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Daubing the Drudges of Fury: Men, violence and the piety of the ‘hegemonic masculinity’ thesis.

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Abstract

A substantial body of empirical work suggests that young, economically marginalised males are the most likely perpetrators and victims of serious physical violence. Interpreting these findings in a historicised way that has been neglected by the criminological discourses of the moment suggests that physical violence has become an increasingly unsuccessful strategy in the quest for social power in liberal-capitalist societies. Although it has been displaced by symbolic violence as the principal domineering force in capitalism’s historical project, physical violence has not been genuinely discouraged but harnessed as a specialist practice in a pseudo-pacification process. From this perspective, violence has a complex relationship with liberal-capitalism. Can the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ help criminology to deal with this complexity and inform violence reduction strategies? This article argues that, in the context of pseudo-pacification, the notion that violent males ‘rework the themes’ of an institutionally powerful ‘hegemonic masculinity’ inverts and distorts the concept of hegemony, which for Gramsci was the self-affirming cultural production of the dominant political-economic class. Thus the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ tends to downplay political economy and class power, which suggests that it is too far removed from historical processes and material contexts to either justify the use of the term hegemony itself or explain the striking social patterns of male violence. This intellectual retreat is representative of a general political evacuation of capitalism’s global socio-economic processes, a move that is allowing sparsely regulated market forces to continue the economic insecurity, specialist roles and corresponding cultural forms that reproduce the traditional male propensity to physical violence.

Key Words

hegemony – masculinity – pseudo-pacification – neocapitalism – dimorphic violence

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Introduction: Scrutinising the terms of the ‘hegemonic masculinity’ discourse

The claim that men commit most acts of physical violence is possibly the nearest that criminology has come to producing an indisputable fact. There is now a measure of consensus in the discipline that men’s violence has undergone a real increase in the past three decades (James,1995; Levi,1997), or alternatively that more penetrative analyses are revealing a traditionally high level (Newburn and Stanko,1994). Working from this platform, criminology has made a major contribution to the placement of masculinity under the scrutiny of a number of critical standpoints, many of which have been influenced by varieties of feminism and profeminism. The intellectual tribunal emerging from this ‘gender turn’ has coincided with the gradual but seemingly irreversible erosion of the traditional male’s predominance in politics, culture and the labour market. For many commentators violence is a traditional masculine method of maintaining dominance and responding to challenges, and thus it follows that an upward trend in male violence is one of the clearest indicators that the masculine gender order is under threat and showing a ‘tendency to crisis’ (Ingham,1984; Connell 1987,1995; Brittan,1989; Kimmel,1987,1996).

In this climate of transition and crisis, the sociologist Bob Connell’s (1987,1995) notion of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ has become highly influential in the study of the relationship between men, masculinity and violence. Connell, aided by a number of collaborators in the general profeminist project (see Morgan,1992; Messerschmidt, 1993; Kimmel,1987,1996), has tried to support yet problematise the pivotal feminist claim that violence is an instrument of transhistorical male or ‘heteropatriarchal’ dominance and oppression in the gender order. His claim that ‘[a] structure of inequality on this scale is hard to imagine without violence [perpetrated by] the dominant gender who hold and use the means of violence’ (1995:83) is balanced by an awareness that, on the one hand, many acts of violence could be expressions of the continuity of that oppressive power or, on the other, reactions to its perceived discontinuity.

Connell’s introduction of the ‘threatened male’ into the discourse allows the totalising image of the transhistorically oppressive male to be juxtaposed against its vulnerable *alter ego*. He builds on this tension by claiming that a diversity of ‘subordinated’ masculinities shadows the traditional oppressive norm, offering men alternative gendered identities that can contest this norm in progressive ways. Following Gramsci (1971), he names the traditional, oppressive gender form ‘hegemonic’ because it utilises cultural production to reproduce ideologically its institutionalised dominance over ‘subordinated’ men as well as women (1995:78-79). This reinforces his earlier claim that both the gender *and* internal masculine orders are structured by ‘.... a historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity’ (1987: 184).

Summarising this complex position would risk oversimplification, but it does rest on the pivotal concept of ‘hegemony’. The Italian neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci reformulated this old term to mean the use of popular cultural production – texts, images and ideas – to engineer amongst the subordinate proletarian mass a fragile consensus that the bourgeoisie’s power, wealth and privilege was the product of ‘natural’ values, forces and circumstances. Thus hegemony helped to reproduce the class order by

incorporating the bulk of the working class *mentally and emotionally* into the dominant belief-system, preventing a conscious appraisal of their material exploitation and politico-cultural subjugation that might have led to the politics of social transformation. Gramsci furnished the intellectual world with a vital insight; how class and corporate power is no longer reproduced principally by crude, coercive means, but by the naturalising, legitimising and mystifying ideological production of institutions such as the state, the family, religion, art and mass media. The influence of this ideology on everyday life can be seen in practices such as politics, wage negotiations, social policies, family relationships, schooling and child-rearing.

According to Connell (1995), traditional males mobilise similar ideological techniques to reproduce their real dominance over women in the gender order and, more notably, over ‘subordinated masculinities’ in the masculine order. ‘Legal violence’ and ‘street violence’ combine with ‘economic discrimination’ to constitute a set of ‘.... quite material practices’ (1995:78) by means of which structures of dominance and subordination are enacted in real social and economic relations. Male-dominated cultural production ‘exalts’ these practices, giving men the impression that they have a legitimate right to call upon violence when it is deemed essential to the maintenance of the traditional order. In reality this often means in a brutal and arbitrary manner. This right has been distributed across the class order as one of a cluster of ‘patriarchal privileges’. Hegemonic cultural production, in conjunction with the recurring enacted practices that it encourages (Butler,1993), reproduces the belief that it is legitimate and natural for men to use violence as a means of oppressing women and less belligerent males. Thus male violence is the brutal core of a politico-cultural strategy that is deployed to sustain an illegitimate position of dominance. Men who intimidate or physically attack women, gay men or less assertive heterosexual men ‘.... usually feel they are entirely justified, that they are exercising a right authorised by an ideology of supremacy’ (Connell,1995:83). Whether or not they are involved directly as the ‘.... the frontline troops of patriarchy’ (1995:79), ‘complicit’ males in all class positions benefit from it because it distributes a ‘patriarchal dividend’ of privileged and legitimated entitlements throughout the traditional masculine order, one of which is the right to use violence. Thus what Messerschmidt (1993) labels ‘destructive masculinity’ can take its place as one of the hegemonic forms that dominate both the gender order and the social order.

Connell (1995) goes on to draw what could have been useful distinctions in the masculine order. He divides it roughly into three main groups, which bear some resemblance to those that make up the class structure. Firstly, the specialist producers and circulators of culture; secondly, the complicit, aggressive (but not necessarily violent) mainstream redeemers of the ‘patriarchal dividend’; and thirdly, the frequently violent ‘protest masculinities’ that inhabit the socio-economic margins. The members of this third group are the most likely to mobilise their entitlements to violence as a crude reaction to economic redundancy and the perceived threat of supersession by what they believe should be ‘subordinate’ gender forms.

However, although these formal distinctions give the impression that class divisions are not being entirely overlooked, they simply describe the differing ways in which class-based groups of men tend to ‘rework’ the same universal privileges and strategies of domination. The basic totalising premise is retained: real male powers and privileges are hegemonically reproduced and distributed in the form of a universal ‘patriarchal dividend’ that *permeates the class-divisions of the masculine order*. The central claim seems to be that traditional masculine culture has some sort of unifying, distributive property that overrides class divisions in order to maintain its dominant social position for the benefit of all traditional males.

However, Connell does not delve too deeply into the question of the *real value* that the privileged right to use intimidation and violence might carry, and whether it's enough to warrant such prodigious cultural production and a cherished place in the traditional male's inventory of power strategies. The debate on whether or not social power is based on abstract rights and beliefs is too expansive to discuss here, but suffice it to say that Pierre Bourdieu's (1984,1990) economic metaphor is possibly more convincing. For him, the main purpose of displaying, enacting and reproducing the customary beliefs, rights, practices and expressive capacities that make up symbolic and cultural capital is that not only can they aid the maintenance of a perceived dominant social position, but also that they can be transferred eventually into *economic capital*. Although this might elicit a cry of 'economic reductionism' from some temporarily in-vogue theorists of the 'cultural turn', this protest often throws a smokescreen over their own tendency to reduce analyses of social power to the much less convincing premise of domination for its own sake. At least Bourdieu's perspective furnishes us with an objective material purpose for the struggle over cultural privileges. If this is the case, does the specific privilege of using intimidation and violence allow men to redeem this 'patriarchal dividend' politically and economically, or does it limit them to the fleeting liminal satisfaction of wielding pointless, destructive force over others? If indeed a unified 'patriarchy' does exist as a real social power, then its 'dividends' must be in some real sense exchangeable across class divisions. Put simply, it must be possible for lower-class men to *cash them in* for some of the real privileges and benefits enjoyed by those men who – alongside many women and 'subordinated masculinities' – inhabit the higher class or occupational echelons. If profitable exchange is infrequent rather than routine, then, in the case of violence, the personal is quite possibly *not* very political.

Connell (1995) glosses over this question of material reward in two main ways. Firstly, he expresses the disparity of wealth between men and women in terms of a crude mean average income. This move ignores class divisions, not only allowing him to place a £3.60 per hour security guard or a £50 per night doorman in the same politico-economic category as a male billionaire, but also in a position of 'structural' dominance over a £300,000 per year female Q.C. or 'subordinated masculine' media executive. It also carries the tacit suggestion that, in the project of liberating homosexuality, a gay security guard might share mutual *political* interests with a gay media executive, an intellectual position in which the cultural politics of sex and gender override rather than 'intersect with' the economic politics of class, making his claim to give '....full weight to their class as well as their gender politics' (1995:75) sound rather hollow. If this statistical average were to be broken down, it would become quite obvious that it is heavily skewed by the vast fortunes owned by a very small number of men.

It's also difficult to see how the 'patriarchal privileges' enjoyed by the lower classes can be expressed even in purely *cultural* terms. How, for instance, could the notion that '.... [m]en gain a dividend from patriarchy in terms of honour, prestige and the right to command' (Connell,1995:82) be applied to the security guard, apart from the honour and prestige of wearing a peaked cap adorned with the firm's logo and the right to command his Alsatian dog? Connell, in an attempt to retain some notion of class, claims that the class and gender orders 'intersect' (1995:75). However, he seems reluctant to explain exactly how, or provide any thick description of everyday life in the nodes of intersection, preferring instead to illustrate his argument with rather rare examples of working-class masculinities that might be experiencing some form of 'gender vertigo' (1995:142). The inconspicuous majority – the comfortably heterosexual, quietly traditional and far less exotic young males who populate the streets, pubs and clubs of every Western town and city – are conveniently ignored.

Secondly, he fails to apply even this crude economic analysis to the *internal masculine order* itself, the very focus of his study. This exercise would furnish us with a rough sketch of the general economic class positions occupied by those masculinities that he posits as ‘culturally subordinated’ in the masculine order. However, as far as I know, no such research exists. Until it does we have very little idea of the offices of social power that these ‘subordinated’ forms might have held across the history of liberal-capitalism.

Although Connell’s notion of ‘protest’ highlights the overall frustration in lower-class locations, it doesn’t explain why these men would protest so forcefully over the loss of specific ‘privileges’ that, in what will be argued is a normative climate of pacification, have never been really valuable and are now virtually worthless. This problem is an indicator of fundamental contradictions in the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, especially its connection to violence. In Gramsci’s formulation of hegemony, cultural production was designed to engineer an *inclusive consensus*, and one important aspect of this was the creation of a secularised faith that would encourage the lower orders to emulate and aspire to the values and practices of their ‘natural leaders’. If we remember that the bourgeoisie itself rose from the lower ranks of feudalism, then practicing the entrepreneurial faith that grew around the developing economic logic of the market, as so many peasants and workers did (Hobbs, 1995), could always enhance prospects of status and wealth. Embracing bourgeois hegemony could produce *real results* for the active believer, and *real subordination* for the working-class passive believer or dissenter.

Does the *active believer* – and violent males are nothing if not active – in traditional masculine hegemony benefit in a similar way? Something approaching the *inverse* of this might be the case. Although the bourgeoisie aspired to create an inclusive yet hierachal society in its own image, it seems to have made a significant exception in the case of those lower class men who were required to construct and defend the physical infrastructure on which its power and prosperity ultimately depended. Crude, aggressive masculinity was constituted primarily by enforced and brutalising practical experience (Horne and Hall, 1995) and culturally reproduced by *exclusive* subaltern anti-norms, which are difficult to label ‘hegemonic’ in a capitalist project where socially and politically powerful men increasingly abandoned physical violence for a form of sublimated, codified aggression. If this *pseudo-pacified* elite controlled the means of cultural production, it’s difficult to depict the crude caricature of ‘destructive masculinity’ as part of the elite’s attempt to engineer a legitimising consensus by affirming itself as the pinnacle of a ‘natural order’. Rather – and this is in keeping with the historical and anthropological tradition of many cultures (see Gilmore, 1990) – the purpose might have been to constitute and reproduce at a safe distance an archaic hyper-masculine ‘other’, whose insecure and peripheral social inclusion actually depended on his serviceability.

These problems need to be examined in more detail, because they suggest that Connell’s overall theory suffers from some elementary misconceptions. Firstly, the claim that ‘.... members of the privileged group use violence to sustain their dominance’ (1995:83) is excessively simplistic in its direct association of violence and social domination, and it neglects the complex dimorphic nature of violence as both a symbolic and a material practice (see Hall, 2000). Secondly, his one-dimensional conceptions of cultural hegemony, violence, state formation and the logic of capital accumulation do not bear the mark of deep exploration. The correspondences that he draws between them, summed up in the quote below, seem to be informed by a notion

of consumer-driven neocapitalism as the old Wright-Millsian *military-industrial complex* that characterised the productivist-imperialist form of classical capitalism. As such, they are quite stunningly simplistic and dated:

'Nevertheless, hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual. So the top levels of business, the military and government provide a fairly convincing *corporate* display of masculinity, still very little shaken by feminist women or dissenting men. It is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony (though violence often underpins or supports authority).

(Connell,1995:87, original italics)

This rather vague statement tells us little about precisely how, when, by whom and for what purposes 'direct violence' is exercised, or exactly who is really benefiting from it. Complex and divergent institutionalised authorities, cultural ideals and class practices, between which he posits nothing more detailed than 'some correspondence', are being conflated in the questionable notion of a unified masculine authority. Perhaps this ambiguity can be addressed by emphasising that capitalism has from its beginnings deemed the *physical pacification* of the internal territory to be essential to its economic expansion and social reproduction (a position reflected clearly and consistently in bourgeois high culture and law). Viewed from this perspective, the claim that enacted violence was ever a valuable 'power' and 'privilege' reflecting the sort of multi-dimensional and paradoxical authorities that capitalism required seriously neglects its complex institutional, moral and functional contexts.

To support a connection between violence as a valuable 'privilege' and a patriarchal order that is sufficiently unified and organised to be able to distribute this privilege as part of a general 'dividend', Connell's three patriarchal groups must be shown to have common interests. Then, to avoid reducing the issue entirely to culture and gender, the patriarchy's ability to distribute real social, political and economic benefits amongst its members without too much class and racial discrimination must be clearly demonstrated. Also, the real value of physical violence across capitalism's history, over and above its obvious ability to establish temporary interpersonal dominance over other individuals, must be appraised. Finally, if violence is to be connected firmly to institutional power, the claim that the 'hegemonic' cultural encouragement to practice it does actually represent the distribution of a dividend that has real value in the *current* socio-economic context must be rigorously examined. If there are reasonable doubts about any of this then quite clearly criminology should defer the use of 'hegemonic masculinity' as an explanatory tool in its research into violence and masculinity.

Patterns of Violence.

Can we find empirical support for the claim that men who indulge in acts of crude aggression or violence really benefit from patriarchal power and privilege? Analyses that are based on the intersection of class and race seem with evidence to the contrary. Even if feminist criminology's important disclosure of hidden domestic violence in all class echelons is taken into account, a broad sweep of research findings suggests that the more serious forms of interpersonal violence – especially murder – are more conspicuous amongst the marginalised fragments of the (former) working-class. Even if all the usual phenomenological and

political problems of data construction and interpretation are acknowledged (see Maguire, 1997), we will see shortly that both statistical and ethnographic studies of serious and fatal violence show an undeniable concentration in specific social and geographical locations.

There are four main sources of contemporary positivist data: police records of arrests and convictions, government victimisation surveys, self-report surveys and health service statistics.

Basing his conclusions on official statistics, whilst taking some account of their unreliability, the psychologist Oliver James (1995) claims that there was an 'unprecedented rise' in interpersonal violence amongst 14 - 16 year olds between 1987 and 1993 in England and Wales. He focuses predominantly on the legal category 'violence against the person', which constitutes 75% of all violent crimes that appear in the annual Home Office publication, *Criminal Statistics*. Although this category covers recorded incidents from homicide to domestic assaults, he notes that the bulk of the cases concern '... young men from poor backgrounds punching, kicking and stabbing each other' (1995: 1). The idea that similar levels and forms of violence occur in comfortable middle-class suburbs is a myth (Wilson, 1987; Lea, 1992; Currie, 1993). James' work indicates that some cohorts of working class males from economically abandoned areas have become up to 30 times more violent in the period 1955 to 1995.

Attempts to deny or explain away working-class violence have been less than successful. The general feeling expressed by most non-idealistic criminologists is that the incidence of serious violence is likely to be far higher than the average in specific economically impoverished areas (Wilson, 1987; Currie, 1993). Although it must be made quite clear that this is by no means a general practice permeating either *all* or *whole* poor areas (Horne and Hall, 1995), these findings cannot simply be dismissed. The likelihood is that the under-reporting of violence might well underestimate the reality of the situation *in specific areas*, perhaps even more than unjustified police or media attention might exaggerate the general picture (Currie, 1993; Hall, 1995, 1997). This makes political sense if we remember that *understatement*, with its emotional effect *complacency*, is just as effective as *exaggeration*, with its emotional effect *anxiety*, as a metonymic device in the construction of establishment rhetoric. As usual, the reality seems to be more complex and spatially specific. Recent work on the 'fear of crime' indicates that a decrease in the fear of being on the street after dark in more salubrious locales contrasts with an increase in fear – and in the actual risk of victimisation – in economically abandoned locales (see Lea and Young, 1993, pp. 45-49). The 'average risk' calculation, which claims that in Britain a 'statistically average' person can expect to be the victim of violence once every 100 years, ignores the extreme variation of victimhood across social and geographical space and the reality of '.... the daily spontaneous outbursts of violence in the margins ...' (ibid: 39).

A recent medical study conducted in the Accident and Emergency departments of large urban hospitals in England (Hutchinson et al, 1998) offers striking support for this sort of interpretation. According to this work, some of the larger hospitals are treating up to 1000 serious facial injuries per year, usually inflicted during 'drink-related' fighting between young, working class males. In 1998, the 16-25 year old cohort constituted the bulk of admissions. A national total of something like 18,000 per year are suffering lifetime scarring of the face. What used to be a bit of stitching up after a fist-fight is now more serious because of the increased use of weapons such as reinforced boots, knuckle dusters, baseball bats, scaffold poles, knives and the occasional

firearm.

The relatively comprehensive statistical overview of North American crime compiled by Dobrin et al (1996) indicates that the USA suffers from the highest murder rate in the industrialised West; 37 per 100,000 for young men between the ages of 15 and 24 compared to less than 2 per 100,000 for the same group in England and Wales. This is five times the average of the other industrialised nations and twice that of Northern Ireland during the ‘troubles’. Given that men do most of the killing, it’s quite telling that 17,949 males were also the *victims* of homicide, compared to 5,278 women. This male number constitutes 77% of the total, and the vast majority of incidents occur outside the domestic sphere amongst the most impoverished male members of the lower classes and ethnic groups. It is, in other words, being practised predominantly amongst the most powerless and socio-economically devalued male groups in American society, very often catalysed by alcohol or drugs and occurring amongst young men who know each other (Gibbs and Merighi, 1994). There is no need to downplay the gravity of domestic and sexual violence, homophobic bullying or workplace intimidation to appreciate that the redemption of this ‘patriarchal privilege’ (or the supposed protest lodged against its unavailability) is more often than not manifested in *materially and politically pointless* inter-male violence. The only discernible reward that the audience of fellow marginals can bestow is *applause*, a brief moment of approval that, because it delivers only a fleeting shadow of the glory it promises, becomes a highly addictive but ultimately futile pursuit. Some ‘privilege’.

A helpful cross-cultural comparison emerges from Zimring and Hawkins’ (1996) statistical analysis of assault and death. Compared to other industrialised Western nations, the North American rate of assault is not unusual, but the death rate is. It seems that young American males are no more prone to petty altercations than their counterparts in other parts of the world, but because of the prolific use of firearms and other weapons they are certainly more likely to carry an argument to its most lethal conclusion. Therefore a lower murder rate in Western Europe does not indicate a lower violence rate. Although cultural and legal factors such as gun ownership can cause variations in the rate of death and serious injury, the general rise in *assault rates* amongst young men of the former working-class across the industrialised West confirms the probability that they might be in the grip of similar socio-historical forces (Wilson, 1987; Currie, 1997; Hall, 1995, 1997; Taylor, 1999).

A brief look at the circumstances in which murders are committed also casts an empirical shadow of doubt over the direct linking of violence to institutional power, the ‘patriarchal dividend’ or ‘reworked cultural privileges’. Alongside murders in ‘unknown circumstances’ (5,059 men and 1,352 women), the highest victim categories for both sexes were ‘escalation of trivial arguments’ (4,698 and 1,590), ‘non-specified violence’ (2,071 and 989), ‘robbery’ (1,950 and 351), and ‘drug-related violence’ (1,180 and 105). Taken together, these categories towered above the others, totalling 19,388, which constituted 83% of the total of 23,271 in 1993 (Dobrin et al, 1996). Regionally, the highest murder rates – calculated as homicides per 100,000 of the population – were to be found in the economically troubled ‘downtown’ areas of Washington (80+), New Orleans (80+) and Detroit (60+). Black males are by far the most likely victims of murder, over 100 per 100,000 in the early nineties compared to 20 for black females, 9 for white males and 2 for white females. Newburn and Stanko’s (1994) reminder of the high incidence of sexual and physical assaults against young males supports the claim that they tend to be the main victims as well as the perpetrators of physical violence. Adler (1992) and King (1992) suggest that male victimisation tends to be under-reported

mainly because of the taboo against ‘informing’ in lower-class male cultures, while Lister et al (2000) attribute under-reporting to the rational avoidance, by both victims and perpetrators, of unpredictable police actions and legal outcomes. This, in combination with the silencing effect of intimidation, suggests that the actual number of assaults and injuries might be considerably higher. However, the vast majority of murders *do* enter the statistical record, and the victimisation figures for black males have spiked upwards since the early 1980s, while those for white males have declined. This rise coincides with a number of major changes in the socio-economic fabric, such as high post-industrial unemployment, the intensified socio-economic exclusion and ghettoisation of working-class racial minorities, and increased activity in the drug, nocturnal leisure and general criminal markets. Although intimidation and less physically injurious forms of violence are more evenly distributed across the social structure, most serious or lethal violence occurs in demographic clusters of poor, young, urban, minority males (Zimring and Hawkins,1996).

Many ethnographic studies also tend to support the link between serious physical violence and socio-economic subordination. Gibbs and Merighi (1994) point to the multiple marginalisation – in terms of race, age and class – of young lower-class blacks in American urban areas that have been deserted by the forces of capital. Some time ago Hannerz (1969) noted the drift into a ‘compulsory masculinity’ in impoverished and ‘hypersegregated’ neighbourhoods; a form characterised by sexual aggression, ostentation, high-risk behaviour and confrontational violence. In conditions of pragmatic social and economic stress, it displayed a tendency to become almost self-parodying, and many of the more committed individuals followed the stereotypical progression into gangs, crime, drugs and violence. Winlow (2001) notes that in some equivalent British locales the drug and theft industries are now providing more occupational positions for this ‘pseudo-masculinity’ than the mainstream economy. The probability that so many young, lower-class males continue to scratch a living in such impoverished conditions yet carry in their hearts and minds this parody of patriarchal authority suggests that violent hyper-masculinity is both an ideologically induced delusion (MacInnes,1998) and a liminal fixation (Hall,1995, 1997; Winlow,2001) that emerged – or were cultivated – as complementary, sub-rational reproductive agents of an enforced pragmatic relationship with specific material conditions (Horne and Hall,1995; Hall,1995,1997). Or, to apply Bourdieu’s (1990) more succinct formulation, rather than the product of cultural narratives or synchronic psychodynamic relations, it is a set of beliefs and dispositions carried in the body, a *habitus* that is the product of generations of recurring practical experiences in unforgiving material conditions, a brutal art of living supported by internalised but *externally constructed* cultural narratives (see also Hall,1997; Winlow,2001). The more committed subjects of this deeply entrenched form now seem to be falling deeper into a social cul-de-sac where these delusions and fixations are best able to sustain themselves (Horne and Hall,1995; Hall,1995,1997).

Earlier ethnographic studies from America and Britain in the 1970s and 80s (Chambliss,1973; Willis,1977; Schwendinger and Schwendinger,1985) also support the idea that violence is associated with cultural vilification and a lowly social position. One of the most valuable insights to emerge is Paul Willis’ notion that persistent displays of aggression attracted condemnation from authority figures and pacified yet more successful peers. This tended to shunt the perpetrators towards ‘dead-end jobs’, the most unrewarding positions in the occupational hierarchy. It raises the point that ‘symbolic violence’ (expressions of derogation that are part of the historical suffocation and external reconstitution of provincial working-class cultures – see Bourdieu,1984,1990,1991) emanating from the pacified mainstream order is a powerful force in the sociogenesis, reproduction

and socio-economic structuring of ‘visceral cultures’ (Hall, 1997,2000).

Another common ethnographic finding on the theme of cultural derogation is that violence often flares up amongst men when sleights are made concerning the *performance* of traditional roles (Katz,1988; Ptacek,1988; Frieze and Browne,1989). Polk (1994) confirms Wolfgang’s (1958) finding that insults thrown at the traditional objects of male protection and provision – wives, girlfriends, family, close friends – are more likely to trigger violence than those directed at the person. Many cultural theorists have tended to underplay the importance of the way in which micro-interactions in the gender order – energised by powerful emotional dynamics such as expectation, judgement, honour and humiliation – are grounded and referenced in the logic of socio-economic performance (Gilmore,1990). They operate with an impenetrable, preoccupying intensity in the worst material circumstances – where honour is constantly offended and humiliation is a structural condition of existence – which tends to restrict the practising or even imagining of alternatives (Horne and Hall, 1995).

Physical violence is also more likely to occur in front of a male audience. This indicates that many lower-class males are anxious to secure admiration in sub-cultures that are characterised by mimetic rivalry, where young men judge each other quite ruthlessly on their performances of normative sub-cultural expectations (Gilmore,1990; Polk,1994; Winlow,2001). But if the perpetrators somehow feel or believe that violence is a privilege that can be contextually reworked for their own benefit, why are they predominantly *attacking each other*, and why are their everyday relationships characterised by so much anxiety, irritability and interpersonal hostility? Does membership of the supreme patriarchy – which supposedly authorises access to the cultural resources and privileges that ensure continuing domination of the social world – engender feelings of triumph, solidarity and security, or express itself in the smug, elegant posture and celestial sneer of a timeless ruling elite? Miraculously, it appears not.

If this desolate mess is the only real result of the ‘reworking of privileges’, there might be a need for the patriarchy to introduce some sort of quality control on both its craftsmanship and its material. What is at its worst a forlorn cycle of socio-economic exclusion, foolish bickering, emotional combustion, violence, death and imprisonment does not seem to indicate the successful application of an institutionalised dominance strategy, the redemption of a ‘patriarchal dividend’, or the lodging of an effective ‘protest’. Alternatively, it could be seen as the spontaneous fury that tends to follow a sense of betrayal as young men realise that, in this current socio-economic shift, most of their ‘privileges’ are – and in crucial ways always have been – bogus, obsolete and unredeemable for anything really valuable. Reactions such as this are quite common when the subject first catches a glimpse of itself as the victim of a deception that it barely understands; a deception that for some reason continues to be culturally promoted even though its material and political purposes have evaporated. There is an increasing tendency for young working class men to do very badly in the acquisition of qualifications, rewarding occupations and wealth when compared to other social groups, including young working class women (Amin,1994; Taylor,1999). If the powerful producers of patriarchal culture have at heart common interests that transcend class, why, rather than reaching down and pulling their lower-class brothers out of trouble, do they persistently sell them a hollow, useless fake? Why do they ply a trade in parodies of an obsolete power that cannot furnish these supposed beneficiaries with any tangible rewards unless they have access to traditional class privileges or neocapitalism’s new offices? And, more disturbingly, why do those who are sold short continue to buy?

The evidence itself, with or without these alternative interpretations, casts some doubt on the idea that men with a propensity for crude aggression or physical violence are in receipt of cultural privileges that carry any material or structural exchange value in Western societies. Some recent ethnographic studies conducted by Hobbs (1994; 1995), Horne and Hall (1995) and Winlow (2001) have begun to address this problem by contextualising masculine practice in the nascent post-industrial, neocapitalist economy. In this rather novel context, physically violent men confront a ‘.... post-traditional order that is by definition hostile to modes of authority based upon the eternal recurrence of male hegemony’ (Hobbs,1994:120), an order that places high value on ‘.... *precisely the opposite sorts of dispositions*’ (Hall,1997:468, original italics). This insight demands some consideration of exactly what this mutating order actually *is* and, if it has an element of continuity, how it has been implicated in capitalism’s historical process.

Classical Capitalism, Neocapitalism and the Pseudo-pacification Process.

A telling problem with the hegemonic masculinity discourse is that earlier radical liberal and feminist arguments, which staged a one-dimensional critique of both capitalism and patriarchy as unremittingly oppressive tyrannies driven by the ‘masculine traits’ of aggression, intimidation and physical violence (see Messerschmidt,1993), have not really been shaken off. Connell (1987,1995) does hint that these traits cannot be posited as the cause or reproductive agent of modern violence, because social institutions both encourage and discourage them in complex and ambivalent ways (see also MacInnes, 1998), but again he fails to tell us precisely how. Theorists as disparate as Gramsci (1971) and Elias (1994) have acknowledged that capitalism and some of its patriarchal agents retained the right to use intimidation or violence in the international disputes that inevitably accompanied the pursuit of national power and wealth, and as a last resort in techniques of internal regulation such as policing and corporal punishment. However, they also recognised that the most strenuous politico-cultural effort was applied to the *elimination* of these practices in the internal state territory. The establishment of a more stable rule by enrolment into the social order – backed up by the rule of law – was both inferred by capitalism’s market logic and preferred by its more committed and institutionally powerful agents. In short, a sort of expedient, selective *pacification process* in the internal territory vitally enhanced the market-capitalist project’s capacity to maintain order and create wealth.

There is a good deal of empirical and historiographical evidence to support the claim that, compared to what preceded it, this pacification process was notably successful in reducing serious violence in the internal state territory. Historian Ted Gurr’s (1981) classic empirical study of murder in England found that the overall rate decreased significantly from just under 20 per 100,000 at the beginning of the 13th century to less than 2 per 100,000 in 1950. Hanawalt (1976) demonstrates that the London rate was higher than average during the economic and political upheavals of the late 14th century, somewhere between 36 and 52. Although the point was made earlier in this essay that the link between the murder rate and a general climate of violence is tenuous when cross-cultural comparisons are being made, these two phenomena correspond more precisely in the same cultural and geographical space. Gurr comments:

‘... [T]hese early estimates of homicide rates sketch a portrait of a society in which men were easily provoked

to violent anger, and were unrestrained in the brutality with which they attacked their opponents. Interpersonal violence was a recurring fact of rural and urban life' (1981: 307).

A number of historical studies show that most incidents of serious assault and murder followed arguments and flare-ups – especially between neighbouring families – in a general social climate where '.... [h]atred, fear and violence were endemic in rural England before the Industrial Revolution' (MacDonald,1981: 109). Girard's (1977) anthropological and literary studies support the salutary observation that much of the history of the pre-capitalist agricultural settlement was made against a permanent backdrop of petty hostility and mistrust. Bouts of violence erupted regularly, often ensnaring the protagonists in interminable cycles of revenge (Trompf, 1994; Hall, 2000). In contrast, the capitalist project has been characterised by a sustained downward trend in murder and serious interpersonal violence in the internal state territories of Europe from the mid-14th century to the mid-20th. Remarkably, this occurred in spite of the intensification of conditions that, initial logic suggests, should have sent it spiralling upwards: increased socio-economic competition and class division; political, religious and economic upheaval; increased warfare; the structural consolidation of patriarchy, nationalism and racism; brutal state administered class repression; and the creation of large numbers of landless labourers, some of whom in the midst of recession expanded the ranks of violent criminal bands (Beier, 1983; Briggs et al,1996; Hill,1996).

Despite these apparently countervailing conditions, early and high capitalism's hegemonic cultural power seems to have had some success in establishing a six hundred year internal pacification process in emergent European states. However, it is wholly inaccurate to claim that this was the product of the reformist lobbying of pacifists, liberal humanists, philanthropists, religious groups or feminists. These movements played a role in arranging and monitoring pacifying codes, or introducing piecemeal reforms, but the claim that they were prime movers is quite simply erroneous. Behind the pacification process was capitalism's central purpose: the expansion of the commercial market economy. This simply could not proceed under the rigid patriarchal tyrannies administered by partially Christianised warlords in the seigniorial-feudal eras. In Early Modern Europe these elite groups, whose family-centred political power was maintained by the deployment of privatised intimidation and physical violence, began a steep political descent. In fact, capital's logic demanded a wholesale revaluation and modification of both physical and symbolic violence. This signalled the demise of the independent or ordained warrior as an arbitrarily violent territorial tyrant (Maddern,1992; Elias,1994; Bolton,1980). It also ended the monopoly that the religious and royal *ministeria* traditionally held on the deployment of symbolic violence. In an interesting historical reversal, the physical violence that had permeated civil society was monopolised by the emerging state, whilst the symbolic violence that had been monopolised by the elite was quasi-democratised in civil society in the sense that it was placed by the ascending bourgeoisie under the authority of market logic (Hall,2000). Although external warfare in some respects proliferated, this emergent elite was determined to cultivate internal peace alongside an aggressive but sublimated socio-economic dynamic.

Classical historians from Herodotus to Gibbon knew that it is impossible to expand trade and increase prosperity under conditions of general disorder, hostility and violence, and that the attempt to restore order by means of centralised tyrannies creates only the most fragile, ephemeral peace. Throughout its reign the original bourgeoisie's interest in establishing the crucial *internal* pacification process markedly outweighed its interest in maintaining the right to exercise arbitrary physical violence, and the corporate management class that succeeded it has, for precisely the same reasons, retained this preference. Violent

masculine customs that had established themselves in the seigniorial hierarchies, but which were deemed to be dysfunctional in the nascent capitalist economy, were either repressed by altered cultural coding, commercialised and heavily regulated, or outlawed (Holt,1989). There is no space here for a detailed exposition of the pacification process, and at this juncture the reader could be pointed towards Norbert Elias' work '*The Civilizing Process*' ([1939]1994) and its burgeoning secondary literature (see Mennell,1992; Fletcher,1997). Very briefly – and with apologies for the crudity of this synopsis – of interest to this thesis is the way in which bourgeois society, establishing itself between the 16th and 19th centuries, based behavioural codes on the strict control of the visceral emotions. This process was supported by the state's monopolisation of violence, the cultural prompting of individuals to psychosomatically internalise 'refined' behavioural codes as 'sensibilities', and the proliferation of 'figurations', long chains of social interdependencies in the expanding market and industrial economies in which individuals learnt to value each other. These expanding chains enabled and encouraged the traditionally despised lower orders to achieve more rewarding and valued social positions by displaying 'polite' postures and adopting non-violent forms of social and economic interaction.

However, in early capitalism's socio-economic environment, the process of distributing these behavioural codes was competitive, selective and uneven. A new class hierarchy grew around pacification because a convincing outward display of refined sensibilities became a vital requirement for entry to the expanding bourgeois social networks, which in turn lubricated personal access to the higher echelons of politics, trade and industry. The display of civility, manners, cultural knowledge and, most importantly, a reputation for being able to *sublimate aggressive liminal urges* became the main cultural criteria for social ascent (Bourdieu,1984; Elias,1994; Fletcher,1997; Mellor and Shilling,1997; Hall,2000).

However, the capitalist socio-economic dynamic could not be fuelled by gentle sensibilities alone; if they had permeated every dimension of human interaction the dynamic might well have stalled. The velvet glove needed its iron fist, but the old, brittle fist of physical violence was to be replaced by a stronger and more flexible alloy. This was fashioned from what was known and available; in this case 'symbolic violence'. As explained earlier, this traditional form of symbolic derogation and cultural suffocation of the lower-class 'other' had for centuries been the exclusive privilege of religious, monarchical and aristocratic elites as a social ordering and control technique. Quasi-democratising symbolic violence was a reasonably effective method of retaining aggressive interpersonal, familial and social competition in a modified form whilst simultaneously reducing trade-inhibiting forms of physical intimidation and violence. Thus the stimulation of those aggressive or fearful liminal urges and desires that could be translated into commodities and acceptable social ambitions, together with their diversion from physical expression by constant sublimation, gradually established itself as a core dynamic process (Hall,2000). The personal adoption and expression of these elaborately coded sensibilities and practices signified the most valued mode of being in the classical capitalist project:

'Social advancement became less dependent upon one's ability to wield arms and more dependent upon one's ability to compete with words and planned strategies with which to win the favour of social superiors'

(Fletcher,1997:35)

As a dynamic social and economic drive, symbolic violence proved itself to be infinitely more effective than the abandonment of

the body in the ecstatic religious fervour and physical violence that had characterised so much of the past. Any requirements or opportunities for naked intimidation and physical violence were palmed off onto a residue of dislocated males, and discarded ex-warriors found themselves competing with dispossessed peasants in a new, 'democratised' set of specialist violent careers in war, adventuring, internal regulation and banditry (Beier,1983).

This realignment and revaluation of the physical and the symbolic can be seen as a reworking of the essential *dimorphic* nature of violence (Hall,2000), in other words the capacity of violence to operate as both a physical and a symbolic form of social power. Despite the utilisation of ancient religious sublimating and ordering techniques (see Girard,1977; Mellor and Shilling,1997) in capitalist cultural production, the underlying utilitarian logic of the market's requirements meant that maximum effort was applied not to the exciting transformation of some Hegelian 'spirit of the age', but to the practical reduction of physical violence in the mundane public places and activities that were vital to commodity exchange: streets, marketplaces, fairs, taverns, highways, sea-lanes etc. It would have been simultaneously over-ambitious *and* counter-productive to be totally democratic by applying strenuous efforts to the 'liberation' of all displaced men from the grip of the traditional masculine norms and habits that could provide specialist services to the capitalist project. Although a vestige of the old warrior culture was retained and re-briefed to perform supervisory roles in military expansion, a proportion of the hegemonic output from the increasingly domesticated elite was focused on modifying *already existing* serviceable masculine and feminine forms amongst the lower classes; what Connell names 'hegemonic masculinity' might make more sense if it is seen as a dimension of this output. However, because the limited social mobility in the quasi-democratised order did offer some escape-routes, the gendered cultural reproduction of the 'visceral habitus' (see Hall,1997) could only be even reasonably effective and reliable amongst those who were already consigned to a brutalising existence in impoverished locations and physically demanding occupations by means of political repression, economic dispossession and the vagaries of the labour market. This paradox between the simultaneous needs for pacification and the retention of serviceable practices of physical violence is at the heart of bourgeois cultural deception and class structuring. What doesn't seem to be emerging from this perspective is a picture of capitalism as yet another epochal manifestation of the ancient civic entitlement to exercise physical violence to further personal, familial or 'gender' interests, or indeed the endurance of privatised violence as an effective strategy in the reproduction of real social power in the internal territory. What we might be looking at here, rather than Elias' general civilizing process *or* Connell's oppressive tyranny, is an extremely complex market-driven *pseudo-pacification process* that has been supported by paradoxical, inconsistent and duplicitous cultural activity.

Neocapitalism is the recent outcome of profound shifts in the basal productive mode and motive forces of its predecessor, classical capitalism. In the industrialised West, the acquisition and extraction of raw materials, their manufacture into commodities, and the militarised defence and internal regulation of the political group's territory are now performed by sophisticated machines and robots rather than onerous muscular labour and physical violence. Information processing, commodity circulation and consumption, and the attachment of artificial symbolic and aesthetic value to otherwise mundane commodity objects, have replaced productive, domestic and militaristic work as primary economic activities. A cursory glance at the post-industrial wage structure confirms the fact that even very basic technological, informatic, aesthetic and consumptive skills are much more valuable than traditional physical and practical skills (Amin,1994; Rifkin,1995; Horne and Hall,1995;

Taylor,1999). This shift has set in motion *automatically* a systematic revaluation of the marketable dispositions, desires, beliefs, skills, qualities and appearances that constitute the *habitus* of diverse groups and individuals. In this culturally driven economy of symbols and aesthetic surfaces, the symbolic violence that the more powerful classes have honed to a fine edge can now dominate over all other forms of aggression as an instrument of social power and the focus of lower-class emulation. However, it would be grossly naive to portray specialist cultural producers as permanent ‘family members’ of a specific ruling class or gender alongside which they rise and fall. Over the preceding twenty years the rather slippery behaviour of the press, broadcasting and general cultural industries suggests quite strongly that, within the parameters of market logic, they are adaptable, durable and independent power-brokers with a keen eye for changes in the *zeitgeist*. Their allegiances to incumbent powers – ethico-religious, monarchical, patriarchal, governmental, corporate or otherwise – tend to slip and slide in a rather expedient manner (Hall,2000). Symbol specialists operating in and around the commodity market now have the opportunity to reign over discredited, semi-redundant soldier-producers, domestic workers, politicians and old high-cultural *connoisseurs* (Gorz,1989; Lasch, 1996; Hall,2000); rather than continuing to serve ruling elites, they are rapidly *becoming* the ruling elite.

Some readers might suspect that the extent of symbolism’s current dominance over material forces is being exaggerated. If so, perhaps the following quote from Jeremy Rifkin’s assiduously researched study on employment and social re-structuring – which shows the rapid and permanent elimination of manual workers from the production process and the circulatory economy in the ‘third industrial revolution’ – might help to dispel some of the doubts:

‘The information and communications technologies and global market forces are fast polarising the world’s population into two irreconcilable and potentially warring forces – a new cosmopolitan elite of ‘symbolic analysts’ who control the technologies and forces of production, and the growing number of permanently displaced workers who have little hope and even fewer prospects for meaningful employment in the new high-tech global economy’ (1995: xviii).

Connell (1995) recognises that familiar models of working class masculinity that were cultivated around the stable forms of practical-manual employment are now being discarded in this socio-economic transition. However, he fails to update his conception of the dominant elite, ignoring prosperous new groups and therefore also failing to locate marginality in the *full context* of neocapitalism’s radically altered social relations. The intermittent employment, unemployment and severe deprivation experienced by traditional males must be seen *in relation* to the accelerating accumulation of wealth, security and status enjoyed by the physically pacified symbol specialists and their attendant service class (Amin,1994; Lasch,1996; Taylor,1999; Hall,2000). In this context, what are ‘protest masculinities’ actually protesting about? His claim that ‘[p]rotest masculinity is a marginal masculinity, which picks up themes of hegemonic masculinity in society at large but reworks them in a context of poverty’ (1995:114) ignores the probability that the specific ‘themes’ of violence and crude aggression enacted amongst lower-class masculinities have never reflected any of the *sublimated* strategies required to achieve real political and economic success in capital’s social hierarchy (Horne and Hall,1995; Hall,1997,2000), and now they are becoming obsolete even as menial auxiliary tasks. Rather than playing a variation on their self-composed ‘hegemonic’ theme, redundant masculinities are being erased from the score by the newly appointed composer.

Underneath the crassly metonymic accounts of 'living fast and dying young' presented by Connell (1995) and others, there is little evidence of a cultural or psychodynamic logic of protest in the violence practiced by young working-class men. There is even less evidence that this violence is 'underpinning or supporting' an institutionalised authority, to which strategic pseudo-pacification is far more important than persistent violence. Rather, there is some ethnographic evidence (James,1995; Hobbs et al,2000) – supported strongly by police and health service statistics – which shows that the politically pointless detonations of violence that occur amongst the young men who wander the streets, pubs and clubs of the deindustrialised zones are often triggered by the frustrations experienced in struggles over inadequate material resources. The majority of serious violence occurs in crowds and queues around night club doors, bars, taxi ranks, fast-food outlets and sporting events, or in the acquisition or distribution of drugs and other illegal commodities. These incidents are often catalysed by excessive intakes of intoxicants (James,1995; Hobbs et al,2000), and in some instances can be racially or ethnically motivated (Webster,1996). Young men of more entrepreneurial leanings have become extremely adept in the pragmatic use of traditional forms of intimidation and violence to establish operations and generate cash in criminal or quasi-legal enterprise (Winlow,2001). As the robust *habitus* enacts its limited dispositions and strategies in pressing socio-economic circumstances, psycho-cultural gender discourses do not provide the principal generative or reproductive forces, only vindicating narratives.

Conclusions

One constant requirement for the stability and prosperity of any past society based on trade and exchange was a complex structure of practical norms that could maintain interpersonal pacification in tension with aggressive social competition, whilst also being able to call on physical force and violence when required. From this perspective, 'destructive masculinity' is simply an archaic form that was modified to service capitalism's political economy. Higher class groups seem to have invested in pacification because they eventually recognised that, in the longer term, this was a much more durable source of real political power because it was more effective in creating wealth, expanding markets, accruing legitimate political capital and maintaining stability. This group dominated cultural production to manufacture the archaic image of 'destructive masculinity' specifically for serviceable lower class males, along with any others who were sufficiently gullible to actively adopt it as a narrative that justified the practices of their allocated roles, and, eventually, when culture was fully mediated and commercialised, spend their money buying it.

If genuine bourgeois hegemony was an affirming cultural image of its own existing social order (even though Gramsci agreed with Marx – who might not have been wrong about everything – that this social order itself was an inversion of real productive values and relations), the image of the violent macho male in eternal sovereignty over the pacified was certainly not. Rather, 'hegemonic masculinity' was an important element of the original ideological mystification of *real* productive relations, a ruse that helped to legitimise and reproduce *existing* inverted social relations. If lower-class males were to be simultaneously motivated and exploited, the machismo-myth had to be extravagantly inflated in the gender and cultural orders to both disguise and compensate for the fact that the ascending pseudo-pacified elite, and the economic logic they served, were in reality exploiting physically aggressive males as part of the class of materially productive males and females. This was a risky cultural ruse constructed to simultaneously mollify and motivate working class males who had little alternative but to *do* the violent and dirty work allocated to them; to inspire them as active participants in their own subordinated functions and eventually to

neutralise the dangerous political opposition that emerged in later stages of the project in the form of labour movements. Modernist ‘femininity’ was, of course, a complementary ruse encouraging working-class women to perform very different but equally onerous and unrewarding functions. The mass cultural output that attempts to reproduce the classic models of aggressive masculinity or passive femininity is a deception initially contrived by a genuine hegemonic elite to harness the violence and hard labour of the politically and culturally powerless. Because its function is not to distribute the dominant class’ own beneficial, pseudo-pacified way of life across the social landscape, but rather to engineer through a one-way mirror an alternative consensus amongst a subordinate class ‘other’ about its own much less rewarding way of life, this cultural output cannot be described as ‘hegemonic’.

In this light it becomes clear that there is no overall ‘crisis of masculinity’ across neocapitalism’s reconfiguring class order. In the reality of the pseudo-pacification project, the class factions of the masculine order have never been united under a patriarchal flag in the first place. What Connell claims to be a gender relation in which an institutional ‘hegemonic’ masculinity uses violence to oppress reconstructing ‘subordinate’ masculinities is, in terms of real politico-economic power and success, *the inverse of the real class relation* that continues to structure the masculine order. Now, in the neocapitalist order, the economic function in which traditional masculinities were grounded has largely evaporated, which means that these so-called ‘subordinate’ masculinities are not ‘reconstructing’ but rather recognising that the time has come to reveal and fully assert themselves. His fundamental mistakes are firstly to ignore that the pacified have learnt how to exert a fragile rule over the violent, and secondly to posit physically pacified, non-macho masculinities as new, alternative or revolutionary: at the beginning of the bourgeois revolutions six hundred years ago he would have been correct.

Thus there is no real ‘crisis’ amongst the mainstream cohort of pseudo-pacified, commodity circulating and symbol processing males, only a bit of pique, nervous apprehension and inconvenience as female and educated working class incomers flood in to their privileged spaces in a period of rapid expansion and disruption. They will get over it. The *real social and economic crisis* is being experienced by traditional working class men and women who inhabit the former heavy industrial heartlands that once relied on sex-specific variations of physical labour in the productivist, domestic and military spheres. These locations, cut off both geographically and culturally from the centres and arteries of mainstream commodity circulation and symbol processing, are now the heart of nowhere.

Connell acknowledges that the ‘destructive’ masculine form is a caricature that can be embraced quite gullibly by working class men (see Taylor,1999). However, he ignores the contextualising fact that the pseudo-pacified mainstream has for six hundred years exploited the brutalising practices of hard labour, violence and the stultifying practices of domestic drudgery that working class men and women performed in the name of their respective caricatures. From this perspective, the notion that the right to exercise violence was at any time in this historical epoch a ‘privilege’ that promoted the interests of anyone but these pseudo-pacified rulers has to be suspect. Absent from Connell’s account is the most obvious and extensively evidenced source of violence: that it was a brutal skill and a common livelihood practiced by expendable lower-class males across the millennia of our hostile and physically demanding agricultural-industrial history; a form of enforced service to incumbent elites who manipulated the symbolic to reproduce their real wealth and political dominance (Hall,2000). Connell’s claim that the ‘....

members of the privileged group use violence to sustain their dominance' (1995:83) is correct as far as it goes, but it omits the crucial qualification that the dominant classes *avoid actually doing violence themselves*. Put simply, until very recently the lower classes have been ruled not only with the surplus products of their own labour but also with their own violence.

The altered, disorganised neocapitalist commodity market still has a use for intimidation, 'hardness' and physical violence, although the corresponding occupational fields, like others based on physical labour, have been severely 'downsized'. The remaining fields are in the general areas of criminality and the increasingly privatised methods of regulating it. Here the cultural ideal of hyper-masculinity continues to be generated and reproduced in economic reality, more intensely than ever because, compared to their predecessors, these new fields offer limited opportunities. The localised need to display 'hardness' as a marketable skill would at least partly explain the predominance of male-on-male violence and the preference for an audience through which the reputation of the 'hardest' can be transmitted. There are large numbers of former working class individuals who, as Crowther (2000) suggests very persuasively, are very unlikely to find a place in the radically altered neocapitalist mode of production. Some have sunk into a general apathy that is punctuated by detonations of politically pointless interpersonal hostility (Horne and Hall,1995), whilst others seek economic opportunities in those sectors of the economy where the boundary between criminal and legal commodity circulation is blurred (Hobbs,1995; Ruggerio,1996). Large numbers of young men are engaging with criminal and quasi-legal occupations such as property theft, selling stolen goods, drug distribution, protection racketeering, private security and varieties of temporary, unofficial physical labour. In some areas these fields of activity are providing more 'job' opportunities than the mainstream economy (Hudson,1986; Winlow,2001), and here hyper-masculinities number amongst the gendered forms that are deeply embedded in new capital-labour relations (Taylor and Tyler,2000) and market imperatives (Hall,1997; Winlow,2001).

Once again, much of this is the dirty, violent, unrewarding work that members of the pseudo-pacified elite would rather not do, and which has traditionally been serviced by their very own subaltern social construction, *the drudges of fury*. To expect pious proposals of reconstructed masculine positions or progressive parenting to be taken seriously enough to have a transforming effect in these brutal spaces would be to push the boundaries of credibility, whilst in the socio-economic mainstream they amount to little more than pointless sermonising to those who are already being slowly but inexorably converted by historical forces. However, these reformist cultural schemes – touted by self-appointed priests of pacifism who bask in the security of the symbol-processing mainstream – transcend mere piety. They are also *active* in the process of socio-economic exclusion because the very act of identifying an inadequate 'other' in need of reform reverberates around the 'symbolically violent' and socially competitive value system at the heart of neocapitalism. No matter how sympathetically and delicately this is done, it translates itself *automatically* into a process of deselection in the new occupational and social networks. Thus too many traditional males are debarred from the real processes that are gradually promoting 'change', and the overall culturalist project colludes in the intensified reproduction of that which it wishes to reform.

In this bleak climate Western governments are left with only two choices. The first, and possibly still preferable amongst the Left's less fashionable and vocal majority, would be more serious political intervention in the forces of the market and capitalism's culture machine. The return of full employment in the form of 'decent' tenured jobs and the retraction of consumer

pressure – at an opportune time when brutalising occupations are no longer required functions – could afford working class men the time, security, practical incentives and cultural refuge needed to reflexively change their ways of being. It might be preferable, but under the present political regime it's also highly unlikely (Habermas, 1989; Taylor, 1997, 1999; Hall, 1997). This leaves us with only the restoration of the state's capacity to prevent and reduce male violence in the spaces where it occurs, which tend to be against other males in public and against women in private. This means simply more accountable and effective policing.

Left-liberal criminology, with its voyages into the oxymoronic world of ‘cultural politics’, is suffering the same fate as the general progressivist-reformist movement to which it belongs: paralysed in the negative double-bind that it brought upon itself when its initial rejection of old interventionist socio-economic strategies was followed by its subsequent distaste for the fragmented authoritarian measures that are being applied to clear up the social mess that appeared after political economy was meekly handed over to neo-liberalism and market forces. In this hiatus it is forced to save face, so it feigns a preference for the only position that its political capitulation allows; one of repose to chatter about whether or not the intellectual flotsam and jetsam washed up by obsolete radical liberal currents can sustain its utopian yearnings. Quite simply, it no longer fulfils its function as a credible opposition. In a market-driven neocapitalist order that can transpose all sweet dreams into lifestyle commodities and competitive social hierarchies Connell's ‘.... politics of pure possibility’ (1995:243) are a part of this clutching at straws. Meanwhile, pointless hostility flourishes in the social margins that neocapitalism has left gasping for breath, and at its reconstructed economic heart privatised violence inexorably revises its tactics, alters its forms and expands its endeavours.

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