

Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article se sert de deux ouvrages récents en histoire des travailleurs canadiens, *Working in Steel* de Craig Heron, et *Bushworkers and Bosses* de Ian Radforth, pour faire une brève revue de la place de la masculinité dans l'histoire de la classe ouvrière. L'auteur suggère que même si Heron et Radforth introduisent la question de la masculinité dans leur travail, ils ne développent pas suffisamment sa signification et ses fonctions. S'inspirant de la littérature sur la construction sociale du travail, des genres et de la sexualité, l'auteur propose des façons d'aborder certains thèmes liés à la masculinité et à la sexualité dans l'histoire de la classe ouvrière.

CRITIQUES

Rough Work and Rugged Men:

The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History

Steven Maynard

START WITH TWO IMAGES: a sweaty, hard-muscled steelworker from Cape Breton and a brawny bushworker of northern Ontario. These men are at the centre of two recent studies in Canadian working-class history: Craig Heron's *Working in Steel* and Ian Radforth's *Bushworkers and Bosses*.¹

These two images bring clearly into focus the connection between men workers and masculinity. At first, it seems as though Heron and Radforth are conscious of this connection, aware that workers' masculinity is an important aspect of study in labour history; the heading "masculinity" even finds a place in the index of each book. The authors, moreover, appear to realize that masculinity is bound up with the labour process, the notion of skill, and the experience of work. In what follows I want to suggest that what might have been pioneering efforts to consider seriously masculinity on the job turn out unfortunately to be studies of the labour process with an obligatory gesture toward the study of gender. That is, I want to examine the extent to which masculinity — and gender, more broadly defined — is really addressed in these studies. I will do this by critically reviewing how Heron and Radforth use the concept of masculinity, at the same time drawing upon the literature on the social construction of gender and work to raise some general issues pertaining to the study of masculinity and working-class history.

That masculinity should be incorporated into working-class studies only

¹Craig Heron, *Working in Steel: The Early Years in Canada, 1883-1935* (Toronto 1988); and Ian Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario, 1900-1980* (Toronto 1987).

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makes sense given that historically men workers themselves often made very explicit connections between their work and their gender identity as men. When, for example, male Knights of Labor referred to female co-workers as the "best men in the Order," they were no doubt complimenting the work of women in the mass struggles and organizational upsurge of the 1880s, but it was a compliment clearly layered with gender meaning. A good worker and unionist were defined in terms of manliness.² Appeals to manliness continued into the twentieth century. Striking workers in Brantford, Ontario in 1909 denounced strike-breakers as those who "were prevailed upon to betray their manhood."³

Workers' repeated appeals to their manhood did no go entirely unnoticed by labour historians. In 1976 David Montgomery argued that masculinity was an important element in the craftsmen's "ethical code."⁴ Following Montgomery's lead, Gregory Kealey in his study of workers' control noted among Toronto coopers "the pervasiveness of appeals to manliness." Kealey stated that "Canadian coopers saw 'manliness' as the keystone of their struggle and for them honour and pride were sacrosanct."⁵ But if some historians made passing references to workers' manliness, they rarely stopped to seriously question the nature and role of masculinity on the job.

Why do we find this "pervasiveness of appeals to manliness" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century sources? Was this something specific to this historical period? For Kealey, workers asserted their manhood as a way to demonstrate themselves to be the equal of their boss.⁶ On the surface this makes some sense given, that although the conflicting interests of workers and bosses increasingly separated them into two classes, they still had in common their masculinity. Such a hypothesis locates masculinity in part of its class context, but it does not explain why workers chose masculinity in particular as one of the means to contest their position in class society. So we return to the original question: why did men workers mix their evolving class consciousness with a strong sense of their gender identity? I would argue that as industrial capitalism unfolded in this period it not only altered class relations, but also shifted gender relations precipitating a crisis in masculinity.⁷ It is within this crisis of masculinity that we can begin to understand the gender component of workers' appeal to manliness, but more on this later. First, we need to outline the uses Heron and Radforth make of masculinity

²See, Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900* (Toronto 1987), 316-26.

³*Industrial Banner*, August 1909. Quoted in Craig Heron and Bryan D. Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-1914," *Canadian Historical Review*, 58(1977), 450.

⁴David Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the Nineteenth Century," *Labor History*, 17(1976), 485-509.

⁵Gregory S. Kealey, "The Honest Workingman and Workers' Control: The Experience of Toronto Skilled Workers, 1860-1892," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 1(1976), 37.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷The concept of a crisis of masculinity is borrowed from M.S. Kimmel, "The Crisis of Masculinity in Historical Perspective," in Harry Brod, ed., *The Making of Masculinities* (Boston 1987).

in their studies.

Heron and Radforth both show how the dangerous conditions of work in steel mill and bush camp apparently reinforced a rugged masculinity. Heron, for example, writes:

That ever-present danger could breed fear in some steelworkers, but, for many, it posed that challenge to prove their manhood. Among the committed men in the industry, there was (and still is) a masculine pride in their ability to face the gates of hell.⁸

One cannot dispute that working in steel was extremely dangerous. Just how such danger became wrapped up in masculine pride or in the chance for a worker to prove his manhood, however, is a question never posed by Heron. Not only does Heron provide scant evidence of how workers articulated the connection between their dangerous work and their masculinity but he assumes some "natural" link between the two, a link he further assumes is shared by his reader. Rather than analyze the question of workplace conditions and their impact on workers' masculinity, Heron writes it off in two sentences as a foregone conclusion.

If, as Kcaley argued, pride and honour were used by workers to assert their independence vis-à-vis their bosses, Heron and Radforth show that the same masculine pride, along with a strong dose of competition, could be used by bosses to drive workers and increase production. Using a system of bonus wages to reward increases in output, Heron argues:

The competitive element in this process also played on the steelworkers' pride and sportsmanlike machismo. As one old-timer explained: 'you tried to push and when they say let's break a record today and everybody would be out for that record.'⁹

Similarly, in the bush, a system of piece rates determined that:

a bushworker's pride, his status among his peers, and even his manliness were tied up with his ability to turn in a respectable count. Not surprisingly, management tried to take advantage of the workers' sense of pride in their output.¹⁰

Once again, competition and pride, like the challenge of danger, are taken to be natural or given components of masculinity. Never do Heron or Radforth step back from their evidence (slim as it is) to ask by what process capitalism coopts not only workers' labour power but also their sense of pride and masculinity? Men workers have long used the work they do as a measure of self-worth, but how this came to be is a historical question not a biological given of masculinity or maleness.

Neither do Heron or Radforth seem to see the contradictory and changing nature of masculinity over time. Their work on the early twentieth century highlights a competitive masculinity played upon by bosses to drive workers. But in

⁸Heron, *Working in Steel*, 50.

⁹*Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁰Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses*, 75.

the early period of industrial capitalism things were different: masculinity was used by workers themselves to control the pace of production. Thus, as Gregory Kealey shows, in the struggle for shorter hours, machinists like other skilled workers "placed a high premium on manliness."¹¹ Machinists considered rate-breakers as workers who were "willing to doff their manhood."¹² So what had changed by the early twentieth century? It seems as though the meaning and function of masculinity on the job were transformed during the transition from craft to mass production; what workers used in the late nineteenth century as a powerful tool in their workplace struggles and in their claim to respectability was by the twentieth century turned against them. Heron and Radforth make no such comparisons, nor do they suggest any possible clues. But this process of change, however subtle, points I think to the role of social factors in the making and meaning of masculinity. These are questions that leap out from the pages of Heron's and Radforth's histories, questions however that are never addressed.

Masculinity was also intimately tied up with the concept of skill. Raising the issue of gender and skill, of course, moves us onto some thorny theoretical territory, ground covered in only a very limited way by Heron and Radforth. It has been almost fifteen years since Harry Braverman first suggested that we needed to reconsider skill arguing that "advances" in technology under monopoly capitalism had stripped skill away from many workers.¹³ Heron and Radforth's work is much informed by Braverman's scholarship, but like Braverman they do not relate their discussion of skill to gender.

Feminists, and socialist-feminists in particular, have been the ones to argue for a conception of skill that incorporates both class and gender. They insist that discussions of skill must be rooted not only in the relations between bosses and workers, but also squarely within the sexual division of labour, in the relations between women and men. Michèle Barrett noted in 1980: "women have frequently failed to establish recognition of the skills required by their work.... We need to know precisely how and why some groups of workers succeed in establishing definitions of their work as skilled."¹⁴

As Barrett formulated the question, others began to devise a way out of this conceptual corner. Socialist-feminists began to stress that skill was not some objective characteristic of a job or worker but rather a social-political construct. In an important early article, Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor argued that: "Far from being an objective economic fact, skill is often an ideological category imposed on certain types of work by virtue of the sex and power of the workers who perform

¹¹Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892* (Toronto 1980), 78.

¹²*Machinists and Blacksmiths Journal*, June 1872, 668. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 78.

¹³Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism* (New York 1974).

¹⁴Michèle Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis* (London 1980), 166.

¹⁵Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor, "Sex and Skill: Notes Towards a Feminist Economics," *Feminist Review*, 6(1980), 79-88.

it."¹⁵ Building on these ideas, Jane Gaskell later argued that: "Skill is a socially constructed category [and] managing skill definitions is a political process. . . a political process in which some workers have more economic power than others."¹⁶ Implicit in some of the early attempts to lay bare the ideological content of skill was a tendency to jettison the existence of skill altogether. Such an extreme view obviously dismisses the actual skill required by much work be it steelmaking or bread baking. As more recent analyses stress, the issue is not the existence of skill *per se*, but rather the gendered differential in access to training, in what gets labelled as skilled work and in reward.¹⁷ Finally, another area of research in this field demonstrates the connection of skill and technology to gender and sexual identity. In her work, Cynthia Cockburn, for example, details how men:

ascribe high value to technology and technological work and how they identify their masculinity with their skills and careers....Technology enters into our sexual identity: femininity is incompatible with technological competence: to feel technically competent is to feel manly. The gendering of men and women into 'masculine' and 'feminine' is a cultural process of immense power. People suffer for disregarding its dictates. It is, besides, not only people who get gendered but occupations.¹⁸

This brings us back to bushworkers and steelworkers. Radforth argues that despite the fact that bush work "required quite high levels of genuine skill and specialized knowledge" bushworkers have been labelled as unskilled. Due to the association of bush work with the outdoors and heavy lifting and because many men learned the basics of logging not through apprenticeship or formal training but from their own farm woodlot experience, the bushworker's skills were taken for granted. Designated as unskilled, employers were able to pay the low wages associated with such work. For Radforth, all of this indicates that "the woodworker's skill has been socially constructed:"

In order to understand the unskilled label usually attached to bush work, it is necessary to recognize that skill designations are at least in part socially constructed....These designations may or may not bear a close relationship to the actual requirements of the job or to levels of genuine skill and knowledge. The label skilled has been assigned to some jobs partly because of convention and traditions in the trade, or because management and/or unions have effectively defended the high social status and wages accompanying the label.¹⁹

Attempting to relate bushworkers' skill to masculinity, Radforth speculates that it was because bushworkers were denied the respect and reward given to artisans and mechanics that "they took such pleasure in presenting themselves as

¹⁶Jane Gaskell, "Conceptions of Skill and the Work of Women: Some Historical and Political Issues," *Atlantis*, 8(1983), 24.

¹⁷See, for example, Cynthia Cockburn, *Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men and Technical Know-How* (London 1985).

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁹Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses*, 68.

dare-devils and he-men who. . . took on any dangerous or heavy task and carried it out with aplomb."²⁰ And that is it — one short paragraph on masculinity and skill and then only speculation. And what about race and ethnicity? Surely the unskilled designation had something to do with the fact that many bushworkers were immigrants to Canada. Radforth raises the issue of skill, then avoids any sustained investigation, missing the ways in which gender and race are part of the social construction of skill.

Heron is little better. He too argues that "skill is correctly perceived to be a complex blend of technical competence and 'social construction'."²¹ Heron suggests that the experience of Canadian steelworkers demonstrates that "working life in the age of monopoly capitalism was not a one-dimensional process of 'deskilling'." Rather, in steelmaking "a few craft skills survived. . . [and] new groups of skilled production workers emerged."²² Not only do these findings provide a corrective to the Braverman thesis, but such malleability in the configuration of skill in the steel factory points to its changing form. Further on Heron states that "skill clearly means more than technical competence; it requires a social sanction won through the assertion of effective power" and here he points to late nineteenth century craftsmen who used apprenticeship and union power to obtain recognition of their skills.²³ Heron is also aware that in addition to manual dexterity, conceptual ability, and some degree of autonomy, a worker's skill was also buttressed by the ideological "assertion of the craftsman's 'manhood' and 'respectability', or in the exalted idea of 'craftsmanship' itself." Heron argues that, although "most steelworkers had jobs that lacked this kind of material and ideological leverage," they nevertheless "took the same pride in their role as producers that the old-time craftsmen expressed."²⁴ But with all the proper theoretical ground covered, what does Heron do with it? He quotes one retired open-hearth worker: "When I worked there men were proud to work there, and they took pride in their work, I'll tell you that....It's the men on the furnace — that's who makes the steel."²⁵ This is the extent of Heron's effort to uncover the relationship between skill and masculinity, an analytical task that would have unlocked the social construction of both. Theoretical assertions aside, Heron himself does not make any attempt to investigate how steelworkers won "social sanction" for their skills or how workers buttressed their skills with an ideology of manhood or respectability. Heron briefly notes as well that: "The traditional failure to recognize so many of women's skills, like needlework or typing, has also underlined the importance of social constructions of skill within patriarchal capitalist society."²⁶ Now, Heron (like Radforth), in studying an almost exclusively all-male industry,

²⁰*Ibid.*, 68-9.

²¹Heron, *Working in Steel*, 52-3.

²²*Ibid.*, 170.

²³*Ibid.*, 71.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 53, 71 and 63.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 63.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 53.

is saved from the messy task of detailing this process, but you have to give him points for managing to work in yet more ideological posturing. When women do surface again in Heron's text, it is in a rather questionable manner. In explaining the relatively high wages won by steel and auto workers, Heron points out that these industries "had few women workers whose wages would drag down the average figure."²⁷ Now whether or not Heron really thinks this way about women workers is not the point. But by failing to pursue the question, by not providing any analysis of why historically the presence of women in an industry might serve to lower wages. Heron puts himself in the company of those men workers in the past who sought to exclude women from unions using the same narrow thinking.

For any detailed reconstruction of the relations between women and men workers on the job we must turn to other sources. Numerous studies have shown that men workers have often engaged in two interconnected struggles; one to resist the power of capitalist over worker and another to maintain male dominance over women. The dialectical nature of these two struggles, not surprisingly, produce some contradictory results. In the first struggle men workers can win higher wages and maintain shop floor control and when they do it is a blow to capital. But the second struggle between the genders has served both to maintain the subordination of women and to divide the working-class in its efforts to resist capitalism. Certainly capitalists themselves have done much to use and reinforce gender divisions within the working-class, but the historical record also shows that often "the men were as bad as their masters."

Looking at the British Grand National Consolidated Trades Union Movement of the 1830s, Barbara Taylor argued that capitalist development not only reorganized industry but the "traditional patterns of gender roles and authority [began] to shift and break apart." "Male unease or outright hostility" toward female unionism "was evident from the start." The reasons for such hostility were twofold. Men "saw female organization outside the home as a direct threat to male dominance inside the home." Men also feared the impact — particularly on wages and craft control — of female labour within their trades. Any loss in wages or the "loss of craft power became a loss of manly status, of sexual authority."²⁸ Such analysis of changing gender and class relations goes a long way in explaining the element of masculinity in the working-class consciousness articulated by many

²⁷*Ibid.*, 93.

²⁸ Barbara Taylor, "The Men Are As Bad As Their Masters. . .": Socialism, Feminism and Sexual Antagonism in the London Tailoring Trade in the 1830s," in J.L. Newton, J.R. Walkowitz, M.P. Ryan, eds., *Sex and Class in Women's History* (London 1983), 207, 203, 204, and 208.

²⁹ For other examples of this type of analysis see, Judy Lowy, "Not so much of Factory, More a Form of Patriarchy: Gender and Class during Industrialization," in Eva Gamarnikow, et. al., *Gender, Class and Work* (London 1983), 28-45; Richard Whipp, "The Stamp of Futility: The Staffordshire Potters, 1880-1905," in R. Harrison and J. Zeilin, eds., *Divisions of Labour: Skilled Workers and Technological Change in Nineteenth Century England* (Sussex 1985), 114-50. In the Canadian context see, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "The Transformation of Women's Work in the Québec Cotton Industry, 1920-1950," in Bryan D. Palmer, ed., *The Character of Class Struggle* (Toronto 1986), 115-34. See also comments

men workers.²⁹ Analysis taken in this direction sheds light on how the 'crisis of the craftsman' was — as proposed at the outset — both a crisis of work *and* masculinity, of class and gender.

So far we have concentrated on class and gender at the point of production. These relations, of course, including masculinity, extended well beyond the shop floor. Returning to the two main books under consideration, Radforth at least attempts to extend masculinity into the social/cultural realm. He details the conditions and life in the nearly all-male environment of the bush camp. It was in the close quarters of the bunkhouse that the men played cards, listened to the fiddle, and held Saturday night stag dances. For Radforth, games such as arm wrestling and occasional group sports played by bushworkers "are illustrative of a masculine culture." Radforth concludes that in all, "the bush camp was a male world, suffused in every respect with a keen sense of masculinity."³⁰ One is reminded here of Bryan Palmer's early work on the cultural world of nineteenth-century craftsmen. Looking at the cultural traditions of craftsmen on the street and in the tavern, Palmer noted in passing that "this was a male culture."³¹ The problem here is that Radforth and Palmer make the link between culture and masculinity but then go nowhere with it. Both must be faulted for resting the assertion of an entire "masculine culture" on very slim evidence and analysis.³²

The problems associated with Radforth's use of masculinity are to be found throughout both the Radforth and Heron books. Both authors use the term masculinity far too loosely, as if its defining characteristics were somehow a given. Viewing the masculinity of steel and bushworkers, Heron and Radforth are no doubt correct in highlighting its rough and rugged nature. But there needs to be some recognition that, like workers' skills, their masculinity (or femininity) is also socially constructed. So rather than freely tossing around a very narrow and essentialist notion of masculinity, both Heron and Radforth need to recognize and specify that what in fact they are talking about is a particular form of heterosexual masculinity.

by Ruth Frager, "No Proper Deal: Women Workers and the Canadian Labour Movement, 1870-1940," in L. Briskin and L. Yanz, eds., *Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement* (Toronto 1983), 50-60. While gender divisions are central in understanding working-class history, it is also important not to lose sight of those moments when working-class women and men attempted to stand together. On this see, Kealey and Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be*, and Karen Dubinsky, "The Modern Chivalry: Women in the Knights of Labor, Ontario, 1880-1891," unpublished M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1985.

³⁰Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses*, 96 and 8.

³¹Bryan D. Palmer, "Most Uncommon Common Men: Craft and Culture in Historical Perspective," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 1(1976), 10.

³²For more detailed study of the cultural world of the working-class tavern see, Peter DeLottinville, "Joe Beef of Montreal: Working-Class Culture and the Tavern, 1869-1889," *Labour/Le Travail*, 8/9(1981-82), 9-40; and Jon Kingsdale, "The 'Poor Man's Club': Social Functions of the Urban Working-Class Saloon," in E. Pleck and J. Pleck, eds., *The American Man* (Englewood, N.J. 1980), 225-83. On the impact of the sexism of male working-class culture on women's union participation see, Ruth Frager, "No Proper Deal," 56-7.

To do this, Heron and Radforth could have made use of the growing body of theoretical and historical literature on masculinity. A brief example from this work will suffice to make my point. As Blye Frank recently put it, if we want an analysis of society as a whole, then that analysis:

must not only... include gender, it must also include sexuality and, in particular, heterosexuality and masculinity. Heterosexuality and masculinity are not neutral nor are they biological. They are social accomplishments of a political nature located within a larger set of political, economic, and social relations.³³

Frank insists that we need to recognize that the hegemonic form of masculinity has been heterosexual. From this vantage point, historical investigation must uncover how hegemonic heterosexual masculinity "is articulated at many points within the economic, social and political structures of the material world;" how "it supports the present system of capitalism;" and how it encourages "particular forms of masculinity while discouraging others."³⁴

The case of bushworkers, for one, could have provided fruitful investigation of the kind suggested by Frank. Evidence for northern Ontario in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, makes clear that men in bush camps not only played cards and the fiddle, but they also engaged in sex with each other. One thinks here, for example, of Gerard Fortin, the Quebec Communist Party member and union organizer. Describing his early years as a bushworker, Fortin writes:

We all lived together in the big cabins, mostly on stretchers with springs and a mattress, though there were still a few of the old bed bunks with straw mattresses, on which two men slept side by side under one blanket. I was on the straw for a few nights. I slept with a quiet, decent fellow who was going to get married in the spring. Unfortunately, I guess in anticipation of the event, he lost control of himself during one night. Imagine! I woke up with this fellow busy giving me the works. Not my ring (my ring is intact to this day, in spite of my many misadventures) but he was massaging both of us. We were in a top bunk. I couldn't move too much or everyone would know something was going on. I felt like a stupid ass trying to get rid of him without embarrassing him. He was so shy with me after that!³⁵

But men unfortunate enough to be discovered were often brought before the courts and charged with "sexual crimes." Left behind are the trial transcripts which provide a wealth of information detailing the same-gender sexual networks that existed in the logging camps.³⁶

Logging camps, of course, were only one of several same-gender environ-

³³Blye Frank, "Hegemonic Heterosexual Masculinity," *Studies in Political Economy*, 24(1987), 160-1. For other recent examples of the historical and theoretical work on masculinity see, J.A. Mangan and J. Wolvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester 1987); Harry Brod, ed., *The Making of Masculinities* (Boston 1987); M. Kaufman, ed., *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power and Change* (Toronto 1987); J. Hearn, *The Gender of Oppression: Men, Masculinity and the Critique of Marxism* (Sussex 1987).

³⁴Frank, "Hegemonic Heterosexual Masculinity," 167 and 161.

³⁵Gerard Fortin and Boyce Richardson, *Life of the Party* (Montreal 1984), 38.

³⁶I am currently engaged in research using these court records to get at the history of same-gender sexuality in nineteenth century Ontario. The records are housed in the Provincial Archives of Ontario.

ments in which sex could flourish. Research in the emerging field of lesbian and gay history reveals that prisons, boarding schools, and life at sea have historically been places in which women and men could develop intimate and/or sexual contacts with their same gender.³⁷ Evidence indicates that from an early date the military too was an important institution in fostering same-gender sexual networks. For instance, in 1842 in Canada West, Samuel Moore and Patrick Kelly of the 89th Regiment of Foot were convicted of sodomy. In court, a fellow soldier testified that Kelly "was lying on his belly, the bed clothes were on the floor — both men were naked. I saw Moore on the top of Kelly working away as if it was a woman. When the Alarm was given Moore rose up and I saw his private parts come out Kelly's body."³⁸ The two were found guilty and sentenced to hang, their sentence later commuted to life imprisonment. The military, particularly during wartime, would remain an important force well into the twentieth century in creating opportunities for same-gender liaisons.³⁹ Be it military service or the rise of a system of wage labour, both provided some people — many more men than women — with the ability to live outside both the heterosexual nuclear family and the "reproductive matrix" of sexuality.⁴⁰

Evidence from places such as logging camps, then, opens up a variety of interesting questions. Certainly it points to the malleability and social construction of sexual identity and forces us to ask how the material conditions of the bush camp transformed and loosened the hegemony of a rigid heterosexual masculinity. What did such sexuality mean for workers' lives? Was the experience of same-gender sex in the bush camp only "situational" or did it have a longer term impact on the sexual/gender identity of some men? If bush work demanded a rugged heterosexual masculinity, then how did the men who engaged in same-gender sex experience and manage some obvious contradictions? And if we usually conceive of capitalism as dependent on the heterosexual, nuclear family form, then how are we to understand the organization of industries such as logging and the same-gender social-sexual relations it could support? The case of such industries points, I think,

³⁷On prisons see, for example, Jonathan N. Katz, *Gay/Lesbian Almanac: A New Documentary* (New York 1983), 343-44. On life at sea see, Arthur N. Gilbert, "Buggary and the British Navy, 1700-1861," *Journal of Social History*, 10(1976), 72-98. For overviews of work in lesbian/gay history see, Joe Interrante, "From Homosexual to Gay to?: Recent Work in Gay History," *Radical America*, 15(1981), 79-86; Martha Vicinus, "Sexuality and Power: A Review of Current Work in the History of Sexuality," *Feminist Studies* 8(1982), 133-56.

³⁸Quoted in Gary Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada* (Montreal 1987), 76.

³⁹See, for example, George Chauncey, Jr., "Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion?: Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War One Era," *Journal of Social History*, 19(1985), 191-211; and Alan Bérubé, "Marching to a Different Drummer: Lesbian and Gay GIs in World War II," in A. Snitow, C. Stansell and S. Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York 1983), 88-99.

⁴⁰The concept of a "reproductive matrix" of sexuality belongs to John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman and refers to the many ways in which sex and sexuality were intricately tied to reproduction in historical periods before shifts in gender and class relations could further separate sex from procreation. See, John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York 1988).

to the danger for those of us who argue for a materialist explanation of sexuality in positing too simple or crude a relationship between capitalism or class and sexuality. At any rate, such questions not only have implications for current debates within the theory of sexuality and gay history, but they should also play an important part in any discussion of workers' lives.

In the end, Heron and Radforth introduce masculinity into the study of the male working-class, but they fail to rise to the task and fully develop all of its meanings and functions. Instead, what we are given are primarily studies of the labour process with a few ideological nods toward the study of gender. Any serious attempt to relate the case of bush or steelworkers to the issues raised by over ten years of study on the social construction of gender and work are by-passed by Heron and Radforth. It did not have to be like this; other recent work demonstrates ways to consider the labour process and gender/sexual identity within working-class history in a more sophisticated and satisfactory way.⁴¹ It still remains, therefore, for future work to further probe the interconnections among gender, masculinity, femininity, sexuality, and class both on the job and beyond.

I want to thank Bryan Palmer, Shirley Tillotson and Karen Dubinsky for providing interesting ideas and for pushing me to clarify many of my thoughts in this paper.

⁴¹See, for example, Cynthia Cockburn, *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change* (London 1983); and Anne Game and Rosemary Pringle, *Gender at Work* (Sydney 1983). Within labour history, I would point to David Montgomery's new book *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge 1987); Shirley Tillotson, "Canadian Telegraphers, 1900-1930: A Case Study in Gender and Skill Hierarchies," unpublished M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, 1988; and Mark Rosenfeld, "'It Was A Hard Life': Dimensions of Class, Gender, and Work in a Railway Community, 1920s-1950s," unpublished paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association meetings, Windsor, June 1988.

RELATIONS INDUSTRIELLES INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

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