Editorial Note

While it is certainly not the case that the study of masculinity (or masculinities) is now free from criticism, in the decade since the publication of Robert Connell's seminal *Masculinities*, it seems that many of the central theoretical models presented within that text have emerged relatively unscathed from the uproar that surrounded the field at inception. Specifically, Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity—a cluster of traits that defines an ideal masculinity men are expected to aspire to, but a concept grounded in eighteenth century concepts of breadwinning—is often used extensively to explain the way masculinity functions in both history and the history of gender relations. However, if one considers the articles in this issue, it becomes immediately clear that many of the questions that characterized that debate—the proper subjects of historical analysis; the politics of studying men; the role of gender, race, class, and sexuality in the conception of masculinity—have not been fully answered, and the goals of masculinity studies are still highly contested. While all of the articles here agree that the study of masculinity is important, together they take issue with the usefulness of hegemonic masculinity, of Connell's emphasis on "masculinities" (as opposed to "masculinity"), and the efficacy of studying masculinity in general. Each takes a different approach to resolving the issues, yet they all question the way in which we interpret the study of masculinity.

The problem with masculinity studies, as many projects under that rubric have been conducted, seems to be twofold. First, the novelty of masculinity studies has often been mistaken for radicalism. While the feminist critique of the field is certainly relevant here—that returning men to the centre of historical study is not really radical at all—the problem is more complex. If social historians of the New Left have often criticised the growing hold of the new cultural history upon the discipline, we might ask why, of all cultural forms of history, the study of masculinity has remained relatively exempt from that particular debate. The answer is not so elusive, given that the study of masculinity tends to repeat the kinds of structural class analysis popular in the 1970s. The workingmen who were the focus of New Left social history become the 'men' of the cultural turn; the bourgeoisie or capitalist class are replaced with Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity. While the scenario of historical analysis might be moved from the union hall to the billiard hall, the interpretation is interested in finding the structural manifestations of class consciousness, even as it embeds and obscures the role of class and capitalist enterprise in vague notions of power emblemized by Connell's problematic concept.

Which is not to suggest that the goal of masculinity studies is to obfuscate the role of class, or that gender is separate from class or race—far from it. But the second problem with this approach is that, while recognizing that masculinity should only be considered as a relational category of gender, the study of

masculinity often ignores the specific relationships that produce notions of gender in the first place. Consider: if hegemonic masculinity—a way to exist as man—is simply another false promise of the dominant, capitalist, male order that structures society and ensures the power of the patriarchy, then *any* attempts to exert manhood are, if not justified, at least explained by systemic oppression. Certainly, that may well be the case, insofar as every individual is affected by a patriarchal capitalist racist heterosexist consensus—to expand on DuBois, the "wages of white heteronomative masculinity"—but this emphasis on the oppressive demands placed upon men tends to ignore the arguments of theorists like Antonio Gramsci or Michel Foucault: that any hegemonic structure owes its power to the complicity of its subjects.

If we believe Joan Scott that the very language of social history is gendered, then the problem with the study of masculinity is not just that it masculinizes cultural history; it also culturalizes masculine social history. In the process, masculinity is reified as a stable, normative, culturally embedded benchmark for the field. Here, masculinity studies faces the same challenge that 1980s radical feminism and women's history faced from post-structuralist writers such as Scott, Denise Riley, and Judith Butler. Their works challenged the conception of a feminist framework resting upon the unstable and false category of woman. The instability of this category was especially apparent when feminism attempted to include non-white, non-middle class women in the broader emancipatory feminist cause. Class and race disrupted conceptions of the feminist 'woman' who was, in part, able to express her desires for equality because of privileges granted through her own race and class position.

Historians such as Antoinette Burton studying the white English women in colonial India have noted the ways in which women both served and produced colonial rhetoric about their inferior brown sisters in order to advance their own political cause both in India and England. Yet, even in that framework, there is a sense of two victims being produced at the hands of the colonial endeavour embodied by white upper class men. Masculinity studies, in turn, has also tried to produce multiple victims, by granting a greater role to the perils of the breadwinner ideal. In many ways, masculinity studies offers a renaissance to labour history by emphasizing the multiple strains upon the working man as he engages with the ideological and physical machinery of capitalism.

What masculinity studies ultimately suffers from is the inability to grapple with one of Scott's most powerful arguments: "we need to replace the notion that social power is unified, coherent, and centralized with something like Michael Foucault's concept of power as dispersed constellations of unequal relationships, discursively constituted in social 'fields of force.'" These fields of force have never sat well with historians needing to identify the movement of an oppressed class or caste against their oppressor, and even when authors have attempted to engage with Gramsci's notion of hegemony it is seldom to

acknowledge their subject's place at the hegemonic top, exerting power downward. In the study of masculinity, the effort to understand a historical subject has also become one to explain and partly absolve the multiple pressures that were exerted upon men in the face of capitalism. Yet those pressures must be acknowledged for what they were, and often still are: the effort to maintain and preserve power, power over women, power over other races, power over 'normative' notions of gendered bodies and sexual practice, and power over money.

While putting this issue together we hoped articles would respond to Bryce Traister and Toby Ditz's similar critiques that studies of masculinity have been wary of examining gendered narratives of power. This is a major concern for those of us on the left who want to see social, cultural, and institutional sites of power named and challenged. Happily, a number of articles included in this issue grapple with the institutional construction of masculinity, particularly Francis Shor's piece on the Wobblies and Joseph Lapsley's study of the National Institute of Mental Health, as well as Jeffrey Vacante's work on Quebec liberalism.

Two articles take particular issue with the concept of hegemonic masculinity and its failure to adequately theorize the role of non-white, non-middle class men. Malinda Alaine Lindquist's article on the writings of Anna Julia Cooper seeks an intervention in the historiography of masculinities in order to add the voice of a black American feminist who has been active in the debate about masculinities since the turn of the twentieth century. Lindquist argues that we need a black "womanist voice" alongside that of Freud, Connell, and others, in order to understand the interrelationship between masculinity and other forms of power. She argues that through Cooper we can understand how "racial supremacies, imperialism, internal colonialism, and patriarchy were transmitted through, what [Cooper] termed, a 'predominant man-influence.'" Cooper's role in defining a particular spectrum of masculinity affected by race is all the more important for highlighting how women, and not just men, articulated, lived within, and negotiated this scale.

Susannah Bredenkamp's theoretical musings about the phallus provides an additional space of debate with the work of Connell and his theory of hegemonic masculinity. Bredenkamp's article poses the theoretical, lived, and historic disjuncture between men's bodies and social views of masculinity. One of the problems with some studies of men is their focus on male bodies instead of masculinity, thereby failing to "account for and address the feminization of black men, Jewish men, and other "adjectival masculinities" throughout history." Bredenkamp traces the "origins of masculinity in nineteenth-century studies of biological difference" arguing that there is in fact only a single masculinity in western culture which "is at once the signifier of race, class, sex, ability, etc. and that any attempt to analyze one aspect without reference to the others obscures the processes of differentiation, signification, and the distribution of

power as they relate to all bodies."

One striking instance of institutional regulatory power acting under the guide of 'hegemonic masculinity' is seen in Joseph Lapsley's article on the 1969 National Institute of Mental Health Task Force Report on Homosexuality. In a fascinating unpacking of the NIMH report, Lapsley shows how liberal ideals of companionate marriage and the free market came together at the heart of a debate around homosexuality. Lapsley finds that this report, which has largely been depicted "as a groundbreaking, positive development" contains a nefarious undertone of free-market measures intended to promote "heterosexuality at the expense of homosexuality." Homosexuality was promoted by the report as a way to establish a difference against which heterosexual masculinity could be defined.

In his work on the Industrial Workers of the World, Francis Shor finds that "[g]ender constructions ... during this period [the first two decades of the twentieth century] were reconfigured by the insistent militancy of syndicalism in ways that instantiated an oppositional masculinism" or what Shor refers to as "virile syndicalism." While the Wobblies benefited from cohesion brought about by this oppositional stance, Shor finds that they ultimately failed by downplaying the role of women and fostering gender division. Shor's article, which arguably falls into line with Connell's definition, still recognizes the limits of Connell's model in enabling descriptions of power.

Vacante's provocative article suggests that Quebec's narrow definition of masculinity and sensitivity at being outed as different from the rest of North American society is intimately related to Quebec's past and their own particular liberal project. Picking up on currents within a series of political watersheds in Quebec since the 1960s, he follows his own work and other scholars in revealing how a particular notion of masculinity has arisen in the province. Vacante's own argument, is that this notion of masculinity, developed with significant help from historians, has prevented the development of masculinities studies in Quebec, seeing it as a "threat to the very state apparatus that is alleged to be at the centre of French-Canadian identity. In the same way that Jean Charest's efforts to downsize the state are described as "foreign" to Quebec sensibilities, so too are efforts to portray the state as a heteromasculinist or misogynistic entity seen to betray the spirit of the Quiet Revolution." In this manner, Vacante directly engages with Traister's suggestion that we evaluate the practice of masculinity studies as well as the politics.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Geoff Read, former editor and retiring book review editor who has contributed significantly to the journal over recent years. At the same time, we welcome *Left History*'s new book review editor, Tarah Brookfield, to the staff.

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