The big picture: Masculinities in recent world history

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This article addresses the question of how we should study men in gender relations, and what view of modern world history an understanding of masculinity might give us. I start with the reasons why "masculinity" has recently become a cultural and intellectual problem, and suggest a framework in which the intellectual work can be better done. The historicity of "masculinity" is best shown by cross-cultural evidence on the differing gender practices of men in different social orders. The core of the paper is a sketch of the historical evolution of the forms of masculinity now globally dominant. This shows their imbrication with the military, social, and economic history of North Atlantic capitalist states, and especially with imperialism. This history provides the necessary basis for an understanding of the major institutionalized forms of masculinity in contemporary "first world" countries, and the struggles for hegemony among them. I conclude with a brief look at the dynamics of marginalized and subordinated masculinities.

Studying "masculinity"

Masculinity as a cultural problem

The fact that conferences about "masculinities" are being held is significant in its own right. Twenty-five years ago no one would have thought of doing so. Both the men-and-masculinity literature that has bubbled up in the interval[1] and the debates at conferences and seminars, testify that in some part of the Western intelligentsia, masculinity has become problematic in a way it never was before.

There is no doubt what cued the discovery of this problem. It was, first, the advent of Women's Liberation at the end of the 1960s and the

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growth of feminist research on gender and "sex roles" since. Second – as important intellectually though of less reach practically – it was the advent of Gay Liberation and the developing critique of heterosexuality of lesbians and gay men.

While much of the key thinking about masculinity continues to be done by radical feminists and gay activists, concern with the issue has spread much more widely. The nature and politics of masculinity have been addressed by the new right, by heterosexual socialists, and by psychotherapists of wondrous variety.[2] Four years ago I wrote a short essay on the "new man" for a daily paper in Sydney, and a journalist friend commented that masculinity seemed to be the flavor of the year in journalism, with stories about men at childbirth, fathering, the "new sensitive man," men doing housework, and so on.

Something is going on; but what? Writers of the masculinity literature of the 1970s pictured change as a break with the old restrictive "male sex role," and the rapid creation of more equal relations with women. They were far too optimistic – and missed most of the politics of the process. Segal has aptly called the pace of change among heterosexual men "slow motion," and she has shown the political complexities of reconstructing masculinity in the case of Britain. The leading style of gay masculinity in English-speaking countries went from camp to "clone" in a decade, and gay politics then ran into the wall of the new right and the HIV epidemic. Commercial popular culture, in the era of Rambo movies and Masters of the Universe toys, has reasserted musclebound and destructive masculinity and has made a killing.[3]

So, to say masculinity has become "problematic" is not necessarily to say gender relations are changing for the better. It is, rather, to say that cultural turbulence around themes of masculinity has grown. An arena has opened up. What direction gender relations move will in part be determined by the politics that happens in this arena. And this very much involves the intelligentsia. Intellectuals are bearers of the social relations of gender and makers of sexual ideology. The way we do our intellectual work of inquiry, analysis, and reportage has consequences; epistemology and sexual politics are intertwined.[4]

Masculinity as an intellectual problem

Such awareness is not common in the English-language literature on

men-and-masculinity. Indeed the implicit definitions of masculinity in this literature have limited its intellectual and political horizons quite severely.

Closest to common-sense ideas is the notion of masculinity as a *psychological essence*, an inner core to the individual. This may be inherited, or it may be acquired early in life. In either case it is carried forward into later life as the essence of a man's being. Pseudo-biological versions of this concept abound. A more sophisticated version draws on psychoanalytic ideas to present masculinity as an identity laid down in early childhood by family constellations. Stoller's conception of "core gender identity" is probably the most influential. It has had a good run in blaming mothers for transsexuality, and psychologizing the anthropology of masculinity.[5]

The conception of masculinity as a psychological essence obliterates questions about social structure and the historical dynamic of gender relations. At best, the formation of masculinity within the family is treated as a moment of reproduction of the gender order. At worst, an ahistorical masculine essence, as unchanging as crystal, is set up as a criterion against which social arrangements are judged, and generally found wanting. Exactly this formula is exploited by the *Rambo* films.[6]

The conception of a male *sex role*, the staple of American masculinity literature in the 1970s and early 1980s, promises better than this. It places definitions of masculinity firmly in the realm of the social, in "expectations," "stereotypes," or "role models." This allows for change. There may be role strain, conflict within or about the role, shifting role definitions. It also allows for a certain diversity. Role theorists can acknowledge that the "black male role" may be different from the "white male role." [7]

But these gains are slight. Sex-role theory is drastically inadequate as a framework for understanding gender. The role concept analytically collapses into an assertion of individual agency; it squeezes out the dimension of social structure. It gives no grip on the distribution of power, on the institutional organization of gender, on the gender structuring of production. Role theory rests on a superficial analysis of human personality and motives. It gives no grip on the emotional contradictions of sexuality, or the emotional complexities of gender in everyday life, which are revealed by fine-textured field research.[8]

A third book of work locates masculinity in *discourse* or treats it via cultural *representations*. Early writing on media stereotypes has now been transcended by a much more supple and penetrating account of the symbolic structures operating within particular genres. One of the best pieces of recent North American writing about masculinity, Jeffords's *The Remasculinization of America*, traces the reshaping of the collective memory of the Vietnam War by novelists and filmmakers. This is a striking reversal of the slow de-sanitizing of the Second World War traced by Fussell in *Wartime*. Theweleit's much-quoted *Male Fantasies* similarly locates sources of German fascism in discourses linking war and sexuality.[9] These studies are politically sophisticated, even politically vibrant, in a way the discourse of "sex roles" never has been. They attend to issues of power, to nuances and complexities in the representation of masculinity, to contradiction and change. But because they operate wholly within the world of discourse they ignore their own conditions of existence in the practices of gender and in the social structuring of those practices. Their politics is inevitably reactive. One can get from such criticism no pro-active idea of how to *change* oppressive gender relations – except perhaps to fly back in time and write a better war novel.

The limitations of our current approaches to masculinity are summed up by the startling ethnocentrism of most of the English-language literature. By this I don't only mean white, middle-class writers' habit of taking white, middle-class experience as constituting reality and marginalizing or ignoring men who work with their hands or who come from other ethnic groups. That habit exists, of course. Class and race blindness is particularly blatant in the therapeutic literature on masculinity. It has been under challenge for some time, with little effect.[10] Rather, I mean the more startling ethnocentrism by which a discourse of "masculinity" is constructed out of the lives of (at most) 5 percent of the world's population of men, in one culture-area, at one moment in history. Since wild overgeneralization from culturally specific custom is virtually the basis of sociobiology, it is not surprising that the literature resting on notions of masculinity as a psychological essence should be ethnocentric. It seems more remarkable that the sex-role literature, and the analysis of discourse, should be so incurious about other civilizations and other periods of history.

A cure is at hand, in a body of research that has developed quite separately from the men-and-masculinity literature. Ethnographers in a number of culture areas, doubtless sensitized to gender by feminism

though rarely pursuing feminist themes, have come up with accounts of local constructions of masculinity very different from the mid-Atlantic norm. Notable examples are Herzfeld's account of the "poetics of manhood" centering on sheep-stealing in a Cretan village; Herdt's discussion of ritualized homosexuality and the flute cult as "idioms of masculinity" in a Melanesian culture; and Bolton's curious but evocative study of the slogans painted on their vehicles by Peruvian truck-drivers.[11]

Putting such accounts together might lead to a comparative sociology of masculinity capable of challenging many of our culture's received notions. Some studies have already been put to this use. Thus Lidz and Lidz use the Melanesian evidence to challenge conventional psychoanalytic accounts of the production of masculinity via oedipal relationships.[12]

But the familiar comparative method rests on an assumption of intact, separate cultures; and that assumption is not defensible any more. European imperialism, global capitalism under U.S. hegemony, and modern communications have brought all cultures into contact, obliterated many, and marginalized most. Anthropology as a discipline is in crisis because of this. The dimension of *global history* must now be a part of every ethnography. And that is true for ethnographies of masculinity as well.

Towards a new framework: A political sociology of men in gender relations

To grasp the intellectual and political opportunity that is now open requires a shift in the strategic conception of research and in our understanding of the object of knowledge. The object of knowledge is not a reified "masculinity" (as encapsulated, with its reified partner "femininity," in the psychological scales measuring M/F and androgyny). The object of knowledge is, rather, *men's places and practices in gender relations.* It is true that these places may be symbolically constructed (the subject of representation research); and that these practices are organized transactionally and in the life course (the subject of sex role and personality research). Thus the main topics of existing men-and-masculinity studies are included in this conception of the field. But these topics can only be understood in relation to a wider spectrum of issues that must now be systematically included in the field of argument.

First, masculinity as personal practice cannot be isolated from its institutional context. Most human activity is institutionally bound. Three institutions – the state, the workplace/labor market, and the family – are of particular importance in the contemporary organization of gender.

Thus we cannot begin to talk intelligibly about "masculinity and power" without addressing the institutionalized masculinization of state elites, the gender differentiation of parts of the state apparatus (consider the military in the Gulf deployment), the history of state strategies for the control of populations via women's fertility. The sexual division of labor in production, the masculinized character of the very concept of "the economic," the levels of income and asset inequality between men and women, make it impossible to speak about "masculinity and work" as if they were somehow separate entities being brought into relation. Hansot and Tyack have correctly emphasized the importance of "thinking institutionally" in the case of gender and schooling, and their point has much wider relevance. It is not too strong to say that *masculinity is an aspect of institutions*, and is produced in institutional life, *as much as it is an aspect of personality* or produced in interpersonal transactions.[13]

Second, masculinities as cultural forms cannot be abstracted from sexuality, which is an essential dimension of the social creation of gender. Sexuality has been leeched out of much of the literature on masculinity. This perhaps reflects an assumption that sexuality is pre-social, a natural force belonging to the realm of biology. But while sexuality addresses the body, it is itself social practice and constitutive of the social world. There is no logical gap between sexuality and organizational life. Their close interconnection has been recently documented in important studies of the workplace by J. Hearn and W. Parkin and by Pringle. The sexualization of military life is evident from work on soldiers' language as well as in the more emotionally honest soldiers' autobiographies.[14]

These arguments are consistent with a position in social theory that insists on the historicity of social life. Practice is situational (it responds to a particular configuration of events and relationships) and transformative (it operates on a given situation and converts it into a differently configured one). One cannot be masculine in a particular way (which is to say, engage in particular practices constructing a given form of masculinity) without affecting the conditions in which that form of masculinity arose: whether to reproduce them, intensify them, or subvert them.

Since gender relations produce large-scale inequalities – in most contemporary cultures, collective advantages for men and disadvantages for women – masculinity understood in this way must be understood as political. I mean "political" in the simple, conventional sense of the struggle for scarce resources, the mobilization of power and the pursuit of tactics on behalf of a particular interest. Interests are constituted within gender relations by the facts of inequality. They are not homogeneous, indeed are generally extremely complex, but they are powerful determinants of social action.

Different masculinities arise in relation to this structure of interests and embody different commitments and different tactics or strategies. I have suggested elsewhere that hegemonic masculinity in patriarchy can be understood as embodying a successful strategy for the subordination of women.[15] I would now add to that formula that when the historical conditions for a strategy's success have altered, the hegemonic form of masculinity is vulnerable to displacement by other forms.

To construct such an analysis requires a standpoint, and I take the most defensible one to be the commitment to human equality. The standpoint of equality is not an end-point but a starting-point for social analysis. In relation to masculinity it defines the enterprise as one of "studying up," a matter of studying the holders of power in gender relations with a view to informing strategies for dismantling patriarchy. Given the interweaving of structures of inequality, it should also yield significant information on strategic questions about capitalism, race relations, imperialism, and global poverty. This is no new observation, but it bears repeating. In one of the most literate and penetrating of essays on the question of Latin American "machismo," the Peruvian writer Adolph argued that unchallenged male supremacy "is one of the major obstacles to any real progress in this part of the world." [16] That is true of English-speaking parts of the world too.

Masculinities in history

Multiple cultures, multiple masculinities

Ethnographies and histories of gender have now become rich enough to give us a clear view of some culture areas at least. An important negative conclusion can be drawn immediately. The models of masculinity familiar in Euro/American discourse simply do not work for

the realities of gender in other cultures, so far as these cultures can be reconstructed before colonial or commercial domination by the Euro/American world. Let me sketch, very briefly, two such cases.

In neo-Confucian China from the Song to the Qing dynasties (roughly, the thousand years before this century), the vast majority of the population were peasants working family farms, with administration in the hands of a tax-supported scholar-official class. The heavily patriarchal gender relations in the dominant class were regulated by an increasingly formal body of rules, an authoritarian development of Confucian moral and social philosophy. Peasant families were more egalitarian and less regulated, but the Confucian code remained hegemonic in the society as a whole.[17]

Promulgated by the state and enforced by state and clan as well as family patriarchs, the code defined conduct for men not as pursuit of a unitary ideal of masculinity, but more centrally in terms of the right or wrong performance of a network of obligations – towards emperor, parents, brothers, etc. To the extent heroic models were constructed in popular drama and fiction, they are unfamiliar types to a Euro/American sensibility. They include emperors marked not by Napoleonic agency but by a passive authority and transcendence of struggle; and scholar-politicians marked by guile, persuasiveness, and magic powers.

The difference from European culture is particularly clear in two issues important to European constructions of masculinity: soldiering, and love between men. Neo-Confucian culture deprecated military life. Soldiers were regarded more as licensed thugs than as ideals of masculinity. One set of clan rules advised men of the clan not to become soldiers, remarking that this was "another form of loafing," i.e., not what any responsible man would do. Fighting heroes do appear in popular literature. But, in contrast to Euro/American presumptions, this kind of heroism is unconnected with active interest in sex with women.

On the other hand, early Confucian culture seems to have been far more positive about erotic relationships between men than European culture has been. There was a well-defined literary tradition within the upper class celebrating male-to-male love, with such relationships seen as exemplary rather than decadent. Over time, however, the neo-Confucian philosophers became more hostile to homosexual relationships. In the twentieth century, the tradition affirming them has been completely broken.[18]

In the pre-colonial cultures of Papua New Guinea, with intergroup warfare widespread and no state culture, a marked gender division of labor in production, ritual, and fighting was usual. Male supremacy was asserted in most of these cultures, but in a context where women often had direct access to productive resources (e.g., they owned gardens). The major theme in the formation of masculinity was not entry into powerful hierarchical institutions, as in China, but a ritual and practical separation from the world of women, a symbolic construction of difference.

Lidz and Lidz, reflecting on initiation practices, remark how this distinguished the course of boys' psychosexual development from European patterns, eliminating the "oedipal" period and eroticizing the "latency" period. Herdt's now well-known study of the "Sambia" in the eastern highlands, reinforced by other studies of ritualized homosexuality, shows what from a conventional Euro/American perspective is an astonishing process: the construction of adult heterosexual masculinity through *homosexual* relationships in adolescence and early adulthood.

Schieffelin and Modjeska point to a different cultural form, the "bachelor cults" of Papua New Guinea's southern and western highlands. Rather than coercively initiating young males into the mainstream gender order, these cults provided a kind of organized exception to it. They defined an idealized masculinity in relation to *spirit* women in sharp distinction from married men's life with real women. In these cults a ritual heterosexuality glossed a strenuously homosocial reality.[19]

These comments hardly scratch the surface for either region, but are perhaps enough to demonstrate the fact of genuinely different institutionalizations of gender in different culture areas. In the Chinese case we can also clearly see the *changing* institutionalization of masculinity through the history of the culture. Historical change is also implied by the fine detail of the Papua New Guinea research (though it is obviously more difficult to document for cultures without written records). To speak of "masculinity" as one and the same entity across these differences in place and time is to descend into absurdity. Even a modest study of this evidence wipes out sociobiology, any scheme of genetic determination, or any ontological or poetic account of male essences, as credible accounts of masculinity.

Indeed I am forced to wonder whether "masculinity " is in itself a culture-bound concept that makes little sense outside Euro/American

culture. Our conventional meaning for the word "masculinity" is a quality of an individual, a personal attribute that exists in a greater or lesser degree; in the mental realm an analogue of physical traits like hairiness of chest or bulk of biceps. The connection of such a concept with the growth of individualism and the emerging concept of the self in early-modern European culture is easy to see. A culture not constructed in such a way might have little use for the concept of masculinity.

Nevertheless, it is Euro/American culture that is dominant in the world now, and which must be addressed first in any reckoning with our current predicament. Imperialism was a massively important event in gender history. Some cultures' gender regimes have been virtually obliterated by imperialism. (This includes the native gender regimes of the place where I am writing: Sydney harbor foreshores had a significant Aboriginal population at the time of the white invasion.) All have been abraded by it. Surviving cultures have attempted to reconstruct themselves in relation to Euro/American world dominance, an explosive process that is perhaps the most important dynamic of gender in the contemporary world. Responses vary enormously, from the attempted dismantling of domestic patriarchy in revolutionary China to the intensification of Islamic patriarchy in response to French colonialism in Algeria.[20]

To make this point is not to accept that gender effects simply follow from class causes. Stacey convincingly argues that Confucian China was a patriarchal class order in which the crisis of the politico-economic system was inherently also a crisis of the family and gender relations. Similarly, I argue that European imperialism and contemporary world capitalism are gendered social orders with gender dynamics as powerful as their class dynamics. The history of how European/American culture, economy, and states became so dominant and so dangerous is *inherently* a history of gender relations (as well as, interwoven with class relations and race relations). Since the agents of global domination were, and are, predominantly men, the historical analysis of masculinity must be a leading theme in our understanding of the contemporary world order.

Having made that large claim, I should back it up with a dozen volumes of evidence; and they have not yet been written. Serious historical work on themes of masculinity is extremely rare. All I can offer here is yet another sketch, a historical hypothesis about the course of events that produced contemporary Euro/American masculinities. This sketch is

informed by the decent research I have been able to locate, but is necessarily very tentative.

Early modern Europe

Four developments in the period 1450–1650 (the "long 16th century" in Braudel's useful phrase) mark decisive changes in European life from which we can trace the construction of modern gender regimes.

The disruption of medieval Catholicism by the spread of Renaissance culture and by the Protestant Reformation disrupted ascetic and corporate-religious ideals of men's lives, of the kind institutionalized in monasticism. On the one hand, the way was opened for a growing emphasis on the conjugal household and on married heterosexuality as the hegemonic form of sexuality. On the other hand, the new emphases on individuality of expression and on each person's unmediated relationship with God led toward the individualism, and the concept of a transcending self, which provided the basis for the modern concept of masculinity itself.

The creation of the first overseas empires by the Atlantic seaboard states (Portugal and Spain, then Holland, England, and France) was a gendered enterprise from the start, an outgrowth of the segregated men's occupations of soldiering and sea trading. Perhaps the first group who became defined as a recognizable "masculine" cultural type, in the modern sense, were the conquistadors. They were displaced from customary social relationships, often extremely violent, and difficult for the imperial authorities to control. An immediate consequence was a clash over the ethics of conquest and a demand for controls. Las Casas's famous denunciation of Spanish atrocities in the Indies is accordingly a very significant document in the history of masculinity.[21]

The growth of cities fuelled by commercial capitalism – Antwerp, London, Amsterdam – created a mass milieu for everyday life that was both more anonymous, and more coherently regulated, than the countryside. The changed conditions of everyday life made a more thoroughgoing individualism possible. In combination with the "first industrial revolution" and the accumulation of wealth from trade, slaving, and colonies, an emphasis on calculative rationality began to distinguish masculinity in the entrepreneurial subculture of early capitalism. At the same time, commercial cities became the milieu (by the ear-

ly eighteenth century) for the first sexual subcultures, such as the "Molly houses" of London, institutionalizing variations on gender themes.[22] The notion that one must have a *personal identity* as a man or a women, rather than a *location* in social relations as a man or a woman, was hardening.

The onset of large-scale European civil war – the sixteenth-seventeenth-century wars of religion, merging into the dynastic wars of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries – disrupted established gender orders profoundly. A measure of this is the fact that revolutionary struggles saw the first radical assertions of gender equality in European history, by religious-cum-political sects like the Quakers.[23] At the same time, this warfare consolidated the strong state structure that is a distinctive feature of Euro/American society and has provided a very large-scale institutionalization of men's power. The centrality of warfare in these developments meant that armies became a crucial part of the developing state apparatus, and military performance became an unavoidable issue in the construction of masculinities.

We can speak of a gender order existing by the eighteenth century in which masculinity as a cultural form had been produced and in which we can define a hegemonic form of masculinity. This was the masculinity predominant in the lives of men of the gentry, the politically dominant class in most of Europe and North America.

Economically based on land ownership, gentry masculinity did not emphasize rational calculation. It was not strongly individualized, being tied to lineage and kin networks. British politics in the age of Walpole and the Pitts, for instance, generally followed family lines, and the state structure was organized by patronage. Masculinity was not strongly regulated, allowing a good deal of negotiation over its terms, to the point of public gender-switching in the celebrated case of the Chevalier d'Eon in the 1770s.

Some regulation was provided by a code of honor, both family and personal. The gentry was integrated with the state in the sense that they often were the local state (justices of the peace in Britain effectively controlled rural society), and they staffed the military apparatus. The gentry provided the officers for armies and navies and often recruited the rank and file themselves. At the intersection between this direct involvement in violence and the ethic of honor was the institution of the duel. Willingness to face an opponent in a potentially lethal one-to-one combat became a key test of gentry masculinity.[24]

Transformations of hegemonic forms

The history of hegemonic forms of Euro/American masculinity in the last two hundred years is the history of the displacement, splitting, and remaking of gentry masculinity. Because I have limited space I am very summary at this point. Political revolution, industrialization, and the growth of bureaucratic state apparatuses saw the displacement of gentry masculinity by more calculative, rational, and regulated masculinities. The bureaucrat and the businessman were produced as social types. The economic base of the landed gentry declined, and with it the orientation of kinship and honor. Violence was split off from political power, in the core countries; Mr Gladstone did not fight duels, nor lead armies. Rather, violence became a specialty. As mass armies were institutionalized so was the officer corps. This became the repository of much of the gentry code. The Dreyfus affair in France was shaped by this code; the Prussian officer corps was perhaps its most famous exemplar. But violence was now combined with an emphasis on rationality: we see the emergence of military science. If Las Casas's *History of the Indies* was a key document of early-modern masculinity, perhaps the nineteenth century equivalent was Clausewitz's *On War* – Clausewitz being one of the reformers of the Prussian army. It was bureaucratically rationalized violence as a social technique, just as much as superiority of weapons, that made European states and European settlers almost invincible in the colonial frontier expansion of the nineteenth century.[25]

But this technique risked destroying the society that sustained it. Global war led to revolutionary upheaval in 1917–19 23. In much of Europe the capitalist order was only stabilized, after half a generation of further struggle, by fascist movements that glorified irrationality and the unrestrained violence of the frontline soldier. And the dynamics of fascism soon enough led to a new and even more devastating global war.

The defeat of fascism in the Second World War cut off the institutionalization of a hegemonic masculinity marked by irrationality and personal violence. But it certainly did not end the bureaucratic institutionalization of violence. The Red Army and U.S. armed forces, which triumphed in 1945, continued to grow in destructive capability. Less technically advanced armies remained, in China, Pakistan, Indonesia, Argentina, and Chile, central to the politics of their respective states. The growth of destructive capability through the application of science to weapons development has, however, given a new significance to technical expertise.

This paralleled developments in other parts of the economy. The enormous growth of school and university systems during the twentieth century, the multiplying number of "professional" occupations with claims to specialized expertise, the increasing political significance of technology, and the growth of information industries, are aspects of a large-scale change in culture and production systems that has seen a further splitting of nineteenth-century hegemonic masculinity.

Masculinity organized around *dominance* was increasingly incompatible with masculinity organized around *expertise* or technical knowledge. "Management" split from "professions," and some analysts saw power increasingly in the hands of the professionals. Factional divisions opened in both capitalist ruling classes and communist elites between those pursuing coercive strategies towards workers (conservatives/hard-liners) and those depending on technological success and economic growth that allow integrative strategies (liberals/reformers). The emotional pattern of Reaganite politics in the United States centered on a revival of the first of these inflections of masculinity and a rejection of the second. In the 1992 U.S. presidential campaign, both Bush and Clinton image-makers seemed to be trying to blend the two.[26]

Subordinated forms

So far I have been sketching the hegemonic masculinities of the dominant class and race in the dominant countries of the world-system. But this, obviously, is far from being the whole picture. The hegemonic form of masculinity is generally not the only form, and often is not the most common form. Hegemony is a question of relations of cultural domination, not of head-counts.

On a world scale this is even more obviously true. The patterns of masculinity just outlined are formed in relation to the whole complex structure of gender relations. In terms of other masculinities, they exist in tension with the hegemonic masculinities of subordinated classes and races, with subordinated masculinities in their own class and race milieu, and with the patterns of masculinity current in other parts of the world order. To offer even a sketch of this structure, let alone analyze its dynamics, is a tall order; again I shall have to settle for indications.

The historical displacement of the gentry by businessmen and bureaucrats in core countries was plainly linked to the transformation of peasants into working classes and the creation of working-class hegemonic masculinities as cultural forms. The separation of household from workplace in the factory system, the dominance of the wage form, and the development of industrial struggle, were conditions for the emergence of forms of masculinity organized around wage-earning capacity, skill and endurance in labor, domestic patriarchy, and combative solidarity among wage earners.

The expulsion of women from industries such as coalmining, printing, and steelmaking was a key moment in the formation of such masculinity. The craft union movement can be seen as its institutionalization. The growing power of organized labor in the last decades of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century was one of the main pressures on the masculinity of the dominant class that led to the splits between political alternatives (fascist, liberal, conservative) already mentioned.[27]

At much the same time the masculinity of the dominant class was purged in terms of identity and object choice. As gay historians have shown, the late nineteenth century was the time when "the homosexual" as a social type was constructed, to a considerable extent through the deployment of medical and penal power. At earlier periods of history sodomy had been officially seen as an act, the potential for which existed in any man who gave way to libertinage. From the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, this change meant that the potential for homoerotic pleasure was expelled from the masculine and located in a deviant group (symbolically assimilated to women or to beasts). There was no mirror-type of "the heterosexual"; rather, heterosexuality became a required connotation of manliness. The contradiction between this rapidly-solidifying definition and the actual conditions of emotional life among men in military and paramilitary groups reached crisis level in fascism. It fuelled Hitler's murder of Roehm and his purge of the Stormtroopers in 1934.[28]

On the frontier of settlement, regulation was ineffective, violence endemic, physical conditions harsh. Industries such as mining offered spectacular profits on a chancy basis. A very imbalanced sex ratio allowed a homosocial masculinization of the frontier. Phillips, in an important study of the New Zealand case, draws the contrast between two groups of men and two images of masculinity: the brawling single

frontiersman and the settled married pioneer farmer. The distinction is familiar in the American and Canadian west too. The state, Phillips argues, was hostile to the social disorder generated by the masculine work and pub culture of the former group. Accordingly, it encouraged family settlement and might promote women's interests. It is notable that such frontier areas were the earliest where women won the vote. Nevertheless cults of frontier masculinity (Daniel Boone, the cowboys, Paul Bunyan, the diggers, the shearers, the Voortrekkers) continued as a characteristic part of sexual ideology in former colonies of settlement such as the United States, South Africa, and Australia.[29]

In colonies where local populations were not displaced but turned into a subordinated labor force (much of Latin America, India, East Indies) the situation was more complex again. It is a familiar suggestion that Latin American "machismo" was a product of the interplay of cultures under colonialism. The conquistadors provided both provocation and model; Spanish Catholicism provided the ideology of female abnegation; and oppression blocked other claims of men to power. Pearlman shows that this pattern is also a question of women's agency. Machismo is *not* the ideology governing men's relations with women in the subsistence-farming Mazatec people, where gender relations are much more egalitarian. Outmigration and commodification are changing this, but even so, the young Mazatec men who are picking up a hyper-masculine style from the wider Mexican culture are forced into code-switching at home because older women and men will not play along.[30]

Nevertheless, it is the Mazatec gender order that is under pressure in the interaction, not the national Mexican. Internationally it is Euro/American culture and institutions that supply the content of global mass media, design the commodities and the labor process of producing them, and regulate the accumulation of resources. This power is the strongest force redefining men's place in gender relations outside the North Atlantic world.

Contemporary politics

The present moment

If this historical outline has some validity, it should give us purchase on what is happening in the lives of men and women in the "first world" at the present time. It suggests, most obviously, that we should see contemporary changes in masculinity not as the softening (or hardening) of

a unitary "sex role," but as a field of institutional and interpersonal changes through which a multilateral struggle for hegemony in gender relations, and advantage in other structures, is pursued.

The distinctive feature of the present moment in gender relations in first-world countries is the fact of open challenges to men's power, in the form of feminism, and to institutionalized heterosexuality, in the form of lesbian and gay men's movements. We must distinguish between the *presence* of these movements from the operating *power* they have won, which is often disappointingly small. Whatever the limits to their gains, and the success of the conservative backlash, the historic fact that these movements are here on the scene structures the whole politics of gender and sexuality in new ways.

These challenges are being worked out in a context of technological change and economic restructuring (e.g., the decline of heavy industry in old industrial centers), globalization of market relationships and commercial mass communication (e.g., the crumbling of Eastern-European command economies), widening wealth inequalities and chronic tensions in first-world/third-world relations (e.g., the Vietnam war, the debt crisis, the Gulf War). Each of these processes has its gender dimension.

Contestation in hegemonic masculinity

Earlier in the twentieth century a split began to open in the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant classes, between a masculinity organized around interpersonal dominance and one organized around knowledge and expertise. Under the pressure of labor movements and first-wave feminism, and in the context of the growing scale of mass production, dominance and expertise ceased to be nuances within the one masculinity and became visibly different strategies for operating and defending the patriarchal capitalist order. In some settings distinct institutional bases for these two variants hardened: line management versus professions, field command versus general staff, promotion based on practical experience versus university training. Political ideologies and styles – conservatism versus liberalism, confrontation versus consensus politics – also clustered around this division.

Feminism in the 1970s and 1980s often found itself allied with the liberal/professional side in this contestation, for a variety of reasons.

Notions of equal opportunity and advancement by merit appealed in a technocratic style of management. Much feminist activity was located in universities and professions. Liberal feminism (the strongest current in feminism) as an enlightenment project found itself on the same terrain, and using much the same political language, as progressive liberalism and reformist labor.

The patriarchal counter-attack on feminism, conversely, rapidly became associated with the masculinity of dominance. Early attempts to find a scientific basis for the counter-attack, such as Goldberg's *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, were faintly ludicrous and had little influence.[31] Much more powerful was the cultural backing given by authoritarian patriarchal churches. Perhaps the most successful of all antifeminist operations in the last 20 years has been the Catholic church's attacks on contraception, abortion, and sexual freedom for women.

The reassertion of a dominance-based masculinity has been much discussed in popular culture. To my mind its most interesting form is not Rambo movies but the 1980s cult of the "entrepreneur" in business. Here gender imagery, institutional change, and political strategy intersect. The deregulation policies of new-right governments in the 1980s dismantled Keynesian strategies for social integration via expert macro-economic regulation. The credibility of the new policies rested on the image of a generation of entrepreneurs whose wealth-creating energies were waiting to be unleashed. That this stratum was masculine is culturally unquestionable. Among other things, their management jargon is full of lurid gender terminology: thrusting entrepreneurs, opening up virgin territory, aggressive lending, etc.

New-right ideology naturalizes these social practices, that is, treats them as part of the order of nature. But in fact the shift of economic power into the hands of this group was very conjunctural. The operations of the entrepreneurs were essentially in finance, not production. Key practices such as the leveraged management buy-out (in the United States and the construction of highly-geared conglomerates (in Australia) depended on the institutional availability of massive credit at high rates of interest (junk bonds and bank consortium loans). The political interest in sustaining a huge diversion of funds from productive investment was limited, but the "entrepreneurs" could not stop. The growing contradiction between this particular inflection of the masculinity of dominance and the need of the rest of the dominant class for economic stability led to denunciations of greed and in the

later 1980s to a virtual withdrawal of political support.

The political damage-control has generally taken the form of attempts to show these episodes were an aberration, not that they resulted from a mistaken strategy. Deregulation and the roll-back of the welfare state remains a powerful agenda in the politics of the rich countries, and neoconservative regimes continue to be electorally successful. It is in the internal politics of the state that we see most clearly the new direction in the contest between dominance and expertise. What Yeatman calls the "managerialist agenda" in the reconstruction of the state occupies the terrain of expertise. Its ideology is provided by neoclassical economics, and its operating language is provided by a management science legitimated by university business schools and rapidly spreading through the universities themselves. But it detached the notion of expertise from the liberal/reformist politics of the Keynesian era and the humanist commitments that had allowed at least a partial alliance with feminism.[32]

Managerialists and technocrats do not directly confront feminist programs but under-fund or shrink them in the name of efficiency and volunteerism. Equal-opportunity principles are accepted as efficient personnel management ideas, but no funds are committed for affirmative action to make equal opportunity a vehicle of social change. Research and training funds are poured into areas of men's employment (for instance the Australian government is currently pushing science and technology) because of the perceived need to make the country "competitive in international markets."

Speculating a little, I think we are seeing the construction of a new variant of hegemonic masculinity. It has a technocratic rather than confrontationist style, but it is misogynist as before. It characteristically operates through the indirect mechanisms of financial administration. It is legitimated by an ideology centering on an economic theory whose most distinctive feature is its blanket exclusion from discourse of women's unpaid work – which, as Waring bitterly but accurately puts it, "counts for nothing" in economic science.[33]

Challenges: "Alternative" masculinities

Contestation for the hegemonic position is familiar. What is novel, in Euro/American history, is open challenge to hegemonic masculinity as

such. Such challenges were sparked by the challenge to men's power as a whole made by contemporary feminism. Feminism may not have been adopted by many men, but an *awareness* of feminism is very widespread indeed.

In the course of a recent life-history study among Australian men, this point emerged clearly. Almost all the men we interviewed had some idea of what feminism was and felt the need to take some position on it.

Their positions ranged from essentialist rejection:

> I think the feminist movement's gone too far. Because women are women, they've got to be women. The feminists, as I say – the true, die-hard feminists – have taken it past the extreme, and turned women, those women, into nonentities now. They're not women any more. (Computer technician, heterosexual, 30)

via way endorsement, usually making an exception of bra-burning extremists:

> I think they have a just cause, because they have sort of been oppressed. Well they certainly have been oppressed. And it would be a better world if once this equality comes. But extremists spoil it for those who want it to change. But change, so everybody can be happy. (Technical teacher, heterosexual, 40)

to full-blown acceptance of feminism:

> Certain times in my life it's been the most important ideal for me and I've just done lots and lots of work on it. (Trainee nurse, heterosexual, 22)

The last kind of response is rare, though it is important in defining political possibilities. The life stories of men who reached this point via environmental politics show the importance of a direct encounter with feminist activism among women. Given the massive bias of media against feminism, more indirect acquaintance is extremely unlikely to lead to a positive response from men.[34]

The challenge to hegemonic masculinity among this group of men mainly takes the form of an attempt to re-make the self. Most of them started off with a fairly conventional gender trajectory, and they came to see a personal reconstruction as required. This turns out to be emotionally very difficult. The growth-movement techniques available to them do not deliver the political analysis, support, or follow-through

that the project actually requires. Only a few, and those only marginally, have moved beyond this individualist framework to the search for a collective politics of gender among men.

A collective politics is precisely the basis of the challenge to hegemonic heterosexuality mounted by gay liberation. At one level this challenge was delivered simply by the presence of an open gay milieu based on sex and friendship. "Coming out" is experienced as entering a social network, not just as entering a sexual practice. As a gay man in the same study put it:

> Rage, rage, rage – let's do everything you've denied yourself for 25 years – let's get into it and have a good time sexually, and go out partying and dancing and drinking. (Transport worker, gay, 25)

The collective work required was to construct the network and negotiate a social presence for it. This meant dealings with the state authorities, e.g. the police; economic mobilization, the so-called "pink capitalism"; and organizing political representation, the most famous representative being Harvey Milk in the United States.[35]

Most of this went no further than a politics of pluralist accommodation, analogous, as Altman has pointed out, to claims for political space by ethnic minorities in the United States. It was this assimilationist program that was disrupted in the early 1980s by the HIV epidemic and the need for a renewed struggle against the medicalization and criminalization of homosexuality.

But in gay liberation, from very early on, was a much more radical, indeed revolutionary, challenge to hegemonic masculinity. The slogan "Every straight man is a target for gay liberation!" jokingly catches both an open-ended libertarianism and the point that gays cannot be free from oppression while heterosexual masculinity remains as it is. Drawing on Freudian ideas, some gay theorists argued that the repression of homosexual affect among straight men was a key source of their authoritarianism and violence. These ideas have never been turned into an effective practical politics; but they remain an important moment of critique.[36]

"Rage, rage, rage" is exactly what the settled married farmer, or the respectable married working man, cannot do. Donaldson argues that the link between the family-household and the workplace, rather than the workplace itself, is the axis on which working-class masculinity is formed. It finds political expression in a community-based, formally-organized labor movement and is sustained by a sharp gender division of labor between wage-earning husband and child-raising wife. These points have been well documented in recent Australian research on sexual politics in working-class communities.[37]

But with the collapse of the postwar boom, the abandonment of full employment as a policy goal by modern states, and the shift to market discipline by business strategists (an aspect of the contestation discussed earlier), the conditions of this gender regime in working-class communities have changed. Significant proportions of the working class face long-term structural unemployment. Traditional working-class masculinity is being deconstructed by impersonal forces, whether the men concerned like it or not.

Young men respond to this situation in different ways. They may attempt to promote themselves out of the working class, via education and training. They may accept their poor chances of promotion and develop a slack, complicit masculinity. Or they may fight against the powers that be, rejecting school, skirmishing with the police, getting into crime.[38]

The tattoo-and-motorcycle style of aggressive white working-class masculinity is familiar enough; Metcalfe even comments on the "larrikin mode of class struggle." It has generally been understood as linked with stark homophobia, misogyny, and domestic patriarchy. Our interviews with young unemployed men suggest that this pattern too is being deconstructed in a significant way. The public display of protest masculinity continues. But it can coexist with a breakdown in the *domestic* gender division of labor, with an acceptance of women's economic equality, and an interest in children, which would not be expected from traditional accounts.[39]

Since structural unemployment in first-world countries is most likely to affect members of oppressed ethnic groups, such a deconstruction must interweave with race politics. American discussions of mascu-

linity in urban black ghettos show this interplay in one dramatic form. In other parts of the world it does not necessarily follow the same course. For instance, some Australian work on the making of masculinity in multi-ethnic inner-city environments suggest a more negotiated, though still racially-structured, outcome.[40]

What the evidence does show unequivocally is that working-class masculinities are no more set in concrete than are ruling-class masculinities – though in a bourgeois culture they are much more liable to stereotyped representation. The conscious attempts at building a counter-sexist heterosexual masculinity have mainly occurred in middle-class milieux. Some socialist explorations did occur but are now mostly forgotten. I would argue that a progressive sexual politics cannot afford to be class-blind. It must look to the settings of working-class life, and existing forms of working-class collective action, as vital arenas of sexual politics.[41]

Afterword

To cover the territory of this article is to skate fast over dangerously thin ice. For much of the story the evidential basis is still very slight; that is why I have called it a sketch and a historical hypothesis.

But this is the scale on which we have to think, if the major problems about men in gender relations are to get sorted out. For too long the discussion of masculinity has been bogged down in psychological readings of the issue, most often in an ego-psychology based on an extreme individualism. We need to let the breezes of politics, economics, institutional sociology, and history blow through the psychology. They may puff strategies of reform away from an individualized masculinity-therapy towards a collective politics of gender equality.

At the time of writing, the most popular English-language book about masculinity is a deeply reactionary work by the American poet Robert Bly called *Iron John*.[42] The fact that significant numbers of middle-class North American men are attracted to a view of masculinity which is nativist, separatist, homophobic, and expressed through concocted myths of ancient men's rituals, is a disturbing index of current sexual politics.

Yet even here a dialectic can be seen. For Bly's "mythopoetic men's movement" has moved beyond an individualized masculinity-therapy to emphasize collective processes, gatherings of men to enact rituals and generate solidarity. If that awareness can be connected with a pro-feminist, pro-gay agenda, we will have less drum-beating among the trees, but we may actually be moving towards gender equality.

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