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RELATED ENTRIES

Abolitionism; Adolescence; African-American Manhood; *Birth of a Nation*; Citizenship; Douglass, Frederick; Emancipation; Gilded Age; Lincoln, Abraham; Middle-Class Manhood; Militarism; Military; Nationalism; Passionate Manhood; Slavery; Southern Manhood; Strenuous Life; Victorian Era; War; Whiteness; White Supremacism; Youth

—Thomas Winter

CLASS

The economic and social transformations engendered by industrialization, urbanization, and the emergence of a market economy in the nineteenth century led to processes of class formation, class difference, and class identity that have profoundly shaped definitions of manliness in the United States. A man's position in the process of production, the type of work he performs, and the amount of managerial and entrepreneurial control he exercises are determinants of class status and are intricately connected to notions of masculinity and gender. As an expression of a man's economic status, and of the cultural attitudes and perceptions that it engenders, class and class difference are connected to articulations of gender and manliness in U.S. society.

Manhood and Social Hierarchy in Preindustrial Society

The notion of class divisions did not exist in preindustrial America, but emerged with the separation of labor from managerial control and ownership of the means of production that were part of the Industrial Revolution. Yet preindustrial society recognized social hierarchies and status distinctions that were closely intertwined with definitions of manhood. Status distinctions were reflected in three different paradigms of manliness that prefigured subsequent class-based definitions of masculinity: patrician, artisan, and yeoman. The patrician, who inherited European aristocratic ideals of manhood based on honor, cultural refinement in taste and conduct, and substantial property ownership, saw himself as one of the trustworthy few who fulfilled his duties and obligations and served the republic

by providing leadership to society. In turn, the patrician expected and received the deference of those below him in social standing. The artisan and the yeoman both emphasized economic self-sufficiency and independence as the basis of citizenship and manliness, but they had different economic foundations. The artisanal ideal of manliness, rooted in craft-based production, emphasized workplace autonomy and craft-based solidarity, whereas the yeoman emphasized access to and ownership of land as the marks of autonomy and manliness.

Industrialization and the Market Revolution

In the early nineteenth century, industrialization and the market revolution fundamentally reshaped processes of economic production, manufacturing, and distribution, as well as the social experiences of work and business. These economic transformations created new forms of social stratification and new notions of manliness based on class difference.

Class-based constructions of masculinity were grounded in experiences of work, income-generating activity, and economic transactions. The control over one's labor power and the ability to participate in an expanding marketplace—called “transactional manhood” by the historian Scott Sandage—increasingly set the standards by which men defined themselves as men and as members of particular social classes. Industrialization and the market revolution slowly replaced an ideal of manliness grounded in propertied independence with an ideal rooted in acquisitive individualism and the ability to engage in economic transactions.

Merchants, lawyers, and those artisans who were able to expand their operations formed the core of an emerging middle class and conformed most closely to a notion of transactional manhood. For these men, entrepreneurial control over one's business operations, and one's workforce became fundamental both to class status and to class-based definitions of manliness. Middle-class manhood meant, above all, espousing an individualistic ethos, being continually “on the make,” and embracing those behaviors deemed necessary for economic success—particularly self-control, industry, sobriety, rationality, and competitiveness.

For upper-class men, ideas of manhood remained grounded in property, power, wealth, quasi-aristocratic status, and social leadership (not unlike the eighteenth-century patrician). They aspired through their wealth, social position, and political clout to conduct themselves as civic stewards, offering guidance and giving shape to an urbanizing and industrializing society by holding political office, performing charitable

work, and serving in informal advisory functions. With the market revolution and the shift of economic transactions from barter and local exchange to cash and credit in domestic and trans-Atlantic markets, control over the circulation of money through credit or speculative activity became a critical aspect of upper-class manliness.

Not all men could achieve this ideal of transactional manhood. Artisans and journeymen, who aspired to become master artisans and to realize an artisanal masculine ideal based on skill, entrepreneurial control, and craft autonomy, found themselves increasingly pressed into the ranks of an emerging working class. Industrialization and the market revolution curtailed their ability to transact. Nor could older ideals of propertied independence ground their notions of manliness, since the ownership of land or a house became increasingly unattainable for them. The ability to establish their sons in jobs and careers of their own became more important to their sense of manhood—but this rested on uncertain foundations, since its success depended largely on the occupation, labor demand, and skill level required. Instead, working-class men grounded their manliness in their ability to earn a family wage. Many skilled craftsmen were able to retain traditional notions of craft control and workplace autonomy in their definitions of working-class manliness. For factory operatives and skilled craft-workers alike, awareness of their shared class status, and solidarity with other men of the same class background, became a significant aspect of their manliness.

Corporate Capitalism in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

The second wave of industrialization in the late nineteenth century, and the subsequent rise of corporations, further reshaped class-based social structures and class-based definitions of manliness. Mechanization and the so-called deskilling of many work processes, the continuing significance of craft-based control and craft autonomy, the increasing significance of bureaucratic and corporate structures, and the further spatial expansion of cities (and the spatial distribution of social functions within them) all contributed to the reshaping of class-based social structures and class-based definitions of manliness.

Mechanization and the deskilling of an increasing number of work processes increased the entrepreneurial power and control of industrialists. For a small group of upper-class businessmen, the power and ability to direct the flow of production, cash, and credit—to function as “captains of industry”—became a crucial aspect of their definitions of

manliness. Their control over large labor forces and national distribution networks, as well as social Darwinist ideas linking success with power and strength, figured into their perceptions of their manliness.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the United States witnessed the formation of a whole new substratum of middle managers for whom the administration and supervision of others was a critical aspect of their manliness. These new middle-class men belonged to an emerging corporate class of employers, entrepreneurs, professionals, managers, advertisers, ministers, academics, and others who were united by their profound agreement as to the benefits of a corporate capitalist society—and who shared in its administration, control, and ideological justification. Men of this corporate class defined manliness through corporate, bureaucratic, and professional codes that emphasized productivity, efficiency, teamwork, and public status.

Class-based constructions of manhood among industrial workers continued to vary, depending on one’s level of skill. In some areas, such as glove-making, glass-blowing, printing, and steel manufacturing, craft skills retained significance and craft autonomy continued to play a significant aspect of the definition and experience of working-class masculinity. But for the increasing ranks of semiskilled and unskilled operatives and workers, craft autonomy became unattainable.

For a growing segment of the male working class, the paycheck, or the ability to provide for one’s family, became the yardstick of manliness and social worth. With the introduction of the continuous-motion assembly line, older artisanal ideals emphasizing skill content and physical power withered, and some manufacturers replaced men with women. Men in many industrial work settings compensated for this development by defining certain jobs as suitable for men only. The affirmation of masculinity through such gender-typing became an important part of the cultural wage that working-class men derived from their work. Working-class men also looked increasingly to labor unions (such as the Knights of Labor, founded in 1869, and the American Federation of Labor, founded in 1886) to define and collectively affirm class-based definitions of manliness. While men across class lines tended to share a belief in the importance of individual effort for economic success and well-being, working-class men increasingly realized that mutual loyalty among men of the same class background allowed them to protect their economic interests and their claims to manhood in a transactional society.

The Great Depression intensified class-based definitions of manliness. Those who struggled to survive were reaffirmed

in linking manhood to economic status and the ability to provide, while wealthier Americans who weathered the storm were confirmed in their belief in their own strength. Among working-class men, class solidarity and unionization became an even more salient dimension of working-class manhood, as was evidenced by the large number of strikes, in particular in 1934 and 1937, and the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which organized previously unorganized workers. Yet militant assertions of working-class masculinity, critical of and potentially in opposition to capitalism, was reined in by the New Deal. By supporting unionization through the Wagner Act (1935), the federal government generated new loyalties between the federal government and the working class, thus bringing working-class men and their definitions of manhood into a closer alliance with the corporate class and a closer conformity with transactional standards of manliness.

Manhood and Class in Postwar America

The long cycle of global economic expansion that followed World War II and that lasted until the late 1960s had a tremendous impact on class-based definitions of manliness in U.S. society. This economic upswing stabilized the lives and careers of middle-class men and enabled many working-class men to aspire to, and even achieve, middle-class status. Suburban living, including the ownership of a home, household appliances, and an automobile, became an important expression of a man's success as breadwinner and a pervasive symbol of a man's class status. Yet some cultural critics suggested that the security, comforts, and social status associated with suburban manhood undermined rather than bolstered masculine identity. Others, such as Sloan Wilson, the author of *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* (1955), and William Whyte, the author of *The Organization Man* (1956), feared that the new middle-class male lacked autonomy.

Manhood and Class in a Postindustrial Economy

Between the mid-1950s and the 1980s, a series of structural changes in the U.S. economy altered the class structure of American society and challenged older class-based definitions of manliness. According to the sociologist Daniel Bell, the United States economy was, by the mid-1950s, entering a new "postindustrial" phase based less on production and manufacturing than on theoretical knowledge and professional expertise. By the late 1960s a long stretch of post-World War II economic expansion had given way to stagnation and inflation. During the 1970s and 1980s, U.S. companies began adjusting to changing global realities by means of a restructuring—often

called "de-industrialization." The increasing significance of white-collar and service occupations, the end of continuous economic growth, and the decline of heavy industry (which meant a loss of jobs in previously male preserves) made the class distinctions and class-based notions of manhood generated by industrialization less meaningful. Michael Moore's documentary film *Roger and Me* (1988), a study of the decline of Flint, Michigan, as a result of GM plant closures, suggested that workingmen felt powerless, alienated, and unable to adjust to new realities by articulating new and meaningful definitions of manliness and class.

The corporate restructuring of the U.S. economy affected not only working-class men but also, by the mid-1980s, middle-class men as well. After an initial expansion of the corporate sector in the early 1980s, corporations began to "downsize," resulting in the loss of white-collar management positions. Men began to lose their sense of security in their jobs and their work-based masculine identities.

As old frameworks of class-based notions of manhood emphasizing entrepreneurial control lost significance, new class divisions and class-based definitions of manliness emerged. Class distinctions grounded in the social relations of production in an industrial economy did not vanish. But the most meaningful postindustrial class divisions—sometimes overlapping with, and sometimes replacing, corporate industrial class distinctions—became those between men (and increasingly women as well) who possessed and administered scientific knowledge and expertise and those who were subjected to such knowledge and expertise without exercising any control over it. Class-based definitions of manliness increasingly became defined through participation in corporate networks of codification, application, and distribution of knowledge. The development of these new postindustrial definitions of manhood suggests that class remains a powerful shaper of masculinity in American society.

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COLD WAR

The Cold War, which began after World War II and lasted through the 1980s, was a geopolitical rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union grounded in an ideological rivalry between capitalism and communism. The Cold War raised concerns about both external and internal threats to American strength, social stability, and security, and particularly to material abundance, middle-class lifestyles, and cultural norms about masculinity. Motivated by fears of emasculation, effeminization, and homosexuality, Americans anxiously defined their nation and their way of life in terms culturally associated with masculinity, including power, diplomatic and military assertiveness, economic success, sexual and physical prowess, moral righteousness, and patriotism.

Postwar Anxieties

A major basis of Cold War anxiety was the fear that the defining features of American life weakened both American men and the nation, thus rendering both unable to confront the perceived threat of Soviet communism abroad and at home. In an often contradictory fashion, American commentators of the 1940s and 1950s identified the sources of this weakness as postwar material abundance, conformity (as well as nonconformity), overprotective mothers, negligent parents, governmental and corporate paternalism, and rampant homosexuality (which Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) had shown to be far more widespread in U.S. society than most had believed). Corporate capitalism, in particular, caused anxious concerns. Bureaucratic and regimented workplaces, critics argued, seemed to have undermined the manhood of American men. Suggesting that American men had become alienated and emasculated by corporate work and suburban life, C. Wright Mills's *White Collar* (1951) and William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956) maintained that manliness could be affirmed through independence, self-determination, and the exercise of power.

Masculinity and 1950s Domesticity

Cold War anxieties regarding American manhood often equated communism with voracious femininity or seductive female sexuality. In the novels of Mickey Spillane, such as *One Lonely Night* (1951) and *Kiss Me Deadly* (1952), women who work for communists take advantage of weak men who are unable to resist their seductive wiles. In these tales, only the protagonist/hero Mike Hammer—whose name suggests the association many Americans perceived between masculinity, physical toughness, and Americanism—possesses the fortitude necessary for triumph over these figures. In an even more

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RELATED ENTRIES

Agrarianism; Artisan; Automobile; Boxing; Business/Corporate America; Capitalism; Darwinism; Great Depression; Individualism; Industrialization; Labor Movement and Unions; Leisure; Market Revolution; Middle-Class Manhood; New Deal; *Organization Man, The*; Professionalism; Property; Self-Made Man; Suburbia; Urbanization; Work; Working-Class Manhood

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