Article

'If I Die Here, I'm a Hero!'

On Masculinity and Vulnerability Among Male Asylum Seekers

Marco Palillo

London School of Economics

Abstract For asylum seekers, masculinity is often a site of conflict, negotiated through competing discourses and public narratives about what it means to be an asylum seeker. Here, the male 'genuine refugee' is often depicted as a feminised, passive victim who 'deserves' humanitarian protection on the base of his vulnerability. Focusing on the crossing of the desert to Libya, this article analyses asylum seekers' positioning of themselves as 'men' through their own narratives as well as the ways in which they engage with vulnerability, victimhood and agency in their storytelling. In particular, the focus lies on two cases, of Hakeem and David, selected from within 36 life history interviews with asylum seekers, refugees, and international protection holders collected in Sicily. For these men, the refugee journey is narrated as an accomplishment not only in terms of receiving asylum, but also in terms of their masculinity, exalting qualities such as endurance, courage, and competence. Two images, of the soldier and the hero, are presented as imaginary positioning of the self. This positioning appears to resolve performative tensions around masculinity/refugeeness, contesting the dominant image of the passive, feminized, helpless subject at the heart of 'the genuine refugee' public narrative. This might also be read as a strategy to reconcile profound questions about identity, the self, and experiences related to trauma and the loss of masculine status in the context of forced migration.

Keywords masculinity, refugee, narrative, life history, forced migration, genuine refugee, vulnerability

Razak, a 19-year-old Gambian asylum seeker, emerges from his room, while I am visiting a reception centre in Sicily. Razak proclaims that he wishes to go back to Libya. His words are received by me and two social workers, Darla and Ada, with great surprise. I have spent the previous six months gathering accounts of people who fled for their lives from Libya. Razak is one of them. I have interviewed this young man a couple of days before and I am curious to know the reasons for his sudden change of mind. Meanwhile, Darla reminds him how terrible Libya is for African refugees. To which Razak responds resolutely: 'I'd rather die in Libya than waste my days in Sicily doing nothing.' His gestures and his tone have now changed. Razak presents himself as a man, not a boy, a man who needs to work and is tough enough to survive Libya, once again. This performative shift is received by Darla and Ada with a warm laugh. They do not take Razak seriously. I do not believe Razak either. Instead, I perceive his utterance as a display of masculinity and a way to express his frustration over the few job opportunities he encountered in Sicily. At the same time, I cannot stop thinking about why this performance of masculinity and toughness resembles a parody? Or why Razak, a few days earlier, appeared so 'credible' to me when narrating his journey to Libya, almost breaking down in tears?

The most interesting element of this performance is the response of the audience, namely, Darla's laughter. This laughter points us towards the complexities of performing masculinity and refugeeness, at the same time. Performing masculinity always entails a negotiation across multiple, and often competing, discourses (Toerien and Durrheim 2001). Masculinity, rather than being analysed as a fixed entity, can be seen as 'a field of conflict that men have to traverse in a quest for coherence' (Toerien and Durrheim 2001, 36). In the case of asylum seekers, given their condition of otherness, this field of conflict involves a consideration of dominant public narratives³⁵ (Somers 1994) about them. As illuminated by Razak's vignette, these narratives connote specific normative assumptions of vulnerability, victimhood and passivity, which highly problematize refugees' gender and sexuality. On one hand, a public narrative depicts the 'bogus asylum seeker,' or 'bad refugee' as a potential criminal, terrorist and abuser of the immigration system (Griffiths 2015) to convey images of marginality, dishonesty, and threat (Zetter 2007). This narrative, as exemplified by the debate that followed the New Year's Eve gang assaults on women in Cologne, is fuelled with 'imageries of a dangerous foreign masculinity' (Scheibelhofer 2007, 102) associated with a spasmodic, archaic, and highly racialized sexuality. In Italy, this discourse entered the recent electoral campaign after the horrific murder of a young woman, allegedly at the hands of a group of Nigerian asylum seekers (Politi 2018). On this occasion, Silvio Berlusconi, the leader of the centre-right coalition, called for the deportation of 600,000 asylum seekers on the basis that only a small fraction of these were 'genuine' refugees. The former Italian Premier added that the rest, living off 'trickery and crime, constitute a 'social bomb' ready to explode (Politi 2018).

Much like a mirror image (Andersson 2014), a counter narrative conjures the portrayal of the 'genuine' refugee informed by feminised notions of passivity and vulnerability (Oxford 2005, Scheibelhofer 2017, Griffiths 2015). In her study on the visual representations of refugees in publications of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Johnson (2011) illustrates how the dominant image of the Cold war heroic white male refugee ready to fight for Western political values while jumping from a plane was replaced by the voiceless woman from the Global South, always pictured with a child, beneath the caption 'Click to donate' (Johnson 2011). The feminization and racialization of the refugee category, far from being a means to empower refugee women, has instead strategically coincided with the depoliticisation of the refugee clientele (Johnson 2011) to depict refugees as a mere object of assistance in need of advocacy groups and aid providers to speak on their behalf (McKinnon 2008). The suffering body (Fassin 2001) of the 'genuine refugee' is exposed to the eyes of the Western public as the epitome of the non-threatening subject,³⁶ to answer the spectre of difference posited by the refugees' condition of otherness (Johnson 2011). Central to this representational shift are the politics of vulnerability promoted by humanitarianism (Ticktin 2016) aimed at mobilising public support for refugee advocacy (Johnson 2011).

³⁵ Somers defines public narrative as 'those narratives attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual' (Somers 1994, 619).

³⁶ This can be observed in the visual politics of rescue operations in the Mediterranean. Here, Europeans are represented saving the helpless refugees while arresting human traffickers and potential terrorists (Musarò 2017).

This politics is based on a rigid gender essentialism,³⁷ where men and women are associated with 'mutually exclusive and oppositional attributes' (Charli Carpenter 2005, 296) around the need for protection.

In their blog posting dated September 6, 2016, in *Religion and the Public Sphere*, Wilson and Mavelli provide a good example. Following the 2015 UK offer to take up to 20,000 Syrian refugees, David Cameron proclaimed: 'We will take the most vulnerable, we will take disabled children, we will take women who have been raped, we will take men who have suffered torture' (BBC, 2015). Here, 'good refugees' are conceptualised in terms of 'the most vulnerable' ones, who 'patiently wait in refugee camps to be rescued by Western saviours' (Wilson and Mavelli 2016) with protection granted not on the grounds of rights, but based on the capacity of soliciting compassion (Ticklin 2016, Fassin 2001). This focus on gendered notion of vulnerability³⁸ and lack of agency not only ignores the specific issues affecting men in forced migration contexts such as forced military recruitment, torture, sexual violence, arbitrary detention, and summary execution (Carpenter 2005), but it also penalises those who, like Hakeem and David, engage in proactive survival strategies such as crossing Sub Saharan Africa or the Mediterranean (Wilson and Mavelli 2016). Not conforming to the dominant image, the credibility of these young men is often jeopardized and their claims are met with suspicion and disbelief.³⁹ This is due to the fact that the refugee status determination is structured as a process of recognition of a *a priori* subjective condition, as defined by the UN Refugee convention (1951);⁴⁰ therefore, it demands the applicant's ability to interpellate refugeeeness as 'a recognizable identity' (Luker 2015, 92) within the refugee determination procedure.⁴¹ This process entails two opposing sides: the non-citizen subject (i.e. asylum seeker) and the sovereign State (Zagor 2014). In front of such a structural power imbalance (Zagor 2014) the performance of a recognisable identity must be obtained through conformity (Zetter 1991). Therefore, it has to fit some sort of a dominant narrative, or what Langellier calls 'the continued retelling of tales of plight

³⁷ See the brilliant work of Carpenter (2005) on the use of gender essentialisms in transnational efforts to advocate for the protection of war-affected civilians.

³⁸ On this matter, Charsley and Wray (2015) mentioned the section 3.4 of the Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Mandate (UNHCR, n.d.) which identifies, again, some specific groups of asylum seekers - women who are at particular risk in the host country, elderly asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers that require medical assistance among others, as 'applicants with special needs'. According to the UNHCR (n.d.) guidelines, these should be prioritized in reception and registration procedures. Here, the two scholars conclude that: 'All refugees are, by definition, vulnerable but some are regarded as particularly so' (Charsley and Wray 2015, 413).

³⁹ Patrick Strickland (2016), in his piece 'Why the world is afraid of Refugee Men?', illustrates how being a young man in military age and in good health is often presented by far right politicians as being incompatible with the need of humanitarian protection and is used in the rhetoric of invasion.

⁴⁰ The UN convention (1951) defines a 'refugee' as a person who '...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion...'.⁴¹

⁴¹ In Italy, this process entails a first instance procedure, in which the Territorial Commissions for the Recognition of International Protection (Commissioni territoriali per il riconoscimento della protezione internazionale) interviews the applicant (Bove 2017); and a subsequent judiciary appeal if a negative decision is issued by the Commission (Bove 2017). Three different forms of international protection might be granted: refugee status, subsidiary protection, and permit on humanitarian grounds (Bove 2017).

and flight' (Langellier 2010, 70). At this juncture, what happened to individuals not conforming to the canonical narrative of the 'genuine refugee'? Is there any room for subaltern voices to enact some sort of 'resistance' narrative contesting the representations and moral imperatives imposed by the dominant narrative (Fivush 2010)?

My goal here is to study the performance of masculinity in the context of refugee stories; that is, the ways in which participants position themselves as 'men' within their narratives. Narratives are stories that define who we are in time and place and in relation to others (Fivush 2010). Storytelling can be intended as performance (Langellier 2010, Riessman 2008) situated and accomplished dialogically (Langellier and Peterson 2004) with an audience.⁴² I assigned myself the role of immediate audience but I also took into account the wider audience to which these narratives, being embedded in the refugee regime, are subjected to.⁴³ Given that for asylum seekers storytelling most of the times concerns a negotiation of what is the safest thing to say (Jackson 2013), I am also interested in exploring how participants engage with gender implications of the 'genuine refugee' narrative around vulnerability, victimhood and agency.

In order to do this, I will specifically focus on one particular segment of the journey – the crossing of the desert to Libya – which is universally described by media, international organizations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as one of the most deadly migration routes (Kingsley 2015, Unicef 2017). Here, people on the move are exposed to extreme weather conditions and multiple abuses (Amnesty 2017) from armed groups, people smugglers, criminal gangs and militias. Two cases, of Hakeem and David, were selected among life history interviews collected during my doctoral research fieldwork in Sicily with asylum seekers, refugees and international protection holders. They were selected as they both share a general thematic interest (Riessman 2008) in presenting the experience of the desert crossing as a basis to make claim about their manhood rather than to present themselves as vulnerable victims.

⁴² A dialogic-performative narrative approach to data analysis was applied, influenced by the work of Riessman (2008, 2003) and Langellier and Peterson (2004). The approach incorporates elements of thematic and structural approaches with a dialogic-performative framework (Riessman 2008); what is said/how is it said is interrogated together with 'who' an utterance may be directed to, 'when', and 'why', that is, for what purposes (Riessman 2008, 105). Hakeem and David were interviewed by the researcher using the life history method; they were asked to narrate their stories starting from their lives back home to their resettlement in Sicily. The performance of the narrative of desert crossing to Libya was analysed in relation to the broader interview (both in terms of structure and content), the intersubjective construction of meaning between interviewer and interviewee and the 'genuine refugee' public narrative. Primary attention was given to: a) the plot of the story – including ordering/sequence, turning points and the selected genre, b) positioning of the participant in the story as a character, and c) positioning of secondary characters in relation to the participant; d) positioning of different audiences by the narrator. All the information that might directly identify the informants were removed, omitted or modified, including key components of research design such as sampling criteria (i.e. nationality), participants' location and identity of gatekeepers. Pseudonyms were used instead of real names. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form prior to being interviewed.

⁴³ This is because the refugee's story told at the asylum hearing becomes a yardstick against which subsequent versions will be measured (Kirmayer 2003).

Narratives of the Desert

Hakeem and David are both West African asylum seekers residing in Sicily at the time of the interview;⁴⁴ they both entered Libya after the collapse of Gaddafi's regime, undertaking the same desert route from Niger. Hakeem is a 24-year-old single man who travelled alone and identifies as a Muslim; he left his country after being wrongly imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. David, who undertook the journey with his wife, is in his thirties and identifies as a Christian; he left his home country due to the generalised violence which made him and his family fear for their lives. In terms of their socioeconomic position, David comes from a middle class, urban background while Hakeem is the first male son of farmers. For both of them, the refugee experience has represented a journey to 'declassification',⁴⁵ not only in terms of their extreme impoverishment, but also in terms of loss of economic, social, cultural, symbolic and human capital (Van Hear 2006). In this regard, the drastic changes men face as a result of forced migration, of course, affect their masculinity also in terms of the perceived threat of 'feminization.' In her study of masculinities in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Desiree Lwambo cites a participant's quote: 'before the war, I was a man' to point out how the armed conflict led to the emasculation of male farmers once they were unable to carry out their farming activities (Lwambo 2013). It is worth noting that the feminization of refugees, as argued by Hyndman and Giles, is not just a representational issue, but it also invests the material conditions of forced migration (Hyndman and Giles, 2011). Being unable to protect and provide for themselves and their families (Jaji 2009) during the flight and in refugee camps (Turner 1999), and being unable to behave as adults once they enter the asylum system – working, making decisions about their lives, forming stable families (Griffiths 2015), the asylum seeking condition can be a source of shame and stigma for men (Griffiths 2015). To emphasize the performative-narrative element is not to deny the 'materiality' of these experiences, which in the case of desert crossing entails exposure to highly traumatizing events;⁴⁶ to the contrary, the aim is to throw light upon the ways in which narratives mediate, and therefore make meaning of these events through the act of storytelling; here, with regard to masculinity, narrative becomes a site of exploration of the complex cultural conflicts (Langellier 1999) that gender performing embodies at the intersection of real-life experience, discourse and subjectivity.

The story of Hakeem is very common among asylum seekers in Sicily. It is a story of a solitary journey undertaken by a young man that has to face many difficulties and challenges to finally reach safety in Italy: the flight from his country, where he managed to escape police custody; the escape at night across the border like a fugitive; the wandering across West African countries in search of jobs. At one point, some friend suggested Hakeem to go Libya where there seemed to be more plentiful opportunities to make money. The friend was right, Libya is a place where a man on the move can easily find jobs, but the cost, according to Hakeem, was high. He describes Libya as a

⁴⁴ Fieldwork took place from September 2016 to May 2017 in Sicily.

⁴⁵ I acknowledge that this concept was suggested by Tereza Kuldova in one of her comments on earlier draft of this article.

⁴⁶ Indeed, I am convinced that underestimating the materiality of these traumatic experiences, and their consequences on participant's lives, would be profoundly unethical.

‘terrifying’ place and he uses a very powerful metaphor of ‘a well’: ‘if you enter there, you will never come back...’ This metaphor illustrates a theme which is very common in narratives of people fleeing through Libya: the impossibility to go back due to the risks associated to desert crossing. Risks that, according to Hakeem, we do not perceive in Europe, seeing only what happens to people on the move in the Mediterranean Sea. Hakeem recounts how he spent five days on a pickup truck in the Sahara, after the driver got lost in the dunes. This was too much: being without water or food, they feared for their lives. Once in Libya, Hakeem had to face more adversities. In Qatrun, black migrants are a target of violence and exploitation by rebel groups, militiamen, and gang members; Hakeem starts thinking about going back but the possibility of re-entering the Sahara was too scary: ‘I was always thinking how to go back, but the Sahara, I was so afraid.’ Being unable to go back, he can only go forward. He decided to move to Sebha, where he thought he would find a better situation. He was wrong. Once there he finds himself in the middle of tribal fighting. Guns and militia are everywhere and migrants find themselves living in overcrowded compounds. It is here that he begins to feel ‘disappointment’ about his condition of being a refugee in Libya.

What for Hakeem was a ‘well’, is in David’s narrative represented as the Biblical cursed land. ‘Desert is a cursed land! In the Bible! You know that the desert is a cursed land! Whereby you can’t find any living thing! You understand?’ David recalls how the journey through the desert is lonely and marked by a desperate individualism with no room for solidarity or compassion. ‘When you are embarking on a journey, that’s why I said your brother will be your enemy! When you are embarking on such journey, passing through the desert, there’s no brother!’

Here, everything can happen to black travellers. Smugglers and rebel groups have the power of life and death over those who are fleeing. Drivers are defined as ‘criminals’ that constantly rob, beat, and kidnap people on the move. The pickup truck would stop in the middle of the desert and they would be searched for money. Men would be searched even in their anus. That is how David lost all the money he had. Women would be raped in front of everybody with no possibility for men to intervene. Traveling with his wife, David managed to ‘protect’ her by making her wear typical Muslim clothing, even though they were Christian, after the advice of his ‘gate man’. ‘You have to adapt in every situation you find yourself. Just to make ... you understand? So my wife was dressed like them!’, said David. Then, he recounted the experience of witnessing human traffickers’ brutality towards female travellers:

‘I told my wife you see what our girls are passing through? – a girl said – ‘I wanna go back!’ How come you will go back? How can you go back? It’s not done! You can’t go back, you have to face! You have to face it! You understand? For what for whatever!’

This introductory part of both narrative performances seems to be perfectly aligned with the ‘genuine refugee’ narrative, conveying the primary message of vulnerability, hardship and exposure to dangers, and subsequently the impossibility of coming back, associated with the journey. However, things change when participants locate themselves as ‘men’ within these narratives. The episode of David’s wife wearing Muslim clothing is

a good example; here, David wants to illustrate his value as a husband who is able to 'protect' his wife, distancing himself from other travellers who are instead, in David's words, not as much 'oriented'. He also implies how thanks to his capacities he was able to outsmart the brute forces of human traffickers.

Crossing of the Desert as a Gendered Enterprise

Once asked to locate themselves as men in these narratives of desert, the gender dimension of the crossing enterprise becomes very clear. First of all, because of the continued exposure to hardship and danger that involves cultural discourse on masculinity, toughness and strength. Secondly, due to the fact that human traffickers, who have the power of life and death over black travellers, are all men. This creates a specific dynamic where masculinity becomes central to framing power relations and hierarchy among men and with women. In both Hakeem and David's narratives of the desert, smugglers and armed groups assume the role of the villains who perpetrate violence and abuse the black travellers. At the same time, fellow refugees are positioned in the story in terms on how they 'resist' hardship of the journey-including smugglers' abuses.

The crossing of the desert might be therefore seen as a moment of engagement (Connell 2005) with hegemonic masculinity's ideal. Hegemonic masculinity, although a contested concept (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), is to an extent useful when trying to denote – at least as a cultural ideal (Toerien and Durrheim 2001) – dominant forms of masculinity prevailing in any given context, both in relation to other masculinities and to women. Hegemonic masculinity tends to be equated with dominance, control, strength and authority (Andersson 2008). In line with existing literature on rites of passage that highlights how migration can become an opportunity to signify masculinity (Monsutti 2007, Boehm 2008, Choi 2018), in these narratives of desert, exposure to risk, dangers and traumatising experiences are contextualised to narrate tales of resistance and endurance rather than victimhood. Difficulties are regarded as 'beneficial' as through these the traveller may prove his manhood. Here, we could see how the whole experience of the desert journey to Libya is told as a gendered enterprise:

'Life is not always plain! You understand? You must endanger (encounter) some difficulties along! You understand? Before you be a man you must encounter difficulties! So I just believe you have to take these risks ... for you to get where ... will be beneficial to you! You understand? [inaudible] we must have that in mind! You understand? People knew Libya wasn't peaceful. But they still take, take the risk ... you understand?' (David).

Accordingly, Hakeem affirms that to succeed in the desert crossing one,

'has to be a man, have to be a soldier, a military, a soldier' and affirms 'You have to, you have to (act like a military) ... everyone would have to behave like this...because if you are not, you gonna lose (your life)'. When I ask why, he replies: '...because it's like, now, there's no woman, there's nobody. Everyone is thinking of himself, everyone is

now selfish ... because (you think) you're going to die ...
yes' (Hakeem).

The reference to military masculinity makes sense as soldiers are those who professionally engage in dangerous situations to prove their masculinity (Belkin 2012). At this juncture, the selected narrative genre clashes with the 'genuine' refugee narrative characterised by the continued retelling of 'tales of plight and flight' (Langellier 2010, 70), emerging more like a story of coming of age, or even of a hero's journey (Campbell 1993); in this genre, the boy acquires a new level of manhood through his ability to overcome hardship and dangers. This can be seen when Hakeem describes how asylum seeking men in Sicilian reception camps discuss their experience in the Sahara to compare their masculinities in terms of resistance and strength. Hakeem tells how some travellers will even exaggerate these traits in order to present themselves as 'more' manly: 'You are soldier ... you are (more) a man than me! Yeah, of course, you are (more) a man than me, you are a soldier ... [Inaudible] [laugh] Me, I face two days without water ... if someone tells me two weeks ... without water ... how can I believe it?' (Hakeem). Again, the desert crossing is narrated as a gendered enterprise in which masculinities are scrutinized, evaluated and put in hierarchy.

Performing Masculinity and Refugeeeness

Performing masculinity always requires a negotiation across discourses and different subject positions. Discourses, in this regard, can be understood as cultural resources (Toerien and Durrheim 2001) through which gendered selves are constructed (Brickell 2005) or performed. A relevant literature on men and victimhood (Åkerström, Burcar, and Wästerfors 2011, Burcar and Åkerström 2009, Andersson 2008) has shown how this can be creatively done by men in their narrative accounts. At this point, the refugee story becomes a privileged site not only to study masculinity, but also the capacity of subaltern, marginalised groups to confront, resist or contest dominant narratives (Langellier 2010). Recounting the circumstances of the journey, Hakeem chose the genre of a coming of age story. When asked to think about how the journey has changed him as a man, Hakeem said he acquired more patience, more understanding, more experience. A new level of maturity is achieved for a man who was just a young boy when he left home. Hakeem recalls how he did not have that kind of patience when he was at home. The journey, instead, made him more aware, self-disciplined and self-controlled. In this regard, the discourse around military masculinity is powerful as it provides Hakeem a structure to negotiate meaning about what happened to him. Hakeem sees himself as a refugee man who has dealt with many experiences and survived those; a 'man', finally, who managed to escape from that well.

Hakeem: ... [confused] this thing... encourage (me)... this thing; if I think about the journey think I feel happy.

Interviewer: Why?

Hakeem: That now, I've crossed ... whereby the way that I'm seeing in America, in Europe, in films fighting for themselves, in countries, I do [confused] that is like a gift to me, how escape from

that prison, how I make it up, and now I'm in Italy, having a better life in Italy, I'm very ... it's a big success to me ... I didn't think I'll be too proud of it because from that place I escaped, the hospital, that place ... it was terrible ... I was sick ... it was terrible ... so I feel very happy if I think about how I do I ever to do it ... how I managed.

Completing the journey, navigating multiple life threatening situations and risks, was presented as a 'big success' for Hakeem. Without denying his fears and acknowledging the burden of pain and suffering, Hakeem narrates a story of success. Through this narrative choice, he managed to present some sort of agency: escape from the prison, journey through Libya, arrival in Italy. Interestingly, he refers to Western movies, mostly Hollywood's military genre, and locates his experience within this imaginary where the protagonist 'fights for' his life.

In the case of David, the selected genre is more recognisably one of the hero's journey (Campbell 1993). This is exemplified in a highly dramatized moment (Langellier 2010) when David is on the boat a few minutes before it capsizes. Thinking he is going to die, he makes sense of all that he has been through since he left home:

'What I said "ah! If I die here"... I said "If I die here, I'm a hero!"... I said "If I die here, I'm a hero! I've tried!"... You understand? [Laugh] That was my thinking! You understand? I said if I die here, I'm hero, because nobody is going to know I die here... you understand? But to me! Wherever I'll be! I am hero because it's not easy to pass through the desert...! If you cannot sustain the desert ... there's no way you sustain the water! But if you can sustain the desert, you sustain the water ... you understand? So I said I'm a hero, because I've heard of Sahara, in the Bible! Cursed land! And I heard of the Mediterranean Sea! And this is where we are! [Inaudible]...I'm hero if I die here!' (David).

The 'before you be a man you must encounter difficulties' finally finds its conclusion on the waves of the Mediterranean Sea: through the journey David sees himself as a hero who managed to survive multiple difficulties and risks. The reference to the Biblical view of the desert as a 'cursed land' clarify which cultural template is cited by David. The Bible provides many examples of a hero's journey, such as Moses (Wilson 2013). Here strength, wisdom, honour, solidarity, fertility, and marriage are seen as keys to masculinity (Wilson 2013, 341). These themes are clearly recognizable in David's account. An indicative example is how he narrates the terrible tales of the smugglers' abuses to refugee women in order to mark them as godless. This narrative choice aims at presenting himself as the opposite: a family man with strict moral and religious codes.

This choice of the hero-soldier as the idealized symbol of masculinity is a monomyth (Campbell 1993) common to many cultures and across time (Sullivan and Venter 2005), from Ulysses to Vin Diesel. Whitehead views the Hero as the ubiquitous and exemplary symbol of manhood, characterised by a common core of transcendental courage in the face of danger (Whitehead 2005). There is no doubt that through this imaginary

positioning of the self (Wetherell and Edley 1999), both Hakeem and David are making a claim about their manhood despite and within the refugee experience. In the selected genre of coming of age story/hero's journey, masculinity is achieved and proved rather than annihilated. This narrative choice might be read as a form of contesting the gender implications of the 'genuine' refugee narrative as both the hero and the soldier are the antithesis of any emasculated, victimised subject. Through this narrative choice, participants also manage to not fall into the 'bogus asylum seeker' negative stereotype as the soldier-hero represents a purified ideal of masculinity (Dawson 1994).

At this point we should ask why this story was narrated this way. The reference to the hero-soldier seems to correspond to some sort of self-exalting strategy (Wetherell and Edley 1999). Through this heroic positioning (Wetherell and Edley 1999), in fact, David and Hakeem put themselves above all the other men (and women) in the narrative performance (including the audience). I view this as a response to the masculine anxiety, namely, the fear of a collapse in self-identity as a man (Whitehead 2005) produced by the refugee experience, including the emasculating and infantilising aspects associated to the asylum system (Griffiths 2015). Refugees and asylum seeking men find themselves navigating complex dynamics of shame (Kabesh 2013) and stigma (Jackson 2013) associated with the loss of masculine status, at the intersection of class, gender and race. Hakeem, for example, recalls how the flight deprived him of his bright future as the first male son of the family, the one who was going to be in charge of the family business after his father death.

Interviewer: Do you miss your country sometimes?

Hakeem: Not sometimes, that's always!

Interviewer: Always...

Hakeem: I have to be at home! Because I have things to control!

Interviewer: What kind of things?

Hakeem: I have things to work there! I have to do my life! People, I have people to work for me! Not people I work for, people, people pay me!

In this extract, Hakeem expresses his frustration over the asylum seeking condition. Now, he finds himself working, often being exploited, for other (white) men in Sicily while in his farm he would have 'people working for him.' When he says 'I have things to control!' he is precisely reclaiming his masculine status, lost as a result of the flight; but he is also contesting the emasculating aspect of the refugee system, where asylum seekers experience a lack of control over their lives, being unable to work and relying only on state aid. The nostalgia for his home is immediately reconnected to his masculinity. At home, Hakeem felt in control and with a purpose due to his position as a firstborn male son in the family. In Sicily, he faces severe marginalisation. For David, the loss of masculine status is connected to his socio-economic status and his capacity of 'protecting and providing for' his wife. He aims to reclaim the role of head of the family,

dangerously challenged by the forced migration experience, by showing that his capability of taking care of his wife in the context of the desert crossing. Later in the journey, however, before reaching Italy, the two will be separated and this will create a great sense of loss and failure in David.

These power struggles across masculinity become particularly visible by looking at the relationship between narrator and audience. Issues of power are embedded in all research relationships (Hugman, Pittaway, and Bartolomei 2011) but they are particularly challenging in the field of forced migration. Being a white Sicilian native interviewing black asylum seekers in Sicily, it is very important to acknowledge the relations of power that narratives inhabit and create (Forman 2006). At this juncture, David, who is older than me, uses a paternalistic approach, maybe to respond to some sort of dynamic at the intersection of masculinity, class, age and race. For him it is also very important to clarify that thanks to his education he is capable of not only understanding but also evaluating what I am doing. That is why he would often refer to me using expressions such as 'if you carry out a proper research' or adding 'you understand?' at the end of each sentence. His style of talk and gestures would convey a message of maturity, masculine competence and wisdom as he was trying to kindly educate me on research, life and marriage. On the other hand, Hakeem aims at demonstrating that he is different from other fellow asylum seekers who did not want to be interviewed, clarifying that he perfectly understands the reason why I am conducting this research and its relevance. Hakeem was also the only participant across the whole fieldwork experience who asked to see my LSE badge as proof of identification during informed consent negotiation. Again, both participants want to convey notions of masculine competence, and, most importantly, agency. This interrogation of the teller/audience relationship in the wider interview situation provides a few more insights on the performance of masculinity in the context of the desert crossing narratives. Presenting themselves as agentic subjects,⁴⁷ the refugee journey is reconfigured as an arena in which the masculine status, once lost as a result of the flight, can be regained through the performance of a heroic masculine self, capable of resisting adversities and sufferings. At this juncture, participants' culture and habitus (Bourdieu 2001) play a crucial role. This is quite evident in David's story where the tactic to 'resist' the 'genuine' refugee narrative is the interpellation of a traditional discourse of masculinity, that is, the Biblical hero's journey. Given that the primary aim of narration is to provide a sense of coherence, order and meaning to fragmentary events (Kirmayer 2003), the reference to a traditional discourse of masculinity seems to offer a clear structure to negotiate what has happened, the archetypal monomyth (Campbell 1993) of the 'hero-soldier'; around this template, participants reconcile profound questions about identity, self, and traumatic experiences (Kirmayer 2003). This can be particularly seen through the position of the villain in the story; the image of the hero is dependent on the villain (Whitehead 2005). In the case of these narratives of desert, the villains are the smugglers/armed groups inhabiting Libya no man's land. The villain and hero are complementary figures who are bound together by a common ideology of masculinity

⁴⁷ It is acknowledged that one of the main existential functions of storytelling is to provide a sense of agency, especially in disempowering circumstances, as illustrated by the seminal work of Jackson (2013). The issue, here is how this is done contingently through storytelling. In the cases of Hakeem and David, masculinity seems to offer a structure to negotiate agency across public and private meanings (Jackson 2013).

(Andersson 2008). This positioning might help David to resolve the victim/perpetrator dichotomy; as suggested by Kjerstin Andersson, in fact, in the fight between the hero and the villain ‘there is no victim’ (Andersson 2008, 139).

Conclusion

The two stories presented provide some insights into the complex process of performing masculinity in narratives of forced migration. First of all, they underline the difference between how we talk about asylum seeking and refugee men, and how they talk about themselves and their experience.

These two interviews clearly show the relevance of masculinity in making sense of the journey. The crossing of the desert to Libya is narratively constructed as a gendered enterprise that men on the move undertake. Due to the difficulties and hardship associated with the journey, including loss of masculine status as a result of the flight, these enterprises might also be perceived as moment where masculinities are scrutinised, proved and regained through the performance of a heroic masculine self. In this regard, the arrival in Italy is narrated as an accomplishment not only in terms of safety and possibility of asylum, but also for their manhood. Both Hakeem and David feel they have demonstrated something to themselves and to their audiences exalting qualities they ascribe to their masculinity, such as endurance, courage, self-discipline, and self-reliance. These characteristics allow participants to locate themselves as ‘men’, not as passive or vulnerable victims, in their narratives of forced migration.

Two images, one of the soldier and another one of the hero, are presented as imaginary positioning of the self (Wetherell and Edley 1999). The selected genre of coming of age/hero’s journey seems to resolve performative tensions around masculinity/refugeeness, resisting, or at least contesting, the gendered implications of the ‘genuine’ refugee narrative, yet without falling into the ‘bogus asylum seeker’ negative stereotype. In this regard, participants’ heroic positioning might be regarded as a response to the fear of a collapse in self-identity as a man (Whitehead, 2005) produced by the refugee experience; it might also be seen as a way to navigate the victim/perpetrator dichotomy associated with exposure to highly traumatizing experiences. In absence of other opportunities, the monomyth (Campbell 1993) of the masculine hero-soldier might be the only available, even though significantly inadequate, strategy to reconcile profound questions about self, masculine identity, and vulnerability. In this regard, refugee policies toward men need to fully address gendered implications of forced migration and asylum, as it is advocated for refugee women (Freedman 2012). According to the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) managed by the Ministry of the Interior in partnership with local authorities, 86,6% of their adult beneficiaries are men⁴⁸ (Caldarozzi et al. 2017, 37). The number increases significantly if we also take into account unaccompanied minors. At the moment, however, gender is never regarded as a key factor in planning interventions and programmes toward asylum seeking and refugee men. In this context, a new approach is strongly needed; in particular, when dealing with asylum seekers and refugees’ exposure to trauma, loss and marginalization or in the context of help seeking (Addis and Mahalik 2003); here, discourse of

⁴⁸ This figure reaches almost 100% for some West African countries, such as Gambia, Senegal and Mali (Caldarozzi et al. 2017, 37).

masculinity ('take it like a man') seems to powerfully operate making their experiences invisible and their voices silenced.

Lastly, these two narratives also offer an opportunity to deconstruct more broadly the politics of storytelling (Hammack and Cohler 2011, Hammack 2011, Jackson 2013) that frames refugee determination procedure. What happens to asylum seeking men who contest/resist the 'genuine refugee' narrative in the context of asylum hearings? Do they have less opportunity to be granted asylum? Further research must investigate the role of masculinity discourse in the asylum deliberation process and its political implications on people's claims.

- Addis, Michael E, and James R Mahalik.** 2003. "Men, masculinity, and the contexts of help seeking." *American psychologist* 58 (1):5.
- Åkerström, Malin, Veronika Burcar, and David Wästerfors.** 2011. "Balancing Contradictory Identities—Performing Masculinity in Victim Narratives." *Sociological Perspectives* 54 (1):103-124. doi: 10.1525/sop.2011.54.1.103.
- Amnesty.** 2017. "Libya-Country Overview." Accessed August 17. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/libya/>.
- Andersson, Kjerstin.** 2008. "Constructing young masculinity: A case study of heroic discourse on violence." *Discourse & Society* 19 (2):139-161.
- Andersson, Ruben.** 2014. *Illegality, inc. : clandestine migration and the business of bordering Europe*: Oakland, California : University of California Press.
- Barker, Gary, and Christine Ricardo.** 2017. "Young men and the construction of masculinity in Sub-Saharan Africa : implications for HIV/AIDS, conflict, and violence." (32712):1.
- Barnett, Laura.** 2002. "Global Governance and the Evolution of the International Refugee Regime." *International Journal of Refugee Law* 14, no. 2 and 3. 238-62.
- BBC.** 2015. David Cameron urges EU countries to follow UK's lead on refugees. September 14. Accessed February 28, 2018 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34242346>
- Belkin, Aaron.** 2012. *Bring me men: military masculinity and the benign facade of American empire, 1898-2001*. London: Hurst.
- Boehm, Deborah A.** 2008. "'Now I Am a Man and a Woman!': Gendered Moves and Migrations in a Transnational Mexican Community." *Latin American Perspectives* 35 (1):16-30. doi: 10.1177/0094582x07310843.
- Bove, Caterina.** 2017. AIDA Country Report: Italy. 2016 Update edited by European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE): Association for Legal Studies on Immigration (ASGI). Accessed August 29. <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy>
- Brickell, Chris.** 2005. "Masculinities, Performativity, and Subversion." *Men and Masculinities* 8 (1):24-43. doi: 10.1177/1097184X03257515.
- Burcar, Veronika.** 2013. "Doing masculinity in narratives about reporting violent crime: young male victims talk about contacting and encountering the police." *Journal of Youth Studies* 16 (2):172-190. doi: 10.1080/13676261.2012.704992.
- Burcar, Veronika, and Malin Åkerström.** 2009. "Negotiating a Victim Identity: Young Men as Victims of Violence." <http://dx.doi.org/>

- 10.1080/14043850902815073. doi: Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention, Vol. 10, No. 1, May 2009, pp. 37–54.
- Caldarozzi, Alessandra, Baldoni, Emiliana, and Monia Giovannetti.** 2017. Rapporto annuale Sprar. Atlante Sprar 2016. Roma: Sistema di protezione per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati (SPRAR). Accessed February 18 <http://www.sprar.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Atlante-Sprar-2016-2017-RAPPORTO-leggero.pdf>
- Campbell, Joseph.** 1993. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. London: Fontana.
- Carpenter, Charli R.** 2005. "Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups": Gender, Strategic Frames and the Protection of Civilians as a Transnational Issue." *International Studies Quarterly* 49:295–334.
- Charsley, K., and H. Wray.** 2015. "Introduction: The Invisible (Migrant) Man." *Men and Masculinities* 18 (4):403-423. doi: 10.1177/1097184X15575109.
- Choi, Susanne Y. P.** 2018. "Migration, masculinity, and family." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*:1-17. doi: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1427562.
- Connell, R. W., and James W. Messerschmidt.** 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender and Society* 19 (6):829-859. doi: 10.1177/0891243205278639.
- Connell, Raewyn.** 2005. *Masculinities*. 2nd ed. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Crepet, A., F. Rita, A. Reid, W. Van Den Boogaard, P. Deiana, G. Quaranta, A. Barbieri, F. Bongiorno, and S. Di Carlo.** 2017. "Mental health and trauma in asylum seekers landing in Sicily in 2015: a descriptive study of neglected invisible wounds." *Conflict and Health* 11 (1):1-11. doi: 10.1186/s13031-017-0103-3.
- Datta, Kavita, Cathy McIlwaine, Joanna Herbert, Yara Evans, Jon May, and Jane Wills.** 2009. "Men on the Move: Narratives of Migration and Work among Low-paid Migrant Men in London." *Social & Cultural Geography* 10 (8): 853–873.10.1080/14649360903305809
- Dawson, Graham.** 1994. *Soldier Heroes : British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities*. New York: Routledge.
- Eastmond, Marita.** 2007. "Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20 (2):248-264. doi: 10.1093/jrs/fem007.
- Fassin, Didier.** 2001. "The biopolitics of otherness: Undocumented foreigners and racial discrimination in French public debate." *Anthropology Today* 17 (1):3-7. doi: 10.1111/1467-8322.00039.
- Fivush, R.** 2010. "Speaking silence: the social construction of silence in autobiographical and cultural narratives." *Memory* 18 (2):88-98. doi: 10.1080/09658210903029404.
- Forman, Murray.** 2001. "'Straight Outta Mogadishu': Prescribed Identities and Performative Practices among Somali Youth in North American High Schools (1)." *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* (5).
- Freedman, Jane.** 2012. "Taking Gender Seriously in Asylum and Refugee Policies." In *Global Migration: Challenges in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Kavita R. Khory, 45-64. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

- Griffiths, Melanie.** 2015. "'Here, Man Is Nothing!'" Gender and Policy in an Asylum Context." *Men and Masculinities* 18 (4):468-488.
- Haddox, Susan E.** 2016. "Masculinity Studies of the Hebrew Bible: The First Two Decades." *Currents in Biblical Research* 14 (2):176-206.
- Hammack, Phillip L.** 2008. "Narrative and the cultural psychology of identity." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 12 (3):222-247.
- Hammack, Phillip L, and Bertram J Cohler.** 2011. "Narrative, identity, and the politics of exclusion: Social change and the gay and lesbian life course." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 8 (3):162-182.
- Hammack, Phillip L.** 2011. "Narrative and the politics of meaning." *Narrative Inquiry* 21 (2):311-318. doi: 10.1075/ni.21.2.09ham.
- Hugman, Richard, Eileen Pittaway, and Linda Bartolomei.** 2011. "When 'Do No Harm' Is Not Enough: The Ethics of Research with Refugees and Other Vulnerable Groups." *British Journal of Social Work* 41 (7):1271-1287. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcr013.
- Hyndman, Jennifer, and Wenona Giles.** 2011. "Waiting for What? The Feminization of Asylum in Protracted Situations." *Gender, Place & Culture* 18, no. 3: 361-79
- Jackson, M.** 2013. *The politics of storytelling. Variations on a theme by Hannah Arendt*, 2nd edn. Copenhagen: Museum Musculanum Press University of Copenhagen.
- Jacobsen, Karen, and Loren B. Landau.** 2003. "The Dual Imperative in Refugee Research: Some Methodological and Ethical Considerations in Social Science Research on Forced Migration." *Disasters* 27 (3):185-206. doi: 10.1111/1467-7717.00228.
- Jaji, Rosemary.** 2009. "Masculinity on Unstable Ground: Young Refugee Men in Nairobi, Kenya." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22 (2):177-194. doi: 10.1093/jrs/fep007.
- Johnson, Heatherl.** 2011. "Click to Donate: visual images, constructing victims and imagining the female refugee." *Third World Quarterly* 32 (6):1015-1037. doi: 10.1080/01436597.2011.586235.
- Kabesh, Amal Treacher.** 2013. Postcolonial masculinities : emotions, histories and ethics: Farnham, Surrey, England : Ashgate.
- Kingsley, Patrick.** 2015. "On the road in Agadez: desperation and death along a Saharan smuggling route." *The Guardian*, November 9. Accessed August 29, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/09/on-the-road-in-agadez-desperation-and-death-along-a-saharan-smuggling-route>
- Kirmayer, Laurence J.** 2002. "The refugee's predicament." *L'Evolution psychiatrique* 67 (4):724-742. doi: 10.1016/S0014-3855(02)00166-4.
- Kirmayer, Laurence J.** 2003. "Failures of imagination: The refugee's narrative in psychiatry." *Anthropology & Medicine* 10 (2):167-185. doi: 10.1080/1364847032000122843.
- Lacroix, Marie.** 2004. "Canadian refugee policy and the social construction of the refugee claimant subjectivity: Understanding refugeeeness." *Journal of refugee studies* 17 (2):147-166.
- Langellier, Kristin M.** 1999. Personal narrative, performance, performativity: Two or three things I know for sure. *Text and performance quarterly*, 19(2):125-144.

- Langellier, Kristin M.** 2010. "PERFORMING SOMALI IDENTITY IN THE DIASPORA: 'Wherever I go I know who I am'." *Cultural Studies* 24 (1):66-94. doi: 10.1080/09502380903200723.
- Langellier, Kristin, and Eric Peterson.** 2004. *Storytelling In Daily Life: Performing Narrative*: Temple University Press.
- Luker, Trish.** 2015. "Performance Anxieties: Interpellation of the Refugee Subject in Law." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 30 (1):91-107. doi: 10.1017/cls.2014.13.
- Lwambo, Desiree.** 2013. "'Before the War, I Was a Man': Men and Masculinities in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo." *Gender & Development*, 21(1): 47-66.
- McKinnon, Sara L.** 2008. Unsettling resettlement: Problematizing "Lost Boys of Sudan" resettlement and identity. *Western Journal of Communication*, 72(4): 397-414.
- Monsutti, Alessandro.** 2007. "Migration as a Rite of Passage: Young Afghans Building Masculinity and Adulthood in Iran." *Iranian Studies* 40 (2):167-185. doi: 10.1080/00210860701276183.
- Musarò, Pierluigi.** 2013. "'Africans' vs. 'Europeans': humanitarian narratives and the moral geography of the world." *Sociologia della Comunicazione*.
- Musarò, Pierluigi.** 2017. "Mare Nostrum: the visual politics of a military-humanitarian operation in the Mediterranean Sea." *Media, Culture & Society* 39, (1): 11-28.
- Phillips, Coretta, and Rod Earle.** 2010. "Reading Difference Differently?" *The British Journal of Criminology* 50 (2):360-378. doi: 10.1093/bjc/azp081.
- Politi, James.** 2018. Berlusconi hardens immigration stance after weekend shooting. *Financial Times*, February 5. Accessed February 28 <https://www.ft.com/content/3a3e1902-0a8c-11e8-8eb7-42f857ea9f09>
- Pupavac, Vanessa.** 2008. "Refugee Advocacy, Traumatic Representations and Political Disenchantment." *Government and Opposition* 43 (2):270-292. doi: 10.1111/j.1477-7053.2008.00255.x.
- Rich, Adrienne.** 1984. "Notes towards a politics of location." *Feminist postcolonial theory: A reader*:29-42.
- Riessman, Catherine Kohler.** 2003. "Performing identities in illness narrative: masculinity and multiple sclerosis." *Qualitative Research* 3 (1):5-33. doi: 10.1177/146879410300300101.
- Riessman, Catherine Kohler.** 2008. *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Rubin, Herbert J., and Rubin, Irene.** 2012. *Qualitative Interviewing : The Art of Hearing Data*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE
- Scheibelhofer, Paul.** 2007. "His-stories of Belonging: Young Second-Generation Turkish Men in Austria." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 28 (3):317-330. doi: 10.1080/07256860701429733.
- Scheibelhofer, Paul.** 2017. "'It won't work without ugly pictures': images of othered masculinities and the legitimisation of restrictive refugee-politics in Austria." *NORMA* 12 (2):96-111. doi: 10.1080/18902138.2017.1341222.
- Seckinelgin, Hakan.** 2012. *International security, conflict, and gender : 'HIV/AIDS is another war'*, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge.

- Somers, Margaret.** 1994. The narrative constitution of identity: A relational and network approach. *Theory and Society*, 23(5):605–649.
- Strickland, Patrick.** 2016. Why is the world afraid of young refugee men? Al Jazeera, June 20. Accessed February 28, 2018 <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/05/world-afraid-young-refugee-men-160530110614219.html>
- Sullivan, Michael P, and Anne Venter.** 2005. "The hero within: Inclusion of heroes into the self." *Self and Identity* 4 (2):101-111.
- Szczepanikova, Alice.** 2009. "Beyond 'helping': gender and relations of power in non-governmental assistance to refugees." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 11 (3):19.
- Szczepanikova, Alice.** 2010. "Performing refugeehood in the Czech Republic: gendered depoliticisation through NGO assistance." *Gender, Place & Culture* 17 (4):461-477. doi: 10.1080/0966369X.2010.485838.
- Szczepanikova, Alice.** 2011. "From the Right of Asylum to Migration Management: The Legal–Political Construction of 'a Refugee' in the Post-Communist Czech Republic." *Europe-Asia Studies* 63 (5):789-806. doi: 10.1080/09668136.2011.576022.
- Toerien, Merran, and Kevin Durrheim.** 2001. "Power through Knowledge: Ignorance and the 'Real Man'." *Feminism & Psychology* 11 (1):35-54. doi: 10.1177/0959353501011001003.
- Ticktin, Miriam.** 2016. "Thinking Beyond Humanitarian Borders." *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 83, no. 2: 255-271. Accessed March 1, 2018 <https://muse.jhu.edu/>
- Turner, Simon.** 1999. "Angry Young Men in Camps: Gender, Age and Class Relations among Burundian Refugees in Tanzania." *New Issue in Refugee Research*. Working Paper No. 9. Geneva: UNHCR
- Unicef.** 2017. "A deadly journey for children: The Central Mediterranean migration route." UNICEF Child Alert. UNICEF. Accessed August 29. https://www.unicef.org/media/media_94941.html
- United Nations General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 1951. United Nations, Treaty Series, (189): 137, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees** (n.d.) Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Mandate. Accessed March 2, 2018 <http://www.unhcr.org/4317223c9.pdf>
- Van Hear, Nicholas.** 2006. "I went as far as my money would take me': Conflict, forced migration and class". In *Forced migration and global processes: A view from forced migration studies*, Edited by: Crepeau, Francois, Nakache, Delphine and Collyer, Michael. 125–158. Lanham, MA: Lexington/Rowman and Littlefield.
- Wetherell, Margaret.** 1998. "Positioning and Interpretative Repertoires: Conversation Analysis and Post-Structuralism in Dialogue." *Discourse & Society* 9 (3): 387-412. doi: 10.1177/0957926598009003005.
- Wetherell, Margaret, and Nigel Edley.** 1999. "Negotiating hegemonic masculinity: Imaginary positions and psycho-discursive practices." *Feminism & psychology* 9 (3):335-356.

- Wetherell, Margaret, and Nigel Edley.** 2014. "A discursive psychological framework for analyzing men and masculinities." *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 15 (4): 355.
- Whitehead, Antony.** 2005. "Man to Man Violence: How Masculinity May Work as a Dynamic Risk Factor." *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 44 (4):411-422. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2311.2005.00385.x.
- Whitehead, Stephen.** 2002. *Men and masculinities : key themes and new directions*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Wilson, Erin K., and Luca Mavelli.** 2016. "'Good Muslim/bad Muslim'and 'good refugee/bad refugee'narratives are shaping European responses to the refugee crisis." Religion and the Public Sphere (blog). December 6, 2016 <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionpublicsphere/>
- Wilson, Stephen Michael.** 2013. "The Male Coming-of-Age Theme in the Hebrew Bible."PhD Diss., Duke University.
- Zagor, Matthew.** 2014. "Recognition and Narrative Identities: Is Refugee Law Redeemable?" In *Allegiance and Identity in a Globalised World* , edited by Jenkins Fiona, Nolan Mark, Rubenstein Kim. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zetter, Roger.** 1991. "Labelling refugees: Forming and transforming a bureaucratic identity." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4 (1):39-62. doi: 10.1093/jrs/4.1.39.
- Zetter, Roger.** 2007. "More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20 (2):172-192. doi: 10.1093/jrs/fem011.

Marco Palillo is a PhD candidate at Department of Social Policy (LSE). His doctoral research explores how refugees and asylum seekers construct and enact masculinity through an analysis of their journey. His broader research interests include masculinities, intersectionality, critical race theory, gender theory, queer theory, sexuality, identity, qualitative research. Contact: m.palillo@lse.ac.uk

Acknowledgements The research for this article was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) through a PhD studentship. This research was reviewed and granted approval by LSE Research Ethics Committee. I am grateful to my PhD supervisors, Dr Coretta Phillips and Dr Hakan Seckinelgin for their constant guidance. I would also like to thank Dr Tereza Kuldova, Dr Flora Cornish, and Ms Rishita Nandagiri for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. In particular, I acknowledge Kuldova for her comments on masculinity and class in the context of the refugee experience. An initial draft of this article was presented at the 'Extreme Masculinities' International Conference, held in September 2017 at University of Vienna.