. In an interview, another man admitted that Queens typically do more administrative work than Kings. This aligns with mundane gender roles today, where women do the majority of the shopping for their families and others. This form of feminized labor which (re-)creates and maintains kinship or other relationships between groups and individuals has been widely theorized. Dileonardo combines two theoretical trends for her reinterpretation of feminized labor and kinship.

“The first is the elevation to visibility of women's nonmarket activities...as labor, to be enumerated alongside and counted as part of overall social reproduction. The second theoretical trend is the non-pejorative focus on women's domestic or kin-centered networks. We now see them as the products of conscious strategy, as crucial to the functioning of kinship systems, as sources of women's autonomous power and possible primary sites of emotional fulfillment, and, at times, as the vehicles for actual survival and/or political resistance” (Dileonardo, 1987:441).

One key difference needs to be noted between the above mundane context and feminized labor as it exists in the CMA: it is often very invisible. This is not to say that nobody is aware of hundreds of thousands of hours of volunteer labor women, collectively, contribute to the SCA. Surely many people are aware of the service hundreds of women provide to the Society, but this insight is likely because they are members of the SCA administrative machine. Rather, the majority of the populace does not participate in this capacity, and it is this “layman” demographic of the Society that will be most ignorant of the necessity and significance of women’s work in the SCA.

My own fieldwork experience supports this observation. I remained a “regular” member of the populace until good friends of mine became heirs to the throne in May, 2009. I had already enjoyed the generosity and kindness of this particular couple for many months, but now I had access to the “back stage” of SCA events. I was often present when the Royals were preparing for *court*, and I was somehow inducted into the Royal entourage. In short, I spent a lot of time with the then current Crown, and it was during this time that I became more aware of how stressful, thankless, and demanding ruling can be. I do not doubt that many other “regular” members of the populace would be just as surprised as I was, should they be granted access to the Royal back stage.

The Truly Honorable Lady

The switch from the Queen to the Honorable Lady is subtle but important. While the Queen serves the kingdom through her Royal performances and obligations, the Honorable Lady serves the kingdom through participation in various administrative and creative aspects of the SCA. The Honorable Lady's garb is period on both senses of the word: it codes her as being whole-heartedly part of the CMA and is historically accurate by the Society's standards. Various symbols (green or yellow belts, tokens or circlets) are worn to demonstrate the Honorable Lady's commitment to the game and integration in the SCA community. In sum, she writes the history of her participation on her body via clothing, jewelry, and other accessories.

Often a pelican or laurel, the Honorable Lady is driven, goal-oriented, and pragmatic. Invisible armies of Honorable Ladies make up the invisible machinery that makes the SCA possible. Again, CMA femininity is performed via invisible feminized labor. The Honorable Lady is also loyal to her kingdom and the Crown and demonstrates this loyalty via a high level of play. Anthonia embodies the Honorable Lady through her obsessively researched and documented garb construction, exceptional needlework, and well-developed *persona*. Similarly, Ortissa embodies the Honorable Lady by holding an administrative office, owning and operating the Green Dragon Tavern, and entering (and winning) A&S competitions. These women are just two examples, but the SCA is teeming with embodiments of the Honorable Lady.

The varying levels of play and values of periodness often make the Honorable Lady the most difficult to embody through material recreations. But there are other ways of embodying the Honorable Lady, from service to gendered performances such as consort-ship. At Forest Maiden, Father Edmond requested the privilege of fighting in my honor in the tournament. I was pleasantly surprised and flattered and of course agreed. As his consort, I was expected to sit close to the list field during his rounds and watch the combat. During one round, Anthonia and I sat

together at the edge of the list while our fighters sweated in the mid-day sun and tried their hardest to bring us honor through victory. Anthonia's legs were tucked neatly under her, and she fanned herself with a large fan as she watched the combat with a large grin and encouraging eyes. Anthonia routinely surprised me with such behavior. Her ability to perform her *persona* and embody the Honorable Lady in nearly every moment of her engagements in the CMA is rare.

Honorable Ladies are also some of the most decorated veteran SCA participants. As discussed above, the SCA used a complex system of awards to recognize individuals for their accomplishments in a variety of capacities. When viewed through a gendered lens, these awards become hegemonic tools in the sense that "hegemonic features of culture are those that serve the interests and ascendancy of ruling classes, legitimate their ascendancy and dominance, and encourage all to consent to and go along with social relations of ruling" (Schippers, 2007:90). Every court ceremony I attended featured numerous award ceremonies. Many of the recipients, male and female, were obviously emotionally affected by receiving awards (some cried). The personal meanings attached to these awards are obviously intense and central to individual identity construction in the SCA (many people wear various tokens or other markers of their past awards). This is the most explicit demonstration of gender hegemony in the SCA. By rewarding some individuals for their performances and embodiments, CMA hegemony reproduces mundane hegemonic femininity by elevating femininities that support and legitimize masculine power and dominance.

The Amazon

Our triad is completed by the Amazon. As an embodied archetype, the Amazon can be a fighter on the tourney field, a belly dancer, or the merry yet crass tavern "wench." Unlike the

Barbarian, the Amazon is often the most difficult for women to embody due to her transgressive nature. The Amazon is a “pariah femininity,” an embodiment that is considered “contaminating to the relationship between masculinity and femininity” which is legitimized by other femininities that are dominant over pariah femininities but subordinate to all masculinities (Schippers, 2007:95). Women embody the Amazon in several different capacities, but all of these challenge the widespread masculine dominance that is reproduced in CMA gender hegemony.

For example, Lady fighters of all types but especially heavy fighters challenge CMA masculinity and femininity. As a belly dancer or wench, the Amazon questions how the SCA frames sexuality, particularly of women, in the CMA. Similarly, the Amazon rejects chivalry as a strictly male prerogative that is received by women. Although the Queen and the Honorable Lady also resist being completely relegated to passive, mute roles by ruling or holding administrative offices, only the Amazon invades male enclaves by fighting in tournaments and on the battlefield, subverting and transgressing both CMA and mundane gender constructs.

Unlike the other feminine archetypes, the Amazon’s body is powerful. When clad in armor, it is often difficult to distinguish the lady fighter from her male comrades and opponents. The female knight embodies the Amazon by wearing her gold chain, spurs, and white belt over her tunic and sideless surcoat (medieval woman’s over-dress with wide, open sides similar to overalls). Alternatively, the Amazon can be an untouchable, mysterious siren clothed in harem pants and dancing in the drummer’s circle. The belly dance and combat, both of which are concerned with skilled control over bodily movements, are performed to code women as Amazons who are in control of their bodies and their position in the community.

Like men, women's habitus – their socialized bodies – reveals internalized and institutionalized gender constructs and gender relationships. The Amazon is flashy, in direct opposition to the reserved behavior of the Honorable Lady and often the Queen. She wears a lot of jewelry, several coin belts jingle at her hips, her garb is richly colored and wildly patterned, or, conversely, she shows skin in excessive amounts (“excessive” in comparison to most women in the SCA who are covered from neck to ankle). Where the Barbarian demonstrates his masculinity by being uncontrollable, the Amazon asserts herself as a woman by taking control and fighting (for a man's honor) on the field.

Lady Maria is a young squire and fighter and holds an award of arms. She was one of the youngest SCA participants I met (age 20 when I first met her) and a successful fighter whom I am confident will join the ranks of the few and proud Lady Knights (female knights). At Forest Maiden, she entered the tournament and, per SCA corpora, took a male consort (all sovereign-consort pairings are heteronormative). In this event, the victors' consort would be crowned Forest Maiden, and everyone rooted for Maria and joked about how beautiful her consort would be as Forest Maiden. On the tourney field, Maria embodied the Amazon by wearing armor and fighting men for the honor of another man. Mistress Ingegard also embodies the Amazon in her re-creations, although in a different way. In the follow passage from a focus group Ingegard and another woman discussed the pros of being a woman in the SCA, and both women in the interview and the other individuals discussed embody the Amazon:

Ingegard: There's a lot of historical reenactment where women are meant to be in camp and shop. It didn't take me very long to go “I'm tired of shit in the first place.” I don't need to buy that if I can make it. I've done some good shopping, don't get me wrong, but there's nothing to do but shop 'cause that's what women do: we dress up and go shop.

Woman: I don't want those restrictions. Women would not have been making armor. I know how to make chainmail. Women would not have gotten in armor and fought. I do!

Man: We have a lady in our shire who is trying to play her character as accurately as she can, but she likes to fight. She has two *personas*, a female *persona* and a male *persona*. She fights in the male *persona* so that her female *persona* can be accurate. (Bordermarch Autumn Melees, October 2009).

The man's comment above raises the question of female masculinity and Amazonian embodiment. Before now, I have not addressed the possibility of the Amazon conceptualized as a type of female masculinity. According to Schippers, pariah femininities are not female masculinities, despite the fact that they are composed of the "quality content" of hegemonic masculinity (2007:95). Rather, because these gender embodiments are assumed by female bodied individuals – who identify or are identified as women – they are constructed as feminine. "When a woman is authoritative, she is not masculine; she is a bitch – both feminine and undesirable" (Schippers, 2007:95). Desirability characterizes all three archetypes of femininity discussed above; even the Amazon, who is at times undesirable (on the tourney field), is often the most desired women in other contexts (for example, when she dances).

Halberstam's proposes a female masculinity that rejects the reduction of masculinity to the male body and subverts hegemonic masculinity (1998:1-3). By unpacking masculinity as a mythologized set of practices frequently conflated with a certain type of genitalia, Halberstam reveals the social construction of masculinity and how some masculinities (white, heterosexual, middleclass, middle-aged) dominate others (non-white, very young or very old, working-class or upper-class, queer). Female masculinities are, like other gender constructs, extremely contextual and are only exposed in contexts where women's embodiments seem inappropriate or challenging. For example, "some rural women may be considered masculine by urban standards, and their masculinity may simply have to do with the fact that they engage in more manual labor...or live within a community with very different gender standards (Halberstam, 1998:57-

58). Halberstam continues to contrast “the naturalness of female toughness” with the “unnatural measures and unhealthy practices” used to construct modern femininity (1998:58).

This particular conceptualization of female masculinity is somewhat problematic, and it is unclear if Halberstam is trying to naturalize masculinity in general or simply identify historical and contemporary examples of female masculinity that are not always problematic to the individual women or the communities in which they live. Furthermore, Halberstam’s example of rural women who embody female masculinity fails to address the possibility that, in the rural context, these women are not masculine at all but are rather feminine, and it is only when rural women are placed in an urban setting and are judged by these standards that they seem masculine.

Keeping Schippers, Halberstam, and the quote about dual personas above in mind, my observations and fieldwork have led me to conclude that the Amazon is not a type of female masculinity. I am inclined to agree with Schippers that, although pariah femininities can incorporate the quality content of masculinities, they are always constructed as femininities when embodied by women. This is not to say that female bodied persons who perform as men cannot embody masculinity. Indeed, in this context, the individual would be embodying a female masculinity. However, according to my observations, the Amazon is always performing as a woman. When a woman confronts opponents on the battlefield, especially those who are unfamiliar with her style of play, she will be identified as a woman first and fighter second. Whatever masculine quality content the Amazon performs is constructed as feminine, albeit a transgressive femininity that challenge gender hegemony in the SCA.

Conclusion

Performance and embodiment in the SCA have as much to do with living the *Dream* as mundane identity construction. The *personas* people choose and different roles they occupy are framed by the utopian Current Middle Ages, and the identities SCA participants construct are heavily layered and complex products of the blend of contemporary and historical elements. This research has attempted to show how *Scadians* perform and embody different kinds of archetypal SCA identities. The models discussed above are limited in their binary and dichotomous construction of both gender and identity in the SCA, and this is a result of the imperfect science of selecting only six gendered examples. The overly simplistic gender binary and obvious heteronormativity implicit in the models are, however, representative of the SCA culture.

The Society is a fairly tolerant and open community that often proves to be a haven for “marginal” individuals interested in or veterans of so-called “deviant” sexual and gender practice. Surely, it is the SCA’s code of courtesy and chivalry that allows these individuals to enjoy this freedom in the Society. However, the SCA is extremely couple-focused, as is evident in the constant pairing of opposite genders during tournaments and in the ruling offices. For example, although gay men and women can enter and fight in Crown List (as long as they are heavy fighters and meet the basic entry requirements) they may not take a consort of the same sex. A gay man would have to find a female consort who desired the position and the two would rule the Kingdom pending victory at Crown List.

Although women have been able to transgress mundane and period gender constructs and participate in traditionally all-male activities, the SCA has not been able to subvert the contemporary biases against same-sex couples or fully come to terms with what Kimmel calls “lost masculinity” [cite]. In many ways, gender politics in the SCA mirror those of mundane

world. Those who suspect a hierarchical arrangement of masculinity in the Triangle of CMA Masculinity (Figure 1) would be correct. A similar observation is true of the Triangle of CMA Femininity (Figure 2), although, depending on which brand of feminism one's subscribes to, any of the three archetypes could be at the top.

The characters men and women embody in the SCA simultaneously mimic an imagined medieval gendered existence and re-create mundane inequalities and hierarchies. For example, many men attempt to embody the King¹⁸ which requires a decent amount of financial investment in order to create the elaborate garb and possessions associated with the King. Furthermore, Kings are expected to be visible, not just to their local shire or kingdom, but to the Society are large. Mobility and a celebrity-like reputation is an important part of embodying the King. This has obvious costs ranging from gas mileage or airfare to extended leave from work. Those men who lack the financial and social resources necessary to fulfill these requirements will find it difficult to embody the King and, if their identity is focused on such a performance, then they will find themselves struggling and ultimately disappointed.

¹⁸ Indeed, many would agree that every man should aspire to embody the King since he represents the Dream. However, whether or not this is a reality is rendered moot for various reasons, one of which being the different levels of periodness and perceptions on what is or is not period, and thus appropriate for a Kingly enactment. For those who see the King as the ultimate ruler, simply acting powerful and authoritative is enough to embody Kingly masculinity.

Appendix I: Glossary

1. Apprentice: an associate of a laurel that is presumably in training to be a laurel.
2. Associate: like a squire or apprentice, a person studying under a pelican in order to enter the peerage.
3. Code of Chivalry: list of tenets based on fictional and historical “codes” of chivalry from the Middle Ages.
4. Consort: person (usually female) in whose honor a fighter fights in a tournament; in Crown List the winning fighter will become a Royal along with his or her consort.
5. Court: a formal and often dramatic ceremony held during many SCA events, court is only called by Royals, can last several hours, and is used to give out awards, recognize exceptional members of the populace for their service to the local group or kingdom, announce banishments or new laws, or make general announcements to the populace.
6. Crown List: a special biannual tournament in which all participating fighters compete for the Royal office of the Crown. Anyone wishing to enter the tournament must receive Royal permission, submit a letter of intent to the Royals, and meet minimum membership requirements. Winners (a fighter and his or her consort) are expected to commit a full year to the kingdom. The first six months are spent as Prince and Princess, attending events and “learning the ropes” of being Royalty. The second six months comprises the true Royal reign.
7. Current Middle Ages: used to refer to the SCA world or SCA contexts.
8. Feast: a large dinner following evening court. Seats are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Feasts are candle-lit and generally include four courses consisting of period dishes. Toasts, poetry recitations, and period songs provide entertainment. Feasts are widely mentioned as some of the most “period” collective experiences.
9. Garb: clothing worn by SCA members at SCA events; used to differentiate between SCA clothing and theatrical costumes.
10. Knight: member of the Order of the Chivalry; induction into this peerage requires a demonstration of proficient martial arts skills, leadership, and chivalrous behavior.
11. Laurel: member of the Order of the Laurel; induction into this peerage requires a demonstration of a high degree of historical research, commitment to historically accurate recreations, and technical proficiency in arts and sciences.
12. Mundane/mundanity: used to describe a person or object existing in the modern context.

13. Peer: can refer to laurels, knights, pelicans or Royal Peers (kings, queens, dukes/duchesses, viscount/viscountesses).
14. Pelican: member of the Order of the Pelican; induction into this peerage requires a demonstration of outstanding and committed service to the Kingdom.
15. Period: used to describe historically accurate re-creations (My combat boots aren't very period but they're more comfortable than medieval turn-toe shoes.); refers to medieval objects or materials existing during an individual *persona*'s timeframe and geographic location (I searched the library's image archives for a period representation of a cotehardie.).
16. Persona: alter-ego adopted by an SCA member complete with a specific time period, geographic location, and culture. Personas are acted out to varying degrees.
17. Seneschal: SCA administrative position that exists at all levels of the organization (locally, kingdom, and corporately), functions as a liaison between Royal authority and the mundane world regarding legal issues, finances, and general business administration.
18. Sovereign: individual entering and actually competing in a tournament.
19. Squire: associate to a knight.
20. Stick jock: pejorative term used to describe SCA members who overemphasize sport fighting and downplay or completely ignore other aspects of the SCA.

Appendix II: Event Descriptions

Gulf Wars: An annual contest between the Kingdom of Ansteora, and the Kingdom of Trimaris. The war is hosted by the Kingdom of Gleann Abhann and the Kingdom of Meridies. All four kingdoms fight in several battles, with Gleann Abhann and Meridies fighting for Ansteora or Trimaris as appropriate to make the two armies as even as possible. The event is hosted in at the King's Arrow Ranch site in Lumberton, Mississippi, and nearly 4,000 participants attended in 2009. The site is privately owned by a mundane individual. It covers several acres and features several permanent period structures including a two-store wooden fort, the Green Dragon Tavern (a period English-style tavern owned and built by members of the Kingdom), Viking cabins, and elaborate camp gates styles to look like castle towers. War lasts an entire week during which various A&S classes are offered, six major battles are fought, and several tournaments and competitions are held. Gulf Wars is decidedly carnivalesque and is the highlight for many SCA participants.

Forest Maiden: A smaller annual event held just outside of Lake Charles, Louisiana. Roughly 80 people attended in 2009. The event focuses on a tournament but other activities, mostly A&S classes, are also offered (This is also where I learned how to spin fiber into thread and yarn.) Typical of all SCA events, court is held followed by feast and an evening of merry-making, singing, dancing, drinking, and story-telling.

Harvest Home: Another small even hosted by the Shire of Northover just outside of Mandeville, Louisiana. This particular event was Viking themed and featured some unusual though entertaining activities: a Baron and Baroness were "kidnapped" in a Viking raid and then rescued. Melee combat was also fought during the Viking raid. The Kingdom Rapier Championship tournament was also featured at this event. A&S classes and competitions were also Viking-themed. After court and feast, a wedding of two SCA members took place.

Bordermarch Autumn Melees: An inter-kingdom event between Ansteora and Gleann Abhann held just outside of Beaumont, Texas. This medium-sized event was held at a park which featured a permanent fort/castle constructed out of cinderblocks. A several battles were held as were rapier melees, archery competitions, and equestrian activities. A&S, bardic, and dance competitions were held. Several food vendors and merchants were in attendance as well. Although the event only lasted a weekend, over 100 participants were in attendance. The hosting barony is hoping to turn this event into an inter-kingdom war in the future.

Coronation: Two coronations are held per year. A weekend event, Coronation involved the last court and "death" of the preceding crown and the ascension and first court of the heirs to the throne. The event is held at King's Arrow Ranch and also features a tournament, however the event focuses on the huge ceremonies involved in the changing of the crowns. A large feast was held after the first court of the new crown which was followed by a bardic circle and a full night of merry-making and partying.

Fighter Practice: Weekly practices are open to the public and held to allow local fighters to train and hone their skills. The last fighter practice of each month is a "garb and grub," a potluck

where everyone dresses in garb. The idea is to give SCA participants more opportunities to wear garb and engage in their favorite past time and, to some extent, indirectly recruit new members.

Business Meetings: Held monthly, business meetings are open to the public and are held at a local library. During the meeting, shire officers assemble, discuss major and minor issues of kingdom law, plan events, discuss and elaborate on various reports (treasure, new members, etc) and conduct other items of business.

Bibliography

Agnew, Vanessa. History's affective turn: Historical reenactment and its work in the present. *Rethinking History*. (Sept., 2007) Vol. 1, pp 299-312.

Austin, John. "Performative Utterances," from *Perspectives in the philosophy of language* (edited by Robert Stainton). (Broadview Press, Ltd.: Orchard Park, NY). pp. 239-252. 1999

Belk, Russell, Costa, Janeen. The Mountain Man Myth: A Contemporary Consuming Fantasy. *Journal of Consumer Research*. (Dec., 1998). Vol. 25, pp. 218-240

Boellstorff, Tom. *Coming of Age in Second Life*. (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ). 2008

Bowen, Ashley. Old times there are not forgotten: civil war re-enactors and the creation of heritage. Thesis. (Apr., 2009) Georgetown University.

Bowman, Sarah. The psychological power of the roleplaying experience. *Journal of interactive Drama*. (Jan., 2007) Vol. 2, pp. 2-12

Breunlin, Rachel, Regis, Helen. "Can There Be a Critical Collaborative Ethnography?" *Collaborative Anthropologies*, Vol. 2 (edited by Eric Lassiter). (University of Nebraska Press). pp. 113-146. 2009

Butler, Judith. *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*. *Theatre Journal*. (Dec., 1988) Vol. 40, pp. 519-531

Coles, Janet, Armstrong, Paul. Living History: Learning through re-enactment. 38th annual SCUTREA Conference. (July 2008)

Connell, R.W. *Masculinities*. (University of California Press: Berkley). 1995

Connell, R.W., Messerschmidt, J.W. Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society* (2005). Vol. 19, pp. 829-859

Cramer, Michael. *Tourneys, Wars, and Dancing men: re-creation as performance in the society for creative anachronism*. Dissertation. (2005) The city university of New York.

Crawley, S.; Foley, L.; Shehan, C. *Gendering Bodies*. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: Lanham, MD). 2008.

Dileonardo, Micaela. The Female World of Cards and Holidays: Women, Families, and the Work of Kinship. *Signs* (Spring, 1987). Vol. 12, pp. 440-453

Faubion, James. *Rethinking the subject: an anthology of contemporary European social thought*. (Westview Press). 1995

Fron, J; Fullteron, T; Morie, J.; Pearce, C. Playing Dress-up: costumes, roleplay and imagination. Ludica 2007.

Goncu, Artin, Perone, Anthony. Pretend Play as a Life-span Activity. Topoi (2005) Vol. 24, pp. 137-147

Hall, Dennis. Civil war reenactors and the postmodern sense of history. Journal of American culture. (1994) Vol. 17, pp. 7-11

Hall, Kira. Performativity. Journal of Linguistic Anthropology. (2000) Vol. 9, pp. 184-187

Hunt, Stephen. Acting the part: 'living history' as a serious leisure pursuit. Leisure Studies. (Oct., 2004) Vol. 23, pp. 387-403

Hunt, Stephen. But We're Men Aren't We!: Living History as a Site of Masculine Identity Construction. Men and Masculinities. (2008) Vol. 10, pp. 460-483.

Kapchan, Deborah. Performance. The Journal of American Folklore. (1995) Vol. 108, pp. 479-508

Kimmel, Michael. "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity." Men and Masculinity (edited by Theodore Cohen). (Wadsworth: Belmont, CA) 2001

Kimmel, Michael., Messner, Michael. Men's Lives. (Allyn & Bacon). 2010

Lee, Zane. Social identities within the society for creative anachronism. Thesis. (Dec., 2005) Texas A&M University.

Lassiter, Luke. Moving Past Public Anthropology and Doing Collaborative Research. NAPA Bulletin 29 (2008) pp. 70-86

Lewis, J. Genre and Embodiment: From Brazilian *Capoeira* to the Ethnology of Human Movement. Cultural Anthropology. (1995) Vol. 10, pp. 221-243

Lindley, Craig; Eladhari, Mirjam. Narrative Structure in Trans-Reality Role-Playing Games: Integrating Story Construction from Live Action, Table Top and Computer-Based Role-Playing Games. DiGRA Conference 2005: Changing Views – Worlds in Play.

McEwan, Emily. Living in these current middle ages: the society of creative anachronism and historical re-enacting behavior. Thesis. (1993) University of Illinois.

Miller, Kimberly. Gender Comparisons within Reenactment Costume: Theoretical Interpretations. Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal (1998). Vol. 27, pp. 35-61.

Morris, Rosalind. All Made Up: Performance Theory and the New Anthropology of Sex and Gender. *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1995) Vol. 24, pp. 567-592.

Radtchenko, Daria. Simulating the past: reenactment and the quest for truth in russia. *Rethinking History*. (Mar., 2006) Vol. 10, pp. 127-148.

Sabo, Donald., Panepinto, Joe. "Football and the Social Reproduction of Masculinity." *Men and Masculinity* (edited by Theodore Cohen). (Wadsworth: Belmont, CA) 2001

Schippers, Mimi. Recovering the feminine other: masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony. *Theoretical Sociology* (2007). Vol. 36, pp. 85-102

Simmons, Sabrina. The knights in city park: a qualitative study of chivalry as equipment for living in postmodernity. Thesis. (2008) Colorado State University.

Spencer, Dale. Habit(us), Body Techniques and Body Callusing: An Ethnography of Mixed Martial Arts. *Body and Society* (2009). Vol. 15, pp. 119-143

Stebbins, Robert. Serious Leisure. *The Pacific Sociologist Review*. (Apr., 1982) Vol. 25, pp. 251-272

Trigg, Stephanie. Medievalism and convergence culture: Researching the Middle Ages for Fiction and Film. *Parergon*. (2008) Vol. 25.2, pp. 99-118

Turner, Rory. Bloodless Battles: The Civil War Re-enacted. *The Drama Review*. (1990) Vol. 34, pp. 123-136

West, Candance; Zimmerman, Don. Doing Gender. *Gender & Society* (1987), Vol. 1, pp. 125-151.