Models of Masculinities in *Troy*: Achilles, Hector and Their Female Partners

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*Introduction – What Does it Mean to Be a Man?*

Films, as reconstructions and interpretations of reality, provide insights into social constructions of reality. They are one of the visual forms in which and with which a contemporary society is portrayed. Popular and successful Hollywood cinema productions have therefore proven to be an abundant resource for analyzing gender relations. Films set in the ancient world are no exception. In fact, while they usually employ storylines passed down over many centuries, they often turn out to be especially interesting in the ancient and modern values, moral conceptions, and societal norms they adopt and implement.

Our particular focus here is Wolfgang Petersen’s *Troy,* which is “inspired by” Homer’s *Iliad* and focuses on two male characters – the Greek Achilles, introduced via a text insertion at the beginning of the film as the mightiest warrior of all times, and his Trojan counterpart Hector, the heir to King Priam’s throne. The intention of this study is to analyze the depiction of masculinity in the film by examining both the representation of Achilles and Hector and the extent to which the narrative structures and

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4 Most film adaptions focus on Helen and the conquest of Troy, so Achilles is usually disregarded or plays a minor role. Cf. Susanne Gödde, “Achilleus,” in *Der Neue Pauly,* suppl. 5 (2008) 13. The same applies to Hector.
the staged manliness contain references to values and standards in the real world.

In our title we have deliberately chosen to employ the term “masculinities” in its plural form following the assumption of a diversity of masculinities that form the basis of Raewyn Connell’s influential sociological research widely promulgated in her 1995 book of that title. Connell’s conclusions provide the groundwork for our typology of the forms of masculinity. But before we commence with the analysis of manhood in Troy’s Achilles and Hector, we have to delineate several aspects of gender. We define gender as a social and cultural construction. Different designs of gender can be found in diverse cultures and historical epochs. The disparity between them is determined by not only the cultural and historical environment but also the local social context in which an individual dwells. Within a school, neighborhood, or work place, one can identify different constructs of masculinity as well as various patterns of behavior and ways of dealing with the male body.

This spectrum of masculinities is shown to the audience of Troy in the form of personified characters. The filmmakers present a variety of masculinity types which portray the genre’s binary oppositions – good and evil. According to Connell’s model of social gender structure, masculinity is always conceived in relation to various masculinities as well as in relation to women, whereby the relations are characterized by a difference in access to power. This hierarchy is topped by the so-called hegemonic masculinity. At the bottom of the hierarchy is where one finds women; in between the two are the other forms of masculinity. The latter are characterized by subordination, complicity, or marginalization. Hegemonic masculinities are the most important pillars of patriarchy, perpetuating the existing social system by persistently reproducing the relations of power. Marginalized masculinities have access to fewer resources of power than the hegemonic. Characteristically included in this lower cat-

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6 Following predominantly Martin Lindner, *Rom und seine Kaiser im Historienfilm* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Antike, 2007) 98–103, 186f., and 214, we employ the term “film-makers,” because in addition to the director Wolfgang Petersen, the producers, scriptwriters, artistic designers, and not at least the actors have an influence on the final presentation of the movie as well.