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The Polycrisis and the Centaur: Hegemony, Masculinity and Racialisation

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ABSTRACT

The multiplicity of crises that mark the contemporary era, the polycrisis, also constitutes a crisis of hegemony. This article explores the functions of gendered racialisation in elite management of this hegemonic crisis, with reference to Gramsci's use of the figure of the Centaur, a hybrid of humanity and animality. It discusses the ways in which this hybrid evokes racialising tropes of human bestiality to express the dynamic interplay of consent and coercion through which hegemony is maintained. Moral panics in relation to the threat of the racialised male Other, variously figured as migrant, terrorist and/or criminal, draw on a bestialised humanisation of racialised masculinities in order to elicit consent to the exercise of coercive authority. Such authority in turn invokes a plasticity of excess/deficiency of the racialised male Other to sanction exclusionary and exterminatory violence. To seize the political opportunity of the current moment to reimagine gender justice and social justice together requires a deeper engagement with the deployment of racialised masculinities in securing consent to coercive authority amid the deepening polycrisis.

Keywords: polycrisis, hegemony, racialisation, masculinities, plasticity

INTRODUCTION

In August 2019, a global convening of feminist activists met in Mexico to strategise towards the UN Beijing+25 events planned for the summer of 2020. They called attention to a 'world in crisis' as a result of neoliberal capitalism and climate change, the resurgence of anti-feminism as a political force seeking to both manage and exploit this crisis, and the need for radical social change (Anon, 2019). The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic a few months later only reaffirmed their warning of systemic crisis. In Hearn's view, there is a 'contemporary economic–political–ecological 'ecosystem', with intertwining, engulfing, holistic crises, perhaps for the whole planet', in which '[e]conomic exploitation, financialised capitalism, growing inequalities, anti-democratic movements and ecological damage work together, with multiple material-discursive feedbacks' (Hearn, 2022: 16).

Economic historian Adam Tooze has described the current conjuncture as a 'polycrisis', in which 'the shocks are disparate, but they interact so that the whole is even more overwhelming than the sum of the parts' (Tooze, 2022). The polycrisis, and the need for urgent systemic change that it reveals, poses a challenge not only to elites who benefit from existing political and economic arrangements. It also calls into question the analyses and strategies of what is commonly characterised as 'liberal feminism', with its emphasis on individualised women's empowerment and equal opportunities within the current system. As Watkins (2018) makes clear, this is a feminism which pursues gender equality and accepts social inequality. In their 2018 *Notes for a Feminist Manifesto*, Arruzza *et al.* (2018: 114) ask whether we will 'continue to pursue "equal-opportunity domination" while the planet burns? Or will we reimagine gender justice in an anti-capitalist form, which leads beyond the present carnage to a new society?'

I argue that this work of re-imagination must reckon with the uses of gendered racialisation in managing the hegemonic crisis produced by the current conjuncture. I begin with the crisis of hegemony produced by the polycrisis, and the opportunities this presents for both Right and Left political forces. Gender has become a significant terrain of struggle over hegemony, with the rise of an authoritarian populism in many societies being marked by a patriarchal and paternalist politics of re-masculinisation. Intersectional feminist movements are challenging this regressive gender politics, as part of a broader anti-racist, anti-capitalist challenge to a crisis-ridden neoliberalism. But scholarly and programming work on masculinities, I argue, still largely fails to articulate itself in

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relation to intersectional feminist responses to the contemporary hegemonic crisis. I briefly review the limitations of the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' in this regard, before turning to Hearn's discussion of the 'hegemony of men' and its invitation to consider the 'coloniality of gender' and deconstruct the category of 'men' by attending to its racialised human-animal boundaries.

This ambiguity of the category of 'men' and its frequently racialised human-animal boundaries is deployed, I argue, in the management of hegemonic crisis. Gramsci's (1971) foundational account of hegemony, as a dynamic interplay of consent and coercion through which authority is secured, invoked Machiavelli's figure of the Centaur. Its hybrid of humanity and animality expressed the racialisation of rationality that accompanied the entangled histories of Renaissance humanism and European colonialism. I explore the ways in which this dynamic of hegemony, and specifically the eliciting of consent to the exercise of coercive authority, continues to rely on racialising tropes of human animality. With reference to Jackson's (2020) concepts of racialised plasticity and bestialised humanisation, I consider the use of moral panics in relation to the racialised male Other, variously figured as migrant, terrorist and/or criminal, to manage periods of hegemonic crisis. Such moral panics have relied on a bestialised humanisation of racialised masculinities, that in turn invokes a plasticity of excess/deficiency to sanction exclusionary and exterminatory violence against the male Other. To get 'beyond the present carnage to a new society' requires, I conclude, a deeper engagement with the deployment of racialised masculinities in securing consent to coercive authority amid the deepening polycrisis.

HEGEMONIC CRISIS AND ANTI-FEMINISM

The gender dimensions of the polycrisis must be clearly understood as both challenge and opportunity. As Arruzza *et al.* note, an anti-capitalist feminism has become thinkable today because of the 'political dimension of the present crisis: the erosion of elite credibility throughout the world, affecting not only the centrist neoliberal parties but also their Sandberg-style corporate-feminist allies' (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser, 2018: 114). The polycrisis is thus also a crisis of legitimacy for political and economic elites. 'All the signs have become present that we are living through an epochal crisis', write Gilbert and Williams (2022: vii), in which 'the systems of order that regulate our political world have been plunged into disarray.' This is, then, a crisis of hegemony.

With the rise of far-right authoritarianism and the electoral success of explicit 'strongmen' in ostensibly democratic polities, it has become common to liken contemporary politics to the hegemonic crisis in interwar Europe, during which fascist parties, notably in Italy but also elsewhere in Europe, rose to power. Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci articulated his influential account of hegemony in response to these developments (Gramsci, 1971, 1995). Hegemony, as the process of securing and exercising societal leadership, 'comprises a complex set of practices designed to win the active and passive consent of key social actors in a particular historical bloc, while securing the compliance of others' (Howarth, 2015: 198). Such consent becomes harder to manage during times of economic recession and political instability, producing a crisis of hegemony, which presents opportunities for Left forces to forge a new historical bloc around their own intellectual and moral leadership. To do so, however, the Left must confront the elite's own efforts to resolve this hegemonic crisis through its recourse to, and celebration of, coercive power.

The 2019 Mexico City feminist convening, in their diagnosis of the 'world in crisis', highlighted this coercive turn in contemporary politics, in which '[a]uthoritarian governments, some of which were in fact democratically elected, often consolidate power in the name of security through emergency laws that indiscriminately curb dissent' (Anon, 2019: 3). That this coercive turn should seek to legitimise itself, at least in part, through anti-feminism should come as no surprise; 'authoritarian power is inevitably exercised by targeting women and gender-non conforming people through the regulation of their bodies, roles, freedoms, and rights' (Anon, 2019: 4). Social order, embodied both in the institutions that elicit our consent and those that coerce our compliance, remains male-identified: led by men and lived through masculine idioms, at once heteronormative and cisgendered. A widespread and growing sense of disorder, then, born of conjunctural crises, is unsurprisingly experienced and expressed in gendered terms.

This helps explain the contemporary return of the 'strongman' as a patriarchal source of psychic comfort, a man who can take charge and restore a sense of order. Bolsonaro, Erdoğan, Modi and Putin have all made explicitly masculinised appeals to their electorates, promising to defeat their internal enemies (including ethnic, religious and sexual minorities) who are said to threaten domestic security and national prosperity. An extensive literature, both academic and journalistic, now delineates the entangled growth of authoritarian populism and virulent anti-feminism in many societies, whose appeal in recent years has relied on both a discourse and affect of gendered, and frequently racialised, crisis (Dietze and Roth, 2020; Strick, 2020; Agius, Rosamond and Kinnvall, 2021; Encinas-Franco, 2022).

Recent political developments, notably in the apparent return of a 'pink tide' in Latin America, with the electoral successes of centre-left leaders in Chile (Boric), Colombia (Petro) and Brazil (Lula) among the most significant,

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caution against a generalised and reductive reading of the regressive gender politics of the polycrisis. Nevertheless, a revivified masculinisation of politics, both heteropatriarchal and cisnormative, can be discerned in the 'culture wars' against 'gender ideology' being waged in many societies in response to a pervasive sense of crisis (Graff and Korolczuk, 2022; Heinemann and Stern, 2022).

The political opportunity of the polycrisis for Left movements in general, and an anti-capitalist feminism in particular, is the 'erosion of elite credibility' it has produced, a hegemonic crisis that opens space to reimagine gender justice and social justice together. The political challenge is that it is also an opportunity for a range of Right formations to claim to restore a sense of order and resolve the hegemonic crisis through anti-feminist policies and symbolic practices of patriarchal masculinities. It is tempting to frame responses to this challenge in terms of confronting the 'strongman' politics that seems to exemplify such practices. But this would be to construe the revivified masculinisation of politics too narrowly. The 'strongman' is but one example of these practices of patriarchal masculinities, and understanding their broader and deeper insinuation into modes of governance is an urgent task. Nor is it helpful to examine the linked problems of hegemonic crisis and the re-masculinisation of politics through the lens of 'toxic masculinities'. If anything, such a lens narrows the focus to a concern about the supposedly problematic behaviours of 'toxic' men, thus replaying the individualised framing of structural problems for which the field of anti-patriarchal work with men and boys has been rightly criticised (COFEM, 2017).

Current theorising of masculinities in relation to a concern about hegemonic crisis has yet to grasp both the political opportunity and challenge outlined above, confined as it is within the terms set by Connell's (1995: 71) foundational, and still influential, definition of masculinity as 'simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture.' This definition privileged an individualist account of gender practices which emphasised the mutual shaping of culture and embodied behaviour; '[t]his is why life-history studies have become a characteristic genre of work on hegemonic masculinity', as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 844) noted in their article rethinking the concept, a decade on from Connell's elaboration of it in her book *Masculinities*.

Widely taken up in both scholarly and programmatic work on men and their masculinities, the concept of hegemonic masculinity invokes Gramsci to explore and explain the processes of 'cultural ascendancy' and 'discursive persuasion' by which 'a specific form of masculinity in a given historical and society-wide social setting (…) legitimates unequal gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities' (Messerschmidt, 2018: 28). But the concept has long been confused about the relationship between 'cultural ascendancy' and material domination, a relationship in which Gramsci was keenly interested.

In one of its earliest formulations, Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985: 592) defined hegemonic masculinity as both a 'culturally exalted form of masculinity' and the means by which 'particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance.' The ways in which the concept of hegemonic masculinity conflates different ways of being a man ('culturally exalted') with different positions in hierarchies of power (materially privileged in 'positions of power and wealth') has long undermined the term's analytical acuity and political utility. As Howson notes, 'hegemonic masculinity slides in meaning between a political mechanism that is tied to hegemony and the manifestation of the dominant version of manhood' (Howson, 2006: 109).

This conceptual slipperiness undermines efforts to theorise the gender dimensions of the polycrisis and its crisis of hegemony, not least because such a theorisation requires that gender be understood in its imbrication with other relations and operations of power. '[B]etter ways of understanding gender hierarchy are required', insisted Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 848) in their review of the uses of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, implicitly acknowledging the limitations of its account of gender in relation to other social stratifications. Messerschmidt (2018: 69) developed this insight further, highlighting the need to attend to 'the mutual conditioning or intersectionality of gender with such other social inequalities as class, race, age, sexuality, and nation.' But here again there is a reluctance to think structurally and beyond the behaviourist/culturalist framing so characteristic of the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. It is noteworthy that Messerschmidt focuses his use of the concept of 'variable intersectionality' primarily on the interpersonal manifestations of a range of social inequalities in different forms of 'hegemonically masculine interaction' (Messerschmidt, 2018: 99).

An intersectional feminist account of masculinities in the context of the polycrisis, that can make sense of the political opportunities and challenges arising from this moment of hegemonic crisis, needs a clearer focus on the structural forces at work. In his recent article on the place and potential of crisis/crises in critical studies on men and masculinities, Hearn (2022: 566) develops his longstanding argument that it is more useful, conceptually and politically, to 'analyse not only, or not so much, masculinity/ies *per se*, but the naming, identification, construction, historicising, problematising and deconstruction of men as both persons and a gender category.' Drawing attention to the hegemony of men, rather than hegemonic masculinity, highlights men's roles in and responsibilities for a range of crises, from the economic to the ecological. In this way, Hearn argues, it becomes possible to focus on 'the powerful effects of certain groupings of men, with elites, state and military leaders, corporate and finance

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leaders, autocrats, oligarchs, dictators, and the super-rich creating crises', as well as on 'men's domination of and specialisation in violence (and non-specialisation in care)' and 'the uneven impacts of crises on men and masculinities, linking with intersectional social realities' (Hearn, 2022: 577).

There is a welcome emphasis here on the decisions and practices of elite men, on differences between men based on 'racialisation, class, age, disability, sexualities and gender, among further inequalities' (Hearn, 2022: 577) as well as on the fact that the 'social category of men is (re)created in everyday life, institutional practices and interplay with other social categories, such as class, ethnicity and sexuality' (Hearn, 2022: 573). Less clearly articulated by Hearn in this paper are the economic and political forces that structure these practices and differences, and the crises to which they give rise, as well as the uses to which masculinities, as a set of symbolic practices and ideological investments, are put in the service of managing and exploiting these crises (also see Hearn, 2015).

But the insistence that men as a gender category 'need to be denaturalised and deconstructed, just as postcolonial theory deconstructs the white subject or queer theory deconstructs the sexual subject' does provide a useful starting point for such an articulation of the structural forces shaping the gender dimensions of hegemonic crisis (Hearn, 2022: 573). As Hearn suggests, deconstructing the hegemony of men as a gender category reveals the shaky biological foundations of the binary sex/gender system so beloved of conservative and right-wing forces and an emerging group of self-identified 'gender critical' feminists. It also helps explain the centrality of the oppression of trans people, and the suppression of trans identities and experiences, to the contemporary rise of anti-feminism discussed above. The patriarchal restoration of a sense of order amid proliferating crises relies, in part, on a renovation of the naturalised boundaries between the categories of male and female in the binary sex/gender system.

The insistence that the gender category of men be denaturalised also opens up important analytical and political space to address the ways in which narratives and representations of masculinities are racialised in an effort to restore elite credibility in this era of polycrisis. Hearn (2022: 573) mentions, but does not investigate, the 'coloniality of gender and rereadings of capitalist colonial modernity' as well as the 'broader question of human–animal/non-human relations, which also problematise fixed, dominant and supposedly autonomous notions of men and masculinities.' Recent theorising of racialised masculinities in terms of the positing, policing and blurring of human–animal boundaries of the category of man is indeed highly suggestive when it comes to understanding the management of hegemonic crisis today (Curry, 2017; Ratele, 2021). Such boundaries were at the heart of Gramsci's formulation of hegemony, as the interplay between consent and coercion in the exercise of state power. Central to this formulation was the mythical figure of the Centaur, half-man, half-beast. For Gramsci, following Machiavelli, the Centaur embodied and symbolised 'the hybrid of compulsion and consent by which men were always governed' (Anderson, 1976: 49). Far from simply juxtaposing consent and coercion as modes of governance, Gramsci was interested in hegemony 'as itself a synthesis of consent and coercion' (Anderson, 1976: 22). The figure of the Centaur not only expressed this synthesis, but grounded it in a racialised policing of the category of man and its human–animal boundaries that persists to this day.

CONSENT, COERCION AND BESTIALISED HUMANISATION

Using Machiavelli-Gramsci's figure of the Centaur, a hybrid of humanity and bestiality, to explore the process of hegemony as a dynamic interplay of consent and coercion, is helpful in highlighting the ways in which racialised gender has been deployed in managing this dynamic. The Centaur appears in Machiavelli's most famous writing on political philosophy, *Il Principe* ('The Prince'), published in 1513 at a time of increasing European colonial incursion into Africa and the Americas and, relatedly, the emergence of the humanist philosophy of the European Renaissance. These distant histories remain extremely consequential for contemporary life. As Wynter (1996: 300) makes clear, the 'intellectual revolution of humanism' was tied from the beginning to the colonial encounter with non-European peoples.

The extraordinary violence of European colonial incursion and conquest prompted debates about its legitimacy, most famously in Valladolid, Spain in 1550 'where the boundary between the civilised and the savage was prosecuted' (Patel and Moore, 2017: 36). At issue was the legitimacy of the encomienda system, by which Spanish colonial authorities extracted the forced labour of indigenous people. Defending the justness of the system in the Valladolid debates was Spanish humanist and jurist Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, who emphasised that the indigenous peoples were inferior to the Spaniards 'as children are to adults, women are to men, the savage and ferocious [man] to the gentle, the grossly intemperate to the continent and temperate and finally, I shall say, almost as monkeys are to men' (Pagden, 1982, cited in Wynter, 2003: 283). It was the animal-like nature of indigenous peoples, bereft of human reason, that legitimated Spanish seizure of their land and labour, Sepúlveda claimed.

The humanism of the European renaissance relied, from its beginning, on this project of racialisation. The origin story of this project, and its roles in European colonialism and the emergence of capitalist social relations,

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is both complex and contested. But it is widely acknowledged that, from the beginning, this racialisation of rationality was tied to animalisation. In Jackson's (2020: 4) words, 'Eurocentric humanism needs blackness as a prop in order to erect whiteness: to define its own limits and to designate humanity as an achievement as well as to give form to the category of "the animal".' Gender has long been used to mark and mediate this human-animal boundary so central to racialisation. For Jackson (2020: 4), 'black female flesh persistently functions as the limit case of "the human" and is its matrix-figure' because 'the delineation between species has fundamentally hinged on the question of reproduction; in other words, the limit of the human has been determined by how the means and scene of birth are interpreted.' The animalisation of the African female racialised femininity as white, Jackson (2020: 8) argues, so that 'an idealised white femininity became paradigmatic of "woman" through the abjection of the perceived African "female".' No wonder that Sojourner Truth, a prominent anti-slavery abolitionist campaigner after gaining her freedom in 1827, focused her speech to the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio, in 1851 on the question: 'Ain't I a Woman?'.

The racialisation of colonised and enslaved populations, from the beginning of European incursions into Africa and the Americas in the 15th century, was legitimated by a humanist philosophy of rationality that used gender as an unstable marker of the human-animal boundary. This instability lives on today. As Vergès (2022: 93) makes clear, '[r]acialised women are not completely "women" and racialised men are not completely "men," according to the norms inherited from slavery and colonialism.' It is telling that Curry uses the term 'Man-Not' to frame his examination of the dilemmas of black manhood in the USA. He notes that the 'colonised/racialised subject was denied gender precisely to define the boundaries between the content of the human and the deficit of those racially speciated' (Curry, 2017: 6). This gender delimitation is enmeshed with the racialisation-animalisation discussed above. As Curry (2017: 7) makes clear, the 'Man-Not is the denial not only of Black manhood but also of the possibility to be anything but animal, the savage beast, outside the civilisational accounts of gender.' He cites the scholarship of Lugones, whose discussion of decolonial feminism begins with the colonisation of the Americas and the Caribbean, in which 'a hierarchical, dichotomous distinction between human and non-human was imposed on the colonised in the service of Western man' (Lugones, 2010: 743).

This colonial distinction between the humanist rationality of civilised Man and the uncontrolled savagery of colonised populations figured the racialised male body as another limit case of the human, but this time as existential threat. Curry emphasises that the Black male 'was constructed as the white race's antipodal monstrosity, a sexual threat to the very foundation of white civilisation if its savagery was not repressed' (Curry, 2017: 4). Contemporary politics, both within and between formerly colonised and colonising nations, continues to be shaped by this 'caricature of racialised men as threats to the social and biological reproduction of white order' (Curry, 2017: 4). In her study of the far-right National Rally in France (formerly known as the National Front, NF), Scrinzi (2017: 134) notes that the 'nation is compared to a domestic community threatened by invaders, on the basis of dualisms opposing Us (the inside, the private) to the Other looming large on the outside.' As she (Scrinzi, 2017: 136) explains, the threat of the Other 'required the hypervisibility of the racialised man, represented as a sexual and cultural threat to female citizens.' This hypervisibility has entered the mainstream, as is evident from 'the media focus on the figure of the "garçon arabe", the young male of immigrant origin, as racialised men of the suburbs tend to be depicted as potential rapists' (Scrinzi, 2017: 129).

Images and narratives of the uncontrolled sexual appetites and violence of racialised men have gained renewed political currency and legitimacy as a result of the popularity of the 'great replacement' meme, referencing the 2012 book by right-wing French commentator Renaud Camus, in which he claims that Europe's white majority faces demographic defeat as a result of the sexual and reproductive excess of North African and sub-Saharan African immigrants (Köttig and Blum, 2017). Such tropes continue to resonate politically in diverse ways, from Trump's rhetoric on immigration to the moral panic concerning what were referred to as 'Asian grooming gangs' in media and policy responses to child sexual abuse scandals in the UK, in which emphasis was given to the 'primitive' masculinity and 'predatory' sexuality of the men involved (Alexander, 2017). Nor is this confined to white-majority societies. The political rhetoric of the Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India urges the re-masculinisation of Hindu society in the face of the existential threat posed by Muslim male sexuality, a discursive re-masculinisation entangled with the complexities of the 'coloniality of gender' as a technology of imperial control, through which the colonised were constructed as distinct 'native' groups, in part through an imposition of differential gendering. For one way to understand the Hindu nationalist hyper-masculinity celebrated by the BJP is as a reaction to the differential gendering of colonised men under the 'define and rule' (Mamdani, 2012) governance of the British empire, through which the 'effeminate Bengali' became a staple figure of the imperial imagination (Sinha, 1999).

Significantly, these racialised tropes of primitive and predatory masculinity have always relied, for their political effectiveness as a technology of domination, on an unsettling ambiguity. In her close reading of anti-blackness in US culture and politics from the time of the earliest colonial settlement, and the uses made of animalisation by advocates of slavery, Jackson (2020: 27) emphasises that 'all of the thinkers above identify black people as human

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(however attenuated and qualified).' Indeed, as Jackson (2020: 28) explains, the 'enslaved [lived a] bifurcated existence as both an object of property and legal person endowed with limited rights, protections, and criminal culpability.' This 'bifurcated existence' produced an ontological ambiguity, that was politically useful for slave-holding elites. On this basis, Jackson calls for a more complex understanding of the human/animal binary and its uses in racialisation:

> Binaristic frameworks such as 'humanisation versus dehumanisation' and 'human versus animal' are insufficient to understand a biopolitical regime that develops technologies of humanisation in order to refigure blackness as abject human animality and extends human recognition in an effort to demean blackness as 'the animal within the human' form. (Jackson, 2020: 20)

In Jackson's noteworthy intervention, what is central to these racialising technologies of humanisation is not simply a determining dehumanisation or fixed animalisation but an imposed plasticity of being. Plasticity is 'certainly an antiblack mode of the human concerned with apportioning vitality and pathologisation' Jackson (2020: 11) argues, but also a 'praxis that seeks to define the essence of a black(ened) thing as infinitely mutable (…).' In this way, racialised populations are 'cast as sub, supra, and human simultaneously and (…) black(ened) humanity as the privation and exorbitance of form' (Jackson, 2020: 35).

This racialising plasticity, and its gendered hybrid of deficiency and excess, has travelled historically and geopolitically. In her account of the gender narratives accompanying the War on Terror, Puar (2007: xxxiii) notes that 'during the aftermath of the release of the Abu Ghraib photos in May 2004, I maintain that Muslim masculinity is simultaneously pathologically excessive yet repressive, perverse yet homophobic, virile yet emasculated, monstrous yet flaccid.' In this view, racialisation is, in part at least, the production of ontological vulnerability to being defined by the dominant, as Mamdani's (2012) account of imperial governance as 'define and rule', referenced above, makes clear. Fanon's celebrated account of colonialism also spoke to this vulnerability, when he (2008: 89) insisted that 'the Other fixes me with his gaze, his gestures and attitude, the same way you fix a preparation with a dye.'

The more appropriate concept for understanding the racialised plasticity at the heart of anti-black racism, Jackson (2020: 23) argues, is 'bestialised humanisation, because the African's humanity is not denied but appropriated, inverted, and ultimately plasticised in the methodology of abjecting animality.' This notion of 'bestialised humanisation', and its uses in racialising projects both historically and contemporaneously, returns us to the figure of the Centaur, whose deployment as a trope of governance and its hybrid of consent and coercion, emerged at a time when both colonialism and humanism were reshaping political philosophy and practice in early modern Europe. Significantly, the human-animal hybrid nature of the Centaur grounded the insistence on sovereign authority, as requiring both consent and coercion, in the humanist commitment to rationality as the boundary marker between human and animal. The dualities of animal/human, coercion/consent and irrationality/rationality were homologous, as Fontana (2015: 61) makes clear: 'Politics to Gramsci, as to Machiavelli, embodies both force and consent, represented by the figure of the Centaur who represents the synthesis of passion/feeling and reason/thought.' The notion of 'bestialised humanisation' highlights the ambiguity of this synthesis; the practice of politics as embodied in the Centaur is not simply or only an alternation between coercion and consent but their hybridisation. In turn, this 'bestialised humanisation' makes use of a gendered racialisation, in which the existential threat associated with the animal-like nature of the racialised male Other serves to elicit consent for the exercise of coercive authority. The ways in which these chains of association have been used in the management of hegemonic crisis are discussed next.

RACIALISED MASCULINITIES AND MORAL PANICS

In their landmark study of hegemonic crisis in 1970s Britain, and the uses made of the figure of the 'black mugger' in elite management of this crisis, Hall *et al.* (1978) made reference to the centrality of consensualised coercion in such crisis management. They (Hall, Critcher *et al.*, 1978: 321) examined the 'the slow development of such a state of legitimate coercion' in response to an emerging concatenation of economic and political crises in post-war, post-imperial Britain which, by the 1970s, amounted to a 'crisis of hegemony', marking 'a moment of profound rupture in the political and economic life of a society, an accumulation of contradictions' (Hall, Critcher *et al.*, 1978: 217). To explain the ways in which this crisis of hegemony was managed by economic and political elites, Hall and his co-authors turned to Cohen's work on the concept of 'moral panics', first published in 1972. As Cohen (2011: 1) explained, '[s]ocieties appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic' in which a 'condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests.' This threat 'is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media' in response to

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which 'the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people' (Cohen, 2011: 1).

In the case of 1970s Britain, it is the moral panic that grew up around violent street crime that served to displace social anxieties on to the male figure of the 'black mugger', stories about whom became a staple of both media and political discourse. Hall and his co-authors focused on the class-race entanglements of the crisis of hegemony facing the post-imperial British capitalist state, but it is also through gender that social anxieties produced by crises of the economic and political order are managed. They referred to the form of this crisis management as a 'displacement effect' in that 'the connection between the crisis and the way it is appropriated in the social experience of the majority – social anxiety – passes through a series of false 'resolutions', primarily taking the shape of a succession of moral panics' (Hall, Critcher *et al.*, 1978: 322).

In this way, Hall *et al.* (1978: 221) suggested that the moral panic is one of the 'principal forms of ideological consciousness by means of which a "silent majority" is won over to the support of increasingly coercive measures on the part of the state', in this way lending 'its legitimacy to a "more than usual" exercise of control.' Eliciting consent for coercion has long relied on a bestialised humanisation, usually condensed in the figure of the racialised male Other. The displacement effect of moral panics is evident in the emblematic crises of the contemporary era, embodied in the para-human and implicitly or explicitly male-identified figures of the racialised migrant, terrorist and criminal. Such figures, and their dangerous masculinities, continue to be invoked in legitimating 'increasingly coercive measures on the part of the state'. As Walia makes clear, the 'migrant crisis' that continues to dominate the news headlines in the Global North is itself a moral panic, serving as:

> a pretext to shore up further border securitization and repressive practices of detention and deportation. Such representations depict migrants and refugees as the cause of an imagined crisis at the border, when, in fact, mass migration is the outcome of the actual crises of capitalism, conquest, and climate change. (Walia, 2021: 3)

Animalising tropes and metaphors have long been used to racialise migrants as a threat, usually coded as male/masculine, 'portraying them as wild animals or savages that must be hunted by potent border predators of the state' (Ceciliano-Navarro, Golash-Boza and Márquez, 2021: 96). Anti-migrant rhetoric in white-majority countries continues to highlight the 'predatory' sexuality of the male migrant (Anderson, 2017; Scrinzi, 2017). With the onset of the War on Terror, and the mass displacement of populations across West Asia and North Africa consequent upon US-led invasions and bombing campaigns, longstanding tropes used by the Christian West to pathologise Muslim and Arab male sexualities have been updated in Islamophobic depictions of a dangerous Islamic masculinity, embodied as migrant, terrorist or both (Puar, 2007; Kundnani, 2015; Kallis, 2019). The racialised figure of the Islamist terrorist is frequently bestialised, nowhere more clearly visible than in the images of US torture of Iraqi detainees, leaked from the prison complex at Abu Ghraib, just outside Baghdad, where some prisoners were leashed like animals.

These links between racialised masculinities, the exercise of coercive authority and processes of social legitimation are also condensed in the figure of the criminal, and his role in the emergence of the 'police power' (Neocleous, 2014). The historiography of this emergence increasingly highlights the primary function of the 'police power' as the preservation of social order through the policing of those deemed to be disorderly. As Neocleous explains:

> This conjunction of 'disorderliness' and 'criminality' was connected to the idea of 'rebellion' against the very structures of life and modes of being that were being imposed by the state and the new regime of accumulation, and even against the political order itself. (Neocleous, 2014: 30-31)

Such rebellion required policing, and coercive measures were often justified through reference to the animal-like unreason of the disorderly.[1] This legitimation of coercive repression through reference to the frequently racialised trope of the criminal-animal, implicitly or explicitly masculinised, continues to be a feature of contemporary police power.[2] Positing the animal-like nature of the criminal (and often by association, the terrorist

[1] John Locke, whose writings on political philosophy in the closing decades of the 17th century remain widely regarded as foundational for modern liberalism, likened the criminal who resisted labour discipline and land enclosure to a savage beast who has 'renounced Reason' like 'the Lyon or Tyger', and who has thus 'declared War against all Mankind' (Locke, 1988: II, sect 10, cited in Neocleous, 2014: 75). Significantly, he made this argument with reference not only to land enclosure and labour discipline measures in England but also their extension to recently acquired colonies in North America and the Caribbean; the colonial roots of the criminal-animal trope are deep.

[2] In her discussion of the acquittal of Los Angeles police officers for their brutal assault on 3 March 1991 of Rodney King, an African American man, in spite of clear video evidence, Wynter (1994: 42) notes the media reporting that 'public officials of

and the migrant) as the enemy of society sanctioned former President Duterte's official policy of extra-judicial killings by police of suspected drug users and dealers, mostly men, in the Philippines. This policy relied on and reinforced a sense of liminal humanity attached to the urban underclass:

> But what constitutes this liminality? It would seem to many, including to the victims of this ongoing spectacular and everyday war, that it is their humanity that is liminal. Indeed, family and friends of the murdered repeatedly express the violence inflicted on the victims in precisely these terms—it is as if they were animals, they cry in protest, as if they were not human. (Tadiar, 2022: 285)

The formulation by Jackson of racialisation as an imposed plasticity of being, and its assertion of an ontological authority over the para-human status of the racialised, is useful for thinking through the ways in which this plasticity mobilises masculinity in service of its authority. Racialised men become 'hypervisible subjects' (Amar, 2011) through a dynamic of excess and deficiency in relation to the binary gender coding of masculinity that has marked the gender orders produced by the long history of racial capitalism (Bhattacharyya, 2018; Robinson, 2020). In the gender binary system that still shapes gender relations and significations in so many societies, masculinity is expressed, *inter alia*, through sexual potency and industrious productivity. What is noteworthy about the racialising of a para-human maleness, as a means of eliciting consent for the exercise of coercion, is its reliance on a plasticity of gender coding; the racialised man is hypervisible as both excessive (as physical and sexual threat) and deficient (as unproductive waste). While the hypervisibility of racialised masculinity as physical and sexual threat is well documented in the histories of European colonialism and clearly evident in contemporary geopolitics, less often discussed is the way in which this hypervisibility of male/masculine excess is shadowed by the racialised figuring of male/masculine deficiency and redundancy, and the threat posed by this gendered waste.

FROM EXCESS TO DEFICIENCY

Fifteen years ago, as the global financial crisis took hold, Connell (2008: 248), in her discussion of masculinities under neoliberalism, was noting that in 'third-world cities there has been a de-institutionalisation of economic life that has left very large numbers of young men in precarious conditions.' This has provoked considerable anxiety among political and economic elites for many years. Since the Second World War, Hendrixson (2004: 8) notes, 'US military analysts and academics have defined the growing numbers of young people in the South as a potential national security threat.' With the onset of the War on Terror, the 'youth bulge' thesis gained increasing traction in US national security debates, as Hendrixson explains:

> Personified as a discontented, angry young man, almost always a person of colour, the 'youth bulge' is seen as an unpredictable, out-of-control force in the South generally, with Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia and Latin America all considered hot spots. (Hendrixson, 2004: 8)

Elite concern about this 'out-of-control force' of discontented young men, often framed as potential or actual criminals, terrorists and migrants, has helped to drive the increasing securitisation of public policy in many societies (Mabee, 2009; Amar, 2013; Reveron, 2016). Singh's discussion of these figures of racialised threat notes that the 'criminal, the barbarian, and the terrorist represent actors who lack self-control, who are incapable of inhabiting liberal subjectivity, and who therefore must be controlled through illiberal means (either extermination or the deprivation of their freedom)' (Singh, 2019: 118). Graham (2011) discusses this increasing securitisation as the rise of a 'military urbanism', which expresses the growing paramilitarisation of urban law enforcement in both formerly colonised and colonising societies. A large body of scholarship on urban youth gangs has highlighted the use of tropes of violent masculinities, implicitly or explicitly racialised, in public policy discourse to solicit consent for repressive measures (Rodgers, 2007; Streicher, 2011).

But the desire for repression of the racialised male Other is driven not simply by elite fear of violent excess but also anxiety over the unproductive waste this Other embodies. The economic restructuring that birthed the 'law and order society' of the UK in the 1970s, via the moral panic of the 'black mugger' analysed so clearly by Hall *et al*. (1978), is also implicated in the expansion of the global prison population over the last 40 years (Acheson, 2022). In Gilmore's (2007) groundbreaking account of the political economy of the California state prison system, whose population grew nearly 500 percent between 1982 and 2000, even though the crime rate peaked in 1980 and then declined, she emphasises the functions of this system in managing the surpluses produced by capitalism's volatility, including surpluses of land, capital, and crucially labour. Capitalism produces, indeed relies on, idled labour; '[a]s

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the judicial system of Los Angeles routinely used the acronym N.H.I. to refer to any case involving a breach of the rights of young Black males who belong to the jobless category of the inner city ghettoes. N.H.I. means "no humans involved."'

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systemic expansions and contractions produce and throw off workers, those idled must wait, migrate, or languish until— if ever—new opportunities to sell their labor power emerge' (Gilmore, 2007: 71).

What is striking about Gilmore's account of this use of prison to warehouse idled labour, predominantly men, and mostly men of colour, is the wide degree of support for such an approach to the management of capitalist crisis, not only among political and economic elites but also the voters who supported the necessary funding measures. As Gilmore makes clear, moral panics about the violent criminality of the racialised male Other played a significant role in this expansion of the prison-industrial complex. But so too did the imperative to remove from view the embodiment of such crisis, in the form of redundant men, whose very presence was a lived reminder of systemic crisis. A similar logic, if extreme example, of such 'waste management' is at work in Duterte's sanctioning of extra-judicial killing as part of his 'war on drugs' policy in the Philippines. As Tadiar makes clear, citing the ethnographic research of Jensen (2014) in Bagong Silang, a slum relocation site established in the 1970s and today a *barangay* ('village') with the greatest population density in Metro Manila, the targets of this policy are urban slum dwellers, usually young men. Such men 'face the ever-looming threat of confinement in a deranging infinity of time, an asphyxiating state of perpetual coming to nothing, which they call buryong' which 'expresses in personified form that endless, aimless time of waiting, which haunts these young people facing absolute redundancy with the threat of maddening perdurance as their life sentence' (Tadiar, 2022: 166).

From the earliest colonial settlement in the Philippines, waste 'served at once as a legitimating rationale of capitalist dispossession and as an object of elimination for the improved production of value' (Tadiar, 2022: 29). Then, as now, the threat posed by these lives deemed unproductive was most commonly associated with racialised men, and this threat continues to sanction the use of coercive measures to discipline, and if necessary, eliminate, those whose lives represent waste. The only difference now is that their elimination has itself become valourisable; Tadiar notes the various forms of entrepreneurial activity, including extortion during arrest, ransom after arrest, 'even commissions for funeral parlors' (Tadiar, 2022: 238), that have been opened up by the official policy of extra-judicial killing directed at young, mostly male, urban slum dwellers.

CONCLUSION

The constructed threat of the racialised male, as both violent excess and unproductive waste, is used to elicit social consent for the exercise of coercive authority, in ways that help to suppress political dissent and social unrest in response to contemporary crisis conditions. Central to this project of consensualised coercion, in its effort to manage hegemonic crisis, is racialisation as a flexible technology of power, and its imposition of plasticity on the racialised figure. This article has explored the mutability of the racialised male Other, manifest as both a plasticity of being (through bestialised humanisation) and of doing (as violent excess and unproductive waste). Both forms of plasticity produce racialised men as legitimate targets of exclusion or extermination.

More work, both conceptual and empirical, is needed to examine the mechanisms though which, in differing societies, coercive authority in a context of hegemonic crisis is legitimated through reference to the racialised male Other. Clearly, there is a logic of containment at work, from border fences to prison walls to the policing of the boundaries of the gender category of men itself. It is telling that Ratele has proposed 'the concepts (non)men and (non)masculinity as conceptual resources in efforts to open up critical studies on men and masculinities to decolonial, southern and majority world-oriented perspectives' (Ratele, 2021: 771). The hybridity of these concepts recalls the plasticity of gendered racialisation so central to the legitimation of coercion. As Vergès (2022: 93) notes, in 'white supremacy's view, the gender of non-white people is both fixed and fluid, as gender binarism is an attribute of whiteness.'

A practice of enlistment is also evident in the ways in which majoritised groups are enlisted, ideologically and practically, in the consensual exercise of coercion against the racialised male Other. Far from the state being defined by its monopoly of legitimate violence, a range of state forms have long relied on a dispersal of violent labour among parastate militias and citizen patrols to maintain elite rule. Racialised narratives of security, often centring the threat of the male Other, continue to be used to enlist majoritised populations as agents of exclusionary or extirpative violence, from the 'borderguard masculinities' of the anti-immigration movement in Finland (Keskinen, 2013) to the orchestrated mob violence against minoritised communities, such as the anti-Muslim pogroms that have accompanied the BJP's rise to and consolidation of power in India (Vanaik, 2018). The ways in which this enlistment works in other societies and polities in the current context of hegemonic crisis merit further study.

So too does the incitement to punish that often accompanies this project of enlistment. As Tadiar writes, 'this punitive mode has long operated as a standing practice of racialisation that is intrinsic to capitalism' for which as 'organising codes of discernment and discrimination of conduct and status, race and sex are inextricable in the work of devaluation (…)' (Tadiar, 2022: 244). Deepening ecological, governance and economic crises will only further fuel incitements to punish and scapegoat the racialised and gendered figures of the migrant, terrorist and criminal, and thus displace rising social anxiety about the violent excess and destructive waste of capitalism itself.

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If the authoritarian turn of the polycrisis is to be effectively resisted by intersectional anti-capitalist feminist movements, then these specific operations of gendered racialisation in the service of eliciting consent to coercive authority need to be more clearly challenged. Only this way can gender justice and social justice be reimagined together.

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