

Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century

By Amanda D. Lotz

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The emergence of "male-centered serials" such as The Shield, Rescue Me, and Sons Of Anarchy and the challenges these characters face in negotiating modern masculinities.

From the meth-dealing but devoted family man Walter White of AMC's *Breaking Bad*, to the part-time basketball coach, part-time gigolo Ray Drecker of HBO's *Hung*, depictions of male characters perplexed by societal expectations of men and anxious about changing American masculinity have become standard across the television landscape. Engaging with a wide variety of shows, including *The League*, *Dexter*, and *Nip/Tuck*, among many others, Amanda D. Lotz identifies the gradual incorporation of second-wave feminism into prevailing gender norms as the catalyst for the contested masculinities on display in contemporary cable dramas.

Examining the emergence of "male-centered serials" such as *The Shield*, *Rescue Me*, and *Sons of Anarchy* and the challenges these characters face in negotiating modern masculinities, Lotz analyzes how these shows combine feminist approaches to fatherhood and marriage with more traditional constructions of masculine identity that emphasize men's role as providers. She explores the dynamics of close male friendships both in groups, as in *Entourage* and *Men of a Certain Age*, wherein characters test the boundaries between the homosocial and homosexual in their relationships with each other, and in the dyadic intimacy depicted in *Boston Legal* and *Scrubs*. *Cable Guys* provides a much needed look into the under-considered subject of how constructions of masculinity continue to evolve on television.

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Editorial Review

Review
"Amanda Lotz impressively maps out important features of television's representations of men and shifting masculinities in the 21st century. Her careful analyses of these series makes this book an essential resource for anyone interested in television, gender, and culture."-Ron Becker,author of *Gay TV & Straight America*

"*Cable Guys* is essential reading for students and scholars working in television studies and in the gendered politics of representation. The book is clear enough to be accessible to an undergraduate audience, while it is also sufficiently subtle and illuminating to be satisfying to more advanced students and scholars.?"-*International Journal of Communication,Katherine Sender*

“Her examination of this topic provides a new frame of analysis for viewing gender on television. Rather than simply assuming a black and white dichotomy between hegemonic masculinity and feminized men, Lotz looks at these shows from a different angel that reveals the complexity of gender negotiation for men.”-Journal of American Culture

"Lotz explores modern visions of masculinity following third wave feminism and epitomized in the rhetoric of male protagonists in cable programming. Mostly eschewing networks’ depictions of problematized males, Lotz zeroes in on straight male one-on-one friendships, what she calls the ‘homosocial enclave of the male group,’ and a genre that particularly challenges male characters, the emerging ‘male centered-serials.’”-Choice

"*Cable Guys* is an incredible work that should further cement Lotz's place as a considerate yet comprehensive expert on media and gender studies. Her writing . . . oozes confidence, knowledge, and reflection for her themes and televised tales."-*PopMatters*

“Cable Guys is a remarkable book that will transform the way we think about both television and constructions of masculinity. This clear, well-written, and deeply engaged book refuses to generalize about masculinity and instead reveals the complexity of straight, white men on television. Covering a wide range of programs, from cable to broadcast television, Amanda Lotz offers us an indispensable resource for the fields of media studies, television studies and gender studies.”-Sarah Banet-Weiser,author of Authentic™

"Lotz (communication studies, Univ. of Michigan; *Redesigning Women: Television After the Network Era*) here explores how cable television is dramatizing contemporary American male masculinity. The author identifies and focuses on three narrative types: serials that emphasize the development of of a central male protagonist (e.g., *Breaking Bad; Dexter*), shows set in male enclaves (e.g., *Rescue Me; Entourage*), and stories featuring intimate male friendships (e.g., *Boston Legal; Nip/Tuck*). Lotz argues that these dramas depict straight, largely white men wrestling with what it means to be manly in today's post-second-wave feminism and in the context of rising queer visibility. She concludes that the shows' characters all struggle to combine old and new modes of manhood . . . . Lotz offers a concise and insightful analysis of the productions she does examine. Verdict: Scholars will value Lotz's contribution to media and masculinity studies, as will more casual viewers who enjoy watching cable television with a critical eye."-*Library Journal,*Anna J. Clutterbuck-Cook, Massachusetts Historical Soc. Lib., Boston

“Rather than simply assuming a black and white dichotomy between hegemonic masculinity and feminized

men, Lotz looks at these shows from a different angle that reveals the complexity of gender negotiation for men. […] Lotz's analysis provides a fresh look not only at the changes in television entertainment but also at the way that these changes have altered popular conceptions of manhood."-*Journal of American Culture*

About the Author
Amanda D. Lotz is Professor in the Departments of Communication Studies and Screen Arts and Cultures at the University of Michigan. She is the author of *The Television Will Be Revolutionized, Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century* (NYU Press), and *Redesigning Women: Television After the Network Era*, co-author of *Understanding Media Industries and Television Studies*, and editor of *Beyond Prime Time: Television Programming in the Post-Network Era*.

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