



Editor's Note

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Welcome to the second issue of *JMMS*. In the past year the *JMMS* website has received approximately 8000 visitors, which I believe is a reasonable number for a new online publication with a niche audience. In that time visibility and legitimacy of online, open access journals in the academic environment has increased, and this is set to continue. Anyone interested in reading more about the development of open access should consult Peter Suber's excellent *Open Access News* [<http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/fosblog.html>] which is usually updated on a daily basis, reflecting the subject's rapid expansion. Recently we have been listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals [<http://www.doaj.org>] from which many university libraries draw information, so we are beginning to filter through to a number of library databases, taking our place alongside other established journals. My point here is that *JMMS*'s method of delivery is here to stay, a fact recognized by a good number of researchers who are keen to maximize their readership. I urge any potential *JMMS* contributors who are unsure of the open access publishing model to read up on it and then send us your work. The next general issue of *JMMS* is currently underway and a special edition edited by Yasemin Besen focused on youth masculinities and spirituality is being finalized and is scheduled for publication in August.

This issue contains four main articles and six book reviews. Stefan Horlacher's *From a Metaphysics of Presence to the Blessings of Absence: The Medial Construction of Masculine Identity in Thomas Hardy's Novel Jude the Obscure*, offers a psychoanalytically inspired reading of the intersection of masculine identity, language and meaning in Hardy's protagonist, of "his desperate clinging to the illusion of a transcendental signified." Elizabeth Ruchti's *The Performance of Normativity: Mormons and the Construction of an American Masculinity* argues that despite being firmly on the margins of American society, Mormon masculinity is in fact an exemplar of ideal American masculinity: "a performance of normativity staged from a position of abjection." Lisa Tyler's "He was pretty good in there today": *Reviving the Macho Christ in Ernest Hemingway's "Today is Friday" and Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ* argues that both Hemmingway and Gibson's bouts of emotional volatility were eased by identifying with a muscular, yet suffering Christ in their work. Brendan Smyth's *To Love the Orientalist: Masculinity in Leila Aboulela's The Translator* shows how the novel offers a model of progressive, socially engaged Islamic masculinity.

In our review section we look at, among other books, John Ibson's *Picturing Men*, which offers a photographic account of the decline in intimacy among American men between 1850 and 1950, from "hugs and kisses to empty seats

between men in theatres." Ibson highlights an issue that many men would no doubt identify with, but once in a while a piece of cultural production comes along that counters the norm, such as the recent DVD *Old Joy* (dir. Kelly Reichardt, 2006).

Not a lot happens in *Old Joy*, which simply follows a couple of buddies, Kurt and Mark, on a camping trip to visit some hot springs in the Cascade mountains east of Portland, Oregon. Such is the lack of genuine intimacy among men that various moments leap out of the movie.

First, it is interesting to note that intimacy among men often brings with it an unwarranted expectation of homoeroticism. After setting up camp for the night, Kurt suddenly blurts out that he's worried about their relationship. "I miss you, I miss you really really bad. I want us to be real friends again." Mark claims that everything is all right between them but Kurt still appears troubled. We almost expect him to offer some confessional statement about unrequited love, but it's simply a concern for their friendship, which is subject to the passing of time and Mark's impending entry into fatherhood.

The next morning Mark mentions how he's been involved in doing some woodwork with local kids and building a community garden. Kurt says, "I'm so proud of you Mark, I'm serious. You've really done something. You've really given something back to the community." Again, these aren't the kind of words we usually hear among friends: such achievements are often given a grudging respect following Gore Vidal's words, "Every time a friend succeeds, I die a little."

Later, at the hot springs even Mark gets on edge about a fear of sexuality in their intimacy. While he is lying naked in the hot springs, Kurt comes up behind him and begins to give him a shoulder rub. Mark is tense and says, "Hey, what's going on?" Kurt says, "Just relax man, just settle in" and literally lays his hands on Mark's head like a spiritual healing. The camera cuts to a close-up of Mark's tense hand, noticeably wearing a wedding ring. The hand quickly loosens under Kurt's massage and drifts down into the water. When the two friends arrive back in town Mark holds Kurt's shoulder and says, "That was awesome Kurt." Kurt says, "I'll call you soon, man." And the temporary autonomous zone of their trip is over, but with a new security that their intimacy is still intact, albeit different than it once was. *Old Joy* is a delightful, meditative little movie that offers a time-out from the usual presentations of men.

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