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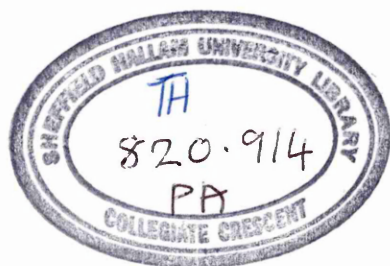
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**PERSONALISING THE  
PUBLIC: A REVIEW OF  
FOUR BOOKS ABOUT  
MASCULINITY**

**CHRISTOPHER PARKHOUSE**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of Sheffield Hallam University for the  
degree of Master of Philosophy**

**August 1996**



## ABSTRACT

The thesis is focused around a critical literature review of four selected books written on masculinity by men between 1977 and 1989. The works chosen provide evidence of the enormous impact of feminism on the social sciences and represent a British left-wing academic response to this political and ideological challenge.

In the first three chapters I have located the writers and their works within their political and historical context. I have also examined the particular social networks that exerted an influence upon the writers under discussion.

The main primary research for this dissertation took the form of interviews with three of the writers and an account of these meetings is included.

Central to the whole project is the concept of the "personal is political"; its origin, its importance vis a vis the feminist movement and how it applies to men and masculinity, all constitute key questions.

Within male ideology the personal had become associated with the private sphere and women, while the political had become associated with the public realm and men. During the course of the thesis I came to realise that if the personal was political then the political/public realm was also personal; many of men's personal experiences occur within the public arena.

Although not openly expressed within their works I argue that in retrospect the four writers were in effect struggling to move beyond a feminist-derived definition of the "personal is political". Collectively, their efforts take us towards a new definition of the concept, one which recognises the way in which the public must also be recognised as personal for men.

Arising from this study, I construct a new definition of the "personal is political" which I have referred to as "Personalising the public: Men critically examining the way in which the public is also personal".

In this way the thesis may signpost a way forward for further research in this expanding area of gender studies.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my tutors; Tessa Perkins, Van Gore and Joe Bristow for all their advice and encouragement. Many thanks to Jeff Hearn, Andrew Tolson and Arthur Brittan for their time and support. I would also like to thank Sally for all her tolerance and hard work in typing the finished document.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis will be an evaluation of four works written by men on masculinity between 1977 and 1989. A central concern of this analysis will be to explore the concept of the “personal is political” (1); its theoretical origin, its importance to feminism and in particular how it applies to men and masculinity. In the conclusion I will examine whether the concept is applicable to men and if not how the concept needs to be re-worked, informed by the insights from the authors under review.

The second wave of the women's liberation movement that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s once again brought to prominence the relationship between the sexes. Feminism not only became a major issue within the mainstream of politics it also gradually became established within academia and began to influence many academic disciplines. Feminism touched the personal lives of countless numbers of women and therefore countless numbers of men as well; for many men it was simply impossible to ignore. One of the most distinctive features of the feminist movement was the way in which it problematised masculinity. Feminist theorists argued that a system of male domination operated throughout the world (2). It seemed for a while that the traditional tables had been turned; those advancing the discussions on the subject of men were women. However, men slowly began to contribute to this debate and male writers began to challenge a female monopoly. From the mid 1970s onwards there was a significant increase in the number of publications by men about masculinity.

If it is true to say that history is primarily men writing about and chronicling the exploits of men then why should writings on masculinity be any different? Although it is men writing about other men, this time it is done from a rather different perspective. This time when men said “men” they did not mean mankind in general or the proletariat in particular - rather men writing about men as distinct from women.

For the purposes of this thesis I have selected four books written by men about masculinity:

- 1) The Limits Of Masculinity by Andrew Tolson (1977)
- 2) The Gender Of Oppression: Men, Masculinity and the Critique of Marxism by Jeff Hearn (1987)
- 3) Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics by R.W.Connell (1987)
- 4) Masculinity and Power by Arthur Brittan (1989)

These works have been chosen because they represent four works written within the framework of a British left-wing academic tradition, over a twelve year period.

No writer floats free from tradition or discourse and therefore I will look more closely at the shifting political and historical context in which the works were produced in order to illuminate their particular concerns. These writers were also constituted by more specific social networks.

Although social networks are often invisible in books, they may provide invaluable insights. I will return to this issue in the conclusion when I argue that the men's movement and other particular social networks played a significant part in the writing of these works.

### **The “personal is political”**

The analysis of gender relations in contemporary debates has revolved around issues associated with the public-private divide and the “personal is political”. In order to understand more fully the significance of this phrase we need to consider three areas: radical political movements of late 1950s and early 1960s and women's experiences in them; issues for women which emerged from the recognition of discrimination; and finally feminist theory that developed from the first few years of political activity. All these areas will be discussed in turn.

The “personal is political” was principally a slogan, but like most slogans it had emerged from a theoretical perspective. To the women's movement it became a central theoretical concept. The slogan the “personal is political” was associated with three post-war radical movements: Civil Rights and the black power movement that developed in its wake; gay liberation; and women's liberation. These campaigns all had specific aims and goals which encouraged wide-scale support. All involved a rejection by the oppressed of the dominant definitions of them as inferior. Hence the slogans “glad to be gay” and “black is beautiful”.

These slogans drew attention to how oppression affected personal life and how changing your personal life was a political act of assertiveness and defiance. All these movements therefore involved “consciousness-raising” as part of their political strategy. The slogan “glad to be gay” was used to celebrate gay identity and sought to subvert homophobic discourse which held that homosexuality was an illness and needed to be cured. Equally for women the “personal is political” challenged a male-dominated society based on spheres that are separated and gendered. Subjective and objective, private and political, domestic and public: in each pairing the former term came to be associated with women and the latter associated with men.

The notion of “separate spheres” is crucial to understanding gender relations in the 19th and 20th centuries. If the distinction is based purely on the historical development of patriarchy then it is unnecessary and open to change. Women need not be associated with the domestic, they are not tied to their biology and an uncontrollable “emotionality”. By the same token women can play an active part in political decision making. The understanding of how the male and female spheres were constructed as separate and the slogan the “personal is political” played a key role in mobilising women for specific campaigns and for practical demands: domestic labour; control of their bodies; opposition to rape; sexual harassment and discrimination. These were not presented as the concerns of individuals, but of all women and of all men. Feminists began to theorise the way in which state actions and policies were part of the way women were oppressed.

David Jackson expresses the connections between the personal and the political in the following way:

*“Patterns of feeling, attachments, sensual pleasures, ‘the burden of pain and desire’ cannot be kept separate from the invisible network of social structures. Rather they dovetail into each other at every point.”*

(Jackson 1990 page 265)

Therefore, combining the personal with a more wide scale socio-political overview would produce a more sophisticated analysis that has a bearing on lived experience. Western feminists have argued that within the current gender order everything comes to be defined in terms of its opposition to the white male heterosexual. The voice of the white male heterosexual becomes the “norm” or even the “natural”, black becomes non-white, and femininity comes to be defined in terms of what is non-male and hence in negative terms. Therefore, the position that really needs to be deconstructed is that of the white male heterosexual. The fact that this position defines itself in a positive way means that to deconstruct it in a critical fashion is to begin a process that attempts a definition of masculinity that does not present it as the unquestioned ideal against which all else is defined. In this way a critical faction challenges the dominant self-image.

During my analysis of the works it soon became clear that, despite major differences, what all the writers under discussion share and derive from feminism is an assumption that the “personal is political” and all the writers attempt to incorporate it within their account of masculinity. Therefore, my starting point for this thesis is that the concept of the “personal is political” is so crucial to feminist and male debates on gender relations that it can be used as a method by which to explore the strengths and the weaknesses of the four works under discussion. It is however a complex concept used in different ways and therefore it needs to be carefully defined. In diagrammatic form the dichotomy would look something like the table on the following page:

### The “personal is political” - Six oppositional pairings:

WOMEN - Personal	MEN - Political
Subjective/Emotional/Biased	Objective/Neutral/Reason/Rationality/ ‘Scientific’ - even in social sciences
Private	Public - Power/Control
Domestic - Family and home	Public - Work and state
Individual - Psychological	Collective - Social/historical
Love/Romance/Sexuality/Submissive	Responsibility/Intellect/Aggression
Nature	Culture

A key feature of this diagram is the way in which any one signifier comes to stand in for the whole and can thus be associated with any signifier in the other category.

Drawing on feminist debates I have identified how “the personal is political” carries meaning in at least five ways. These definitions will act as a way to work through these texts; analysing which definitions they utilise and which they marginalise or ignore.

#### Five definitions of the “personal is political”

##### 1 Auto-biographical Experience

The writers discussing and drawing on their own personal experiences when appropriate. This does not mean discussing something they have no experience of but by the same token this also means not consistently concentrating on areas they have little knowledge of as a reason for ignoring the personal.

##### 2 Biographical Experience of Others

Drawing on the personal experiences of other men. This allows the writers to examine the “personal is political” in areas outside their experience.



**3 “Grass roots Politics”**

Promoting a kind of populist politics whose forms and content are rooted in everyday life and experience.

**4 The Connections Between the Public and Private Spheres**

Demonstrating the way in which a supposedly private area, such as the family, is in reality closely related to the dominant power structure, be it patriarchy or capitalism.

**5 The Connection Between the Construction of Gender and Power Structures**

Demonstrating how masculinity is constructed and enacted in our society at both an individual and collective level, and what this tells us about the power structures of male domination and capitalism AND vice versa.

At the end of the work I will focus on what is missing from these definitions. This is in terms of what the writers were trying to express, what I personally wanted from these works, and the consequences that emerged from this.

As I have stated, the theory of the “personal is political” forms a central part of the works under discussion. The writers may not draw on all of the five points outlined above but they all draw on some of them. How successfully they deal with the aspects they do discuss and why certain aspects have been overlooked is something I will examine in more detail in the conclusion. Crucially, the conclusion will concentrate on whether the five definitions that are derived from feminist theory are suitable for a study of masculinity. If they are not this may mean that the theory needs to be revised and extended.

In order to understand how the influential phrase the “personal is political” first originated and developed it is necessary to understand the historical separation of the public and private spheres. Therefore in chapter 1 I will explore the historical development of the separation between the public and the private. There follows a brief examination of the positions adopted by the early male supporters of women's suffrage, concluding with an emphasis upon social networks and political influences. This chapter will end with how the personal and the political became separated within the mainstream

sociological tradition of functionalism. Chapters 2 and 3 concentrate on the changing concepts and gender relationships in the post-war era. Changing sexual discourses exerted a crucial influence on the writers under discussion. These chapters will also consider the academic developments in “malestream” and feminist theory. “Malestream” was a term originally coined by Mary Daly (Daly 1979) and extensively used in feminist theory. It refers to the way in which theories and knowledge are defined by white educated men to comprise the mainstream. This is relevant to the “personal is political” as that which is defined as mainstream is determined within the public realm. Chapter 4 is a review of Tolson's work, the first of the texts under discussion. Chapter 5 traces the major developments that took place in academia and in the women's and men's movements after the publication of Tolson's work in 1977 but before the publication of Hearn's work in 1987. The next three chapters concentrate on a close reading of the selected texts written by Hearn, Connell and Brittan. Chapter 9 describes and comments upon interviews with three of the authors: Hearn, Brittan and Tolson. The concluding chapter concentrates on how the writers under discussion have dealt with and interpreted the concept of the “personal is political”, a concept now refined in the light of the argument and analysis of the preceding chapters. From all this emerges a new sixth category of the “personal is political” when applied to men and masculinity.

The thesis has led to a very personal involvement for myself. During the conclusion I will discuss in more detail my own experiences, how the works under analysis have affected me, and the insights I have gained.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE EARLY SUPPORTERS OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

#### 1.1 The history of male writings on gender

I want to begin this section by analysing the historical separation between the public and the private spheres. I then wish to look at some of the theoretical precursors to the male writers of today.

As early as the 1830s and 1840s an ideological definition of women as located in the home had been firmly entrenched in Britain (Hall C. 1992). This conservative and evangelical view emerged at the time of (and in opposition to) the French Revolution and the radical writings of Mary Wolstonecraft and de Sade (Sade 1791, Wolstonecraft 1792). Central to evangelical thought was the distinction between the loving home and the hostile world that became mapped onto other dichotomies, such as, male and female, rational and emotional (Hall C. 1992). By the 1830s such a separation was being reinforced by the emergence of medical, psychiatric, and sexual discourses. These discourses were subsequently challenged by women's campaigns such as the suffrage movement.

There are significant differences between the social milieu that the current writers are working within and the early male supporters of the suffrage movement. Looking back, contemporary writers seem to suffer from not being associated with any wide scale movement.

The philosopher John Stuart Mill was part of a circle of philosophical radicals that included such early feminists as Harriet Grote, Sarah Austin and Harriet Martineau. Other male friends of Mill included Richard Pankhurst and F.D.Maurice. Following the Pankhurst connection, links can be traced to other socialists such as Keir Hardie.

Morgan notes that:

*"...such networks both provided the intellectual and moral climate which stimulated the interest and commitment to issues such as women's suffrage and sustained that commitment, perhaps in the face of hostility and indifference. Further, such networks remind us that the relationship with women, often strong and independent-minded*

*women, should not be analysed in isolation but should be placed in a wider social context."*

(Morgan 1992 page 150)

Furthermore, Morgan argues, the early male radicals came from a background of involvement in a wide range of radical causes and campaigns for social and political reform.

These theorists saw themselves as campaigners, united by a specific issue. They wrote for particular movements and campaigns and often tried to target their works beyond the limited coterie, publishing papers as manifestos to be picked up by politicians and members of the public.

The social network the early male writers on gender enjoyed finds its modern equivalent in sixties' youth culture - a time when the male writers were often part of student culture studying left-wing oriented courses. Many of the writers, Tolson and Hearn especially, were involved in left-wing men's groups that sought radical change. There was however no single issue such as the vote that united various disparate factions.

## **1.2 Radicalism and gender**

By the late nineteenth century there were few male exponents of a radical sexual politics, the exception being Edward Carpenter (Weeks 1981). Carpenter drew a strong connection between the personal and the political, arguing that socialism was not just about the transformation of economic relations but of an entire way of life. In the early twentieth century a number of radicals tried to combine Freud and Marx, most notably and successfully Wilhelm Reich, an Austrian communist and sexual reformer. Influenced by socialist feminism of the time, Reich began to construct theories of human development that concentrated on the social shaping of male and female roles. He argued that sexual repression was key to general social reaction; what had been implicit in Carpenter now became explicit in Reich.

It would seem that those who wrote about the disadvantages of a dominant masculinity have either been ridiculed, forgotten, or their works regarded as marginal within mainstream sociology. On the Subjection Of Women (Mill 1869) is not Mills most famous work. De Sade, Reich and Carpenter are usually seen as dangerous madmen and

Adler is regarded as one of Freud's lesser acolytes while the gender message of Marx and Engels was eclipsed by the issue of class.

### **1.3 Post-war gender relations and the concept of maternal deprivation**

I now wish to examine theories of gender relations in Britain in the immediate post war era and how the personal and the political were theorised. During World War II, gender roles had undergone considerable change with many women working full time outside the home. After the World War II strong attempts were made to encourage women to leave their jobs and return to their “traditional” roles as wives and mothers.

In fact this was more ideology than reality. Women were encouraged to leave their jobs in the traditional male industries such as engineering and take up or “return” to more conventional “women's work”, that is, secretaries, shop work and part time work. If there were fears that tradition was being undermined by women's changing roles in society then the emotive issue of child care could be mobilised as a weapon.

The two principal theorists of “natural roles” in post war era were Dr. Spock in the USA and John Bowlby in Britain. Bowlby's work was developed through the Tavistock Clinic and the needs of homeless children and refugees in the wake of World War II. Bowlby argued that the children who were emotionally disturbed were so because they were not being cared for by their mothers:

*“...what is believed to be essential for mental health is that the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother substitute - one person who steadily “mothers him”) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment.”*

**(Bowlby 1965 page 13)**

Bowlby's work became both popular and influential. In Britain in the 1950s and 1960s stories in the press of “latch key children” began to appear at regular intervals and mother absence was the “common sense” explanation for every form of “adolescent delinquency”.

## 1.4 Functionalism

It is important to acknowledge the significance of the functionalist school of thought as it dominated social theory during the 1950s and much of the 1960s and informed the way masculinity and gender relations were understood for nearly twenty years. Although functionalism did not have such a big impact in Britain as it did in the USA, its influences were certainly felt and it formed an important part of the education for many of the male writers on masculinity who were studying social science related courses in the 1960s. Functionalist theory is based on the conception of society as being organic, different parts of society are interrelated and need to be examined as being part of a whole, all parts together constituting a complete system. Institutions such as the family are understood in terms of how they functionally contribute to the maintenance of the social system. Functionalists believe that specific normative patterns of behaviour are associated with particular social roles which function to maintain the system.

This model therefore proposes that gender differences are conceived as “sex roles”. Starting with the premise that modern industrial societies entail a separation between home and work, functionalism then proposes that this “necessary” separation generates the need for different roles in each sphere. These different roles are taken on by different sexes because of biological differences. Parsons described the women's role as being “expressive” as women provide warmth, security and emotional support for the children and the husband. The man's role is “instrumental”, competitive in the workplace, but, as he needs a wife to return to, the two roles are complementary.

Role theory helped to lay the foundations for what were to be the major concerns for sexual politics over the next two decades particularly because of its attempts to explain how social structure was related to personality formation, and its development of the notion of “socialisation”. Role learning and socialisation are the methods by which individuals develop a pattern of behaviour that is required by society. Those who do not fit into this pattern are deviant. The main agents involved in socialisation were identified as being the family, peer group, school and the media.

Functionalist theory clearly has conservative tendencies - a tendency to view the maintenance of the status quo as “functional” and therefore beneficial and a tendency to regard alternative patterns of behaviour as dysfunctional and deviant. The family unit is

seen as being necessary for the functioning of society and men's and women's roles as being necessary for the functioning of the family. Functionalism came to be regarded as reactionary and its claim to be an apolitical and objective form of theorising was increasingly criticised. The meaning behind the slogan the “personal is political” was precisely a challenge to functionalism’s claim to neutral knowledge about the social world.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE 1960'S AND THE CHANGING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

### 2.1 Introduction

In this section I will look at the changes that were taking place during the twenty years following the World War II, concentrating on the growth of the state and the changes in the relationship between the public and the private spheres. Many legal reforms, relating to homosexuality and abortion in particular, resulted in the weakening of control in the private sphere and this was vital in determining the agenda for the women's and gay liberation movements.

The post war consumption economy stressed the sexual but it commercialised and trivialised the female body whilst denying the existence of homosexuality. This angered and politicised women and helped push the concept of the “personal is political” to the fore. The consumption economy also dramatically affected men and the perception of masculinity. Barbara Ehrenreich notes:

*“What had been understood as masculinity, with its implications of ‘hardness’ and emotional distance, was at odds with the more ‘feminine’ traits appropriate to a consumption-oriented society, traits such as self indulgence, emotional lability and a ‘soft’ receptivity to whatever is new and exciting.”*

(Ehrenreich 1983 page 170)

The post-war emphasis on monogamous heterosexual relationships resulted in a series of moral panics about the openness of vice (1). However, the attitude that homosexuality could be rooted out was rather contradicted by the new psychological studies by Kinsey in 1948 and 1953 that undermined the belief in a natural given “normality” - 37% of the sample (white middle class males) had experienced same sex contact to orgasm (Weeks 1989). Effectively what Kinsey demonstrated was a gap between “public” definitions of “normality” and “private” practice.

The middle-class and newly de-proletarianised youth became the counter culture that drew on the themes of peace, violence, drugs and sex as symbolic images of youth in revolt.



The counter culture with its semi-political and cultural stance raised many issues central to “sexual politics” (a phrase of Reich's), questioning the family, advocating sexual liberation and the importance of the “personal”, all issues that were to become central to feminism. However in many communes the traditional division of labour remained and sexual liberation was for heterosexuals, Weeks remarking that:

*“It was as much the contradictions of the counter-culture as its example which influenced the sexual liberation movements of the late 1960's and 1970's.”*

(Weeks 1989 page 283)

## **2.2 The ‘personal is political’ and the women's movement**

It is important to understand how these changes specifically affected the feminist movement and why the slogan the “personal is political” became so central.

In the early 1960s the movement “Students for a Democratic Society” (S.D.S.) was formed. It was anti-racist, anti-Vietnam and liberationist in outlook. In 1962 an S.D.S. leader Tom Hayden commented that “...the time has come for a reassertion of the personal.” (Evans 1979 p.167) Since the end of World War II among the young there had been a notable and steady shift away from conventional politics. Many young people argued that the wars in Korea and Vietnam were being fought only in the interests of impersonal big business. S.D.S. meetings in the mid 1960s often began with the campus organiser describing his or her background and how they became involved in radical politics. Consciousness Raising (C.R.) largely developed from this form of politics although also popular at the time was Maoist communism that encouraged the practice of “speaking bitterness”.

C.R. is a form of verbal self expression that takes place with the support of others in small groups, the idea being that theory grows from feelings and experiences which in turn generates collective political change. C.R. is comparable to psychoanalysis in its notion that to raise one's consciousness is to become more aware of one's own repression. Maggie Humm has identified four key elements to C.R. for the women's movement: the validity of personal experience as a source of authority; a source of new knowledge which is derived from the understanding that women's symptoms are part of a general victimisation by men; public and private realms are interconnected and facts of

individual oppression are key to women's politics; and commonality of experience leads to an understanding of women as a sex class (Humm 1989).

In Britain in the second half of the 1960s new liberalising laws were passed on such issues as equal pay, abortion, divorce and gay rights. For many women the best path to victory appeared to be within traditional class politics especially as there were so many radical Marxist groups emerging which could tackle the new political landscape. By the late 1960s many women felt that their concerns were being marginalised within the mainstream Labour movement and radical left wing groups and women began organising on their own terms. As many of these women were middle-class ex-students they felt relatively comfortable with discussing their emotional lives and so C.R. as a form of political organising moved to the fore. Therefore the situation was similar to the one in the USA where the notion of the “personal is political” was in part inspired by opposition to “malestream” theorising, as well as drawing from it.

This form of theorising also helped in dealing with the complications that although the bourgeoisie and the proletariat lived and worked separately, men and women did not. The same dilemma was true for gays and lesbians who may love and be loved by heterosexuals. The developing theories helped to explain that personal and intimate experiences were not separate but were determined by social and political systems, “personal” problems were rooted in a particular system. The “personal is political” was developing in several other areas: Laing discussed sanity and madness in a work entitled The Politics of Experience (Laing 1967); and in 1968 Kate Millet confirmed it as a central issue for feminism with the publication of her work, which drew its title from Reich, Sexual Politics.

Many women were beginning to question some of the most personal aspects of their lives, principally marriage and the nuclear family, faster than legislation in this area was changing. The contraceptive pill had provided women with a degree of control over their own bodies but they wanted more and focused on the issues of abortion, rape and pornography. In this sense major conflict over the personal and political terrain was almost inevitable.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, feminist writers began drawing an increasing number of connections between what had been defined as the personal and the public

spheres. These included such areas as the family (Segal 1983), domestic violence (Dobash and Dobash 1980), rape (Brownmiller 1975), relations in the workplace (Game and Pringle 1984 and Cockburn 1983), housework (Oakley 1974) and reproduction in the family (Firestone 1971).

### **2.3 The 'new left' and academia**

I now wish to concentrate on the development of two very crucial paradigms to the development of the "personal is political": Marxism and symbolic interactionism. Marxism helped to place a new emphasis on ideology and consciousness while symbolic interactionism was highly critical of the functionalist belief in objectivity and gave more weight to subjective analysis.

The concern over racism, third world exploitation and the instability of corporate capitalism encouraged a new interest in Marxism, but a form of Marxism that could deal with contemporary issues. The new theorists included such humanist Marxists as Lucien Goldman and George Lukacs, and structuralist Marxists such as Althusser, Lacan and Levi-Strauss. These writers moved away from an exclusive concentration on production into areas such as ideology, society and politics, and most particularly the problem of "consciousness". A "personal revolution of consciousness" could be regarded as a serious method by which to challenge the "system". This interest focused attention on the cultural sphere while remaining within a Marxist framework.

During the late 1960s and 1970s interest grew in less orthodox sexualities and the social exploration of lesbianism, transvestism, transexuality and paedophilia. Evidence suggested a range of behaviours, a continuum between "normal" and "abnormal", and essential characteristics were of less importance than the effect of social labelling.

Within Britain the importance of sociological studies had been developing in criminology since the 1950s; "labelling theory" became more radical, arguing that deviance came about when powerful groups forced their values on a weakened majority. The result of these developments was "The National Deviancy Conference", the first of which was held in 1968 and they were held once or twice a year until 1977. "The National Deviancy Conferences" drew on various styles of research such as ethnographic and labelling theories, and combined them with a more Marxist based approach. The Conferences

gave rise to what became known as “new criminology”, that is, an analysis of culture in conjunction with theories of the state and the political economy that were being developed within the Centre For Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. The interface between interactionist, ethnographic and Marxist theory was to have a major impact on British sociology and in turn this interdisciplinary approach heavily influenced feminist theory.

## 2.4 The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

The centre was significant for its concentration on culture and contemporary Marxism. Tolson joined the centre in 1972. As well as all the theories of crime and delinquency already discussed race and gender made a major impact. Stuart Hall, one of the first directors of the centre, believes that feminist influence was key in five major ways. Firstly the “personal is political” approach changed the object of study. Secondly, the expansion of the notion of power was important in re-analysing the concept of hegemony. Thirdly, gender and sexuality became central to understandings of power. Fourthly, the concept of the subject became a major theme of theoretical practice and, fifthly it helped re-open the previously closed frontier between social theory and the theory of the sub-conscious, that is, psychoanalysis (Hall S. 1992). The British feminist Terry Lovell has argued that:

*“...it was the convergence of textual with socio- historical analysis that made cultural studies congenial to British feminism. The whole range of interests that define feminism in general and socialist feminism in particular might be contained within its broad remit.”*

(Lovell 1990, page 276)

In 1977 Paul Willis, a member of the C.C.C.S., published Learning to Labour, that included a section on sexism in the workplace and made several references to masculinity. In 1979 the collection Working Class Culture was published, that included a chapter by Willis entitled “Working Class Culture And Masculinity”, a paper that was almost unique for including the word 'masculinity' in the title. Considering its size (about thirty to forty members at any one time) the centre had a number of female students who were strongly committed to feminist concerns, including Ros Brunt, Lucy Bland, Sue Lees and Angela McRobbie.

## **2.5 Divisions within Marxism and the academic left**

The various developments within British Marxism also led to very significant and bitter rifts between the various camps that was to have a significant effect on the writers under discussion.

Hegelian Marxism (Goldman 1964, Lukacs 1971) placed an emphasis on a subjective and psychological dimension to life that was being crushed by the technical nature of monopoly capitalism. The school developed an interest in psychoanalysis and aspects of human personality that could not be fulfilled merely through economic well being. They also argued that the theorist was always part of the object of his or her studies. Indeed, they argued that objective fact was not external to theoretical thinking and it was only believed to be so due to alienation that had separated value from research and knowledge from action.

In opposition to these theories the structuralist Marxists, such as Althusser, rejected the emphasis on men as the subjects of history. Althusser believed that the object of thought must be separated from the real object. He rejected Hegel's conception of a totality whereby elements of the whole were phenomenal expressions of an inner essence. (Althusser 1977).

The conflict between the humanist and structuralist Marxism within academia was often severe and bitter. The structuralists tended to dominate from the late 1970s until the 1980s and would have little to do with the “humanist” arguments. It is important to understand this as the writers under discussion are taking on feminism and “personal is political” issues that were heavily influenced by humanist Marxism and out of step with the dominant left theory of the time.

## **2.6 The “dual systems debate”**

The so called “dual systems debate” was largely an attempt to synthesise the two main debates dominant in British feminism in the 1970s: radical feminism and Marxist feminism.

Radical feminists argue that men dominate women in a patriarchal system that is not derived from any other system such as capitalism. Opinions vary as to the root cause of

male oppression but the two main theories are the appropriation of women's bodies (O'Brien 1981) and male violence (Brownmiller 1976, Firestone 1974, Rich 1980). Shulamith Firestone argued that the subjection of women was rooted in the division of labour that is determined by the different roles men and women have in respect to the reproduction of the species; these roles having become institutionalised within the family. The radical feminists believe that sexuality is constructed around male desire and imposed on women through the concept of femininity; heterosexuality being socially institutionalised and used to organise other aspects of gender relations.

Marxist feminist analysis in the 1970s largely revolved around the “domestic labour debate” that was an attempt to incorporate feminism within a Marxist framework. The Marxist feminists believe that the basis of gender inequality is derived from capitalism, gender relations being determined by the domination of one class over another. The two main theories concerning the cause of oppression are the family and the need for women's domestic labour, such as producing and raising children and caring for the worker, all of which are unwaged. Christine Delphy (1984) argued that marriage was a way by which men appropriated women's labour power in exchange for their upkeep, while Anne Ferguson (1979) believed it to be a sex/affective system whereby women's work involved providing sexual relations and child nurture. The second main strand of Marxist feminism focused on ideology arguing that gender relations are created through the discourse of masculinity and femininity and are not reducible to class. (Barrett 1980).

As the name suggests “dual systems theory” takes account of both capitalism and patriarchy. Opinions over how these two structures operate differ. Eisenstein (1981) believed that they operate together as one system: patriarchy provides the system of control of law and order while capitalism runs the economy and the pursuit of profit. On the other hand Mitchell (1975) argues that the two are separate yet closely interconnecting systems, capitalism controlling the economic level while the unconscious level is the realm of patriarchy. Hartman (1979) believes that patriarchy controls women's material exploitation by men, men keeping the best paid jobs for themselves while in the home women do more work than men even if they work outside the home. The two disadvantages for women work together, as a weakened economic position gives them less power in the home and less power in the home disadvantages them in the work place. Hartman further argued that capitalism did not ‘create’ a system whereby

men exploited women as patriarchy predates capitalism. Young (1981) has criticised Mitchell for drawing a distinction between the two systems that cannot be maintained, that is, it cannot account for elements of one system in the supposedly exclusive realm of the other. Walby (1990) has criticised Hartman for failing to fully take account of the contradictions and tensions between the two systems. Furthermore the “dual systems” theorists have taken little account of the full range of patriarchal structures giving little consideration to sexuality and violence; the basis of patriarchy being found in either the material (Hartman, Eisenstein) or the cultural level (Mitchell).

## CHAPTER 3

# THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE MEN'S MOVEMENT IN THE U.S.A. AND BRITAIN

### 3.1 Introduction

It was developments within the men's movement that influenced the first works written by men explicitly about masculinity. Further, on both sides of the Atlantic, many of the problems that beset the movement revolved around the issues of the “personal is political”.

One significant piece of “sex role” research was by the American scholar M. Komarovsky whose Blue Collar Marriage was published in 1964. This presented a picture of masculinity as constructed within a complex process of negotiation, usually with women. The principal theme of the work, namely that masculinity was a limiting construction, was to dominate the men's movement over the next two decades.

A common set of issues developed and a new genre began to emerge. A version of sex role theory emerged which tended to view the traditional male role as problematic for two main reasons: it led men to compete with each other and oppress women; and the “role strain” caused by trying to achieve the “male image” was an unpleasant burden. Carrigan, Connell and Lee believe that much of this literature represented a:

*“...part of the general drift by which new left became counter culture. Personal ‘liberation’ meaning an expansion of the pleasures of an already privileged group.”*

(Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1987 page 155)

It is clear from these developments that there were problems within the men's movement over how the “personal is political” was being taken up and used. The men's movement took up the personal aspect but sidelined the political. This allowed the feminist movement to be viewed as an ally - men having a lot to gain by changing, and by ignoring the issue of power, little to lose.

During the 1970s attempts were made to give role perspective greater intellectual credence by providing explanations as to how roles developed in a historical context.



The most substantial work produced in this respect was the collection edited by Pleck and Sawyer entitled Men and Masculinity (Pleck and Sawyer 1974). In 1981 Pleck published The Myth of Masculinity which regarded men and women as being in a “class like” relationship (Pleck 1981). For its time this work was extremely radical in that it concentrated on issues of power.

### **3.2 The British men's movement**

In Britain in 1972 the first men's group appeared. Almost from the outset the men's movement was dogged by splits and factions that largely represented the various influences and interests of their founders. Three main factions appeared: the socialist Marxists who equated women's struggle to the overall struggle against capitalism; those who were interested in consciousness raising on an individual level; and the radicals who supported the gay and radical feminist movements (Rowan 1987).

These splits effectively represented the problems the men's movement was having in reconciling the personal and political. However, many men rejected the individualistic beliefs that were present in much of the movement and as early as 1974 Tolson was involved in founding the group “Men Against Sexism”. The ideology of this group was to be gay affirmative and pro-feminist. Unlike other groups it took account of wider power structures. The major influences were the radical works emerging from the USA, such as Pleck's, and the socialist and liberal wings of the feminist movement. This was because liberal feminism was the area that was proving to be most sympathetic towards the men's movement.

### **3.3 Achilles Heel**

Popular in the men's movement of the time was the belief that there was a contradiction between men's outer display of machismo and an inner insecurity and emotional deprivation, supported by Shere Hite in The Hite Report on Male Sexuality of 1981. Several television programmes of this time, namely Channel 4's “About Men” and the BBC's “Men and...” emphasised the importance of conditioning in the construction of sexuality. The programme “Men and...” was partly put together by Andy Metcalfe, one

of the editors of Achilles Heel and also co-editor with Martin Humphries of the book that grew out of the publication, The Sexuality Of Men. In 1978 the first issue of Achilles Heel was published and it appeared regularly until 1983. It was started from a collective of only six members but at its height the collective was rarely above eight or nine permanent members.

Achilles Heel went a long way to popularise the “soft” and “emotional” style of writing that was becoming accepted in the men's movement as the way to write the “personal”. As well as this style of writing the other major outcome of Achilles Heel was the book The Sexuality Of Men published in 1985, which was indicative of many of the developments analysed above.

### **3.4 The Sexuality of Men**

If the movement was fragmented then so literally was this book, being a series of essays with no single coherent theme. As none of the theorists agreed with each other, the book and hence the men's movement (the book being virtually its entire public face) looked confused and directionless.

The Sexuality Of Men and Easthope's What A Man's Got to Do (Easthope 1986) can still be seen in book shops while the works of Brittan, Hearn and Connell tended to have a shorter shelf life. The belief in “men as fragile” appeals to many in men's groups, while an engagement with popular culture gives these works wider appeal. The works are also presented in such a way that the book can be read without having to understand a great deal of complex theory or be versed in the traditional discourses. All the theory needed is contained in the works and even much of this theory can be overlooked or grasped only superficially.

It was Tolson's work more than The Sexuality Of Men that bridges the gap between the more radical elements of the men's movement and the later academic works. It had a personal style derived from experiences in men's groups and yet provided a distinctive theoretical framework.

The collapse of the men's movement in the mid 1970s has been somewhat exaggerated and is only one side of the story. But this is the Achilles Heel side of the story and those

who have written about the history of the movement such as Seidler and Rowan were, and remain, heavily involved in Achilles Heel.

Those men who were particularly drawn to individual therapy and the “growth movement” were strongly affected by criticisms from the gay groups in the mid 1970s and this part of the movement collapsed. With no strong political theory or manifesto it possessed neither direction nor resilience (Segal 1990).

However the part of the movement that was more concerned with the political debates and connected these to their personal lives and men’s group’s activities did continue. It is to this strand that Tolson and the other three writers belong.

### **3.5 The ‘personal is political’ and the men's groups**

I now wish to turn attention to how the “personal is political” affected the men involved at a more individual level. This not only helps us to understand the themes and concerns that operated in both the political and personal domains but what happened that may make the writers cautious or defensive when discussing certain issues.

Not since the early days of Reich in the 1930s had sexuality and anti-authoritarianism been so closely linked, although crucially this time the cutting edge of the radical debate was in the hands of women and gay men. For straight men the feminist movement meant handing over power to women and gay men. What men were being forced to accept was that their sex was not naturally superior and dominant - or come to that even equal - but that their sex was responsible for a catalogue of brutality, domination and an all destroying craving for power. According to John Stoltenberg:

*“To take seriously in one's consciousness the fact of sexist injustice would have to mean for men, as it already does for many women, a total repudiation of masculinity.”*

(Stoltenberg 1983 emphasis in original)

Many of the men who joined the men's groups did so in order not to feel ‘left out’, one man interviewed by Helen Franks commenting: “It was a form of protection. We thought, God knows what they're up to, so we got our own finger in the pie.” (Franks 1984 p.190) Clearly some men were involved for personal reasons that had little to do with feminism at all, as another respondent told Franks: “We are doing something that is

designed to benefit ourselves, though we hope and think that feminism will benefit too.” (Franks, 1984 p.189) Many men claimed they were becoming token victims, incurring the misplaced wrath of their feminist friends and partners and that despite making themselves outcasts women were being hypocritical, as the interviewee “Vic” said to Franks:

*“...traditional men will see us as a bunch of poofers, traditional women will dismiss us. Even feminists who talk about the importance of being themselves, when they see men as myself, which is not dominating and macho, tend to say there is something ambiguous about me, as if you can't be heterosexual and also not dominating.”*

(Franks 1984 page 192)

### 3.6 Gay politics and issues

While these men may have initially been interested in various male-female issues, issues concerning male-male relationships also began to surface. Women's and gay politics largely revolved around small groups and “consciousness raising”. Traditionally, men in groups do not tend to talk of intimate matters; these boundaries are well defined and men only talk intimately, if at all, with their wives. Therefore, men behaving in this way and playing a passive role in political and personal terms were, by definition behaving like women and gay men.

If the uncomfortable issue of gay politics was implicit to the straight men involved in the men's groups it was made explicit in an anonymous article published in “Brothers Against Sexism” in 1974 that argued:

*“You are trying to make heterosexual relations work. Why? For the sake of ‘your women’? I doubt it. Surely for yourselves because you don't want to make it with men. But in the end the only way forward is to really open yourself up to the mirror image of yourself and experience through another, yourself as a man (you are a male remember) - and build something from the ruins of your male ego that will result.”*

(Brothers Against Sexism 1974 page 5)

The issue of how to forge closer links and truly identify with gay men was a major concern to many straight men involved in men's politics. Connell believes that in order to demonstrate their commitment to change, some in the men's movement developed more physical, sometimes sexual, relationships with other men. After interviewing six heterosexual men who had tried to act positively to women's and gay liberation in the 1970s and 1980s, he remarks that:

*"The classic barrier to friendships among heterosexual men is homophobia...three mentioned brief homosexual encounters, none with any enthusiasm...Their political line was pro-gay and some described warm friendships with gay men, but several also showed a touch of homophobia. They had learned a feminism that directly challenged sexism but gave no clear line on homosexuality among men. Their practice of change did not bring into question the heterosexual sensibility of their bodies. So they had no way of bringing into focus the difficulties involved in new-model relationships among men."*

(Connell 1995 page 133-4)

### **3.7 Fathers and fatherhood**

During the 1960s criticisms of the family had largely laid the blame on mothers and the capitalist state. However in the 1970s feminism had begun analysing the family in a way that placed blame squarely on men and fathers. Not only were the issues of child abuse and rape in marriage highlighted but feminists challenged the notion of the family as a unit, conjugal roles as complementary and motherhood as a natural biological function. The connection between individual fathers and the "institutionalisation" of fatherhood is central to Hearn's work and he believes that the concept of fatherhood should be destroyed for ever. Tolson discusses the relationship with his father in some detail.

### **3.8 Guilt**

During the 1960s and 1970s theoretical and personal divisions were drawn between men and women. Questions of guilt, blame and the contested search for constructive practical change lay at the heart of this divide. Male writers tended to react in one of two ways. One way was to deny that men should feel guilty and were in fact equally oppressed, for

example Goldberg's The Hazards of Being Male (Goldberg 1976). The other extreme was a complete acceptance of guilt that was often stultifying. A typical statement is that by the writer and academic John Rowan who was involved in the men's movement:

*"I am a man. At first that may sound like a ordinary sort of statement. Yet in a way it is a confession, an admission, it is rather as if I were to say - 'Yes, I dropped the bomb on Hiroshima.' Except that it goes further, into the tiny details of everyday life. It is like adding - 'And I'm putting a little arsenic into my wife's tea every day.' My wife had discovered feminism, it hurt and as a good member of the growth movement I allowed it to hurt."*

(Rowan 1987 page 1)

All through his work the problems of masculinity are worked through with other men, not women. In this way men found the physical and emotional space separate from women in order to become 'experts' in 'their' field, that of masculinity.

### **3.9 The 'personal and men'**

As we have seen there were a great deal of diverse influences on the writers. Gay liberation and women's liberation, a culture of homophobia and the devaluation of women, Reich and youth sub-culture in the 1960s, sexual liberation and androgyny in the 1970s. There is no one clear image of masculinity or even of specific masculinities. There are however many contradictory and competing influences on the writers, some of which are dealt with in more detail than others in their works.

This leads us to the question of what the "personal" actually means to men. For some writers this can mean a simple process of mirroring feminism and therefore the personal relates to "women's" issues; in other words, associating the personal with the private and domestic sphere. The result would be a focusing on such issues as sexuality, domestic labour, sexual orientation and child care.

However certain issues pertain specifically to men. These include the workplace and changes that have taken place therein; unemployment and the loss of breadwinner status; and the need to remain objective and to be emotionally distant. This last aspect also concerns when and where certain behaviour is appropriate and how this varies between the "public" and the "private" spheres. Other areas that relate differently to men than to

women include war and the use of violence and how these in turn affect male attitudes towards life and death. From a personal point I enjoy violent films but not the reality of violence such as boxing or a fight in the street, but the connections need to be examined. If men claim to be against the patriarchal order they also need to discuss how change in their own and other men's lives can be brought about, the difficulties that will be faced and the way in which they have effected change in their own lives.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANDREW TOLSON : THE LIMITS OF MASCULINITY

#### 4.1 Introduction

During the preceding chapters I have charted the development of left wing theory; discussions of gender and the women's movement; the history of the men's movement and the cumulative effect on the men who became involved in gender politics. All these aspects are key to the concept of the "personal is political" and therefore an analysis of the four works. Bearing these influences in mind, and the five criteria I outlined as being representative of the theory of the "personal is political", I now wish to analyse the four works under discussion, beginning with Tolson's The Limits Of Masculinity.

The formative influences on Tolson were his experiences in men's groups and British left wing theorising of the early 1970s. His work is an analysis of masculinity and gender relations combined with traditional Marxism. In this way Tolson is able to trace the connections as well as the conflicts between patriarchy and capitalism. He argues that patriarchy pre-dated capitalism but that capitalism is utilising gender relations and is superseding patriarchy. He concentrates on the difference between middle-class and working-class masculinity and the development of a "progressive middle class". Tolson includes interviews for each type as well as many personal observations. Tolson also draws on Freudian psychoanalysis to discuss the early psychological construction of masculinity. Towards the end of the work he discusses C.R. politics as the way forward. His work is an attempt to construct a sociology of masculinity, that is relating masculinity to the organisation of power. In terms of this approach Tolson's work was unique.

Considering that male writing on gender up to the publication of Tolson's work had been of the voluntaristic, liberal and "equally oppressed" school, his remarks on power are of great importance:

*"To simply deny, or vaguely wish to 'relinquish', the reality of this power is to fall victim to a liberal myopia. And to assume that men can, unproblematically, experience, 'men's liberation' - that there are any analogies with gay or feminist politics - is, in the end, an illusion."*

(Tolson 1977 page 144)



Tolson's experience in men's groups is important; he was keen to study masculinity from a personal as well as a political perspective. The need to understand and analyse his experience and draw connections between his own and other men's everyday behaviours and wider political factors are the central concerns of the book. In this way he places the personal within a more political framework. Tolson joined a men's group in 1973. His own background involved University, the counter culture and the impact of feminism. He describes how many men felt excluded from women's experiences in feminist groups. He overtly recognises that men found it difficult to relate in the same way as women:

*"As men, we had no language to formulate our uncertainties:...On the personal level, I think we must also recognise that many men remain distanced from their emotions. Whereas feminist women are able to theorise from their own experience, preserving its nuances and sensations, men, even at their most perceptive, seem to theorise about themselves, analysing from the outside."*

(Tolson 1977 page 19)

Tolson seeks to learn from, not copy, feminism, arguing that his book is about:

*"...the recognition that without the personal dimension, social theory is meaningless. This recognition is at the heart of feminist perspective - made necessary by its critical focus on sexuality and consciousness. And it is an ability to make this recognition, that in one respect, defines the limits of masculinity."*

(Tolson 1977 page 21)

Effectively, Tolson is arguing that the impact of the "personal is political" is so important that to ignore it is to produce an incorrect form of social theory. Further, men cannot simply apply feminist theory to their own situation in order to understand how the "personal is political" relates to men.

#### **4.2 Historical theory and gender relations**

Tolson goes on to discuss the "personal is political" in the sense of how private life relates to wider political theory. Drawing on liberal and socialist feminist perspectives, he develops four key arguments. Firstly, Tolson discusses the distinction between biology and culture; he is dismissive of biological arguments and concludes that masculinity is

culturally constructed. Secondly, he argues that at the present time, masculinity is closely associated with work and how this is related to non-work in terms of leisure; in effect this is discussing how private areas relate to and support the public world of work. Thirdly, he argues that if masculinity is culturally specific and socially functional, it must therefore be subject to historical change. Finally, if gender is cultural and historical, it must have a political significance in terms of power and conflict. Tolson argues that historically patriarchy was concerned with male inheritance (a view adapted from the work of Engels) and was therefore centred on the family (Engels 1972). The agricultural mode of production was organised around the family, the division of labour being determined by sex, the work with most status being carried out by men. In the capitalist age of corporate property the importance of the family, and therefore patriarchy, has declined, though it still exists as a powerful anachronism. However, Tolson is not arguing that patriarchy has gone:

*“It is apparent in so far as our society remains patriarchal, it works for the benefit of men - in employment, civil law and informal relationships. Straight men are not ‘oppressed’ by patriarchy in the same way as women or gays. Equally, many aspects of industrial capitalism, and the development of what Zaratesky calls ‘proletarianisation’, have simply accentuated tendencies of masculine culture. In the consumer society, ideas of ‘affluence’, leisure, and the split between ‘work’ and ‘home’ are masculine ideas - there is no such split for the housewife.”*

(Tolson 1977 page 16)

However what is key for Tolson is the way in which a private form of patriarchy has been replaced by a public capitalism. It was the transition from the private to the public that was key to understanding present day gender relations and the conflicts between patriarchy and capitalism. As will be seen later, this development is also central to the arguments of Hearn, Connell and Brittan, but for different reasons.

#### **4.3 Masculinity and socialisation**

Before studying masculinity and its relation to capitalism and class in more detail, Tolson analyses how the foundations of masculinity are laid down in childhood. The family, the

school and peer groups provide the primary agents of socialisation. The role of the family and generational conflict between fathers and sons are themes that Tolson returns to frequently. According to Tolson the most significant agent of socialisation is the family and especially the boy's relationship with the father who presents to the boy manhood as a perpetual future. The boys 'gender identification' with the father is problematic due to alienation from the father caused by his absence from the home:

*"Father is an outsider because he goes 'out to work'. The brutality of his 'presence' lies not so much in acts of domestic violence (though these cannot be minimised) as in general masculine estrangement, conditioned by the reality of work."*

(Tolson 1977 page 24)

This lack of relationship is central to the boy's conception of his masculinity and the way in which the boy relates to the wider world. Tolson reinforces this argument with a personal recollection of how the principal image he received of his father came from how he was "represented" by his mother.

Although Tolson states that the family is not the focal point for the organisation of society, he has made it the focal point for the construction of masculinity. The boy's relationship to his father, and therefore adult masculinity, is structured around the dichotomy of the workplace/home. Tolson utilises his own experience to emphasise how it felt to grow up in such an environment. This suggests that Tolson's theory is grounded in the personal experiences of himself and others. Unique for a male writer, Tolson discusses the father-son relationship within the context of a male-dominated society. Writing about his personal feelings and experiences must have been a difficult and painful process. It may well be something he has worked through in men's groups and elsewhere in some detail.

#### **4.4 Patriarchy, capitalism and class**

The next section of Tolson's book continues discussion of the boy's relationship with his father, but develops into a much broader analysis concerning the interrelation of patriarchy and capitalism and variations in the definition of 'masculinity' between classes. This is directly related to the "personal is political" in the sense of how the family

structure and interpersonal male relationships are related to structures of power. This argument also suggests that many of men's personal experiences occur in the public realm.

The boy's ambivalent relationship with the father is crucially important to masculine identity:

*"To the boy, masculinity is both mysterious and attractive (in its promise of a world of work and power) and yet, at the same time, threatening (in its strangeness and emotional distance)...This simultaneous distance and attraction is internalised as a permanent emotional tension that the individual must, in some way, strive to overcome. Self realisation can only be achieved through a confrontation with the father's absence; and, by extension, through the emotional uncertainty a boy feels within himself....As he grows up, the ambivalent structure of his masculine identification becomes a quest for resolution, and a boy develops a compulsive need for recognition and reward."*

(Tolson 1977 page 25)

This struggle is enforced in the school and peer group both of which encourage a structure of status and achievement. At this stage masculinity starts becoming conscious and is organised around a value system of taboos and a recognition of status. The work environment serves to encourage the notion of a seamless masculine character that struggles to deny the emotional insecurity and an ambivalent identification that began the process in the first place.

Tolson's argument echoes Komarovsky's (1964) thesis that masculinity is formed via a process of negotiation. The father stands as the authoritative figure negotiating between the public and the private, between the personal and the political. Many of men's personal experiences occur within the public forum of the workplace, but only certain ones can be expressed there. Not only is the boy's relationship with the father based on ambivalence, so is the man's relationship with the workplace:

*"At the bottom (and this is understood by the family) the worker is individually powerless, a mere calculation of the capitalist economy. This remains the unspoken truth of his masculine identity. At home the working class father is under continuous pressure to appear competent, to 'be a good father.' But his*

*aggression, his bitterness, and often his violence, point to the impossibility of his situation.”*

(Tolson 1977 page 31)

This relates back to the argument that masculinity is a fragile construction and men's power is often maintained through violence rather than argument and ideology. Tolson believes the same emotional structure, namely the ambivalent relationship with the father, exists in all classes, acting as the basis of all subsequent personality development:

*“For both classes of men, far from providing a challenge to the organisation of work, their masculinity actually supports it, and helps it to continue. Masculinity involves making personal compromises with social problems - defending male prerogatives in the family, keeping up a ‘front’ against confrontations. Such personal solutions are socially functional, because covering up for weaknesses, ‘making the best of a bad job’, is always to accept the status quo.”*

(Tolson 1977 page 31)

For the boy the father bridges the gap between the home and the workplace. When he is older and enters the workplace the young man undergoes an apprenticeship and rituals that act as a form of substitute fatherhood in the workplace. The antagonisms between fatherhood in the home and in the workplace represent the tensions between capitalism and patriarchy.

Tolson argues that confrontation with the father in the home is where the boy first learns conservatism, and draws directly on the early writings of Reich:

*“...the political and economic position of the father is reflected in his patriarchal relationship to the remainder of the family. In the figure of the father the authoritarian state has its representatives in every family, so that the family becomes its most important instrument of power.”*

(Reich 1970 page 53)

Tolson's next step is to concentrate on the “personal is political” in terms of the male worker within the capitalist workplace. This is moving away from a feminist-derived theory of the “personal is political” to concentrate on the personal aspects of masculinity within the public sphere.

#### 4.5 The contradictions between patriarchy and capitalism

Tolson discusses the way in which the emotionally distant self is constructed and reinforced in later life by drawing on the work of Marx and in particular the theory of alienation. Marx argued that the more men work for capitalist enterprises the more the process and product of labour take on an alien reality. Tolson believes that manhood is achieved only through emotionally distancing the self from the domestic world. The separations created by capitalist relations between work, leisure and home serve to externalise work to the labourer. As Marx wrote in the 1844 Paris Manuscript:

*“The worker only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home.”*

(Marx 1970 page 110)

Of course when the man is at work he literally is not at home confirming the public-private divide. Tolson develops this argument, stressing that in the workplace men's expectations are both confirmed and denied and this creates a contradiction at the centre of masculinity. Capitalism supports patriarchy in that the industrial wage brings the worker a certain kind of freedom. Owning private property is important to the notion of being “one’s own man”. Wage labour is bound up with masculinity:

*“...because his identity remains the source of a man’s motivation to sell his labour-power - capitalism reinforces patriarchal culture.”*

(Tolson 1977 page 56)

On the other side of the dialectic, patriarchy is undermined by capitalism in four principal ways: masculine identity requires stability, with the “wife and kids to support” the man’s ability to oppose his boss is always limited; the mechanisation of labour deprives the skilled worker of a traditional mastery over the tools of the trade; advances in technology require formal education and therefore an end to the direct verbal transaction of knowledge from father to son. Finally, the division of labour between factory and home weakens the authority of the father, Tolson remarking that:

*“The ambitious nature of capitalist wage labour is that while it reactivates aspects of patriarchal culture, it simultaneously seals their historical fate.”*

(Tolson 1977 page 57)

In this sense Tolson believes that the more a man stresses his 'right to work' the more the product of his labour is used against him. As the traditional left support the 'right to work' without question or definition, this is a challenging argument.

Tolson then brings the argument back to how the workplace affects men in the private sphere, including their sexuality:

*"Masculine models of behaviour - gestures, habits, tones of voice - become instinctive; and routines of work - schedules of activity and rest - make up the pattern of everyday experience. Even a man's sexuality is regulated by his basic commitment to work."*

(Tolson 1977 page 55)

In common with other writers under discussion Tolson's argument is that gender identity affects the entire body. Here he is arguing that, for men, the processes that affect the personal (that is, the functioning of the body) occur partly in the public workplace. Tolson argues that within working-class male labour sexual symbolism acts as a form of unity as well as providing a diversion and a psychological defence. Yet Tolson notes the contradictions too, suggesting that "It is as if the worker despises his own sexuality - in the same moment as he reaffirms his commitment to work." (Tolson 1977 page 62)

His discussion of working-class masculinity finishes with an interview with 'Bill', a shop steward and lorry driver. The interview contains illustrations of all the main themes previously discussed. The relationship between father and son, contradictions between capitalism and patriarchy, his attitudes to work and the fear of status loss.

#### **4.6 Middle-class masculinity**

Again Tolson concentrates on how the personal relates to the political, buttressed by evidence from an interview with 'Alan' as an example of how the theory relates to a particular individual's everyday experiences; 'everyday experience' here indicates the 'subjective' or 'personal'.

Tolson suggests that for the middle class the image of patriarchal authority is based on moral dignity and respectability, values still utilised in contemporary political debates.

The middle-class man has a "career" instead of a "job" that is a long term investment on a ladder of individual achievement informed by the "professional ideal". Furthermore, the

professional must be self disciplined while also being subservient to a greater authority such as the Empire. Tolson illustrates these claims by drawing on personal accounts. Tolson uses an interview to describe how one teacher lived out:

*"...the ideological contradictions of a decaying imperialist class ridden society."*

(Tolson 1977 page 88)

He backs up this assertion with interview material. But the comments from the teacher do not lead us to the conclusion that Tolson suggests:

*"Everybody watches everybody else. Its like a cat stalking a mouse. You see, there's very few opportunities, and you watch everybody else."*

(‘Teacher’. In: Tolson 1977 page 88)

It is unclear why this form of corporate competition should automatically suggest the *"...ideological contradictions of a decaying imperialist class ridden society..."*

Thus, at times, Tolson's view of middle class masculinity does seem overly simplistic and relies far too heavily on a single unitary model. However, Tolson is painting with a broad brush in order to highlight the major differences between middle and working class masculinity, a project made necessary by the Marxist stance adopted. Tolson, to his credit, does juxtapose theory and personal experience. He discusses the way in which, at University, he initially enjoyed debate between male students but how later on this ‘game’ seemed very closed and restrictive, allowing no room for introspection. The subsequent career structure reinforces this process, stimulating particular responses until the man becomes socially fixed by his work and unable to escape its effects:

*"As husband and father, he is the **subject** of an ideology to which his wife and children are the **objects** - of his concern, his protection, his authority. And his focal position is maintained by a continuing **economic power** - the material reality to which the ideology corresponds."*

(Tolson 1977 page 95 my emphasis)

Tolson relates the personal to the political in a more theoretical way by identifying three points of stress within the contemporary middle class family: the relationship between the married couple; the interactions between parents and children; and definitions given to sexuality.



In the first instance the man dominates via the “moralism of the masculine presence” (Tolson 1977). It is he who expects to have the ‘final word’ and can define the limits of the sphere of discussion. On the second point, children are raised to respect their father and maintain his status; the child's development becomes channelled around the father's expectation of himself. The Oedipal complex varies according to shifting social relations, and during the 1950s and 1960s many sons adopted a different value system to their fathers:

*“...the ‘generation gap’, is no inevitable rejection of paternal affection; but it is experienced as such within the traditional middle class family. Because of the patriarchal affinity between fathers and sons - ideological contradictions are taken personally. The disillusioned father, caught inside a web of communications he cannot control, is forced into an aggressive dogmatism. The guilt ridden son, acting out his rebellion with increasing petulance, is reduced to cynical self-parody.”*

(Tolson 1977 page 100)

The third point of stress within the middle class family identified by Tolson concerns sexual relationships, Tolson arguing that within bourgeois sexuality:

*“Sexual recognition was locked into an armour of respectability.”*

(Tolson 1977 page 101)

Due to sexual repression, middle-class sexuality has become idealised as a form of quest and desire has become directed towards a dichotomous view of women. In this discussion Tolson only hints that dominant male desire is not natural and that there are sinister aspects to men's understanding of love and desire.

Tolson then introduces his second main interview, with a teacher, and again he utilises the “personal is political” approach when structuring the material. Here we see encapsulated the importance of the long term career, the ideology of the providing “family man” and his attempt to draw a division between social (public) and mental (personal) attitudes:

*“...Alan particularly emphasises the constant, inter-penetration of his career and family life. ‘Home’ is one of the careerist calculations. But also as he himself is increasingly aware, ‘home’ represents a compensation for the often frustrating*

*routine of the classroom. It is as though the structure, on certain levels, is independent of his will - all he can do is try to keep a kind of 'equilibrium'. It is precisely at these levels that definitions of gender add their legitimacy to the status quo."*

(Tolson 1977 page 102)

#### 4.7 The "progressive middle-class"

Tolson believes that white middle-class masculinity is suffering a crisis due to a widespread post Empire disillusionment with career structures. This has given rise to a "progressive middle class" consisting of teachers, social workers, journalists and creative artists. They advocate alternatives to traditional domesticity via communal living and collective child care. This group is the product of an affluent society that had seen a shift to consumer capitalism and a growth of the service sector, especially higher education.

The "progressive middle-class" are seen to have become critical of the affluent society itself and a "crisis of identification" has emerged as a vital element of middle-class culture. For men this has meant that work reproduces masculine insecurities and the withering of fantasies of "sexual freedom". As a result the masculine counter culture has become characterised by cynicism, doubt and self pity.

Tolson argues that men returning after the war faced complex readjustments and a clash of perspectives. The male teenagers of the 1960s were shaped by their father's experiences. The crisis of middle-class masculinity counterposed the emancipation of middle-class women. Finding their careers insecure, men became more dependent on their "traditional" place within the home at precisely the point that feminists were challenging received stereotypes. This is another important contribution by Tolson, drawing attention to the significance of shifts in masculinity in the years immediately after World War II. The impact of these developments on future gender relations is something that was later developed by feminist writers such as Segal, Wandor and Ehrenreich.

Tolson's discussion of generation gaps and how the values of the "progressive middle class" became opposed to those of the previous generations is something the other writers under analysis do not consider at all. Presumably Tolson himself is a member of

this class as he advocates “alternatives to traditional domesticity”, is suitably “self conscious” and is critical of contemporary capitalism. However, he does not mention himself in relation to the “progressive middle class”. It would have been useful if Tolson had developed this argument and taken the opportunity to analyse his own position in relation to his audience.

#### 4.8 The family

Not surprisingly, considering how much time he has devoted to family dynamics, Tolson sees the family as a crucial agent of change. This section concerns an analysis of how the “personal” area of the family acts as a focal point of contemporary political struggle. According to Tolson, men fall back on the home as the last refuge of the patriarch. Within the “progressive middle class”, changes in masculinity and the impact of the women's movement have encouraged couples to re-arrange the traditional domestic relationship, referring to themselves as ‘couples’ or a ‘partnership’.

He believes that the images and myths of love and equality mask the unequal nature of the relationship in which the man still maintains his masculine moral presence. The genuine attempt at companionship by some couples is compromised by a new male moralism, that of “the gift of freedom to women.” (Tolson 1977) Men’s generosity of spirit masks the underlying power structure within which the gift is made. Tolson’s argument effectively revolves around how men in the public world are trying to maintain control of women and the private world.

With regard to the future of childrearing Tolson believes that it is difficult to change the structure of the nuclear family as:

*“Men particularly want sons. They glorify the role of progenitor - the ‘bond’ between father and son. There remain mysterious feelings of protection, responsibility and recognition (support in distress, praise in achievement) which over-determine the biological relationship.”*

(Tolson 1977 page 119)

Again this constitutes a return to a central issue for Tolson, that of the father son relationship. Yet ultimately it does not really leave us with any way forward.

Tolson's third interview is with 'Tom', an ex-civil engineer who, inspired by the involvement of his wife with the women's movement, broke away from his old life. Once more Tolson manages to illustrate the "personal is political" rather successfully. 'Tom' changes from a routine lifestyle to an 'alternative' one, a period defined by a 'growing consciousness' of how the limitations imposed by work affected his home life. By sacrificing the fixed goals of his career he is able to conceive a future for himself. Through his own self consciousness he experiences a new quality in his personal relationships.

The interview with 'Tom' seems more optimistic than the others. Indeed it is far more optimistic than Tolson's dismissal of the "progressive middle class" would suggest it was going to be.

#### 4.9 Consciousness raising

Next, Tolson attempts to relate theory to a more personal "grass roots" politics and an examination of the networks associated with the men's movement. Tolson noted that men's groups had no real politics of their own, no issues to unite around as a basis for action against a system that operates in their favour, and no language with which to express the personal:

*"...my education had given me an academic language deceptive in its apparent flexibility, with which I could seize on aspects of experiences, but could not express their total, personal significance...I realised that the social theories I had learned applied to the society of which I was a part; that I was defined by the ideologies I criticised. So there was a continual attempt to find links between ideas and experiences - criticising the ideas if they collapsed, or did not seem to fit, the complexities of experience."*

(Tolson 1977 page 138-9)

He argues that what is needed is a "theory of consciousness" (that is, a theory which defines the process of becoming conscious) and a method of making this practical to men's everyday experiences; a theory that can encompass social experience as well as the structures that define this experience. Tolson is effectively seeking to develop a form of the "personal is political" that is relevant to men and masculinity. He believes such a

theory would support a Marxist/Althusserian argument that the social formation comprises two defining structures, social institutions and ideologies. Tolson once more returns to the subject of the father son relationship and an emphasis on family dynamics but approaches it in terms of a more linguistic analysis:

*“Patriarchy is a ‘general ideology’ substantially carried by codes of speech (‘Wait till your father gets home’) and by inherited rituals and customs (like ‘initiation ceremonies’ at work). Through language, patriarchy remains a powerful source of definition, even when the primary institution in which it is located - the family - has lost many of its former functions to the capitalist state. The language of patriarchy is communicated, for the most part, unconsciously, in early childhood, before the individual learns ways of speaking associated with the ‘State Apparatus’ as such.”*

(Tolson 1977 page 140)

#### 4.10 Ideology

According to Tolson, work-related language straddles the divide between the personal (the family) and the political (public world of work and masculine language). The mans status as worker enables him to possess both wages and in gender terms the language with which to dominate public life. Possessing this cultural power also allows the worker a way to justify the indignity and unhappiness of his alienated labour:

*“...subjectively, such an explanation fits his experience of working; and objectively his patriarchal assumptions and aspirations are rewarded by the economic mode of production.”*

(Tolson 1977 page 142)

Although Tolson stated that he did not want to shy away from confronting the reality of men’s power he spends little time on this. Even though men are oppressed under capitalism, they do benefit from patriarchal relations. C.R. as a form of politics is however predominantly something that will appeal more to the “progressive middle class” and therefore tends to be somewhat exclusive. This is not to say that there is anything wrong with the theory of C.R., only that Tolson gives few indications as to how groups could attract men of all classes, sexual orientations and ethnic backgrounds. In

this sense although he has discussed the personal as a method of political strategy he has not demonstrated a way to successfully bring the two together in practice.

#### 4.11 Tolson's methodology

I now wish to discuss the ways in which Tolson has drawn on the personal experiences of himself and others to provide a biographical and subjective account of masculinity. It must be said that, interesting though these personal accounts are, their validity is questionable on methodological grounds. As the sources are un-named and no background information is given, the reader is left unclear as to what extent the subjects have been allowed to speak for themselves. At times these examples seem almost too typical and one is conscious that the interviews may have been carefully tailored to provide a perfect fit. Tolson does not tell us how long, how many or whether there were other interviews that were rejected because they did not match the theory nor why these subjects were chosen in the first place. More explicit discussion of methodology may have reassured us, yet Tolson himself raises the question that these views may not be very representative:

*“If masculinity is structured, as we have seen, in socio-historical terms, what is the status of the individual solution? What, in short, is the political validity of Tom’s personal account?”*

(Tolson 1977 page 133 emphasis in original)

I think that one answer to this is that the interviews do represent important experiential steps forward in combining an analysis of masculinity that is both personal and political. These accounts serve to bring the work to life, giving the feeling that real people and the issues that affect their lives are being addressed. Although it is often done implicitly it is fascinating to hear men talk about their own and other men’s masculinity; it feels as if very delicately and slowly some new territory is being explored. It also helps to involve the reader; I found it difficult to read Tolson's, and other men's, experiences of their childhood without comparing it to my own.

#### 4.12 Conclusions

The primary criticism of Tolson's work is that his theory of patriarchy is too simplistic; he overplays the role of the family and relies on the literal definition of patriarchy as "the rule of the father". Feminist theory had already moved beyond this definition. Further Tolson sees patriarchy, or "traditional masculinity", largely in terms of stereotyped or macho versions and therefore wrongly concludes that patriarchal relations are more strongly adhered to among working-class men. It would take the theory of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell 1987) to demonstrate that patriarchy and male power is just as important, if not more so, to the middle-class, albeit in a different form.

Tolson has dealt with several key issues that men encounter as the "personal", such as the relationship between fathers and sons, how the family affects other interpersonal relationships and how all these aspects relate to the public world. Tolson also demonstrates very successfully that masculinity is not a seamless unity but a contradictory process involving a struggle between the home and the workplace. Both middle-class and working-class men strive to assert their authority in the former while being continually undermined in the latter. However this leaves us with a rather tantalising question. If patriarchy is a hangover from the past and is being constantly undermined by capitalism then what will masculinity and femininity be like once patriarchy has receded even further? This is a question Tolson does not address but he does provide us with enough to speculate. As capitalism only takes from men while patriarchy provides men with a sense of pride and dignity, albeit at the expense of women, then presumably as patriarchy fades so men will be left with less pride and a "crisis of masculinity" may occur.

Although his definition of patriarchy seems weak, in hindsight his work on analysing the tensions between patriarchy and capitalism was a major step forward. Concentrating on tensions, as opposed to looking for a smooth functionalist fit, contributed to the "dual systems debate" and other future work on the connections between capitalism and male power.

One notable aspect of Tolson's work is that whenever violence is mentioned it seems to be equated with working-class men and concerns violence towards children and other men. Violence against women is not discussed at all and whenever middle class

relationships are mentioned the discussion is concerned with how men maintain control through ideology and coercion, not violence. Although feminist research on domestic violence and the middle-class had yet to emerge, it now seems an unfortunate oversight.

Another criticism of the work is that Tolson treats gays and men as two separate categories. As a result when he refers to 'men', he is only referring to heterosexual men and therefore effectively marginalises gay men and gay issues. As we have seen concerning the history of the men's movement in Britain, the marginalising of gay issues was a major problem. It is for this reason that Carrigan, Connell and Lee argue that Tolson's book is very much in the "books-about-men" tradition. Connell believes that this marginalising of gay issues represents:

*"...the final confirmation of the political meaning of the "men's movement" and the "books-about-men" genre. It is not fundamentally about uprooting sexism or transforming patriarchy, or even understanding masculinity in its various forms. When it comes to the crunch what it is about is modernising hegemonic heterosexuality. It is concerned with finding a way in which the dominant group - the white, educated heterosexual, affluent males we know and love so well - can adapt to new circumstances without breaking down the social structure arrangements that actually give them power."*

(Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1987 page 164)

Ironically these criticisms are very similar to Tolson's own criticisms of the "progressive middle class". Although Connell's criticisms are relevant they ultimately go too far and ignore the contribution of Tolson's work and the radical break it represented with what had gone before.

Of great importance, in retrospect, is Tolson's recognition of different forms of masculinity. Influenced by the theories of personality types in the works of Jung and the Frankfurt school, Tolson was the first writer to really discuss the difference between middle-class, "progressive middle-class" and working-class masculinities. Unfortunately he relies on an oversimplified connection between personality and a given social situation and therefore his account seems too much like role theory. However, although the models are crude they do highlight important distinctions. Tolson also analyses how class affects a man's personal view of his masculinity and how the individual is affected by



historical factors such as Britain's changing role in the post war economy. Tolson is working towards the theory that patriarchy revolves around struggles for definition and competition between groups of men, an idea which Connell was to develop in more detail as "hegemonic masculinity". After Tolson, left-wing works concentrated heavily on masculinities, in the plural, and the effects of class on the development of masculinity.

Of all the texts under examination, Tolson's work in many ways comes closest to incorporating all five aspects of my criteria of the "personal is political". Tolson's method of drawing on biographical experience and the use of interview material is of immense importance. His work suggests that the way the private and public are perceived by men may be different to the way they are perceived by women. This form of analysis serves to bring the personal and the political closer together. With the possible exception of David Jackson's work, they have never been more successfully combined.

The emphasis on father-son relationships runs throughout much of the work and again draws on all five of my criteria of the "personal is political". Not only does this serve to give this important dimension the critical attention it deserves, but it is unique for a male writer to so critically examine this relationship in the context of patriarchal relations. However, Tolson does tend to neglect the influence and effect of women and the women's movement in either middle-class or working-class life. The father is given great importance in the male child's life but the mother is only mentioned in the way she represents the father. This is the only time that Tolson gives any prominence to the role of the mother in the family and in the work wives only appear as theory - confirmation of a male centred approach.

In his discussion on how men respond to work and the way in which this affects their sexuality, Tolson is beginning to write about the body, a theme unknown to previous male writers. The way in which work (public) affects men's physical sense of well being, their attitudes and conceptions of sexuality are examples of where for men the political has become personal and there is no division between the two.

Although his discussion of how the personal relates to wider political factors is not as sophisticated as Connell's analysis, he had much less to work from. Ironically, because he had few models or sources, Tolson's eclectic bibliography gives the work a major strength. Tolson draws from a variety of sociological and psychological literature,

second hand and personal accounts, cultural studies work, as well as mainstream sociology and feminist literature. This gives the work an interdisciplinary feel as well finding references to masculinity wherever they may occur and not restricted to a body of literature defined as “gender studies”. Tolson is in this sense highlighting that there is a wealth of written work on masculinity either explicitly or implicitly in this century. His drawing on every imaginable source from popular literature and songs helps to give the work an exciting exploratory feel, a real sense that ‘masculinity’ and gender relations really are everywhere, and moves his work away from being a purely academic exercise.

## CHAPTER 5

# THE DEVELOPMENTS THAT OCCURRED BETWEEN THE PUBLICATION OF TOLSON'S WORK AND THE PUBLICATION OF THE OTHER THREE WORKS

### 5.1 Introduction

After the publication of The Limits of Masculinity (1977) until the publication of The Gender of Oppression (1987) there was a ten year gap, a period in which there were significant changes notably within the women's movement but also in social theory. It was in the context of these changes and the debates that they generated that the remaining three works were conceived and published.

### 5.2 The developments in the women's movement

By the mid 1970s a noticeable division had appeared in the women's movement between the socialist feminists and the lesbian feminists who were mainly the radicals. There was a sense in the movement that the issues were moving away from concerns over economic factors to those concerning the power of men (Coote A, Campbell B 1982). These arguments were to profoundly shape the second wave of academic writings by men on masculinity.

Campaigns were now being organised around previously ignored or marginalised issues such as abortion, rape, violence, pornography and discrimination against lesbians. Also of great significance was the impact feminism had made on academia. Given all these factors it is perhaps not surprising that there was a rush of feminist publishing between 1975 and 1985. Many of the works that are now regarded as feminist classics were published during this period. (1)

### 5.3 Beyond the “dual systems debate”

By the early 1980s the “dual systems debate” had largely run aground; no material base or dynamics of change for patriarchy were ever fully theorised that were either separable

from the capitalist mode of production or that did not rely on essentialism or universalism.

#### **5.4 The post structuralist discourse and Foucault**

Elsewhere in academic circles more generally, post structuralism allowed for an analysis of the meta-narratives of Marxism and psychoanalysis that, it was argued, were discourses dependent as much upon the view of the writer as on the validity of the argument. Foucault argued that sexual identity, constructed through discourse, was a historical phenomenon that was not constant in history (Foucault 1981).

#### **5.5 Further developments from gay writers**

Since the early 1970s, gay writers had been arguing that gay men were oppressed within a patriarchal society and that therefore dominant masculinity was not a “male role” but a type of masculinity to which all others were subordinate (Altman 1974). Connell illustrates a willingness to engage with such arguments claiming that:

*“A consideration of homosexuality thus provides the beginnings of a dynamic conception of masculinity as a structure of social relations.”*

(Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1987 page 174)

#### **5.6 The academic men's movement and the impact of feminist criticisms**

Prompted by feminist criticism men began to question how much difference their activities had actually made and the conclusion, it seemed, was very little. The appearance of feminists and feminism within academia allowed, or forced, many of the male writers to join in the debate once again. It was now not just women's or even gender debate, it was an academic debate less directly in women's control and a debate open to men.

In his article for Sociology (1985), Connell closes by outlining his intention for further work: to develop theories of power; concentrate less on the 1970s personal style and devise a system of gender that was not as radical as radical feminism but took gender/gay

issues as more central than men's movement literature. These principles are effectively the ones from which Brittan and Hearn would also work.

### 5.7 Men and the concept of power

The different meanings the concept of the “personal is political” might have for men and women was becoming more apparent. One of the most significant differences was in the concept of power: how men define power and whether men recognise their use of power and in what circumstances. The feminist works published after Tolson began tackling the issues of interpersonal and state power far more directly. At the heart of this debate was whether male power was in the hands of the state, as the radicals (Brownmiller 1976, Daly 1979) argued, or state power was in the hands of men, as the socialists (Barrett 1980, Delphy 1984) argued. Male academics realised they needed to address the issues of power much more directly and could no longer rely on the argument that patriarchy was as damaging to men as it was to women.

In his work Which Way Is Up? published in 1983 Connell argued that:

*“It would be wrong to presume just because there are acute anxieties involved in the formation of hegemonic masculinity, that they persist unchanged as a permanent insecurity within masculinity. This seems to be what Tolson (1977) thinks; and it is important for the critique of masculinity as a restriction on men's capacity for experience, which was a common theme in the 1970's literature on men. I disagree profoundly with the idea that masculinity is an impoverished character structure. It is a richness in plentitude. The trouble is that the specific richness of hegemonic masculinity is oppressive, being founded on, and enforcing, the subordination of women. Most men do become secure in their physical masculinity.”*

(Connell 1983 page 22)

Men as secure and masculinity as a richness had never been suggested before by a male writer who claimed to be sympathetic to feminism.

Power, not weakness, was the key concept for the next generation of writers on masculinity. Both Connell's and Brittan's works actually have “power” in the title while

Hearn settles for 'oppression'. What characterises the post-1985 discussions of masculinity was that the debates were now less concerned with limits and insecurities and more focused around the issues of strength and power.

## CHAPTER 6

### JEFF HEARN: THE GENDER OF OPPRESSION; MEN MASCULINITY AND THE CRITIQUE OF MARXISM

#### 6.1 Introduction

Hearn's work is an analysis of patriarchy and reproduction derived from feminism and Marxism. The work includes an analysis of the role of the professions and ways forward to more egalitarian gender relations. The first section of the work (parts 1 and 2) introduces feminist and Marxist theories of reproduction. Hearn argues that within Marxism, reproduction has been subsumed under production when in fact reproduction is of greater significance. The influences of both the dual systems and domestic labour debates are clear. The next section is the development of a "materialist theory of reproduction" (Hearn 1987). This consists of three elements: class relations at the point of reproduction; human value; and technology. Hearn's aim is to produce a theory of gender that is dialectical.

The next section of the work concentrates on the institutionalisation of patriarchy, focusing in turn on hierarchic heterosexuality, fatherhood, the professions, and the state. The final section of the work looks at how masculinity is constructed, concentrating on the role of the professions. Hearn draws heavily on social work and the social sciences. This relates directly to his personal experience in the social sciences department at the University of Bradford where he became head of the social work course. In this way Hearn's writing is intended as a contemporary intervention into social theory and policy, within his own department and beyond. A large amount of his thinking and research is derived directly from his doctorate and appears in the work almost complete in that form, bookended by several essays on related issues.

In 1983 Hearn had published a piece entitled "Men's politics and social policy" in the Bulletin on Social policy. His next notable publication was in Sociology, entitled "Notes on patriarchy, professionalisation and the semi-professions". Both demonstrate an increasing concern with the wider issues of men's power but linked specifically to the workplace. In 1983 Hearn wrote an article entitled "Gender and Organisations: a selective review and a critique of a neglected area", for the journal Organisation Studies. This time the work was co-written with feminist writer Wendy Parkin and it was with Parkin that Hearn wrote "Sex at Work" for The Sexuality of Men, a book that appeared

in 1985. Many of the ideas in this chapter were developed further in Sex at Work: The Power and Paradox of Organisation Sexuality, again in partnership with Parkin and published in 1987. The world of work and its hierarchies is an area that is of particular personal relevance to men and given Hearn's background in this field it is surprising in retrospect that it was not given prominence in The Gender of Oppression.

## **6.2 The personal, the political and the theoretical**

From the outset, Hearn's discussion revolves closely around reproduction and fatherhood. This suggests a desire to recognise that these issues affect men in highly personal ways. On the cover of the book is a review by Terrell Carver who remarks that "...the approach is personal and political", complemented by Hearn's own insistence that "...the recognition of the facts of the existence of the 'personal' and the 'political' is a necessary part of theory." (Hearn 1987, page 11)

## **6.3 Fatherhood**

At this point it is worth discussing Hearn's life and his previous works in more detail to understand why the issues of reproduction and fatherhood became so central to his work. In 1983 Hearn published a short book entitled Birth and After Birth: A Materialist Account. The use of the word materialist is important, suggesting the enormous influence Marxism was already having on his view of gender relations. But the inspiration behind the book is feminist politics. This had aroused an interest in gender relations that had been reinforced by personal experience. Around 1983 Hearn's life appears to have taken a dramatic turn when he was present at the birth of his third child, Molly. The work is written as a partly personal account of feelings and attitudes and a partly and somewhat jumbled unfolding of his theory of "materialist reproduction".

Birth and After Birth was followed by the weightier Gender of Oppression, which concentrated more on Marxist theory and far less on personal feelings. This book, like its predecessor, is not a definitive unfolding of one issue but more an argument still in various stages of development.



#### 6.4 The three intentions of the work

Hearn's basic intent is laid out in a section entitled "Feminist Critiques of Men". Here he introduces the subject of radical feminism and specifically The Redstocking Manifesto of 1969 that discussed gender in class terms. In three remarks that follow Hearn lays out the rest of the book: gender class analysis has a great deal to offer; feminism should not be incorporated within existing political and academic frameworks such as Marxism; and although Marxist feminism can talk about capitalist institutions it cannot explain men's specific oppression of women.

The main tenants of Hearn's work are all here: a class-related analysis of patriarchy; society as patriarchal above all else; combined with a Marxist and Marxist-feminist interpretation of society.

Hearn then goes on to outline the changes that have affected men in the post war era. His discussion of militarism and violence, I believe, is particularly relevant to the concept of the "personal is political" and how it might relate specifically to men. Hearn agrees with Tolson that World War II led to a crisis of masculinity. Hearn argues that militarism plays a vital role in the construction of masculinity in five major ways: militarism provides a particular type of activity and labour; it provides models of masculinity; the massive expenditure on the arm's industry; killing; and the threat of potentially being killed.

#### 6.5 Marx and reproduction

According to Hearn, Marx defined reproduction in seven ways beginning with the assertion that

*"...no society can reproduce, unless it constantly reconverts a part of its products into means of production, or elements of fresh production."*

(Marx 1977 page 531)

This is followed by six more definitions that include: biological reproduction, maintenance of labour, reproduction of labour through the conversion of capital, the reproduction of capital, reproduction of the methods of production and the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production.

Hearn believes that issues around reproduction form the cornerstone of patriarchy. For Hearn society is patriarchal above all else. Patriarchy is the base while at this juncture in history capitalism is the superstructure. This is a brave move and Hearn is the only male heterosexual writer to adopt this position. Hearn explains how capitalism obscures patriarchy by arguing that patriarchy:

*"...is a system of social relations in which the person qua woman, or indeed man, is a person solely in terms of their body...Thus the conflation of labour and person (under capitalism) may obscure, that is, force out of sight the conflation's of bodily appearance and person under patriarchy."*

(Hearn 1987 page 15)

The relationship between the personal (person's body) and the political (system of social relations) is here made very clear and is developed to form a central aspect of Hearn's work.

## **6.6 O'Brien and men's alienation from reproduction**

Hearn directly addresses the historical development of the public-private divide and the dichotomy of the personal and political. He argues that men's attitudes towards reproduction affect the relationship between men and women and between different groups of men at a political level.

O'Brien (1981) was the first to develop a materialist analysis of reproduction. She argues that in the process of childbirth women perform labour by which they transform biological reproduction into a human activity. Men do not labour in the same way, since the ejaculation of sperm is their only contribution to biological reproduction. Hence men are alienated at the point of reproduction. O'Brien argues that the historical origins of male control of reproduction are derived from men's initial consciousness of their alienation from the birth process. Both Hearn and O'Brien argue that awareness of this alienation created a public-private divide that acts as male separation from, and appropriation of, sexual, generative and destructive labour powers, Hearn quotes O'Brien and remarks that:

*"The creation of the public realm, the separation of the public and the private realms, and the dominance of the public over the private realm, are thus all part*

*of the relations of reproduction... 'a huge and oppressive structure of law and custom and ideology is erected by the brotherhood of man to affirm and protect their potency... a structure which must be actively maintained, because at the heart of male potency lies the intransigent reality of estrangement and uncertainty'.*"

(Hearn 1987 page 80 and O'Brien 1981 page 60-1)

According to Hearn, within the current mode of production, men exploit women but this need not be the case. Under a different mode of production, women's role as child bearers could provide them with power. Hearn and O'Brien recognise that as men cannot have children their interests are different to those of women. Further, women contribute more biologically and socially to the origin of children than do men. The theory that men feel a deep seated psychological inadequacy when it comes to women's reproductive capacities is not, of course, a particularly new one, as earlier references to "womb envy", as opposed to Freud's theory of "penis envy" (Freud 1983) indicate. In 1967 Ralph Greenson argued that:

*"Each sex is envious of the opposite sex; but the males covert envy underneath his external facade of contempt seems to be particularly destructive with regard to his gender identity."*

(Greenson 1968 page 270)

Paula Nicholson, however, has questioned why motherhood should always become such a key issue when women's role in society is discussed. Nicholson argues that men often invoke the idealised image of mothers when they wish to avoid the practicalities of childcare. (Nicholson 1993) Even though Hearn and O'Brien are certainly not advocating men should avoid childcare, quite the opposite, they are in danger of constructing a view of women and motherhood that is mythological. I have already indicated how Hearn took a particular interest in the politics of reproduction after being present at the birth of one of his children and perhaps it is no coincidence that O'Brien spent much of her working life before becoming an academic as a nurse and midwife.

Presumably women who are unable to have children, or choose not to, are also alienated and in this sense are "like men". The media often portrays childless career women as not really being "like women". However, Hearn does not explore this potentially interesting area.

Hearn sees masculinity as insecure, fraught with contradiction and built around a defence against women's role in reproduction. This is firmly in the "men's movement" tradition of the 1970s and contrasts with the newly emergent view of those such as Connell that masculinity could be a strength and a richness (Connell 1983). This is a weakness in Hearn's work for as Segal remarks:

*"Rejecting phallocentrism as the product of a defensive sexist imagination, rather than exploring it as a cultural reality, leaves much of the mystery of masculinity concealed."*

(Segal 1990 page 82)

What Hearn misses from this discussion is how "natural "or inevitable this situation is and whether anything can ever be done about it. If there is more equality between the sexes then surely men will feel alienated again and will once more attempt to take control of the situation. If men are unable to accept the reality of their biology then the inescapable conclusion is that half the human race is severely flawed and must either deny its own natural tendencies or destroy itself. I am not arguing that this is impossible or that biological differences between the sexes are insignificant. But I do find Hearn's argument too vague to be convinced of either of these conclusions.

## **6.7 The material theory of reproduction**

Hearn argues that a material theory of reproduction is more comprehensive than Marxism. "The analysis of reproduction in particular and materialist feminism in general can...provide the basis of a more thorough going materialism - a materialism of existence - than Marxism." (Hearn 1987 page 62)

In effect Hearn is essaying a form of materialism that is capable of integrating personal experience with socio-economic structure. The material theory of reproduction involves three principal elements: class struggle at the point of reproduction; technology and the relations of production; and human value and human tithes.

## 6.8 Class struggles at the point of reproduction

Sexual classes and reproductive classes are identified in terms of how people relate to reproduction:

*"There are thus within reproduction separate but interrelated types of material production, for example, in sexuality, fertility and birth, early childwork. For each of these there are slightly different sets of classes or sub classes. In terms of sexuality, divisions obviously exist between men and women, but also between gays and straights. Fertility and birth are based not only on the biology of sex but also on the social control of fertility."*

(Hearn 1987 page 63)

Hearn is critical of the domestic labour debates that analyse gender divisions as "economic" concepts. The house and domestic arrangements are important in sexual politics not because of the amount of domestic labour done there but because that is where reproduction in relation to birth and early childwork occurs:

*"It is also at these various points of reproduction that conditions for me, and I suspect other men, appear. I sometimes want to engage in penetrative sex, but know this may be unwanted; I sometimes wish to be more involved in birth, but know this may be unwelcome; I sometimes seek to be more involved in childwork, but know this may be for other reasons than nurture. The essential matter is that in reproduction men often seem to stand in contradictory relations to women in a number of different ways and these contradictions, which are questions of both (sexual) class power and personal experience, often centre on the points of reproduction."*

(Hearn 1987 page 64)

This is one of Hearn's most illuminating pieces of writing combining as it does the personal, the political and the theoretical. It is also one of the few points at which he relates theory to lived experience and this may be helpful in creating a sense of shared experience with other men. However, although he raises such concerns as whether penetrative sex and child work could be unwelcome he does not pursue them. It is in areas such as these that the differences between men and women over similar "personal" issues become much more apparent and require far more investigation.

He then goes on to broaden out this theory, arguing that the closer one approaches the points of reproduction the more clearly divided the workers are by sex. Classes are further broken down into a hierarchy of sexualities, at present white male heterosexuality is dominant; dominant in the sense that it defines all other sexualities as inferior to its own. Hearn argues that egalitarian heterosexuality would result in a loss of domination of heterosexuality over other sexualities. Thus heterosexual men assist in the maintenance of hierarchic heterosexuality even if they do not act in an oppressive manner. This is an important point as it means that there is no clear division between “good” and “bad” men, those who are oppressive and those who are not.

## 6.9 Human value

The second element of the material theory of reproduction concerns "human value", that is, what human beings consider to be the intrinsic worth of other human beings and is again a reiteration of an argument from Birth and After Birth. This section relates strongly to the "personal is political" in demonstrating what men expect from women in ‘conventional’ relationships and how this is vital for the functioning of patriarchy at a wider societal level. Much of the argument was originally drawn from O'Brien. She argued that the relationship between the biological and the social structure of reproductive relations was due to the historical development of the reproductive process. Hearn argues that:

*“The capacity to reproduce possessed by women is in effect appropriated (by men), so that women themselves are seen to have less value than men, just as workers are seen to have less value than owners and managers. It is in this way that reproductive materialism is more fundamental than productive materialism. It is the materialism of existence - of the valuing of women, of humans, of existence at all. The analysis of reproduction is badly in need of a new concept that describes the way in which human existence is turned into something like but slightly different from a commodity - a ‘human tithe’ or something of the sort. It is this ‘human tithe’ that we routinely and exhaustively extract from each other; and that above all men extract from women...The essential feature of this process of appropriation of babies, children and sex is that it depends on something less*

*subtle than the circulation and exchange of commodities under capitalism. It depends on direct appropriation without recompense, and it is in this sense that patriarchy ultimately hinges on violence. Such possible violence lies not only in individual men, but also importantly in the state itself."*

(Hearn 1987 page 69)

Hearn seems to be trying to demonstrate that through the institution of fatherhood all men gain from patriarchy whether or not they are fathers. Therefore, for a man to be in favour of the current structures of fatherhood is to be in favour of patriarchy. However, I find the whole "human value" argument to be not only unclear but also unspecific. Using such remarks as "something like" and "something of the sort" suggests he is unclear himself what he is trying to say. Many women do not have to rely on men for economic support, many women chose not to have children and Hearn assumes that women have no say in how children are raised. Connell argued that the family could act as a site where women gained some form of power and could challenge male control, an important factor ignored by Hearn (Connell 1987).

Hearn is not very specific in what he means by "appropriated by individuals and by the state". Few men reading the work may recognise their relationships with women as being so blatantly exploitative. Presumably "nurtured products" are used by the state for its purposes, either in wars, employment and the more generalised adoption of male and female roles. If this is the case then I take "appropriation" to mean that they attend patriarchal institutions, such as schools and job training, so that they become the willing participants of a patriarchal system. Hearn's stated intention was to produce a work that presents a challenge to patriarchal ideology so at this point it would be helpful if he outlined methods by which this appropriation could be tackled. For example, should women keep their children away from state schools, nurseries and so forth? More personal concrete examples would have been very helpful. If the public-private divide was created so that men could take control of the process of birth and nurturing, then to challenge this dichotomy is to challenge the patriarchal system.

## 6.10 Technology

Hearn's analysis draws heavily on Engels (Engels 1985). However, while Engels argues that patriarchy is a slave mode of production, Hearn believes it to be more a feudal mode of production. Hearn argues that women in marriage are in a similar position to peasants in a feudal economy. Feminism represents part of the transition from a feudal mode of reproduction to something else. Hearn believes the next stage is reproduction as a capitalist enterprise. This argument is not new, in 1983 Andrea Dworkin argued that in the future "reproductive brothels" would be established so that:

*"Women can sell reproductive capacities the same way the old time prostitutes sold sexual ones".*

(Dworkin 1983 page 182)

Surrogate motherhood is already a booming industry in the USA. Again this is an area where Hearn has been strongly influenced by radical feminism and this is an area that can only increase in importance in the future.

## 6.11 Sexuality

Hearn begins his discussion of sexuality by arguing that the social becomes 'embodied' within the individual but discusses it in terms of a 'materialist' analysis opposed to a more psychological level. According to Hearn sexuality is not discrete but overlaps with other activities, an argument not recognised within the narrowly economic Marxist tradition. He draws on the work of MacKinnon (1982), commenting that:

*"Sexuality is certainly incredibly important as an apparent form of power, but it may also be a daily expression and reconstitution of something else or even many other processes (as MacKinnon herself implies) such as violence, nurture and childcare."*

(Hearn 1987 page 83)

Hearn is effectively discussing the way in which the "personal" area of sexuality is enacted and defined in public. Hearn then moves on to broaden out his theory of reproduction. Reproduction consists of several types: sexual, biological, generative and physical, the latter including violence. Each of these forms of reproduction represents a



dialectic and material process and together these particular types of labour power make up reproductive labour power.

## 6.12 The institutionalisation of fatherhood

The second main pillar of Hearn's work is that as patriarchy revolves around reproduction it has become institutionalised and dominated by a public form of fatherhood in the professions and the state.

This section of Hearn's work is directly connected to the "personal is political", Hearn's theory of fatherhood drawing out the connections and antagonisms between individual fathers in the family and the institutions that act as an extension of fatherhood at a public level.

Much of this work is drawn from Reich, Horkheimer and the Frankfurt school's work on fascism. Reich argued that society had displaced the family as the main site of acculturation, the result was a "fatherless" society and the individual father had been replaced by the collectivised father in the shape of the dictator (Reich 1970).

Hearn's work could be seen as an attempt to develop this theory. Instead of the collectivised father being embodied in one man, that is, the dictator, it is embodied within the state. Hearn believes that what needs to be destroyed is the power of the individualised father in the family and the institutionalisation of fatherhood.

Again Hearn returns to the theory that men's exclusion in biological reproduction, both from their semen and 'subsequent children', is vital in the contemporary mode of reproduction, as:

*"...the division between the private world of fathers and the public world of 'men'.. 'underwrites' a mutual contract between men in a 'fraternity' to sanction private inhibitions in law and in public political life."*

(Hearn 1987 page 86)

However at another stage Hearn argues that there is more likely to be conflict and disharmony instead of 'a mutual contract':

*"Professions have developed historically as public, supposedly 'neutral', 'bodies' of men, respectable 'fraternities', who can act in relation to individual fathers. Various forms of familial professionalism have been practiced whereby*

*professionals, as 'family doctors' and 'public fathers', work parallel to, by way of, and sometimes over and above the rule of fathers in families."*

(Hearn 1987 page 93)

Hearn is pointing to a major area of conflict where men's loyalties may well be divided between the needs of their individual daughters and wives and the collective of men. Therefore, this is an example of conflict for men between the public and private spheres. Hearn leaves this interesting area untheorised.

Both Tolson and Connell have argued that male power in the home might be weakened by outside agencies or by the situation in the home itself. Hearn spends too little time analysing how men's position in the home has been weakened. This question really concerns the changes that have affected men psychologically, the loss of power from being the chief patriarch in the family to being a small cog in a large machine. A glaring omission from the discussion of the construction of masculinity is any mention of the relationship between the father and the son, surprising considering so much of Hearn's work concentrates on fatherhood.

Hearn believes that it is through various institutions men dominate not only reproductive labour powers but also each other. The patriarchal institutions Hearn identifies are: hierarchic heterosexuality; fatherhood; the professions; and the state. All are based primarily around a form of labour power but "co-exist and occur simultaneously" (Hearn 1987 page 89). The forms of labour power they are associated with are: sexuality (sexual desire); birth (biology); generation (nurture) and violence (destruction) respectively.

According to Hearn's argument the public-private divide must have been created at two different stages in history: firstly after men became aware of their alienation from the biological process of birth; and secondly, around the turn of the century with the institutionalisation of fatherhood. The public-private divide that existed prior to industrialisation was presumably necessary so that the divide could be transferred from an individual to a society wide scale. This argument is similar to Connell's theory, male domination and a division between the public and the private must have existed prior to capitalism so that the public-private divide that was necessary for capitalism could come

to exist at all. Hearn's theory is not so clearly explained, being far more implicit than explicit.

Hearn concludes this section by arguing that it is important for men to change their attitudes, and comments in a rather sexist manner:

*"Men have got to rethink our whole relationship with birth and children, including the words we use about them, while respecting some women's decision to remove themselves from that area of life."*

(Hearn 1987 page 165)

While Hearn may believe his work exists to appeal to the more entrenched male attitudes, this comment does seem to suggest that men should applaud their generosity of spirit in allowing women to decide for themselves, ironic considering his warning partly concerns the use of language.

### **6.13 The professions and the construction of masculinity**

Hearn is head of the social work course at the University of Bradford and he often draws on the example of social work when discussing professionalisation. Hearn goes on to discuss how areas that entailed emotional involvement and caring were pioneered by women (for example, social work and the care of the sick and elderly) but are now dominated by male professionals. Once women had developed an area men would step in as managers and often incorporated the movement within an already male dominated arena. The next stage is that patriarchal ideology demands that women's role in public mirrors their role in private and so women are consigned to low status caring and cleaning roles; self control of women being enforced through the "professional code".

According to Hearn the professions control the emotions of boys and men at a public and personal level, the professions regulating the emotions of both their members and their 'clients'. The ideal of self control is important as it contributes to how masculinity is defined. Being 'professional' becomes synonymous with not showing emotions and in turn the ability to control one's emotions becomes associated with patriarchal masculinity. The professions play an important role in shaping and guiding the emotions of male children, young men and adult men in their charge. These activities take place in

areas Hearn defines as "places of public privacy" - for example schools and later on pubs, men's clubs and freemasonry.

I believe this is a very insightful argument; discussing the connection between what men do in these areas of "public privacy", why it is important and how they are channelled and socialised through this exclusive masculine world in which women are not allowed to intrude. The public display of emotions and professionalism is an example of how for men 'personal' experiences are defined and controlled within the 'public' sphere.

Again, Hearn provides no method by which this system can be tackled and how this could connect to a more "grass roots" politics. Presumably parents should keep their children away from these patriarchal professions and institutions but this is very impractical and often illegal. Although Hearn admits that this form of socialisation can be (and often is) very brutal, conflict is never really examined and therefore it is difficult from his analysis to determine where change is likely to occur and when such a system may fall into crisis. As Connell argues, a convincing account of gender formation must account for how and why many do not fit this model (Connell 1987).

This is where Hearn's discussion really requires some form of psychological or psycho-analytical approach to provide more depth. As Mary Eaton has remarked, although Hearn advocates an interdisciplinary approach he fails to do so himself and marginalises all psychological theory (Eaton 1988). Hearn concludes this section by discussing how to turn theory into politics and here emphasises the personal nature of this work:

*"This section includes some short statements on four areas of practice in which I have had direct involvement: fatherhood, childcare politics, men's anti-sexist politics, and social sciences."*

(Hearn 1987 page 149)

Hearn believes men need to make a commitment to children and childcare; all children, all childcare. In terms of what change needs to be brought about and where to target strategies, Hearn believes we need to concentrate on areas of reproduction, primarily twenty four hour childcare controlled by women; Hearn is realistic enough to temper his argument by noting that such changes are unlikely considering the cuts in nursery education, day care and support for child minders. Hearn then discusses what men need

to do at a private and public level. In private the areas of sexuality, nurture, procreation and violence are all open to change:

*"...the private also contains multifarious experiences, talk, conversations, use of language, touch, chores, childcare, housework and so on that are usually considered 'trivial'."*

(Hearn 1987 page 168)

All of these are good ideas but I am still unclear about how to go about all of this. For the public, Hearn concentrates on how men need to challenge patriarchy over such issues as paid work, the street, men's 'private' clubs and associations and reproductive politics. The third method Hearn identifies as a way by which men can work against patriarchy is through anti-sexist activities and groups; primarily supporting women's campaigns and joining men's groups. In relation to the public and his field of social sciences Hearn stresses that male social scientists need:

*"...to clarify what we are doing in relation to feminism, women's studies and the study of gender, and why".*

Hearn 1987 page 181)

Hearn finishes this section by remarking that a critique of men can develop in association with love. As he points out this is almost taboo for an academic text:

*"However, just as within psychoanalysis, practice without love is technique, so too social science without love is methodology. Love is the unspoken necessity for men changing our practice in the social sciences; researching our brothers and ourselves, and co-researching and co-learning as brothers our opportunities for changing and meeting others and ourselves."*

(Hearn 1987 page 184)

## 6.14 Conclusions

The central themes of the work, how patriarchy extracts value from the human body, the institutionalisation of fatherhood and men's alienation from the birth process, are all central to the theory of the "personal is political". They are all connected with my last

two criteria of the "personal is political"; demonstrating the connection between the public and the private and analysing how interpersonal relationships are determined by power structures. Most are a mirror of feminist concerns but some touch on more distinctly male concerns such as emotional control, conceptions of 'politics', violence and war.

It is Hearn's inclusion of how violence is appropriated by men and then used and sanctioned by the state that I believe is his most important contribution to the debate. In terms of the "personal is political" the area of violence, whether it be organised in war or every day interpersonal violence, carries different implications for men and women. Hearn also makes the point that older men do not need to fear having to go to war in the way that young men do - an example of how men's personal perspective changes with age. However, he does not point out that old men have a fear of the violence of younger men, and an inability to defend oneself can be distressing.

His argument helps to explain why the vast majority of violent acts are carried out by men without lapsing into any form of essentialism. In a post patriarchal society men would have to accept women's violence, but what Hearn does not stress is that presumably in a post patriarchal society there would be less violence as so much is generated by present gender relations. However more personal examples of how men use and/or fear violence may have been helpful.

There are problems with Hearn's conception of the relationship between the individual and the state. According to Hearn the state acts as a way of controlling the distribution of the forces of organised violence; wars, especially nationalistic wars, take place between 'local' patriarchies. Men who inflict this violence are not themselves inherently violent but simply serve as agents of oppression who are individually dispensable. However, Hearn makes it unclear if this accounts for the motivation of all men in all wars. It is very questionable if the motives of the fascists in World War II were the same as those who fought against them.

This also applies to his argument concerning the state, rape and violence. Failing to concentrate on how theory relates to lived experience is a major drawback of the work. Nowhere is this more obvious than in his arguments concerning the interconnections

between male violence, capitalism, the state and patriarchy. When discussing the state he remarks that:

*"...perhaps it is simpler just to refer to 'menarchy' or perhaps 'fratriarchy'- the 'legal' right of men in fraternities, be they marauding gangs or the institutions of the state, to steal, burn, kill and rape."*

(Hearn 1987 page 44)

The style of language adopted suggests that men operate as some form of army on the rampage, organised by the state and let loose on a conquered enemy of women. Very few men would willingly recognise themselves in this description and many men are actively opposed to this stereotyped view of masculinity. Although it gives the book shock appeal it tells us little about the specific connections between that state and violence.

Hearn never really tackles the question as to whether men are encouraged to rape and kill to maintain patriarchy, which is similar to Brownmiller's (unaccredited) argument (Brownmiller 1975), or whether rapists and murderers are the fall out of patriarchy (1). The difference is vital and is one of intentionality on the part of the state, that is, the extent to which the state recognises itself as patriarchal and to what extent can it be said to consciously work to maintain male privilege. Hearn does not say if the oppression of women is the state's primary role, every state institution being geared towards the superordination of men and the subordination of women, or whether this varies between specific state functions.

According to Hearn the base of society is a feudal mode of reproduction while the superstructure is a capitalist mode of production. While Hearn concentrates heavily on the former the second is discussed in less detail and the connections between the two are never made very clear.

I believe Hearn downplays the significance of capitalism and its effects on the construction of gender within contemporary society, for as Segal notes:

*"If feminists are seriously to confront the problems of sexual violence, we shall have to realise that what we are up against is something far worse, something far more destructive, than the power of any man or group of men...However old fashioned it may sound in these 'post political' days, what we are confronting here is the barbarism of private life reflecting back the increased barbarism of*

*public life, as contemporary capitalism continues to chisel out its hierarchies along the familiar grooves of class, race and gender."*

(Segal 1990 page 271)

By concentrating on patriarchy, Hearn attaches less significance to the conflict of interest between patriarchy and capitalism identified by Tolson. In this respect Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity is much more useful (Connell 1987). This theory allows us to understand how masculinity is contested and that different groups emerge with different interests and at different times.

Unlike Connell, Hearn never really gets to grips with how the personal and political can be incorporated within a social theory of gender. If Hearn wanted to incorporate radical feminism within Marxist analysis he has largely failed. The two systems still appear separated.

In terms of my first three criteria for the "personal is political", Hearn has drawn on some of his own personal experiences but has not really drawn on the biographical experience of others nor has he really attempted to connect theory to a more "grass roots" politics.

Hearn is more successful on the theme of the "personal is political" when as part of his conclusion he argues that shifting the public-private divide assists in changing the definition of 'politics', making the personal more political, remarking that:

*"...routine 'political' activity of meetings, committees and so on, is usually seen by men as of higher value than 'mere' anti-sexist activity. One almost has to 'come down' from the political level to the personal, from the theoretical to the practical. Indeed, the theoretical is itself often considered as the political, so that paradoxically much time and effort can be spent in such political/theoretical discussions/activities without individuals having to make political positions clear to anyone, perhaps including themselves."*

(Hearn 1987 page 169)

This argument reinforces the way in which the public is also very personal and is crucial to men's conception of the "personal is political". This is reinforced when, in relation to men's anti-sexist activity, he stresses the connection between the public and the private:



*"...anti-sexist activity can contribute to the change in relationship of the private and the public worlds, often by bringing private experiences into a more public forum, in campaigns, group discussions, writing and so on. Shifting the public-private divide itself assists changing definitions of 'politics'."*

(Hearn 1987 page 175)

Although Hearn's work may not have fully succeeded in this task he has put forward a convincing argument that our very understanding and conception of politics and men's conception of the "personal is political" needs to be radically rethought.

## CHAPTER 7

### R.W.CONNELL: GENDER AND POWER; SOCIETY, THE PERSON AND SEXUAL POLITICS

#### 7.1 Introduction

Unlike the other three works, Connell's book is primarily a study of gender, not masculinity. The central theme of Connell's work is to produce:

*"...a form of social theory that gives some grip on the interweaving of personal life and the social structure without collapsing towards voluntarism and pluralism on one side, or categoricalism and biological determinism on the other."*

(Connell 1987 page 61)

Connell is arguing for a theory of gender relations that can account for the relationship between personality and social structure while maintaining an awareness of the historical composition of both. Connell refers to this as being "practice based theory". For Connell the entire principal of social theory revolves around the relationship between the public and personal. He criticises role theory as social theory because it fails to demonstrate the connection between personal agency and social structure. Thus Connell's interests are central to my concern with the "personal is political". The subtitle of the work demonstrates Connell's aim is to produce a work that considers the public and the personal within the context of "sexual politics".

Unfortunately, most of the examples Connell uses relate to women and women's experiences, a greater attention to men might have been more illuminating when discussing men and masculinity.

Gender and Power is divided into four main sections. The first section analyses the historical development of theories of gender and the most important contemporary theories. This section finishes with a discussion of natural differences and Connell's own theorising on how the 'body' relates to political practice. The second section concentrates on three "structures of gender": labour, power and cathexis and how these breakdown into the "gender regimes" of the family, the state and the street. At the end of this section Connell discusses how gender regimes might be showing signs of crisis tendencies and the effects that this may have on gender structures.

The third section discusses the construction of masculinity and femininity. This includes sex difference research, classical and existential psychoanalysis and the relationship between personality and wider structures incorporating the perspective of life history. This section includes Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity in which he demonstrates a connection between individual men and the wider struggle for domination between groups of men.

The final section is an analysis of sexual ideology, politics and political movements that have a bearing on gender relations. Connell concludes by outlining some potential strategies for change and possible futures.

Connell begins the work by arguing that a new school of thought has emerged in social theory that he refers to as a "theory of practice". This has developed from three principal sources. Firstly, the philosophical critiques of mainstream Marxism; secondly the analysis of the relation between structure and practice; and thirdly, social psychology debates about the self and subjectivity.

Connell's aim is to incorporate a "theory of practice" with sexual politics and combine this with a practice based approach to personality. This approach needs to take account of three factors: to produce an analysis that was historical; to take account of psychoanalysis; and to include the theories that developed from the sexual liberation movements. In modern writing he believes this has been best achieved through autobiography and in a way that is more personal than theoretical, argues that this gives a "sense" of the power of gender relations.

Connell stresses the importance of a historical approach as a means of avoiding oversimplifying explanations:

*"The analysis in this book rejects both the idea that gender is the basic oppression from which these others spring, so sexual politics must take priority, and the idea that gender inequalities are secondary, so sexual politics can be sidelined while the main event proceeds."*

(Connell 1987 page 291-2)

## **7.2 The development of a “practice based theory”**

Connell begins by analysing the major current frameworks on gender. He believes that Marxist-feminism and ‘dual systems theory’ are heading in the right direction but first we need an adequate intrinsic theory of gender. Connell identifies the two main versions of intrinsic theory as being sex role theory and categoricism and he goes on to discuss the major drawbacks of each approach. Role theory analysis conceives of male and female roles as complimentary. Consequently there is no recognition of the differences between the roles in terms of political, economic and domestic power. Anybody who resists their role is defined as deviant; there is no adequate way to explain resistance in role theory.

Unlike functionalism, categoricism does give a central place to considerations of power, defining the social order as a small number of categories related by conflict of interest. Because the conflict of interest between the sexes is seen as so central and so intense there is a tendency to lapse into biological arguments, or at least that often appears to be the implicit suggestion. Connell believes that categoricism tends to rely on a normative standard case in terms of both institutions, for example the nuclear family, and individuals, for example ‘male sexuality’. This approach fails to explain the social arrangements that led to a particular form of hegemonic masculinity. At a more "grass roots" level, individual change seems pointless as change can only be brought about at a structural and universal level.

## **7.3 Gender relations and the body**

Connell argues that in the past it has been difficult to analyse gender relations historically because of the idea that there must be something transhistorical in the sexual dichotomy of bodies. However, he argues that the relationship between the body and the social is essential to an analysis of gender relations. This argument is crucial to the "personal is political" as it is concerned with how political structures become expressed and enacted through the body. This allows an understanding of how masculinity is experienced by the individual and what individual behaviour tells us about the wider structures of power and social relations. Previous discussions of men and masculinity had not foregrounded issues about the body. After dismissing natural and pseudo-biological arguments, Connell concludes that the social and the body operate together and that the body itself can be a

site of political practice. Fascism, for example, determined how the body "should" be and that all bodies that did not fit this model were regarded as inferior and even killed. Connell's theory of how the body and social operate together was first developed in his work Which Way is Up? Essays on Class, Sex and Culture published in 1983. In Gender and Power Connell now uses two terms - "embedded" and "embodied". In the first instance he uses Reich's work on fascism to explain how a social movement or system can establish links with unconscious social processes and thereby gain support despite its irrationality. Connell's theory of "embodiment" does not credit Reich though it is drawn from his work on body armour and concerns how gender identity comes to be regarded as part of the body.

The social definition of men as holders of power becomes "embodied" in the feel and texture of the male body and in this way the power of men becomes "naturalised". This is important in allowing men who have little power in other respects to sustain belief in the superiority of men.

According to Reich's theory, men form a body armour (Reich 1969) but this suggests something on the surface, a human being is still inside looking out. By following Connell's argument we can take this somewhat further. If there is no natural self "inside", the whole body is involved in the project, not just the musculature but the way men understand flesh, blood and bone. The lungs become "powerful", blood becomes "thick" and through macho excesses such as fast cars, drink, drugs and exercise, the body is "punished" and "pushed to its limits". This attitude suggests its limits are frustrating and inadequate, the body is not what it is supposed to be and there is a sense of deep dissatisfaction with its frailties. Theweleit in Male Fantasies discussed the ideal of the "body as machine" and how Nazi soldiers boast of terrible wounds; the same men who carefully create images of women that deny any form of biological function (Theweleit 1987).

#### **7.4 Structure and the personal**

Connell then relates these "embodied" experiences of masculinity to structural factors. This involves developing a structural analysis that can take account of both micro and macro gender relations, that is, a structural analysis that is both personal and political.

Connell begins with the "dualist" theories of Bourdieu and Giddens. Bourdieu discussed the connection between structure and practice by focusing on the unintended consequences of strategies pursued by social actors, the pursuit of strategies results in the reproduction of the social order from which the strategies took off (Bourdieu 1977). However, Connell argues that the emphasis on social reproduction makes it difficult to reconcile this approach with a historical dynamic; history happens but it is not reproduced. According to Connell, Giddens (1984) argues that:

*"Human practice always presupposes social structure in the sense that practice necessarily calls into play social rules or resources. Structure is always emergent from practice and is constituted by it."*

(Connell 1987 page 94)

Connell believes that by making the connection between structure and practice logical its form cannot change in history. Therefore like Bourdieu, in Giddens' theory there is no opening towards history. Connell believes that practice responds to a situation, practice is the transformation of a situation in a particular direction while structure is what is in that situation that constrains practice. Practice transforms a situation which in turn becomes the object of a new practice.

Connell argues that within most feminist analysis everything becomes a manifestation of a single structure; the subordination of women to the superordination of men. Connell groups new studies by women into two main theories, firstly, those concerned with the division of labour in the home and labour markets and secondly, those theories that deal with authority, control and coercion via the hierarchies of the state. These include: violence, sexual regulation and domestic authority. Connell adapts these two theories and calls them labour and power but adds a third that can account for the patterning of object choice in relation to desire, which he calls cathexis, Connell explaining:

*"Freud used the term 'cathexis' to refer to a psychic charge of instinctual energy being attached to a mental object, i.e. an idea or an image. Here I am generalising it to the construction of emotionally charged social relations with 'objects' (i.e. other people) in the real world. As with Freud's usage...the*

*emotional attachment may be hostile, not only affectionate. It may also be hostile and affectionate at the same time, i.e., ambivalent."*

(Connell 1987 page 112)

Connell refers to these three elements (labour, power and cathexis) as the three structures of gender.

## 7.5 Labour

In a similar way to Hearn, Connell believes Marxism marginalises the issues of sexual politics. Connell argues that the relationship between the sexes works within the interplay of other factors. In Which Way Is Up? Connell was developing his theory that capitalism and male domination were not sovereign structures but that gender relations enter into the very constitution of class. In Gender and Power Connell develops the argument of Game and Pringle (1983) that gender divisions are a deep seated feature of the production process within the capitalist world economy:

*"This is one of the grounds for a wider rethinking of the socialist analysis of capitalism. For the feminist argument has an interesting parallel with the view from the Third World radical movements, which have seen capitalism mainly as a system of global inequality and imperialism. Together they suggest a new view of capitalism, as a system for the concentration and regulation of profits extracted by qualitatively different mechanisms of exploitation, rather than a basically homogenous structure implied by the concept of a "mode of production"...we no longer need the kind of sideways skip performed by Eli Zartesky in Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life, proposing that capitalism took over the existing patriarchal organisation of gender or domestic life and used it for its own reproduction. The connection is more direct. Capitalism was partly constituted out of the opportunities for power and profit created by gender relations. It continues to be."*

(Connell 1987 page 104)

Although their conclusions may be somewhat different, both Connell and Tolson believe the development from a private system to a public one is crucial in understanding present day gender relations. This is a good example of where Connell draws on feminist analysis

and locates it within broader theories concerning present day capitalist relations. Connell then builds on that analysis and moves the discussion into a new area beyond the "dual systems debate" and towards a theory that brings male domination and capitalism much closer together.

At this point Connell admits he is unsure about how society is organised with regard to the division of labour but argues there are two major principles at work. The first is the "gendered logic of accumulation" whereby the gender organisation of labour advantages men. The second Connell refers to as the "political economy of masculinity"; men's control over the division of labour means they can choose not to do childcare. It is unfortunate that this argument is not developed further as it concerns the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy and is therefore a key aspect of the work, however it does provide an avenue for further study.

## **7.6 Power**

Connell argues there are four "core" power structures of gender. Firstly, hierarchies of institutionalised violence such as the military and police; secondly, hierarchies of the heavy and high technology industries; thirdly, the planning and control of the machinery of the central state; and fourthly, the working class milieu that emphasises physical toughness and associates masculinity with machinery. This last aspect is crucial as it provides the mass support for militarist beliefs that may otherwise be so objectionable to a population as to threaten a government's stability. This is a return to issues concerned with the body and it is directly related to how public concerns of a government connect with the individual man and his view of his own masculinity.

Connell also emphasises ideology as a source of power. Ideology is used to assert hegemonic principals, for example, defining homosexuality as an illness. The church and the media use power through ideology by "representing" and defining the limits of sexual standards. In this argument Connell is pointing to the way personal images of masculinity are formed and enacted within the public realm.

Connell argues that a hierarchy among men has been created to subordinate women and enforce patriarchal ideology. This hierarchy consists of three main types: hegemonic masculinity; conservative masculinity that supports hegemonic masculinity but is not



directly involved in enforcing its goals (i.e. gay bashing, etc.); and subordinated masculinity, such as gay and bisexual men.

Presumably straight men who are opposed to patriarchal relations become a fourth element though Connell does not discuss this.

## 7.7 Cathexis

The third principal element after labour and power, that of cathexis, is particularly important as it is new for male writings on masculinity (1). Connell argues there are two principals of organisation of sexuality in our culture; objects of desire are defined around the dichotomy of masculine and feminine, and sexual practice is organised in couple relationships. The erotic dimension of hegemonic heterosexuality is based on unequal exchange. Further, the process of sexualising women as objects of heterosexual desire means that feminine appeal needs to be standardised. While hostility can be directed at entire categories of people (misandry, misogyny, homophobia) the same is not true of attraction.

In order for sexuality to be successfully organised in this way Connell believes that it requires repression at the psychological level and prohibition at the social level. Both aspects imply an attraction to the negated object, Connell noting:

*"...the structure of cathexis must be regarded as multi levelled, and major relationships as ambivalent...The old clichés about how easily love and hatred turn into each other...make better sense if sexual practices are generally based on structural relationships in which both love and hatred are already present."*

(Connell 1987 page 112)

Within the culture of hegemonic heterosexuality, a broad opposition has been created around genital performance and sensuality; these differences exist around masculinity and femininity respectively. Connell is again returning to the subject of the male body. One of the key elements of patriarchy is that whatever represents the interests of the hegemonic group are defined as natural, everything else is deviant. Connell argues that within a different context the desires of the current hegemonic group could be regarded as deviant and "unnatural". This argument may have been improved with some historical examples or with some autobiographical material. Using auto-biographical material in the

context of a discussion concerning sexual relations is an area that none of the male writers cover.

The three structures of labour, power and cathexis help us to understand that on the one hand masculinity and femininity are formed within a given situation and on another how masculinity and femininity are constructed at a level far removed from an individual setting.

However, as Lynne Segal has remarked, the differences between the three structures are rather vague:

*"...power and desire would appear to be dimensions or aspects of all structures, whereas labour seems to refer to a specific structure as does the state and language and representations. (These three specific structures however would take us back to the Althusserian framework of the economic, political and ideological, which Connell wants to move beyond.) The solution is perhaps to avoid any tripartite structural divisions for a more flexible naming of the central dynamics of the gender hierarchy. Power, surely, is everywhere - in the economic, the political and the interpersonal; desire, and its opposites, fear and loathing, are similarly ubiquitous."*

(Segal 1990 page 102)

## 7.8 Gender regimes

Connell then illustrates how gender is institutionalised via studies of three "gender regimes" - the family, the state and the street. This is an interesting choice. The family is perhaps most frequently cited as an area where gender is institutionalised, the state is more often discussed in gender neutral terms and the street is usually not discussed at all.

Connell chooses to analyse the institutionalisation of gender in the public and private spheres because, he argues, most theorists tend to concentrate on one or the other, or keep the two separate. In this way Connell is able to explore the way in which masculinity is not only constructed in the "private" sphere of the family but also in the public forums of the state and the street.

## 7.9 The state

Connell believes that although the state is active in institutionalising and controlling hegemonic masculinity, it is not consistent in having one coherent policy on gender, and these contradictions suggest:

*"...that the state is not inherently patriarchal, but is historically constructed as patriarchal in a political process whose outcome is open."*

(Connell 1987 page 129)

He argues that the state plays a key role in forming and reforming social patterns and creating categories such as "husband", "mother" and "homosexual". A cyclical process is then set in motion as groups such as these then react on the state via political mobilisation. Therefore, although gender has a dynamic of its own this can only occur after the categories have already been created by the state. In terms of personal politics this a key argument for as Connell points out, the rather contradictory goal for the gay rights movement is to destroy the category of gay, yet ironically the term may provide gay men with a strong identity.

How this contradiction is to be resolved is of immense importance to the gay movement and the "grass roots" aspect of the "personal is political", however it is not discussed any further and this is another area where Connell introduces a topic but then abandons it.

## 7.10 The family

In his discussion of the family, Connell successfully applies the three structures of gender (labour, power and cathexis) and thus provides a useful and informative method by which to analyse the family and gender relations in much greater detail. What is more, this is a method that could involve the subjective experience of the reader. Connell argues that power relations in the family are always under negotiation:

*"The gender regime of a particular family represents a continuing synthesis of relations governed by the three structures. This synthesis is not trouble free: the components of a family gender regime may contradict each other. In the traditional patriarchal household, a marked sexual division of labour actually*

*places some limits on the patriarch's ability to exercise power, since women monopolise certain kinds of skill and knowledge."*

(Connell 1987 page 115)

The weakening of traditional patriarchy, the increased dependence of the family on the state, the gaining of citizenship rights by women and the women's movement have all led to significant changes within the family structure. The net result is a tendency towards a crisis of institutionalisation; that is, the institutional order and the family no longer sustain the power of individual men.

### **7.11 The street**

The street has long been recognised as being a significant arena of social interaction in sociological texts such as Street Corner Society (Whyte 1955). Connell argues that the street is an arena with a particular set of social relations and division of labour. Women's work includes prostitution, child walking and shopping, men repair the street, commit and police the crime, and do the majority of the driving. The street can act as an area of intimidation for women occupied by men, predominantly in areas of high unemployment and ethnic exclusion - especially at night. Shops act as a form of theatre through their sex typed advertising and the street itself is a public arena of rivalry and display of different styles of masculinity and femininity. Connell argues this is an interesting area where hegemonic masculinity is contested.

### **7.12 The emergence of a "practice based theory"**

Connell then attempts to bring together the two main sections of his work, developing a structure that connects a specific social situation and its historical composition to a more personal situation vis a vis gender relations. This provides a theoretical framework that enables the relationship between the personal and the political to be understood. This is clearly illustrated by Connell's discussion of hegemonic masculinity.

### **7.13 Hegemonic masculinity**

Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity is concerned with a number of areas: how masculinity looks and feels and the way masculinity is constructed and experienced in public; how different forms of masculinity relate in a hierarchical form and how all these

aspects relate to the power structures of society; and the historical struggle between different groups of men and the way in which gender relations can change.

Using Gramsci's theory of hegemony (Gramsci 1971), Connell argues that within society there will be a multiplicity of masculinities and femininities that can at times be contested:

*"'Hegemonic masculinity' is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. Interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works."*

(Connell 1987 page 83)

The hegemonic group utilises the state for its own purposes. Homosexuals are often prosecuted via state legislation in areas such as the media, education and state employment practices. Furthermore, the state creates welfare laws that favour those who conform to the hegemonic pattern.

To describe a particular masculine discourse that is dominant/hegemonic at the present time is something Connell largely refrains from doing. While any one discourse may for a time become prominent (as opposed to dominant) it is difficult to describe any one as being hegemonic in the sense that Gramsci meant. In order to make the theory work some inconsistencies seem to have been overlooked. He notes that:

*"...though 'hegemony' does not refer to ascendancy based on force, it is not incompatible with ascendancy based on force. Indeed it is common for the two to go together. Physical and economic violence backs up a dominant cultural pattern (for example beating up 'perverts') or ideologies justify the holders of physical power ('law and order')"*

(Connell 1987 page 184)

However, Connell is downplaying the extent of violence within society and specifically within the hegemonic group. Violence is not just directed at those outside the hegemonic group but defines and orders those inside it. Rugby and boxing were long traditions at University and many middle-class men believe the army a fit and proper place for a man to be. The violence may be more organised or even carried out at a distance in the form of orders, but it still exists. At another stage in the work Connell remarks that:

*“Commercial capitalism calls on a calculative masculinity and the class struggles of industrialisation call on a combative one. Their combination, competitiveness, is institutionalised in ‘business’ and becomes a central theme in the new form of hegemonic masculinity.”*

(Connell 1987 page 156)

Referring to Connell’s tripartite structure of male domination the “combative” masculinity seems to refer more to “hegemonic” masculinity and “calculative masculinity” more to “conservative masculinity”. This suggests there are serious, and not uncommonly violent, tensions between factions within the hegemonic group. Many macho figures reject “calculative” masculinity, “calculative” masculinity consisting of ‘pencil neck wimps who never get their hands dirty.’ In this sense the theory provides a useful way of analysing the connections, and the antagonisms, between different groups of men.

Later on in his work, Connell refers to:

*“...the heroes of hegemonic masculinity, the footballers, jet pilots, wife-beaters and poofter bashers...”*

(Connell 1987 page 215)

Very few men may be jet pilots and those who constitute “conservative” masculinity may or may not be “poofter bashers” but they may well use violence against women and children. The amount of violent attacks against women suggests this occurs amongst all groups. Further, as in the discussion with Hearn’s work, Connell is not making it clear why these men are violent towards women - as a form of power (Brownmiller 1976) or because they feel it the only way to assert their masculinity (Staples 1985)? If it is the latter, then these men are anything but heroic either to themselves or others.

#### **7.14 Personality formation and psychoanalysis**

Connell then turns his attention to the formation of personality with reference to the way structure affects personal life. He argues that both classical and existential psychoanalysis are necessary for explaining the conflict and contradictions within the personality. Classical psychoanalysis:

*"...treats gender formation as the effect of an encounter with power and necessity...It emphasises discontinuity between social context and personality, and points to radical division within personality"*

(Connell 1987 page 191)

Existential theory explains the importance of constitutive choice, although it misses the importance of contradiction. Connell does not believe it is necessary to take on board Freud's particular formulations to grasp the importance of his theory of the unconscious:

*"It implies that femininity and masculinity are normally internally fissured and in tension. To use a rather static model, they are normally layered. (To correct the image one must bear in mind that the relationship between the layers are as important as their content, and the layers themselves writhe around so to speak, as the person moves on a life trajectory)."*

(Connell 1987 page 209)

Connell does not fully accept Freudian analysis and argues that we need to be aware of the critique of Freud outlined by the Red Collective which argued that:

*"...what Freud took to be the effects of the unconscious are in fact effects of power, both class and patriarchal power, their cause being invisible only so long as these structures are not brought into question by political practice. Psychoanalysis is an emanation of the establishment justifying dominance of the therapeutic situation by the therapist."*

(Connell 1987 page 210)

Connell argues that the Oedipal complex is only one pattern of psychosexual development - Adler, Jung and Reich all explored other patterns. Connell believes that what is needed is an empirical investigation into a range of psychodynamic patterns and other interconnections within a given milieu and this he believes can best be achieved via the study of life histories.

### **7.15 The project of love**

Interestingly at the end of this discussion Connell turns his attention to the subject of love, discussing love in the context of wider power structures and the way in which love

can liberate as well as oppress. De Beauvoir and Dinnerstein both argue that through love a woman is incorporated into a man's project which excludes her from "world making" public life. Connell however believes that love can act as a disruptive and less manageable force:

*"... love is also, notoriously, a destroyer of conventions, a force difficult to channel and control. The contradiction between the project of erotic love and the requirements of patriarchal institutions - marriage, property and kinship relations - also has to be recognised as a permanent tension in patriarchal society."*

(Connell 1987 page 217)

Here Connell is drawing attention to the need to theorise contradiction and complexity. Connell's discussion of love is refreshingly different from traditional academic approaches and is another example of his optimism and indication of where hope for the future may lie. However while the concentration on psychoanalysis and love would seem like a perfect opportunity to introduce a more personal auto-biographical element, Connell chooses not to do this.

#### **7.16 Sexual ideology and the role of the academic**

Connell then turns his attention to the question of sexual ideology, which he believes occurs within, and responds to, a specific context. Connell argues that culture is not patriarchal above all else, the power of gender relations to determine cultural processes being historically variable. However he suggests that there are times when change would depend more on gender relations than on any other social force and the present time may be such a moment. Connell's attempts to identify which groups in society are responsible for creating sexual ideology by drawing on Gramsci's theory of the "organic intellectual" (Gramsci 1971), that is, people who work within a class to provide that class with self definition and help to mobilise it as a political force. This would be a good opportunity to use his own personal experiences to explore and illuminate the role of the "organic intellectual".

Connell believes the academic has the responsibility of determining where the gender order is weak and where campaigns for change should be aimed:



*"It matters then, how the articulation of interests is done...In this context the function of theorisation is uppermost in intellectual work. Simply to formulate such an interest requires some mental distance from the current gender order comparing it with conceivable alternatives."*

(Connell 1987 page 257)

Phrases such as "mental distance" and "articulation of interests" give the impression that the role of the intellectual in the 1980s is directing from behind in a calculating rational and academic manner to people who have little understanding of what is going on(2). This is one of the occasions in which Connell's refusal to use auto-biographical material is positively frustrating.

### **7.17 Ideology and "grass roots" politics**

Connell argues that there are three groups active in making sexual ideology: those involved in the regulation and management of gender regimes, which includes the Catholic priesthood (though apparently not the Anglican church); those involved in the articulation of experiences and fantasies which are characteristic of particular groups involved in gender relations; and those who provide the theorisation of gender such as novelists and academics (including "organic intellectuals").

This argument represents the beginnings of a discussion on the way in which male ideology and experience is articulated and theorised within public discourse. However, the influence of public arenas, such as the workplace, are overlooked and further, in working-class environments men may have different opinions on masculinity to the more middle-class makers of sexual ideology mentioned by Connell.

Feminist theorists initially operated in networks that were based in far less public arenas. It would have been interesting if Connell had discussed this further, as when analysing the family Connell noted how the relationship between the husband and wife can be subject to negotiation; and this is one area where women take a very active role in constructing sexual ideology.

Towards the end of the work Connell turns his attention to aspects of the "personal is political" debate which are particularly concerned with constructing a "grass roots" approach, beginning with an analysis of "crisis tendencies". Unlike sex role theory and

categoricalism, the concept of "crisis tendencies" "...can provide a rational link between structural analyses and liberation politics." (Connell 1987 page 163)

Connell argues that the concept of crisis can be applied to either a particular gender regime or institution or a historically composed gender order. Drawing on his earlier theories, he identifies four major features of the current gender order: the gendered separation of domestic life from the money economy and the political world; the heavily masculinised core institutions and a more open textured periphery; institutionalised heterosexuality coupled with the invalidation of homosexuality. All these sustain the fourth component which is the overall subordination of women by men. The concept of "crisis tendencies" focuses attention on the dynamics that have the potential to transform these four elements, as is illustrated by the following example.

Connell argues that the arrival of the second wave of the women's movement and the arrival of the pill meant that hegemonic heterosexuality could no longer be sustained by the traditional structure of cathexis and the result may be a crisis of sexuality.

Hegemony can only be maintained when the women's interests are defined as being the same as a man's but feminism has succeeded in defining them in a very different manner. Connell then relates these developments to the 'private' sphere of the family:

*"The attempt to create egalitarian households and a non sexist environment for children to grow up in is the only form of progressive sexual politics in which significant numbers of heterosexual men have become involved in a continuing and active way. It is therefore something of a laboratory for the possibility of an alliance between groups normally divided by sexual politics."*

(Connell 1987 page 162)

Connell is not suggesting that local changes represent a change in the global relations of power but that they may signify processes that could lead to more widespread structural changes in the long term. The net result of these developments is a 'crisis of interest formation', that is:

*"...the emergence of bases for the social constitution of interests that cut across patterns of interests compatible with the existing gender order."*

(Connell 1987 page 286)

Overall Connell is reluctant to say whether he believes dramatic change to be imminent or not:

*"Whether the gender order's tendencies towards crisis have gone far enough to provide a basis for majorities committed to a major structural reform, is perhaps the key strategic question radical politics now faces."*

(Connell 1987 page 286)

This leads Connell to a conclusion in which he considered the various strategies for changing gender relations. He divides these into "extensive" and "intensive". "Intensive strategies" include: economic equality; creating "liberated zones" which include women only centres as well as mixed areas for men and women to practice counter sexist activities; and finally the "personal dimension" where ways are sought to conserve human resources.

In terms of "extensive strategies", these largely include forging connections between those involved in radical and liberation politics and more mainstream power groups. While this may seem optimistic, at the time Connell was writing during the era of municipal socialism this did seem realistic and at another point in the work Connell accepts that many radical groups are dispersed and fighting for their survival under a right-wing backlash.

### **7.18 Connell and his personal life**

With regards to my first two criteria of the "personal is political", namely discussing auto-biographical and biographical experience, Connell often draws on others' research that utilises biographical accounts recognising the importance of "life histories". This is something he has developed more in his most recent work (Connell 1995). Indeed one of the chief strengths of the book is the way Connell is able to use biographical material to illustrate how practice and structure are related. He does this very successfully in his discussion at the very beginning of the work in the imaginary case study of the teenager Delia Prince and her family. However all the analyses that relate social structures, gender regimes and the biographical draw on women as illustrations. The lack of male biographical material is striking and disappointing.

Connell rarely uses auto-biographical material but when he does, as in his account of his involvement in gender studies, it is enlightening. He discusses the disadvantages for men in a male dominated society and argues that some men do recognise injustice when they see it, adding a more personal note:

*"I have been uneasy with conventional masculinity almost as long as I can remember, certainly since I was a teenager. I am not sure why...At all events my attachment to masculinity was sufficiently fractured to make me sit up and take notice when the women of that generation mobilised in their own liberation movement."*

(Connell 1987 page xi)

The discussion then moves into more theoretical territory and the only time a direct reference to his life is made is when he remarks that:

*"Certainly important was the fact of living with a woman who was working on projects like setting up a women's health centre, and the fact of working in a university department alongside people engaged in feminist research."*

(Connell 1987 page xii)

This is a little tantalising. These observations surely suggest that Connell's personal experience was symptomatic of the crisis he discusses elsewhere. It must be precisely such experiences that constitute a crisis in the gender regime - and provide "organic intellectuals". Some more detailed explanation of his personal biography in terms of his theoretical model would have been most illuminating.

## **7.19 Conclusions**

One of the strengths of Connell's work is that he covers all aspects of the debate. In doing so his work lacks detail and as a result many of his arguments become vague and difficult to follow. Having said that, of the four works under analysis I find Connell's to be the most thought provoking. Drawing from the many areas of feminist and gay theory, as well as works by men, Connell has attempted to develop a complex sociology of gender relations which provides a useful way by which to analyse masculinity from a "personal is political" viewpoint, as he argues:

*"...personality has to be seen as social practice and not as an entity distinct from 'society'. Personality is what people do, just as social relations are what people do."*

(Connell 1987 page 220)

Connell concentrates mainly on the last two of my criteria of the "personal is political", the connections between the public and private spheres and the connections between interpersonal relationships and power structures. These issues are clear in his discussions on the body as a site of political struggle, practice based theory, the theory of personality and psychodynamics and the historical separation of the spheres. However his discussion of life histories does suggest a way in which the first two elements, concerning the use of auto-biographical and biographical experience, could be incorporated.

He focuses on how the "personal is political" relates more specifically to men in his discussions on the workplace, violence, the street, the relationship between the family and the state, sexuality and how gender is "embodied". He also successfully expands feminist derived theories to examine the way that personal aspects of masculinity occur within a more public realm. These discussions are clearly pointing the way forward to a reconceptualisation of the "personal is political" when it is applied to men and masculinity.

With regards to my third criteria of the "personal is political", namely constructing a more "grass roots" politics, his study of egalitarian households as a way forward offers some hope and genuine optimism for change and a way to build for the future. Optimism is also apparent in his discussion on the possibility of re-working patterns of attachment in more egalitarian forms. The discussion concerning where to target strategies for change and his concentration on areas that are showing crisis tendencies are also important for those wishing to construct a radical left wing politics of gender. His discussion of "intensive strategies" even contains several practical suggestions. Significantly this also suggests that the impetus behind the writing of the book was a genuine desire for change and not just an interest in academic theory. Connell also encourages reader involvement in his recurring discussion on how wider structures of power relate to the body and how body image is constructed and contested within the context of hegemonic masculinity. This discussion is unique for a male writer, also unique for a male writer is when he moves away from the traditional academic approach

to concentrate on the positive aspects of love and desire. However many of his arguments, despite being very powerful, do presuppose considerable knowledge of the subject and the work is unlikely to appeal to those outside academia. This is a confusion at the heart of the work as Connell does seem concerned about constructing practical methods of change. He defines the role of the academic as being one who formulates strategy and then reaches out to those beyond academia - however, this work fails in that stated intention.

## CHAPTER 8

### ARTHUR BRITTAN: MASCULINITY AND POWER

#### 8.1 Introduction

Arthur Brittan's Masculinity and Power was published in 1989. It is closer in style to Connell's and Hearn's work than to Tolson's, partly in its focus on power and gay issues and partly in its lack of biographical or auto-biographical material. In some ways Brittan's work is an attempt to define and summarise what he takes to have been the key debates within left wing theorising on masculinity: "Masculinity and competitiveness", "Male sexualities" and "True male discourse".

Brittan's central argument is that femininity and masculinity are historical constructs and that the ideology of masculinity (masculinism) has universalised men as the 'makers' of history:

*"It is male intentionality which conquers nature and pushes forward the limits of knowledge. Man is the 'subject' of history."*

(Brittan 1989 page 174)

This argument is directly related to the "personal is political" in that it presents an analysis of men and "their achievements" at a public level but draws a connection between this area and the image that men have of themselves on a personal level.

Brittan's early chapters reproduce much of Connell's work, and to a lesser extent Hearn's, but Brittan manages to strengthen and develop some of their theories. Therefore I will not provide such a detailed study of Masculinity and Power. For the majority of this analysis I will mainly concentrate on the final three sections of the work as these contain Brittan's most original ideas. These are also the chapters that are most concerned with the "personal is political". The final three chapters are "Men as a collectivity?", "Men, reason and crisis" and "True male discourse".

The first section of Brittan's work concerns the hierarchy of male domination, how masculinity is experienced as part of the body and male sexuality.

## **8.2 The hierarchy of male domination**

Brittan argues that gender relations reflect the material interests of those who hold power. Therefore the dominant masculinity exists as an expression of the current image these men have of themselves and their relation to women; this helps to flesh out Connell's argument about hegemonic masculinity. Brittan's argument provides an insight into how hegemonic masculinity 'feels' and how the hegemonic group are able to present their attitudes and beliefs as 'natural'.

Brittan again borrows heavily from Connell in his discussion of what he calls "heterosexual complementarity", that is, the belief that gender is essentially relational and that a specific masculinity cannot exist without its equivalent femininity. This argument effectively does little more than repeat Connell's theory of what he termed "emphasised" masculinity and femininity, yet loses some of the subtlety of Connell's argument that there is more to a style of femininity than simply being the opposite of its equivalent masculinity. That women have long struggled to create their own images of femininity rather than just acting as passive mirrors to masculinity demonstrates that gender relations are far from settled. The problem here is that Brittan's model is too simplistic - in proposing that masculinity and femininity are simple oppositions he ignores the complexity and variety of lived experience.

## **8.3 The aspects of male domination**

In this section Brittan begins to outline his theory of how masculine ideology has defined history as 'belonging' to men. This is developed in greater depth in the section on male discourse. Brittan distinguishes between three elements of male domination: masculinity, which concerns men's *behaviour*; patriarchy, which is the *system* of heterosexual male domination; and lastly masculinism which is the ideological justification of patriarchy. Brittan argues that the belief in male power has become 'naturalised'. However like such writers as Seidler (1989), Brittan provides no long term historical perspective to explain how and why current male ideology arose and why this belief should still prevail.

## **8.4 Male sexuality**

In the next section Brittan looks at theories of male sexuality. Brittan begins by discussing Freud and the theory of repression and goes on to present Foucault's



criticisms of this hypothesis. However, in an argument that draws on personal experience as much as theory, Brittan argues that Freud managed to express the “feel” of male sexuality (Brittan 1989, page 54). Brittan then goes on to discuss three versions of repression. Firstly, vulgar repression whereby the unconscious is encapsulated by the social, secondly Lacanian and the symbolic order, which Brittan believes presents the privileging of the phallus as almost inevitable and ignores institutionalised heterosexuality. The third theory of repression Brittan refers to as "embodiment" whereby no distinction is made between the body and the social. He draws heavily on Connell and Foucault and his conclusions are effectively the same as Connell's theory of "embedding". Although he draws on Foucault, Brittan argues that Foucauldian theory fails to explain how disciplinary practices became embodied and why there is so much emotional investment in defending "hierarchic heterosexuality", remarking that:

*"While I go along with Foucault when he suggests that there is no hidden secret of human nature to be discovered by looking for the real human being in the recesses of a hidden and distorted unconscious, I think he underestimates the emotional power of these disciplinary practices when they become embodied".*

(Brittan 1989 page 76)

Therefore although Brittan believes that Foucauldian theory is useful it replaces neither Freud nor Reich.

Although interesting, much of Brittan's discussion of male sexualities is vague; for instance, he remarks that men rape in a climate that tolerates the objectification of women:

*"But, at the same time, men are not simply passive embodiments of the masculine ideology. They rape with their bodies, they 'read' pornographic literature, they 'hire' pornographic videos. They do all these thing as active participants."*

(Brittan 1989 page 68)

This is an important argument which stresses men's active participation in oppressive activities, but he does not explain the connection between these activities. Later on in the same discussion Brittan remarks that:

*"In objectifying nature and women, men cut themselves off from part of themselves, they deny their femininity."*

(Brittan 1989 page 68)

This comment seems to imply that there is a natural feminine side to men that needs to be developed. However, Brittan has spent most of the work arguing that male and female qualities are cultural rather than natural. This inconsistency demonstrates the inadequacy of his theorisation of masculinity.

A significant part of his discussion of "Male sexualities" again brings the subject of his own auto-biographical involvement to the fore. This concerns Brittan's partial agreement with the theory that gender is an accomplishment:

*"If I have construed myself as a 'normal' heterosexual male, and then I am confronted by a situation in which all my own certainties appear to be nebulous and insecure, then I may have not only to make adjustments to my behaviour, but also begin partially to redefine my gender identity...What is being suggested here is that this immutable reality is an accomplishment which, like all other human accomplishments, is tentative."*

(Brittan 1989 page 38)

This point is reinforced, only this time in the third person when Brittan remarks that:

*"While we are constantly bombarded by images of unbridled male lust in literature and in the media, the reality is very different. The valorisation of the penis is a requirement of various norms of masculinity, not of the penis...It cannot carry the load of cultural prescription, it cannot conquer the world under the aegis of natural desire because in the final analysis, desire itself is a construction."*

(Brittan 1989 page 57)

Here the personal is very political, the supposedly private arena of sexuality is made public. The discussion implies that in order for sexuality to become "naturalised" all doubt and contradiction must be denied and that this process largely occurs in the public sphere. This theory and his previous remarks seem to cry out for empirical evidence to support and illustrate it - or at least for more discussion. But unfortunately this crucial

insight about the contradictions of masculinity as experienced by men is not developed further.

### **8.5 "Men as a collectivity?", "True male discourse" and "Men, reason and crisis"**

I have already discussed many of Brittan's arguments in terms of the "personal as political" and the public-private divide, however I have left the three most important sections of Brittan's work "Men as a collectivity?", "True male discourse" and "Men, reason and crisis" to the end and deal with them together. I have done this because one section is concerned with the public-private divide, one concerns the lack of discourse with which to construct a platform and strategy for change and the other highlights Brittan's shortcomings for this debate.

### **8.6 Men as a collectivity**

Brittan's discussion in "Men as a collectivity?" is his contribution to the debate concerning the connections between capitalism and male domination and an analysis of the public-private divide. His analysis of when and how men act like a class, and when they can be referred to as being a class, is well covered. He draws partly on his previous work with Mary Maynard, partly on the work of Lerner and on Hearn. In his work with Maynard the authors argued that race and gender are not reducible to class and are not part of a lot of sub systems making up one big one, once race has been added to the equation "dual systems theory" effectively becomes "triple systems theory", remarking that:

*"We are concerned to understand the conditions under which one group of people have control over another and the ways in which they obtain access to the instruments of domination. We stress the significance not of gender, not of 'race', not of economic position - but of all three."*

(Brittan and Maynard 1984 page 70)

In Masculinity and Power, Brittan analyses the connections between patriarchy and capitalism by drawing on Balbus who argues that:

*"It is patriarchy, not capitalism that determines the sexual identity of those who perform the various functions that capitalism demands, and, for this reason, it is precisely patriarchy that remains completely unexplained after an analysis of capitalist functions has been completed."*

(Balbus 1982 page 80)

Brittan repeats Hearn's belief that the confusion about the relationship between gender and class is that reproduction has been subsumed under class (Hearn 1987). Brittan agrees with Hearn that the material exploitation of women takes place at the point of reproduction.

### **8.7 Male domination and reproduction**

Brittan then analyses the historical development of the male domination of reproduction, and uses the work of Lerner, who argues:

*"The sexuality of women, consisting of their sexual and reproductive capacities, was commodified even prior to the creation of western civilisation."*

(Lerner 1986 page 212)

Lerner further believes that women were exchanged by men, their sexual services being part of their labour, their children being the property of their masters:

*"...the enslavement of women, combining both racism and sexism, preceded both the formation of classes and class oppression...Class is not a separate construct from gender; rather, class is expressed in genderic terms."*

(Lerner 1986 page 212-13)

This theory borrows heavily from that of Levi-Strauss who argued that male domination arose in primitive societies as life was scarce and hence women were regarded as very valuable and exchanged by men (Levi-Strauss 1969). However, this theory was criticised for overlooking that society must have already been male dominated as it was men who exchanged women and not the other way around. Lerner has borrowed from this theory but added the element that male domination pre-dated this situation (Lerner 1986). Brittan believes Lerner's argument is similar to Hearn's theory about "gendering" of the body, a political act whereby one person lays claim to another person's body and "products", that is, children (Hearn 1987). Brittan's argument however provides Hearn's

theory with a more historical edge and argues convincingly that Lerner's theories add weight to Hearn's argument. Hearn believed the creation of the public-private divide and male domination of reproduction was rooted in the discovery of paternity, Brittan commenting:

*"Now, whether or not we can go so far as to say that the entire infrastructure of male domination is rooted in the discovery of paternity is, to be sure, dubious. However this is not the point. What O'Brien and Hearn...are arguing for is a view of reproduction as a material sphere in which the main protagonists, men and women, may or may not stand in an antagonistic relationship to each other."*

(Brittan 1989 page 121)

I think this an important argument by Brittan. Brittan has demonstrated a way by which O'Brien and Hearn's theory concerning reproduction as a material sphere can be drawn on and developed without having to accept their rather problematic theory concerning men's discovery of paternity.

## **8.8 Male domination and the state**

In terms of the debate as to whether men and women can be treated as two separate categories or classes, he argues that they cannot because of the vast difference in power between different groups of men and different groups of women. He then draws on Connell's theory of 'hegemony' which involves the negotiation and management of discourse by dominant heterosexual men.

Brittan goes on to argue that the state is heterosexist in the way it guarantees and expresses the dominant form of heterosexuality through the media and schooling and historically through the creation of the nuclear family. The argument that this domination was being actively reproduced in contemporary society was something that had already been discussed by Brittan in his work with Maynard. This argument stands in opposition to Tolson's view that patriarchy is a hangover from the past, demonstrating another area where Brittan's theorising relies on the feminist theory that arose after the publication of Tolson's work. Brittan argues that the state is heterosexual but fails to discuss the role of the state in encouraging or suppressing male violence. This is the same argument that was raised about Hearn's work concerning intentionality on the part of the state. That is,

whether the state is heterosexist in every respect; the purpose of all state functions being to oppress women.

His argument about the state is not as complex or as developed as Connell's who argued that the state is influenced by many, and often competing, forces. This theory is much more useful in explaining the sometimes contradictory measures that the state introduces. Once the public-private divide has been given a general analysis and a criticism of mainstream sociology has been raised, the discussion effectively ends. This is something of a pattern in Brittan, many areas that promise to be a point of departure into a more radical or personal form of theorising end somewhat abruptly and the discussion moves into a new area of academic theorising.

### **8.9 Male domination and the domestic**

Brittan then moves on to discuss the public-private divide and the domestic labour debate. Brittan argues that there are two schools of thought on the home and gender relations; the pessimistic and the optimistic. According to the pessimistic the private sphere came under the control of the public sphere that was dominated by men, the separation of the spheres thus encouraging, or even creating, the ascendancy of men over women. The optimistic theory believes the home to be a haven, a site where men, women and children affirm and negotiate identities that help them to deal with the public aspects of society. Whether the view is optimistic or pessimistic Brittan concludes that all theories regard the public-private dichotomy as a fact of life in contemporary industrial societies.

Brittan does not however discuss whether the public-private divide is also prevalent in non-industrial, non-western societies. Brittan argues that the distinction between the public and private divide is made within "malestream" discourse itself. The modes of reproduction and production are not separate. Brittan rejects the idea that inequality can be explained by reference to the public-private divide as the concepts of "public man" and "private woman" are concepts derived from male discourse. While Brittan is not denying there is an ideological and practical division of labour between the two spheres men and women do not live only in one or the other. In reality the dichotomy between the public and private spheres is a false one. Therefore it follows that certain experiences

occur in both spheres. The separation is far from complete. This argument is pointing the way to how the “personal is political” could relate specifically to men in the sense that their private experiences occur in the public realm.

Under the discussion of male sexualities he remarks that the right-wing attempts to return to Victorian values and the traditional nuclear family image is an attempt to gain what has been lost:

*"Of course, what is lost is the old dispensation in which men not only controlled the public but the private sphere as well."*

(Brittan 1989 page 65)

However Brittan fails to explain how and when men supposedly lost control of the private sphere.

#### **8.10 Male discourse and the denial of dignity**

This section is concerned with how the ideology of masculinity defines some people as being less worthy of status than others. Obviously this affects individual's opinions of themselves and of others at a personal and public level.

To begin his discussion Brittan draws on the work of Solomon and his theory of “transcendental pretence”, that is, that the image of the European bourgeois has become equated with the image of humanity (Solomon 1980). The “transcendental pretence” has also become part of Marxist theory concerning the universalism of class. Brittan and Maynard were arguing something very similar in Sexism, Racism and Oppression but instead were calling the generalised ideology of masculinity “western projection” (Brittan and Maynard 1984). Brittan argues that it was Foucault who challenged the “illusory basis of the *transcendental pretence*” (Brittan 1989 p168) but Brittan is critical of Foucault's theory which he feels denies human agency, and he goes on to say:

*"In a very broad sense, it is the denial of dignity that informs feminism as a counter discourse to masculinism."*

(Brittan 1989 page 152)

Here Brittan is attempting to find one term that can express all forms of oppression and thereby move beyond trying to theorise a system that incorporates economic, racial and gender oppression. Brittan argues that the working-class, women, and black people are all denied human dignity - this is the root of oppression:

*"...privileged male discourse explicitly differentiates between the status-worthiness of different categories of human. It denies the privilege of dignity and intentionality. This, it seems to me, is the truth about privileged male discourse and "hierarchic heterosexuality". It cannot comprehend that 'others' have intentionalities - it cannot comprehend the 'dignity' it excludes."*

(Brittan 1989 page 169)

Those who are oppressed are seen as embodying a counter intentionality and therefore they must be reduced to being status objects. Brittan goes on to relate this theory to gender relations by arguing that:

*"Hierarchic heterosexuality is more than a discourse - it is also a practice in which differences between people are treated as if they had moral and ontological significance...It is 'hierarchic heterosexuality' which embraces the conflation of valorised male sexuality and militarism...'hierarchic heterosexuality'...is the social relations of gender and masculinity, that constitute the matrix in which certain kinds of intentionality are valued, and others are not."*

(Brittan 1989 page 177 emphasis in original)

Again, much of the discussion of dignity concerns the "personal is political" and the public-private divide. As Brittan has argued, denying women their "status worthiness" means denying their personal experience. Therefore it is vital that some form of concrete understanding of oppression must be found which involves men studying feminist theory taking responsibility for their actions; effectively this means taking more account of their own and women's personal experiences, Brittan remarking that:

*"We must believe in the dignity of those who report their suffering. But this is ruled out of court by the presumption that a theory of suffering is 'subjective' and*



*'experiential'. It is simply a counter discourse whose status is of no more significance than the discourse which legitimises the practice. The point is that we have become so obsessed with deconstructing 'true' discourse that we find it almost impossible to give credence to those who testify from the front line of suffering. When I say 'we' I mean 'me' as 'men'."*

(Brittan 1989 page 165)

Again this is an area where Brittan could have related his theories more to lived experience and discussed the connections between himself and his readership. That he does not only leaves us wondering why.

Arguing that the "personal is political" is a way of allowing the objectified group to become conscious of their oppression and to confirm their "status worthiness". If this definition of dignity could be recognised then it would be harder for many men to argue that women are not oppressed in either the workplace or the home.

In his work Meanings And Situations published in 1973 which was based around symbolic interactionism, Brittan argued that academic analysis should be about the "concrete reality" (Brittan 1973) of experience and not about games. This also ties in with Brittan's earlier work with Maynard in Sexism, Racism and Oppression that a concrete theory of oppression needs to be developed to prevent feminist theory from being turned into abstract theory at best and a post modernist game at worst. However, there seems to be some confusion in Brittan's work as part of his discussion of dignity tends to veer towards extremes, for at one point in regards the denial of "status worthiness" he argues:

*"This denial is so fundamental that it is not surprising, when somebody like Andrea Dworkin exposes the degree to which women are subjected to sexual terror and violence at both the individual and collective level, that she is attacked by a veritable host of indignant commentators who accuse her of exaggeration and bias."*

(Brittan 1989 page 164)

Many right wing men have accused Dworkin of exaggeration and bias but so have many left wing feminists. Although Brittan leaps to the defence of a radical feminist at this stage, his argument in total is not sympathetic to the radicalism of Dworkin.

This confusion of theory occurs again over the meaning and the use of the concept of discourse. At one point he remarks:

*"...rape is not a discourse, nor for that matter is male sexuality."*

(Brittan 1989 page 51)

However later he remarks that:

*"To say that some men are capable of rape is not to give their sexuality some kind of essentialistic status; rather it is to point to the fact that the concept 'rape' has meaning in specific contexts."*

(Brittan 1989 page 54)

From this it is difficult to understand whether rape is a product of discourse or not, or in fact what Brittan means by either the terms 'rape' or 'discourse'. The confusion might lie with where he is directing his remarks, the first comment seems to be designed for those feminists who accuse the male writers of being unwilling to confront issues head on. The second remark appeals more to current mainstream left wing theorising.

### **8.11 Men and crisis**

Brittan begins this section by making some useful remarks in terms of recognising his audience when he comments that:

*"There seems to be something very self-indulgent in talking about a crisis of masculinity when we may be referring to a very limited number of men who may have read feminist texts, or who have feminist friends."*

(Brittan 1989 page 180)

Identifying an audience was something Brittan and Maynard had begun to do in their work Sexism, Racism and Oppression published in 1984, noting that because the middle-class are more educated they are more able to distance themselves from their gender identity which results in gender identity confusion.

Significantly the authors are discussing a phenomenon that seems very similar to Tolson's discussion of "the progressive middle class". In terms of relating his theory to lived experience Brittan's remarks are of great importance, however the rest of the discussion returns to the theoretical and this form of approach is not attempted again. Brittan's discussion on "Men, reason and crisis" begins by drawing on Franklin's theory of four

principal masculine character types: "Humanist man", "Classical man", "Routinely masculinist man" and "Anomic man" (Franklin 1984).

Although these terms are highly euro-centric, being meaningless outside western culture, they do allow us to analyse which men are most likely to change (Humanist man) and which are most resistant to change (Classical man). Brittan argues that the idea of crisis in all men assumes that all men have a sense of collective identity, but clearly "humanist man" and "classical" man do not share the same interests. Brittan sees no reason to assume men in positions of power (generals, scientists, politicians, etc.) are about to surrender or lose any of their authority, and they may well destroy the world through the consolidation of power in the hands of hierarchic heterosexuals. However Brittan recognises that challenges to the status quo have been made:

*"...we...must acknowledge that the past thirty years or so have seen an unprecedented attempt to undermine and understand the basis of male domination. Although this attempt derives mainly from feminist and gay sources, its influence has been profound. Not a day passes when some official 'spokesman' does not make some kind of reference to issues raised by these sources."*

(Brittan 1989 page 186)

Although there is no general crisis of masculinity, Brittan believes there is good reason to suspect that the talk about a crisis in masculinity may represent something rather different:

*"...the current crisis of masculinity does not portend the end of male domination and masculinism. It may well be that what we are witnessing today is some kind of 'legitimation crisis'. The viciousness of the counter-attack against feminism and the gay movement by the New Right is indicative of some kind of strain in masculinism. Male authority can no longer be presented as taken for granted - it has to be defended and rationalised by recourse to the most blatant sexual stereotyping."*

(Brittan 1989 page 184)

However, while it is possible to identify local crises of masculinity in areas such as unemployment and middle-class sexual angst, Brittan believes it is not possible to

identify a process that would allow us to say that masculinism is seriously under challenge.

When tracing the history of a crisis of masculinity Tolson has argued that a change in gender relations was partly wrought through Britain's decline as an Imperial power after World War II, something Brittan is in (unacknowledged) agreement with:

*"The myth of the transcendental male hero was shattered forever. Not only was war dirty and disgusting, but it was pointless. If we want to talk about a crisis of masculinity, then we can see the origins of the crisis in the mud of Flanders and the Russian Steppes."*

(Brittan 1989 page 197)

This argument emphasises how crucial the post war period has been for developments and changes in femininity and masculinity. It also helps us to understand why the rhetoric of the right and its espousal of 'traditional' male values should hark back to the Victorian era, a unremembered golden age long before these unsettling developments.

Brittan closes this discussion on an auto-biographical note that relates his experiences within the University to wider factors, commenting that those in the University:

*"...have not recognised our masculinism, our commitment to gender inequality, our sexual objectification of women. The University is no different in this respect than any other institution, except that it glosses violence more successfully. Violence is often hidden behind a rhetorical smoke screen - it is couched in the language of academic 'one upmanship', but this is not a harmless little game - its aim is to hurt and diminish its object."*

(Brittan 1989 page 204)

This is an interesting argument and I believe Brittan rightly argues that violence is not purely physical and is not confined to working-class ghettos and subcultures. However, this is effectively the extent of his discussion on sexual politics within the University, which seems to be an opportunity wasted.

Again towards the end of the work Brittan introduces the personal and again fails to deal with the subject in any detail. Interestingly in his work The Privatised World published in 1977 Brittan discusses the experience of privatisation in contemporary society. He argues that this is reflected within sociology by the proliferation of social theories

obsessed with the self and consciousness at the expense of political involvement. This is significant as it demonstrates an early distrust of theories connected with the personal. Brittan's comments in Masculinity and Power are revealing as to the difficulties he has in dealing with personal issues, highlighted by a discussion he recounts with his students:

*"As a man am I responsible for patriarchy? Am I responsible for all men? As the author of a text on masculinity am I merely trying to assuage my own guilt? Some of my students have no doubt about the proper answers to these questions."*

(Brittan 1989 page 200)

The students do indeed have answers to these questions and apparently they were unrelenting in their criticisms. They argue that male academic writing about masculinity is men writing more authoritative texts, masculinity, heterosexism and gender have become sterile academic topics, and the lack of discourse is resulting in a smothering of the debate. Brittan implies his own guilt as a motivation for writing and then says no more, leaving us with the impression that guilt must have been almost his sole motivation as throughout the book no other possible motivation is given, the rest of the work being "authoritative" academic theorising, Brittan even notes:

*"These students go on to argue that 'sympathetic male' academics should realise that what they say and write has nothing to do with the reality of gender inequality in and out of the academy."*

(Brittan 1989 page 200)

Perhaps there might be a beginning towards a more workable language for the male writers if Brittan started to answer his questions rather than encouraging his students to condemn him.

In this sense his attempts to broaden his discussion into the area of lived experience is short and pessimistic. It is unfortunate that his most personal remarks stay within the confines of academia.

## **8.12 Conclusions**

In the same way as Tolson, Connell and Hearn's works, the central arguments to Brittan's book revolve around the issues of the "personal is political". His discussion primarily concentrates on my fourth and fifth criteria of the "personal is political", those

of analysing the connections between the public and private and how interpersonal relationships are affected by power structures. Directly associated with these dichotomies are Brittan's discussions concerning "talking the body", male sexualities and the public-private divide and the way in which it oppresses women. The elements of the "personal is political" being brought to the fore in Brittan's work are primarily a mirror of feminist concerns such as the sexes as classes, sexuality, the family and the state.

However some do relate more specifically to men such as a possible crisis in masculinity, competitiveness and its connections to capitalism, war and violence. Also relevant to the "personal is political" is his theory that men in science and institutions need to understand their work from a more personal and emotional dimension; the survival of the human race depending on breaking the link between masculinity, rationality and objectivity. In effect Brittan is arguing that there is a need to highlight the personal aspects of the public and analyse how the "personal is political" relates to men. The concept of dignity is useful in explaining the way in which some groups are denied dignity in the political and private sphere.

In terms of my third criteria of the "personal is political", that is, constructing a "grass roots" politics, his conclusions seem vague and not very optimistic. He offers no real sense of direction or way to formulate positive action. This rather suggests that the motivation for writing the book had more to do with an interest in gender and feminism as academic theory than a desire to cause radical change. This is sadly ironic considering there are several warnings in his work that feminist theory is all about personal and political change and should not be co-opted by men and become merely dry academic theory. When it comes to my first two criteria of the "personal is political", drawing on auto and biographical experience, he concentrates on these aspects least of all four of the writers. Although there are some auto-biographical accounts and some interesting moments of self reflection he mainly concentrates on the theoretical aspects of the "personal is political".

Overall Brittan does not really demonstrate how the personal and political can be brought together within a wider social theory of gender. Many of the weaknesses of Brittan's use of the concept of the "personal is political" are summed up in the last paragraph of the book when he notes that:

*"The real crisis of masculinity is that men have come to believe that the distinction between reason and desire, the intellect and the body, the masculine and the feminine, is not only real, but necessary as well. The tragedy is that we have not really understood the connection between the personal and the political, between sexuality and power...What we need to do is stop listening to our own propaganda. We really have to listen to what women say, and not what we think they should say."*

(Brittan 1989 page 204)

Brittan's conclusions only leave us with questions that should have been raised at the beginning of the work and then answered. These questions would be, should men write books on this subject at all and if so then what sort of works should they try to write - perhaps ones that are more personal. If so then Brittan ought to be discussing why didn't men write this type of book twelve years ago after Tolson's work, or twenty years ago after the first feminist texts, and why not now in his work. Comments like these are a good place to begin, not to finish.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **INTERVIEWS WITH THE WRITERS**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

As well as providing important insights into the works under discussion the interviews helped to provide a significant contribution to the chronology of the men's movement.

Although I was unable to contact Connell I was fortunate enough to be able to meet with Hearn on two occasions and with Tolson and Brittan once each.

What needs to be taken into account is how memory can change over time and how new interpretations can arise by the fact of them being discussed. Therefore what is presented are the memories of three men of a time some distance in the past. It is not a factual account but I have drawn attention to where their experiences are either confirmed or denied by other written accounts and experiences. I would also like to acknowledge their great generosity in allowing me their time and their willingness to discuss these issues in such an open and frank manner.

I was interested to discuss several issues with the writers: their own works; their experiences in men's movement politics; their personal and political backgrounds and what had been formative influences in terms of what they read, who they had talked to and who in fact they worked with, professionally and politically.

Both Tolson and Hearn were very forthcoming when I asked about their personal involvement in men's politics. Brittan's wariness of discussing his own personal life was apparent during our conversation. He seemed generally unwilling to discuss his background and his involvement in men's politics - regarding this as irrelevant and self indulgent - and perhaps as unnecessarily inquisitive on my part.

#### **9.2 The location of the writers**

In terms of working environment, interestingly when I went to meet Jeff Hearn at his office at the University of Bradford, the office of the feminist writer Jalna Hanmer was on the same corridor. Jeff Hearn informed me that the University had a higher than national average number of women professors especially in Applied Social Studies, his department. Arthur Brittan still works at York as does Mary Maynard with whom he has collaborated on one work and whom he recently replaced as head of the women's studies'



course. Tolson's location by contrast had changed. He had long since moved on from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (C.C.C.S.) and where and whom he was working with in 1977. He remembers those days as times of great activism working in the C.C.C.S. with many feminist theorists, at the time student contemporaries, and his strong involvement in men's groups. Tolson now works in the cultural studies department at Queen Margaret's college in Edinburgh and although he introduces the topic of gender studies in his lectures and seminars he does not work on a course specifically concerned with gender.

### **9.3 Men's groups and gender politics**

Hearn told me that during the 1980s he had been heavily involved in men's groups and this had strengthened his resolve to become more involved in gender politics. In the introduction to the Gender of Oppression, Hearn lists various groups that he was also involved in which include the "Low Plains Drifter" newsletter collective and the "Bradford Under Fives". The latter is particularly significant considering his emphasis in the Gender of Oppression on men taking more responsibility for childcare in general.

Tolson was involved in setting up one of the first men's groups in Britain, also in the group was Keith Patton (later Keith Motherson), who was to become a leading figure in organising conferences and trying to give the movement a more coherent form. Tolson was also involved in the first conference of the men's movement held in London in 1974. Tolson placed a great deal of emphasis on his involvement in "Men Against Sexism" which he felt was more political and less voluntaristic than many of the men's groups in Britain and the largely apolitical liberal movement in the USA. Tolson also felt the group was highly influential in terms of increasing his awareness of gender issues in a political and personal way. The style of the men's groups at the time, that is discussing your masculinity and its construction, can be noted within his work. The work is also unusual in terms of combining theory with personal reflections by the author.

### **9.4 The history of the men's movement**

Following on from his academic and men's group experiences I was keen to talk to Tolson about his memories of the 1970s and the wider developments within the men's movement. From Tolson's recollections of that period what surprised me most was that

he still felt there was a mood of optimism in the men's movement in the mid to late 1970s. Other published accounts, such as Rowan's, give the impression that in the mid 1970s criticisms from the gay and feminist movements meant that the movement largely fell apart. According to these accounts, the movement did not come back together again until the late 1970s with the arrival of Achilles Heel. Tolson's argument was backed up by Hearn, and both Hearn and Tolson seemed to be suggesting that the histories were somewhat inaccurate in that the impact of gay critics on the movement had been overrated, as had the importance of Achilles Heel. The men's movement was not shattered in the mid 1970s and revived in the late 1970s, the arrival of Tolson's work in the supposed "lull" period suggesting otherwise. The strand of the movement that was predominantly apolitical and concerned with C.R. did seem to collapse around the mid 1970s, many men leaving to concentrate on individualistic therapy. These observations are reinforced by Lynne Segal who noted:

*"these men liked displaying and developing what they experienced as 'the gentler parts of ourselves, our spiritual and nurturing capacities, our ability to love; the feminine side of themselves...With its inter-personal and therapeutic outlook...the men's movement was less able to reflect on the public side of masculinity."*

(Segal 1990 page 284 emphasis in original)

However this is only one side of the story. The more political strand represented by such groups as "Men Against Sexism", with which Tolson was involved, did continue; the last "Men Against Sexism" conference was not until 1980. Tolson told me that after the publication of his work, he was often invited on to television and radio talk shows which demonstrates that the media was showing a significant interest. This gives the impression that the movement was being noticed and that a wider audience was being reached than an academic might normally expect. However, Tolson felt that he was not really an expert on the subject and that maybe he was receiving invitations at the expense of feminist writers or was only invited to provide a contrast, and hence create a lively debate, with a more reactionary writer. After the publication of The Limits Of Masculinity, Tolson felt in some respects he had little to contribute to the debate, a feeling mainly brought on by the rush of feminist publishing in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He further felt that many of the feminist criticisms of men's writing, namely that it was liberal and apolitical guilt inspired were valid. Further, the feminist and gay writings

were theoretically very advanced. Due to the misplaced media interest, combined with the arrival of so much high quality feminist writing, Tolson said that he and a number of colleagues decided to "take a back seat". He effectively left the debate in the late 1970s and toned down his involvement in the men's movement and men's politics. He decided a more positive move would be to introduce discussions around the subject of gender and feminism into other academic subjects, something he still tries to do within the cultural studies' departments in which he currently works. He believes noticeable and "good" new publishing by men did not arrive until Hearn and Connell's works in 1987.

### **9.5 Men's politics and alliances with the feminist and gay movements**

Tolson believes the gay groups were the only ones with a clear cut and unified position, while the straight groups were fraught with internal division over policy and direction. The "Gay Left Collective", which regularly published newsletters and pamphlets between 1975-1980 were far more politically hard hitting than many of the publications by the straight groups.

According to Tolson the more radical of those in the men's movement were dismissive of all writings by men except Pleck's work. In retrospect, Tolson sees his work as being far more inspired by feminism than by male writings or as a reaction to mainstream functionalist writing on gender. According to Tolson, those in the men's groups at the time concentrated mainly on socialist and liberal feminism, radical feminism not being widely known about at the time. The radicals in the men's movement further believed that the men's movement was suffering from not having formed any links with the feminist movement; it was this problem that eventually led to the end of the men's movement. Tolson informed me that by the mid to late 1970s many of the more political men's groups, including his group "Men Against Sexism", felt the only way forward was in forming alliances with feminist groups. The result was that groups formed with titles such as "Crèches against sexism" as opposed to "men against sexism", that is, a more practical politics that could work alongside feminist concerns. This demonstrates that the men's movement was relatively weak compared to the hegemonic position and dynamism of the feminist movement. Tolson was hoping that even if he could not be part of the feminist movement he could at least share some of its ideas and ambitions. Tolson

wanted his book to be considerably more radical than the voluntaristic and apolitical works that were beginning to define the men's movement.

This attitude has continued with Hearn and Brittan who both felt that the men's movement material of the 1970s was too voluntaristic and both writers cited feminism and feminist writings as being by far the greatest influence on their works.

Trying to make the movement more politically active proved difficult and those interested in personal therapy showed little interest. In his work The Limits of Masculinity Tolson discusses C.R., to write a work that was for, and grew out of, the "men's movement", the subject was impossible to ignore. However, his suspicions of C.R. and any form of individualistic therapy are clear.

I have already noted how the same was happening in the USA, Farrell (1974) arguing that the movement should go more mainstream while Sawyer (1970) wanted the movement to become more involved in radical politics.

In some ways I was surprised that the wish to work with feminist writers was pervasive in the men's movement as early as the mid 1970s for it was not until the early 1980s that straight writers began writing serious theoretical works in conjunction with gay and feminist writers. It may well have taken gay and feminist writers this long to become established within academia where the male writers felt more willing to approach them as colleagues and the opportunity through proximity had been established. It is notable that when men did start working with feminist writers it was with the socialist feminists within academia and not the more radical feminist writers.

## **9.6 Feminist and gay presence at the point of production**

Contemporary and lived politics exerted an enormous influence over the C.C.C.S. which Tolson joined as a student in 1972. Others who joined included Ross Coward and Angela McRobbie in the early 1970s, Paul Willis and Richard Dyer in the mid 1970s and Lucy Bland in the late 1970s. Paul Willis and Richard Dyer both had a strong interest in masculinity and gender relations. Importantly, Dyer and Willis had very strongly held and opposing views on masculinity that often resulted in heated debates, the theory of masculinity at the C.C.C.S. being far from seamless.

Guest lecturers at the centre included Juliet Mitchell and Sheila Rowbotham - both cited by Tolson. Tolson drew heavily on the works of Sheila Rowbotham, who was a leading socialist feminist, especially her work Women's Consciousness, Man's World (1973), which included a chapter on the workplace.

During the mid 1970s some feminists, with the support of a few of the men, tried to establish a separatist dimension within the centre. Stuart Hall was criticised for taking a strong patriarchal role and not encouraging discussions on gender and subsequently he took more of a back seat.

Considering the previous discussion it is significant that when men did start re-entering the debate on gender in the 1980s they often did so in conjunction with feminist and gay writers. One of Connell's most notable works on gender before Gender and Power was entitled "Hard and Heavy: Towards a new sociology of masculinity" co-written with Tim Carrigan and John Lee. The work emphasised the extent to which straight writers had ignored the theories of the gay writers. Perhaps not surprisingly Lee was a leading gay writer at the time and worked at Macquarie with Connell. Rosemary Pringle also worked at Macquarie and although they never published any work together it does demonstrate the significance of a feminist presence within the same University department and in his work Which Way is Up? Connell thanks Pringle for her help and encouragement.

Asked to identify his work within an intellectual lineage, Hearn felt himself to be influenced more by "Hard and Heavy" and Tolson's work than the voluntaristic writings of the 1970s. It was interesting to learn from Hearn that he had been heavily influenced by Tolson's work, seeing it as the best thing written by a man on the subject of masculinity, ahead of its time compared to most of the things being written by men at the time, and in fact since.

An early work by Hearn was co-written with Wendy Parkin, and Hearn believed that working at Bradford had exerted a strong influence over his work, due to a large and well-established feminist presence within the social studies department. Bradford has always had strong connections with the gender politics; within the area there are several radical feminist groups, gay liberation groups, men's groups a "Women Against Violence Against Women" group as well as a women's aid refuge. Hearn felt the influence of radical feminism was becoming far more notable in the early 1980s. He felt it to be

politically important for a man to write a work that placed gender as central to the understanding of society and did not marginalise it as "other factors". This is the first, and to date, the only time a man has written a work that has taken such a radical feminist view on gender relations.

### **9.7 Neo-Marxism and the academic left**

Tolson believes criticisms from the feminist and gay movements really hit home in the late 1970s at a time when debates between the humanist and Althusserian Marxists were really raging - largely over the issue of interpersonal power - and whether it should be discussed seriously or not. Tolson told me he was an Althusserian at the time, one of his first published pieces being a criticism of Sartrean humanist Marxism and in favour of Althusserian Marxism. Hearn told me that like Tolson he was also influenced both by Althusser and by feminist theory. According to Hearn, during the early 1970s traditional Marxist theorising was undergoing something of a transformation. Issues that had been raised during the 1960s began to show up the weaknesses of orthodox standard Marxism and increasingly these concerns were being taken on board by the left. Civil Rights campaigners had drawn attention to the marginalisation of race issues within left wing theorising and the feminist movement had done the same concerning the position of women. These issues were of great importance to the male writers under discussion, Hearn talked of how he had been involved in discussions on Marxism since his student days, Marxism was the doctrine that provided them with their initial critique of society. Feminist interpretations of Marxism introduced many men at the time to the subject of feminism. The impact of this analysis and what it contributed to re-interpretations of Marxism had a dramatic effect on the four writers under discussion. Hearn's work can be seen as a moving away from the strict compliance to Althusserian Marxism and the characteristic insistence that subjects were constituted by structures.

### **9.8 The move away from the personal**

According to Hearn and Brittan the main drawbacks to the early men's writing were that the concept of patriarchy was ignored and too many of the writings tended towards the belief that men were as equally oppressed as women. "Personal" was becoming a dirty word associated with self indulgence and as a way of ignoring the more important issues.

Brittan was also critical of much of the work produced during the seventies feeling that its personal self aggrandising style made it apolitical and therefore dangerous. Brittan mentions his own personal involvement only briefly in Masculinity and Power and even then only at the end of his work, which he claims was to avoid falling into this trap. Significantly, Brittan was not involved in men's groups and his attitudes towards discussions of the personal may be formed more by what he has read than what he had experienced. However, Brittan's background as South African born and bred has resulted in his concern with the connections between race, capitalism and gender to a far greater degree than Tolson, Hearn and Connell; Brittan has long been a campaigner against racism and has taught University courses on race.

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **10.1 Introduction**

I began this thesis by stating that the concept of the "personal is political" was central to the analysis of gender but also problematic. I offered five definitions of this powerful but enigmatic phrase identified from a complex and evolving feminist usage. These five definitions were:

- 1        overt and direct personal involvement**
- 2        the utilisation and privileging of biographical experience**
- 3        the connection of abstract theory to a more "grass roots" politics**
- 4        the connection asserted between the public and the private**
- 5        an interest in the links between the social construction of gender and  
          power structures**

The intention was to interrogate the concept of the "personal is political" in terms of men writing about masculinity. I was interested especially in how the writers of the four works had come to terms with and deployed the concept. I was also aware at the outset that certain meanings of the "personal is political" had not been available to the writers at the time they produced their works.

In the introduction I also stated that in the light of these close-focused book reviews I might need to revisit and revise my taxonomy of the "personal is political". I have certainly found this to be the case. I now feel that not only do I have a detailed and sympathetic understanding of the works but more significantly an altered and expanded appreciation of the concept of the "personal is political".

At this stage it may be helpful to restate my initial conception of what are sometimes interchangeable oppositional pairings; "public and the private" and the "personal and the political". According to my original definition the private sphere was associated with subjectivity, emotions, relationships and the domestic; values that were associated with women and with femininity. The public was the arena of institutions and work where the



prevailing ethos was of objectivity, neutrality and rationality; values that were associated with men and masculinity. According to male ideology the public sphere was where "important" decisions could be made free from emotional bias. The public was strictly (in theory if not always in practice) the domain of men and "male" values. The "personal" and the "political" became overlaid on this dichotomy. The personal became associated with the private and women, while the political became associated with the public and men. The feminist phrase the "personal is political" challenged this dichotomy from a particular direction arguing that the private and the public realms are artificial constructions.

However there was another aspect of the "personal is political" that began to emerge while I was studying these works. By concentrating on how the personal had become political, I was missing how the political had become personal; that the personal was part of the public sphere.

While analysing the works I began to realise that the "public" world of work is also "personal" and that many of men's most "personal" experiences occurred in the "public" sphere. The public world of men could no longer be regarded as objective, scientific and rational but as an arena that included many conflicting and contrasting personal experiences. Nor was it to be seen as distant to everyday male lives. I think that Hearn touches upon this point very clearly when he speaks of a "loving" form of politics. His choice of language contradicts the traditional view of politics but also the way in which I had first defined the concept of the "personal is political". This challenged my original dichotomy whereby the personal related solely to the subjective and the domestic. Men and women have different experiences of public life. Hence the concept of the "personal is political" is different for men and women. In this sense there was an aspect of the "personal is political" that was not apparent in feminist literature. In effect the four male writer's works were pointing towards the development of a sixth category of the "personal is political" that was immanent in the problems they were struggling, not always clearly or successfully, to express. The ideas were registered, but not stated. Effectively the writers had to reinvent a received and developing feminist theory as they went along. By necessity, and mainly unconsciously, they began to embrace a new dimension of the "personal is political". In this respect it is not surprising that sometimes their theories may appear faltering and confused.

## 10.2 Personalising the public

From a critical but sympathetic engagement with the four chosen works I now propose a sixth and new definition of the “personal is political”, one that arises and needs to be explicitly recognised when the concept is applied to men and masculinity. It can be expressed formally as follows:

### 6      **Personalising the public - that is, men critically examining the way in which the public is also personal**

Recognition of this additional category constitutes a shift in theoretical ground and exposes the limitations of applying mechanistically a definition derived solely from feminist analysis. This insight points to new areas of research and writing by men about men. David Jackson seems to be saying something similar when in the context of achieving change he writes that what is now needed:

*"...is for more men to come out of hiding and to start excavating, in public, the sedimented layers of their own particular and diverse life histories...And...the hidden networks of male power that are so effectively concealed in these constructions."*

(Jackson 1990 page 3)

It is striking that it is precisely when the writers begin to explore areas of ‘personal politics’ that their works really come to life. In his latest work Masculinities it seems significant and welcome that Connell concentrates specifically on bringing the autobiographical and the political closer together.

It is also important to note that the four writers agree that all men are not the same. Whether analysed in terms of "hegemony" or "hierarchy" different men have very different perspectives on masculinity. Variables such as class, age, disability, race and historical epoch all play a major role in determining what the "personal" and the “political” means to any given individual. Therefore we can conclude that the "personal is political" not only means different things to men and women, but it will mean different things to different men.

### 10.3 Theory and political intervention

This points to another key area, that of the role of theory and political intervention in effecting change. In my analysis and in the four chosen texts, there is much in the way of theory but little in the way of concrete action. In retrospect it is interesting how small the changes have been since the books were written, indeed, the majority of men have done little to oppose the rightist erosion of feminist achievements. From a functionalist perspective, it could be argued that these developments represent patriarchy re-asserting itself in the face of a destabilising element. Therefore we need to look again at received conceptions of patriarchy and I will concentrate on three main feminist approaches: radical, psychological and materialist. According to radical feminism men dominate women in a patriarchal system that is not derived from any other system such as capitalism. The materialist feminist position is based on a more historical analysis. Patriarchy is located within a materialist context, the capitalist mode of production being structured by a patriarchal division of labour. In this way capitalist class relations and sexual divisions of labour are mutually reinforcing. The psychological approach, for example Juliet Mitchell (Mitchell 1971), believed that capitalism controls the economic level while the unconscious is the realm of patriarchy. According to this argument patriarchal ideology has no material basis.

If Mitchell is right then men forming consciousness raising groups and challenging their unconscious ideology is enough to challenge patriarchy. However I believe the arguments of the theorists who locate patriarchy in a materialist sphere are more convincing. Our four authors agree that there are strong links between patriarchy and capitalism and therefore to affect change in one is to affect change in the other.

This comes back to the question of how and with whom men can organise. It must begin with individual action. The women's movement was so successful as there was intervention by women at all levels. It is difficult to identify points or moments that would so polarise feelings among men as to sufficiently split opinion and would lead to a mobilising of men on a political terrain. This concerns understanding where and when structure is vulnerable. This is supported by Connell's argument that past practice constitutes a structure that constrains current practice (Connell 1987). Therefore we have to be aware of the historical development of a situation and which factors are therefore most relevant to causing change in that arena.

I now wish to provide an example of an issue that might have acted as a catalyst for radical political and theoretical intervention by men had there been a radical men's movement.

The Child Support Act (C.S.A.) changed the way the state intervened in financial support of children when parents separate. The parent who did not have custody of the child/children (nine times out of ten the man) had to pay more and were more vigorously pursued. There were certainly men who reacted to the Act on one level. What mobilisation there was against the Act by men was confused and reactionary and was primarily based around men protecting their economic interests. There were demonstrations organised by men and the "Campaign for fair maintenance" was established. Since the arrival of the pill men had felt free from the responsibilities of contraception. The spread of the AIDS virus made it clear how many men were ignorant of, and opposed to, the use of condoms. Advertising only stressed their use as a method of disease prevention.

While the reactionary male response was supported by the tabloid press and the majority of the Tory party, those men who may have had a more radical view of the Act were isolated. Had there been an active men's movement the issue might have been tackled on a very different level. Developments in Australia show how different things could be. In Australia where the C.S.A. has been in existence since 1989, sex education has started to revolve around issues of economic facts as well as moral and theoretical issues. This shows the way an issue can be picked up by teachers to explore male attitudes, in this case concerning childcare, in public places such as schools (Burgoyne and Millar 1994).

The above discussion is an example of an issue that could have resulted in conflict between different groups of men. According to Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, gender relations are not fixed but are in continual state of negotiation. It is significant that when the writers do discuss personal experience they tend to focus on how they felt uncomfortable with attempting to live up to the representation of masculinity. Men who support feminism, or for want of a better phrase "male feminists", constitute a radical element who are beginning to split from the hegemonic group. Change occurs when these men find themselves at odds with the ideology, policy and interests of the hegemonic group. These "male feminists" find similar ground with the existing forces seeking change. In this case the feminist and gay movements. The result

could be a dialogue. These groups need to be aware, and take advantage of, crisis within the dominant group. Crises can occur at both a macro and micro level. This last point is key in drawing attention to the importance of small scale local action.

I now wish to provide several illustrations that demonstrate the problems the writers have when dealing with these areas of "personalising the public" because their conception of the public and the private is of a particular and limited kind. In the conclusions to the literature reviews I drew attention to the way the writers spent little time in dealing with my first two criteria of the "personal is political"; drawing on auto and biographical experience. These illustrations highlight why this is the case. While working on this thesis I have been able to identify three areas that are of particular significance: the problems men have in coming to terms with their masculinity; academic networks; and social networks and men's groups.

#### **10.4 The writers view of their masculinity**

Initially men approaching the subject of feminism did so with unease. They had become the problem, the "enemy". Some male writers believed that the way to be accepted by feminism was to shoulder this responsibility and write in a style that was completely guilt ridden and apologetic. Others rejected this and argued that men were equally oppressed. Another option was to create an "other" that represents the unpleasant aspects of masculinity (violence, rape and so forth). The "good man"/"bad man" dichotomy. The writers often refer to "dominant" and "hierarchic" men, but it is so unspecified that it tells us little about where the author, or the reader, stands in relation to "these men". My involvement in men's groups has certainly made me realise how important the issue of guilt still is. It could be argued that men should feel guilty and write accordingly. But many writers jumped on the "personal is political" bandwagon and then interpreted this to mean an approach that was overtly confessional: the personal being a way to shore up a writing style that is purely self indulgent.

To ignore such relevant issues is another illustration of the difficulty men have in dealing with important aspects of *their* personal world. Connell refers to guilt in his analysis on how male oppression operates as a collective project:

*"But to take responsibility for, and hence feel guilt about, that collective project as a whole is at one level paranoid, at another paralysing. It has certainly not led to any practically effective form of politics over the last dozen years."*

(Connell 1987 page 216)

However this tends to dismiss the problem more than deal with it. This is where the sixth category can be helpful. Writers could explore areas with which they feel comfortable analysing. In the public realm men could begin to look at what they really valued or found problematic about their masculinity. Boyhood memory and fantasy could be discussed from the point of view of how family, childhood and adolescent relationships are reproduced in the public world. Examples of how this might increase our understanding of the adult world of work could include the emotional dimension of employer/employee relationships including the recent increase in mentoring schemes. In the conventional literature on mentoring the emotional and paternal currents of feeling that arise in such a relationship are never discussed. Another area that could be investigated is the way in which left wing politics often revolves around the concept of brotherhood, while friendship tends to evoke such emotions as comradeship and loyalty, feelings that are also associated with militarism. Emotions are often denied as the masculine ethos becomes one where a man has to be tough to survive. When men discuss sexuality this nearly always occurs in the public arena. Only very limited aspects of the private are allowed to intrude into this public forum and ambivalence and doubts are strongly denied.

Men are allowed to be more intimate and emotional in the private realm but must remain "men". In public, men "police" other men's behaviour - the limits of masculinity are very strictly enforced in terms of the controls we exert over our colleagues and friends. I remember as a child being surprised at how my father seemed more officious and "correct" when with his male colleagues than he was when he was alone with his family. But even in the home there was a limit to how far he would go and how close we were allowed to become. It was never as close as it was to my mother and quite often it was my mother who explained what these limits were. She was in the middle between the emotional children and the more correct father, her territory, separate from either of the others. These memories are borne out by Tolson who talks about his father in the following way:

*"...in the face of his masculine intrusion, mother was the reference point. How she spoke of father, how she represented him was crucial. These accounts comprise the family culture that has predetermined my own experience, and, in particular my response towards my father."*

(Tolson 1977 page 26)

The crucial comment here is "representation", masculinity becomes representation. Tolson goes on to discuss how in childhood male sexuality is publicly constructed around representations:

*"...the group communication (about sexuality) is a self sustaining network of boasting, half truth, and fabrication, in which it is impossible to distinguish reality from fiction."*

(Tolson 1977 page 38)

Once these representations are internalised masculinity comes to be defined in terms of those representations. The very idea of discussing masculinity and sexuality means creating an image, it effectively means discussing a representation. Male sexuality is publicly constructed and negotiated as an 'ideal' and as a competition or test, and often a dangerous and violent test. Letting the side down means being condemned to the domestic/private realm of women. And to talk of sides here is to enter the world of sport, another activity that the "personalising the public" insight would render as an area of research into masculinity.

The sixth category allows us to discuss a form of "personal politics" that challenges the fundamental patriarchal principle of the separation of spheres - a principal that is crucial to the maintenance of gender differences. The insight allows us to see that men's personal experiences in the public terrain have an emotional dimension and to bring that to the surface will effectively challenge the essentialism of gender categories. There are many aspects of masculine culture I enjoy. Action movies, tough guy private eyes and renaissance works of art that portray God as an Olympic body builder. But I can also see how damaging these images are to myself and others.

## 10.5 Academic networks

I would like to begin this discussion by distinguishing between two types of social networks so that it can become clearer as to which sort of network, or lack of, is of particular importance vis a vis the male writers under analysis. Firstly there are academic networks. Secondly there are social networks that revolve around friendship, and leisure activities. I will consider social networks and the male writers when I discuss men's groups. Both these forms of networks can either encourage or stifle debate.

The feminist movement was originally formed around a number of campaigns on specific issues but there is little or no consensus as to what men are fighting for and why. The sections by the writers under discussion on why men should be against patriarchy are important and well intentioned. But in retrospect it appears ill argued and sidelined. Why is this? Because crucially the writers themselves are so unsure of their ground. For a while in the late 1970s and early 1980s Achilles Heel was the most significant public aspect of the men's movement. I was involved in the collective in the late 1980s but disagreed with much of its editorial policy and political direction. The magazine was principally run by a small collective in London that allowed for little sense of networking or negotiation. A great deal of the content of the magazine relies on theorising about the same issues that dominated the men's movement in the 1970s; sexuality, domestic labour, pornography and so on. There is little in the publication to suggest any form of concrete action or intervention in a more public arena. Networking has been vitally important to the women's movement but there were no equivalents networks that the male writers could draw on for inspiration and support. The four works under analysis were written in isolation, the authors working alone within departments that were not directly connected to the work they were carrying out and without the support of any wide scale movement. The movement, such as it was, had fragmented and faded considerably since the late 1970s. Even at its mid 1970s height, the men's movement was no more than a loose collection of men's groups and pamphlets with differing ideals and values.

The prevailing academic ethos was also anything but conducive to the work these men were carrying out. The lack of any strong and supportive academic network has certainly hampered any substantial discussion of the personal within a public context. Any attempt to move away from the dominant materialist and structuralist paradigms and engage in a subjective approach was difficult and brave. It risked disapproval and denunciation, most



notably from the Althusserians who exerted a powerful, sometimes intimidating, presence within the academic left. In this single respect, the writers were considerably more radical than might first appear. I am not trying to give the production process for the feminist writers any romantic gloss. Their ideals and styles differed greatly but the feeling that they were addressing a powerful movement at least provided them with something in common (a powerful movement insofar as feminism was becoming more accepted within academia, in popular women's magazines and public demonstrations and organisations). Each aspect of the public face of feminism helped to encourage new debates on various issues key to feminism at the time. For the male writers there was a lack of academic networks capable of sustaining scholarship in masculinity and remaining sympathetic to gay and feminist movements. The male writers were in effect involved in a somewhat different academic network. The principle network that provided inspiration and critical debate was the feminist and gay movements. As has been seen many of the writers worked closely with, or in the same departments as, gay and feminist writers and often co-wrote material with theorists from the gay movement and from feminism.

The sixth category and a discussion around these issues is able to give endless possibilities and at the same time a more focused direction. Without the need for guilt there could be an exploration of the issues that are very important for men in a non threatening atmosphere. The sixth category can also provide an insight into what social networks do exist for men in public - for example leisure space, sports clubs, pubs, social clubs and working men's clubs.

Lovenduski and Randall argue that the women's movement owed its initial strength to its "grass roots" appeal. Now it thrives more in intellectual circles. This is positive as it demonstrates that women are gaining some degree of power but these observers feel the movement will be weakened without the connection and mutual inspiration between the two strands (Lovenduski and Randall 1993). I think this argument holds true for the men's movement that is not only weak at "grass roots" level but even weaker within academic and political circles. Therefore I now wish to turn attention to the men's movements "grass roots" politics in the 1970s, which primarily consisted of men's groups.

## 10.6 Men's groups

Men's groups are an example of the way men in the 1970s started to develop a social network that was initiated primarily to discuss issues around masculinity. The groups acted as a form of social and political network. Social in that they provided support and political in that they served as a forum for the exchange of ideas and even as a springboard for campaigns. Bearing in mind the sixth category we can begin to examine if there is still a place for this form of organising.

Of the four writers, Tolson had been heavily involved in men's groups throughout the 1970s. Hearn was also involved in men's groups but talks little about his experiences. Connell and Brittan do not mention whether they were or not. When Tolson, Hearn and Connell do discuss men's groups it is with a sense of extreme caution. We also need to remember that the number of men who became involved in groups probably only ran into the low thousands. Several key problems with men's groups tend to emerge: men may learn to relate to the men in the group but this does not automatically mean they also learn to relate to men outside the group, or to women. Women's viewpoints are interpreted by men and some groups, such as the "wild men" groups, are only based around the writings of men, in this case Robert Blye (Blye 1990). Perhaps the most worrying part is that men's groups can become reactionary, for example the "Families need fathers" groups in the USA. I do not have very much experience of men's groups but the little experience I do have tends to bear out these worries.

The insight of the sixth category is that in order to personalise the public, more needs to be done in terms of organising in groups within the public arena in areas from which women are excluded. Therefore men need to act but with a continual awareness, and an expressed aim being the furtherance of women's and gay issues. The groups would not exist for the sake of "consciousness raising" or to support specific feminist campaigns, for example, as did the "Men Against Sexism" movement of the 1970s. Rather, the aim of the groups would be to campaign in areas that promote the personal aspect of male public behaviour, acting as support, networking and intervention. This argument is supported by Joseph Boone who argues that:

*"Women in the feminist movement have for two decades successfully shared their ideas collectively, seeking each other out in communal networks or relationships."*

*How eventful it would be if more men professing a politics grounded in feminism did likewise. This is not to suggest we should begin forming exclusive men's clubs (that would indeed be only to produce more of the same), but to remind ourselves that we can learn from each other as well as from our female friends."*

(Boone 1992 page 31)

If patriarchal power is all pervasive and located in a materialist sphere, change also needs to be all pervasive, occurring in macro as well as micro processes. This obviously suggests that men's groups serve a purpose but it is far from being the only solution and something more than theory is needed. As I mentioned at the beginning of this section some form of action is also necessary. There is little evidence to suggest that this has been attempted or is even likely. The traditional form of men's groups were fraught with difficulties and contradictions and this particular form of men's organising has lessened as opposed to increased.

Social and economic developments often occur within capitalism that alter the relationship between the sexes faster than they are being understood and translated back into a form of resistance. Studying contemporary gender relations is rarely very contemporary and can often seem like a process of running to stand still. Perhaps we need to accept that change will not occur very quickly but by remaining vigilant to crisis tendencies and with prolonged effort small steps can be made. Although I have outlined many of the obstacles that stand in the way of men developing the sixth category of the "personal is political", if allied to a form of concrete action and intervention it would help to confront many of these difficulties. It would in effect create an area where men could analyse and challenge patriarchal behaviour perhaps more easily than women could. It could provide a way for men to develop a masculinity that is non oppressive.

### **10.7 My personal relationship to these works**

I now wish to apply the first of my criteria of the "personal is political" to myself and this research, reflecting upon my personal involvement and relationship to the works. Having studied the works in more detail I am now in a better position to appreciate the problems the writers had to face and how much they have achieved. Tolson's book partly managed to bring theory to life and made it more personal but also certainly helped to understand

how difficult the process was. I was drawn to Tolson's work partly through its title, there were limits to my masculinity that I was unhappy with.

I found insightful Tolson's discussion of the middle-class worlds of academia and career as competitive and individualised. I also found relevant his theory that the "progressive middle-class" is a development of the capitalist process of consumption. In Connell's work I found the theory of "embodiment" helpful and it did make me more aware of how "maleness" becomes part of everything I do and how I do it. Also from Connell's work the theory of hegemonic masculinity helped me to understand more clearly the way in which different groups of men struggle to assert their beliefs and interests. Hearn's discussion of the personal and his feelings of alienation concerning pregnancy and the birth process rang true. But I do not agree that this is a profound alienation that affects all my thinking and lies at the heart of all men and male domination. In Hearn the continual stresses on men and women as two separate classes serves to make its point, and make it fairly unforgettably. I found little in Brittan's work that was personally stimulating. His all too brief discussion of where he stood in all this was interesting but only left me unsatisfied and wanting more.

Women seemed to find something in feminism that meant something to them about their lives. The male writers did make an impact on me and some other men but not in the same way and not to the same extent. Obviously, as I was not part of an oppressed group being provided with a programme of resistance and change it was perhaps not surprising. However, male writing will never really take off until men start addressing the issues that really concern men in the way that feminist writers addressed the issues most crucial to women.

For most people not involved in academia, the works I have been discussing are simply too inaccessible. Nobody I know has read or even heard of them though I do know several women who have read, or at least heard of the works by Metcalfe and Humphries and Easthope's work. For the record, they were not very impressed and believe feminist writing still says far more about their lives, though it is a contemporary feminism that holds their interest and not the old Marxist debates.

## 10.8 The personal importance of the sixth category

During the process of studying these works I began to spend more time considering the way in which I related to other men in the workplace and in the public arena of “leisure”. It was in these male spheres that the limits appeared to be most severely imposed and where I became most masculine. I found this situation frustrating. At first I naively believed I could find something that not only challenged but also showed a way to break through these limits. I soon began to realise that I was expecting the works to provide a programme for sudden and immediate change. The four books did not directly help with this. This was because I judged them by naive criteria and they utilised a theory of the personal that had been borrowed from feminism. The result was that I became frustrated and critical of the works. However, close textual reading and the emergence of a new category of the “personal is political” has considerably altered this conception. I now accept that the most that could reasonably be expected from the four writers was something that acknowledged that these boundaries existed. This acknowledgement was crucial in recognising the difficulties myself, and I believe many other men, found in living up to the representation of masculinity I spoke of earlier. After such a detailed reading of the four works I now feel considerably closer to the works and understand how much I share their problems. What began as an attempt to investigate the concept of masculinity led to an analysis of my masculinity. I have not yet found a comfortable and satisfying way of discussing the personal nor have any of the writers. However, they do manage to explore some of the limits and challenge certain boundaries in a way that is not totally guilt ridden or reactionary.

I wanted the writers to tackle issues that concern me as a man, issues that affect me personally and also affect many if not all men. Perhaps the writers are not saying exactly what I want them to say, perhaps they cannot solve my problems and that is not their fault. One is reminded of Marx's dictum: “Men make history but not in the circumstances of their own choosing.” (18th Brumaire) Rather than indulge in easy criticism I have sought to use the works to explore and expand the phrase the “personal is political”. The research process has both challenged and changed me; I hope it has also contributed to an agenda of future research about men and masculinity.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Introduction**

- (1) The phrase the "personal is political" was first used in a written work by Carol Hanisch (1969). Hanisch argued that women's personal lives were affected and determined by decisions made within the public realm. MacKinnon (1982) contains a discussion concerning the "personal is political" and its relation to subjectivity. MacKinnon argues that to understand the politics of women's situation is to understand women's personal lives.
- (2) For a history of the development and the impact of the feminist movement see Coote A. and Campbell B. (1982) Sweet Freedom (Blackwell).

For an overview of feminist theorising and male domination see Walby S. (1990) Theorising Patriarchy (Blackwell).

### **Chapter 2: The 1960s and the Changing Relationship Between the Personal and the Political.**

- (1) National celebrations such as the festival of Britain in 1951 and the Coronation in 1953 were accompanied by newspaper reports on the disgraceful state of London's streets. Partly as a result of such reporting the Conservative government brought in the Wolfenden committee's recommendations on prostitution. The Wolfenden committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution published in 1957, believed both to be a result of declining moral standards and the report was critical of the weakening of the family unit.

In the cold war climate homosexuality quickly became scapegoated as the "enemy within", Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean were typical examples, while under the influence of Senator McCarthy, the U.S. state department defined homosexuality as being a "security risk" (Weeks 1989).

### **Chapter 5: The Developments that Occurred Between the Publication of Tolson's Work and the Publication of the Other Three Works.**

- (1) The feminist 'classics' published during this period include:

Barret M. (Ed) (1979) *Ideology and Cultural Production*.

Barret M. (1980) *Women's Oppression Today*.

Cockburn C. (1983) *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change*.

Coote A. and Campbell B. (1982) *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation*.

Coward R. (1982) Patriarchal Precedents: Sexuality and Social Relations.  
 Daly M. (1979) Gyn/ecology.  
 Dworkin A. (1981) Pornography: Men Possessing Women.  
 Dworkin A. (1983) Right Wing Women: The Politics of Domesticated Females.  
 Ehrenreich B. (1983) The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment.  
 Eisenstein Z. (1978) Capitalism, Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism.  
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 Spender D. (1980) Man Made Language.  
 Wilson E. (1980) Only Halfway to Paradise: Women in Post War Britain 1945-1968.

#### **Chapter 6: Jeff Hearn: The Gender of Oppression; Men, Masculinity and the Critique of Marxism.**

- (1) Robert Staples has argued that "When other expressions of manhood such as gainful employment and economic success are blocked, those men will express their frustration and masculinity against women." (Staples 1985)

#### **Chapter 7: R.W.Connell: Gender and Power; Society, the Person and Sexual Politics.**

- (1) In 1983 Connell had published an essay entitled "Hard and Heavy: Towards a new sociology of masculinity" co-written with Tim Carrigan and the leading gay theorist John Lee. In this essay they argue that gay theorists had shown that men were divided into hierarchies of sexuality and that attitudes to sexuality had varied throughout history and were therefore neither "natural" nor static.
- (2) This seems little different from the role of the intellectual at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies of whom Connell was so critical in Which Way is Up? Essays on Class Sex and Culture when he noted that:

*"We have the secret knowledge that enables us to decode their culture (though we don't do much to help them decode ours) and to work out the ideas they ought to have..."*

*...To overcome these problems doesn't just need a better epistemology. It needs a different understanding of the relationship between the working class and the intellectuals, and ultimately a different practice."*

(Connell 1983 page 230)



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