Masculinity and deviance in British cinema of the 1970s: sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll

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Introduction

In this chapter I explore the representations of masculine others in British cinema during the 1970s. Developing my earlier work on masculinity and dejection in 1960s’ British cinema (The Representation of Masculinity in British Cinema of the 1960s, Edwin Mellen, 2005), I shall expand some of my conclusions from that work into considering the role of dejection in an era which seems itself associated with this and related concepts and analyse are series of representations from The Wicker Man (Robin Hardy, 1973), Tommy (Ken Russell, 1975), The Rocky Horror Picture Show (Jim Sherman, 1975) and Jubilee (Derek Jarman, 1978).

As such, it is useful to begin here by summarising some of the arguments key to my earlier studies on masculinity in British film and to establish the background against which the films of the ‘70s were made. First amongst these issues is the need to establish how it is this chapter formulates what has been widely discussed about within the literature on masculinity in the contemporary era as a ‘crisis in masculinity’. Unfortunately, there is a fundamental flaw in this concept as it has become distorted by pop-psychology and socio-journalistic responses to the changing status of women in western societies: it has taken what was a psycho-sexual concept specific to an individual identity and generalised it into an experience shared by a post-war and, arguably, postmodern, generation. The ‘crisis of masculinity’ has become just one more nail in the coffin of equality and has been used by some popular newspapers as nothing less than a direct attack upon women’s independence; feminism has lead to emasculation which has lead to a crisis for men which make all men doubt their own identities, so the argument goes. But does every man feel he exists in crisis? Is it impossible for there to be feminist men? No. Is it not more accurate to say it is the ideology of patriarchy which is experiencing a crisis: masculinism (Collier, 1995)?

That said, it is worthwhile posing the question: is feminism as manifested through matriarchy itself a reason for the ideology of patriarchy? Patriarchy is an ideology of power, of male empires positioning any binary opposites in a lesser position and, therefore, one way in which the crisis of masculinism can be more usefully considered is in terms of a response to the rise of the Other. Who that other is does not particularly matter; they are inherently feminised through the
processes of orientalization (Said, 1979): the crisis of the ideology of patriarchy is a crisis in the face of the falling/failing empires of men.

Consequently, one of the preconditions for the crisis of masculinism is the end of empire and the resulting ways in which cultures of the West deal with the changed situation. The end of empire took place over a long drawn-out period which shares many political struggles with feminism: after all, emancipation is a word as fitting of slavery (and more directly accurate) as it was of the suffragettes. The fact that the crisis appears to be mainly identified to the post-World War II generations of men also serves to emphasise the connectivity between the formal end of Empire for Britain after 1947 and the establishment of the Commonwealth, a community of equals with the Queen as a figurehead, the changing roles of women in society, and the developing emancipation of other Others in British society (especially in the wake of the 1957 Wolfenden Report which directly led to the decriminalisation of gay sex over the age of maturing in 1967). As such the crisis of masculinism is primarily a social entity: a social ideology and not something individuated and personalised as the crisis of masculinity more correctly is. The men waiting for permission to be legally homosexual were the men more likely to feel that crisis in their own masculinity as their identities were battered on all sides in the years before 1967 than those who were not already othered by the dominant social ideology.

This leads to the second issue in my past work; the movement from and between the abjection of ‘aberrant’ masculinities and their dejection, drawing on Julia Kristeva’s well-known studies *Powers of Horror* (1982) and *Strangers to Ourselves* (1989). In my work on the 1960s I tracked the representation of men who just did not ‘fit in’ in close studies of four particular films; Tony Richardson’s 1962 film *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (in which the misfit typifies the ‘new’ concept of teenager, trying to find an identity in the wake of the loss of strong father figures and their replacement by flawed alternatives), Sidney Lumet’s film of 1965, *The Hill* (which centres upon an engagement with the corruption of power in a World War II North-African British military prison with a rebellion led by a character who, in disobeying his superior officer and the King’s Rules and Regulations has been both abjected by the Law and dejected himself through his choice), David Lean’s 1962 *Lawrence of Arabia* (and the counter-establishmentarianism of TE Lawrence struggling with ‘going native’ and his own developing sado-masochism in the wake of his much debated rape by a Turkish officer when imprisoned at De’rara, culminating in his dejection from his own identity) and finally a little known
B-Movie of 1966, *The Projected Man*, directed by Ian Curteis, a kind of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* for the generation living in the “white heat of technology” (Harold Wilson, 1963) in which the transportation of a man via television ‘rays’ changes him physically and psychologically into something Peter Wright (author of *Attending Daedelus*, 2003) once described verbally as ‘Hamster Man’ (here the abjection comes from the monster whilst the dejection comes from the man still within). Across these films, all attempted to answer the question ‘What does it mean to be a man?’ and held up a mirror to the post-war generation. *Lawrence of Arabia* might have been set during World War One, but would not have been possible until the censorship freedoms of the 1960s had been proven through Basil Dearden’s *Victim* (1960); and *The Hill*, although set in the 1940s, is full of references to the prison as a mirror of British post-colonialist society, including a character played by the black actor Ossie Davies, who in the film (but not the earlier novel) is called King.

**Contextualising 1970s Masculinities**

Whilst, today, we tend to think of the 1960s as a period, primarily, of liberation, what is often forgotten is that the era was less progressive for the majority of people, who were not interested or involved in the counter-cultures, and that the version of the ‘long sixties’, as discussed by Arthur Marwick’s *The Sixties* (1998), was absolutely grounded in the cultural practices and developments set in motion during the 1950s. Within this context, we can start to think about the men growing to maturity in the ‘50s, ‘60s and ‘70s as part of a broader cultural framework than simply the zeitgeist of the swinging sixties. Key to the masculinities of the post-war era is a group of social experiences specific to British culture at this time.

Firstly, the importance of the 1944 education act which enabled bright working class pupils to enter further education and higher education, leading to the first significantly socially diverse graduates of higher education from the early 1950s onwards. Typifying this group were some of the 1950s’ and 1960s’ great British authors and playwrights who helped shape the concept of the ‘Angry Young Man’ and the British ‘Rebel with a Cause’ (as *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, Richardson, 1962, was released as in Canada), John Osborne, Alan Sillitoe and David Story. Specifically, the rise of the ‘grammar school boys’ led to the gradual challenging of archaic elitism in the intellectual ‘industries’ and the growth of an empowered, better qualified, ‘teenage’
culture which had real spending power.

Secondly, the failure of empire throughout this period, meant that immigration to the UK was at its most socio-politically salient in the 1950s and 1960s, with families called to work in Britain from former colonies around the world. One group which exemplifies this group are the ‘Windrush’ generation, who came from the Caribbean to the UK in 1955, whilst India and Pakistan were the focus of town planners during the 1960s seeking to a) fill Britain’s new towns and post-war estates and b) provide core industry workers. This is the era in which Sam Selvon, writing of the experience of immigration during the 1970s, described the many Caribbean workers in the capital as the “lonely Londoners” in his 1979 book of the same name: they were othered and made abject by mainstream society whilst fulfilling the very jobs that society had asked them to do, and so they became dejects, existing on the periphery of society and choosing to continue as such because it was culturally and literally safer. But this is also the same period in which Hanif Kureishi (1986) and Salman Rushdie (1991), Pakistanis in the UK begin to recognise their cultural confusion between what it means to be ‘British’ and what it means to be ‘Pakistani’... and finding that neither status truly encompassed them.

Thirdly, actions carried out in the 1950s in the wake of the social changes World War II forced upon British society (such as enabling married female teachers to work instead of it being illegal or the psycho-sexual studies done in the late 1940s – e.g. Kinsey, 1947 - leading to a better but still flawed comprehension of homosexuality by the heterosexual and patriarchal dominant society), meant that those who had previously been othered because of irrational prejudices and conservative belief systems were slowly being integrated into a more egalitarian society. For example, the Wolfenden Report, as I noted earlier, from 1957, led to a wider discussion of homosexuality as being less of a ‘choice’ for men but rather more ontological in their make-up, which in turn finally resulted in the decriminalisation of gay sex between men over the age of 25 (then the age of maturity) in 1967. Another example is also the legalisation of abortion in the same year but only after many years of debate in the wake of increased back-street abortions and subsequent illness or death during the wartime years.

Those who were previously abjected by society (represented in Sapphire, Dearden, 1957 or Victim, also Dearden, 1960 or in Bill Naughton’s original 1962 BBC radio play of Alfie, which was later filmed by Lewis Gilbert in 1966) became figures who abjected themselves, becoming deject (as discussed by Kristeva, particularly in Strangers to Ourselves in terms of thinking about
foreignness). Aberrant masculinities became permissible and not permissible at the same time: there was a dialogue of identity but little acceptance of changing practices and consequently ‘types’ of deject become framed within society throughout the 1960s, ’70s and into the ’80s which could be quantified and made safe through the stereotype itself. These stereotypes include, and were especially prevalent in 1970s British television (although most are still present in contemporary culture):

- the stoner and the hippy (Neil in *The Young Ones*, BBC 1982-1984);
- the political rebel and the punk (*Citizen Smith* – BBC 1977-1980, the group *The Sex Pistols*);
- the weak husband (Brian Murphy in *George and Mildred* – Thames for ITV, 1976-1979);
- the virgin (which become aberrant because of the assumptions around the ‘permissive society’ seen in *The Wicker Man*, Frank Spencer in *Some Mothers Do ‘Ave ‘Em*, despite the ever-present Betty and the later daughter, Jessica - BBC 1973-1975, 1978, Rigsby in *Rising Damp* (Yorkshire Television for ITV, 1974-1978) and *The Rocky Horror Show/Picture Show* – i.e. both theatrically and in the film);
- the sexual (and middle class) immigrant (Don Warrington’s tribal prince, Philip, in *Rising Damp*);
- the immigrant (working class) in service industries (the Indian orderly, Gupta, in *Only When I Laugh* (ITV, 1979-1982) the occasional black bus conductors in *On the Buses* – ITV 1969-1973);

Once you start to think about the presence of these stereotypes and the ways in which they configured masculinities, examples begin to roar forth but the range of men being represented as unusual, both within and without society, throughout this period, gives lie to the concept that there is a ‘normal’ masculinity: and the masculinities which remain little parodied in the 1970s are the
very epitome of patriarchy as frustrated fathers in *Bless this House* – ITV 1971-1976 – and *Father Dear Father* (although the exceptions were still there with failing fathers, as in Steptoe senior in *Steptoe and Son* – BBC 1962-1974)

Consequently, it can be seen that whilst the characters in the 1960s films I referred to were part of a movement towards and between dejection and abjection, making their identities distinct, we can also extend and develop these trajectories into the 1970s as a parallel to the representation of masculinities both more *and* less tolerated or understood.

*Fragmented Normality/Fragmenting Normality*

The 1960s challenged how people thought about sex and other elements which had ‘othered’ people. The result of this challenge was that the normal and the deviant become debatable concepts and in many ways reversed for particular audiences. The impact into the 1970s was that what to the 1950s was ‘normal’ (no sex before marriage, dominant heterosexuality, female subservience and patriarchy at all levels of life, hidden mental illness, hidden disability) becomes in the 1970s, at the very least, publicly questioned. Tied into this progression of social intelligence was a growing practical cultural comprehension that gender is and sexuality can be, as Judith Butler would later explain in the 1980s, ‘performed’. At a time when gay men and women begin to feel that they could come out, there was also a social awareness that the implication of ‘coming out’ is that ‘staying in’ meant hiding *within* society *from* society. Equally, for the feminists of the 1960s and 1970s, there was an engagement with hidden ideals being released within a new context, something which is explored, albeit critically, in a number of the 1970s *Carry On...* films. As such and against a wider media context of the revelation of widespread political corruption, most modes of social behaviour start to be viewed much more in terms of nurture rather than nature, as being, fundamentally, artificial.

This artificiality ties in closely with the theoretical influences upon the 1970s ‘isms’, such as Marxism, with its heyday in academia at this point, and the factors within society and belief systems that theorists since have identified with postmodernism (the term itself coined by Jean-François Lyotard in 1979): the doubting of long given realities; the fragmentation of coherent meaning, narrative and time; and the avowal of the individual in opposition to society. And these issues can be seen throughout 1970s British films throughout the decade.

One of the key routes in, to examining masculinities and their relationship to social
conventions of normality in a number of films during this period, lies in the observation of the
growth in the presentation of characters through perspective being emphasised, especially in terms
of individualism and a stylistic engagement with first person narrative in films. Robert Kolker
called American film of this era a ‘cinema of loneliness’ and discussed, in his well-read book of
the same name (the current edition being published in 2000), the way in which films of the era in
the US explored the social isolation of the Vietnam generations; and in UK cinema of the period
some general similarities can be traced in the representation of men. These are men struggling with
their identities as sons to fathers idolised as war heroes of a just war, they are men coming to terms
with the concept that their place in society is uncertain (especially if they do not conform to social
expectations of ‘the masculine’ and perform another identity) and, perhaps most importantly for
the 1970s, they are men existing in a society which, throughout the decade, can be argued to be in
the process of deconstruction (the rapid political changes throughout the era and the related
uncertainty, leading to the three-day week and the energy crisis, a significant rise in the numbers of
divorces taking place as the legislation is loosened up, drug-cultures and increased permissiveness,
and the mass unemployment of the period challenging the patriarchal belief in the father as ‘bread
winner’). What was ‘normal’ was existing in a state of limbo and it is hardly surprising that what
Derek Jarman represented in Jubilee in 1977, in response to the artificial jingoism of Queen
Elizabeth’s 25th anniversary on the throne, was an elegiac poem to anarchy and, that other tenet of
British late-seventies iconography, Punk.

The early seventies imagery of the counter-establishment and those who disavowed
normality, however was far more dominated by a ‘glam-rock’ aesthetic directly descendent from
the ‘boho’ looks of the late 1960s and using the latest stretch fabrics. ‘Rock ‘n’ Roll’ itself we tend
to think of primarily as a 1950s marker of rebellion styled with leather biker jackets and quiffs with
young men trying to re-create Marlon Brando’s look in The Wild One (Laslo Bendek, 1954) but,
whilst The Beatles were the polite end of 1960s popular music, The Rolling Stones (formed as
such in 1962) and The Who (formed in 1964) were keeping the chaotic imagery of Rock ‘n’ Roll
well and truly raw. The seventies were really the decade of battling super-groups and the ‘polite’
slot, after The Beatles collapsed, was filled by the ever-popular but rose-tinted world of ABBA –
even though their aesthetic was pure glam-rock with spandex jumpsuits. Another key figure of the
early seventies rock world who is relevant here is Elton John, who throughout the early seventies
became a comparative regular on the epitome of mainstream society television The Morecombe
and Wise Show (at both the BBC and ITV from the 1960s to the 1980s) and was quite adept and sending himself up within that context (the running gag was that Eric and Ernie would keep preventing him from performing on stage and clips of him on the show can be easily found on YouTube). At this early point in his career, John was not quite the flamboyant and conscious ‘quean’ in his performance (both publicly and privately) but he was still the face of seventies rock, the face of a subculture which was ‘outside’ the dominant ideologies, and made strident ‘Rock ‘n’ Roll’ more acceptable; along with the cheeriness of Slade (who by releasing that Christmas anthem, made themselves part of society in the way only a Christmas single can) and the intellectualism of one of seventies’ rock’s other giants, David Bowie, who exuded a wonderful androgyny against the hyper-masculinity of other performers, like Noddy Holder. British rock of the 1970s casts a huge shadow over British films during this period for a number of reasons, not least of which being that at a time when the British film industry was struggling for money, rock stars were part of a small group of people who could and did contribute to British cinema either behind the scenes or in front of the camera. In 1978 George Harrison of the Beatles responded to the Monty Python’s Flying Circus team’s cry of help amidst the financial cold should of EMI and created Handmade Films with his financial manager Denis O’Brien to ensure Life of Brian (Terry Jones, 1979) was completed; and both Mick Jagger and David Bowie risked their reputations as actors during the period with Jagger starring in Performance (Donald Cammell and Nicholas Roeg, 1968 – released 1970) and Ned Kelly (Tony Richardson, 1970), whilst Bowie was rather more successful in The Man Who Fell To Earth (Nicholas Roeg, 1976). It is also worthwhile noting here the importance of The Who as film producers for another seminal film of the 1970s, Quadrophenia (Franc Roddam, 1979 – based on Pete Townsend’s 1973 second rock opera album), whilst for Tommy in 1975they had limited themselves to the creative side of production with a musicians credit list that reads like a Who’s Who of 1970s British music.

Rock stars of the 1970s were also important in propelling theatre and developing edgier musicals during the period, and even musicals in which they were not directly involved became rock extravaganzas, such as Jesus Christ Superstar (released in 1973 and directed by Canadian director, Norman Jewison) but first staged in 1971 after an initial manifestation as what the Really Useful Company website itself calls a “concept album”, clearly signalling the links to the world of popular music. Rock, in a sense, was transforming theatrical genres and making the forms more horizontally integrated, which reflected the changes in the film industries at the time, too.
What was so important about these rock stars, these men, however, was more than just about the finances and style of British films and theatre in the 1970s, it was also about taking a social groups which had been marginalised by society and the media in the 1950s as delinquent and demonstrating how these abjected men had a voice and power which had something to contribute which meant the previously abjected could now be viewed as role models. That this perspective was possible, does not mean it was adhered to or agreed with by the still dominant ideologies but the rock star, in all his masculinities, offered an image of masculinity which engaged with other post-war imagery of men on an emancipated level: it showed that being a man did not have to mean being part of the establishment, or being part of patriarchy, or believing in masculinism.

The Films

The films upon which I focus in this chapter are, as I set out earlier Tommy, The Wicker Man, The Rocky Horror Picture Show and Jubilee. Just in case there are some of you reading that are unfamiliar with one or more of the films’ narratives, it is useful here to briefly summarise each of the films to help contextualise their actions. The Wicker Man is the earliest of the films analysed here, as it was released in 1973. For contemporary audiences it has something of a notoriety borne of the subject matter and the open sexuality of the film which has obscured the subtleties of the movie itself. The Wicker Man can be understood as the 1970s offspring of three particular sub-genres in British cinema: the horror-movie, the police film and the remote rural film. These influences can be witnessed in the casting of Christopher Lee as Lord Summerisle, the charismatic ruler of the island, the central narrative impetus being the young policeman (Edward Woodward’s) searching for a missing girl, and the representation of a rural community being somehow other to the mainland/mainstream culture. There are echoes of Lee’s Dracula (Dracula, Terrence Fisher, 1957) but also the later 1960s horrors such as The Witchfinder General (Michael Reeves, 1968), the social problem film of the 1950s with Woodward as a young, Christian, Dixon-like figure, and those representations of Scottish isolated cultures in The Edge of the World (Michael Powell, 1937) and Whisky Galore! (Alexander MacKendrick, 1949). As Sergeant Howie (Woodward) tries to find the young girl, Rowan Morrison, he finds great opposition from within the community and even from the girl’s mother, despite having received an anonymous letter which brought him to the
island in the first place. A devout Christian, Howie becomes increasingly morally outraged by what he finds on Summerisle, a fertility culture which is effectively a last remaining outpost of Celtic beliefs. Each year, the villagers participate in fertility rights which begin with dancing around the Maypole but, if no good harvest is forthcoming, could end with the death of a virgin. On the walls of the local pub, Howie finds photographs chronicling the demise of the island’s annual harvest and begins to believe that Rowan has either been killed already or has been kidnapped for sacrifice on the coming feast day. Meanwhile, the locals are weaving a web of mysteries and trickery for Howie, which, on the day of the fertility sacrifice, lead to him being imprisoned, dressed in a white night-gown, and inserted into the belly of a Celtic wicker man placed on the island’s headland. The film ends with Howie, the adult virgin whose virginity has been tested and is therefore more pure, being sacrificed by the pagans of Summerisle for their coming year’s fertility.

Virginity is also central to the characters in The Rocky Horror Picture Show, released in 1975. It might seem peculiar to some readers to discuss this film in the context of British cinema, filled as it is by American cultural references but the film’s gothic heritage and characters are Anglo-American if anything, with the American characters drawn from American cultural iconography beginning, from the film’s off, which the direct reference to the well-known painting of a rural American couple, ‘American Gothic’ (Grant Wood, 1930), and the repeated references to American culture as mediated through Hollywood and Rock ‘n’ Roll (the use of the RKO mast and Eddie the biker in addition to the ‘girl and boy next door’, Janet and Brad, played by Susan Sarandon and Barry Bostock). It is Brad and Janet who provide the narrative motivation for entering into the mock-gothic world of Dr Frank N. Furter (Tim Curry): their car breaks down in a storm. Entering the mysterious mansion on the hill (an image straight from Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960). The Munsters (CBS, 1964-1966) and The Addams Family (ABC, 1964-1966) – the two shows starting within days of each other in September 1964) Brad and Janet find themselves witnessing a bizarre party of ‘deviants’, men dressed like women and women dressed like men, all at some stage of undress according to mainstream social tropes. When Furter makes his grand entrance, resplendent as only a six foot seven transvestite can be in seven inch platform heels and full make-up, Brad and Janet, like the other partygoers, find themselves bewitched by his potent charms, ultimately seduced by him in different guises (the trickster Devil, no less) as they begin to spend a long night in the house. Seducing the couple, the virgins, and especially the
transgressive seduction of Brad, however, is not good enough for Frank N. Furter and he awakens his Adonis-like creation, Rocky, for his own sexual uses. Rocky, however, despite his tottering, quickly develops other ideas, and Janet is ultimately revealed as the character who takes Rocky’s virginity in the wake of Furter’s own actions with her. Furter’s house is ruled not by the good doctor, though, but by Richard O’Brien’s Riff-Raff, who is constantly conspiring behind his ‘master’s’ back and who reveals in the film’s final part that the house and its occupants are actually aliens but that Furter has ‘gone native’ (bearing in mind that is Furter is an alien ‘gone native’ then this is an interesting interpretation of the nature of humanity) and they must return home for his punishment. O’Brien created *The Rocky Horror Show* as a theatrical musical and the cast is largely dominated by the theatre production’s cast but the film was also filmed at one of British film’s great iconographic sets, Hammer’s Bray House, with some larger scenes filmed at Elstree Studios outside London. All of these components make *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* symptomatic of cinema production during the period: most films were co-productions derived from other media on some level in order to maintain financial efficacy. Many films would suffer from this issue, with the film productions of TV shows proving prime examples of how *not* to adapt a text from one medium to another, but *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* has become a cult film with a following that exceeds the original stage production and a stable iconography for fancy-dress parties in the UK and US at Halloween.

The presence of glam-rock imagery in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and its references back to the 1950s can be seen to share some perspectives with The Who’s *Tommy*, released earlier in the same year. Like *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Tommy* enjoyed a previous incarnation as a stage production (as a concert performance) but had begun life as a concept album for The Who in 1969. *Tommy* also engages with the idea of setting up one man as an icon and how that can all too easily be crushed. In this sense it can seen that all three films so far are debating ideas of belief and false gods, in charismatic leaders and being misled.

Young Tommy (Roger Daltry) is born into a world at the end of war and grows up with a heroic idealisation of his dead father, an RAF pilot. His mother (Ann-Margaret), still a young woman, remarries a Teddy Boy during the 1950s, played by Oliver Reed with relish and Tommy is less and less important retreating into his own world. This self-isolation from the society of his family is furthered by him becoming a deaf, dumb and blind kid’ in response to seeing his stepfather kill his father, who returns miraculously, for one night only, and his stepfather (and
mother) telling him ‘you didn’t see nothing, you didn’t hear nothing, you don’t tell anybody nothing’, thus making his disability entirely psychological. Tommy becomes more and more dejected, falling back in on his own imagination as his mother tries a series of ‘quack’ remedies to heal him but as he grows to adulthood, Tommy’s teenage (bearing in mind it is Roger Daltry) identity becomes ever more mysterious and his family all the less likely to interact with him, leaving him to the ministrations of his sadistic cousin Kevin and paedophilic Uncle Ernie. Finally left to his own devices, however, Tommy finds fame and attention through playing on the pinball machine as ‘the pinball wizard’ (Elton John was the supporting act for The Who in 1970 and the last concert performance of Tommy at the Roundhouse that year was dedicated to him, hence his place in the movie – www.thewho.com). This worship as a star of gaming turns to something rather more transformative and Tommy becomes more and more viewed obsessively by his fans as being messianic. In this sense, the film is engaging with a critique of stardom itself and drawing on the growth of iconography in analysing popular culture. It was also only a comparatively short time after John Lennon’s famously controversial mis-quoted ‘statement’ from his March 1966 interview with Maureen Cleave in the Evening Standard, that the Beatles were bigger than Jesus. What he actually said was ‘Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn't argue with that; I'm right and I will be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus now; I don't know which will go first - rock 'n' roll or Christianity. Jesus was all right but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It's them twisting it that ruins it for me’.

Ultimately, however, Tommy turns his back on the accolades and worship of him as a false god and the film ends with an image which is contradictorily one of emancipation from society; a man half naked on a cliff top, the wind in his air, freed from the world; and also one of the richest religious images in any film ever with Roger Daltry as Tommy framed within the iconography of the golden Christ, sun blazing in his hair. Indeed, one cannot watch Tommy at this point and not think of the cinematography of Jewison’s Jesus Christ Superstar.

The three films I have introduced thus far are all quite complex in their renderings of masculine identities because all represent so-called ideals as ultimately flawed. Whilst for one ideology (that of the Christian church), for example, Howie’s virginity is a role model for masculinity, for another, because of its atypicality, it is ultimately his greatest weakness. The same is true of Brad, in particular in The Rocky Horror Picture Show and Tommy remains represented as sexually naive if not actually asexual (the film’s prostitute scene with Tina Turner transforms
itself into sado-masochistic drug fantasia rather than an explicit orgy, permitting Tommy to remain an innocent). Derek Jarman’s *Jubilee* is also rich in its engagement with the ‘issue’ of sex. Here, a series of characters are either highly sexual (such as the ménage a trios with Ian Charleston’s character and his two other lovers), androgynous and/or ambiguous, or famously virginal, with both England’s most famous virgin, Elizabeth I, and her magister, John Dee (who was said to have used abstinence to hone his predictive skills and who, like most of England learned population, was a converted Catholic who had taught Elizabeth since her childhood - Weir, 1997)

*Jubilee*, however, is much more politically engaged that the other three films in articulating what shapes identities. It is also the only film which is more aware of the problems of the seventies whilst the other three elide them somehow, with the small exception of Nixon’s resignation speech on Brad and Janet’s car radio). Nevertheless, *Jubilee* also contains that reference point to the past, in this case very powerfully, by juxtaposing Elizabeth I and Elizabeth II, deconstructing the 1950s optimism for the ‘New Elizabethans’. The narrative of the film is quite difficult to follow for many audiences because, like many of Jarman’s films, it should be read as filmic poem with stanzas, and tangents, and interlacing ideas which are not necessarily coherent in the conventional sense of narrative continuity but which question the very force of cause and effect to structure actions. This is, of course, entirely in keeping with the film as an essay on anarchy and history and Jarman’s re-writing of British history by Amyl Nitrate is a superlative discourse upon historiography itself, punctuated by her rendering of ‘Rule Britannia’, a punk rendition as redolent of social decay as The Sex Pistols’ ‘God Save the Queen’ ever was.

The film centres upon a conceit that Elizabeth I and John Dee are able to see into the present (the seventies) and eventually cross over, finding the present day queen a transient figure who runs across the wasteland to be shot for her jewels by the androgynous Bod, played by the actress who also plays the Virgin Queen, one of a series of actions which summarises the socio-political context of the film. The use of Elizabeth as a device, and the style of the Elizabethan parts of the film inevitably create parallels with Jarman’s earlier film of *The Tempest* from 1976: the joie de vivre of the Shakespeare adaptation transfers into the hedonism of his anarchists in *Jubilee*. Also contributing to this is the casting of Toyah Wilcox as the boyish Mad, who had had a small part in *The Tempest* but who was distinctive image of punk at the time, going onto being a punk pop star in the earlier the 1980s. She is one of a series of anchor points within the
film as a character who makes things happen, but her actions are mainly violent: she leads the brutal killing of a policeman and is continuously furious throughout the film. The use of punk as the basis of the film’s visual repertoire, like the use of rock in Tommy, the glam-rock aliens of The Rocky Horror Picture Show and the pagan community in The Wicker Man, firmly establishes the characters as deviant from mainstream society in reality but the reality of the film itself securely denies the mainstream by presenting every character as anarchic on some level (even those which on the surface are ‘respectable’ have a particular character trait which signals their otherness). Consequently, Jarman succeeds in representing deviation from expectation as normality and creates a filmic reality which is unified and permissive in ways which not only liberate the characters from the tyranny of the dominant ideologies of the seventies but also imprisons them in the negativity of anarchy, that in permitting all actions, the arbitrariness of action means life is inherently dangerous (epitomised by the historical manipulation only revealed in the film’s latter parts, that this is an England which lost World War Two). As such, the masculinities being performed in the film (and the femininities) are all clearly tied to the issue I discussed earlier, that the crisis of masculinism is about masculinity in relationship to national history and, particularly, the effect of the ghost of the second world war. This is a world in which it is impossible to identify protagonists and antagonists because neither good nor evil exist in a value system other than that provided by our perspectives as spectators.

The Wicker Man

Unlike many horror films of the 1960s and 1970s, Robin Hardy’s The Wicker Man is actually quite careful to avoid establishing a concept of evil within the film but, rather, presents the different beliefs of the film as perspectives witnessed by a man, Sergeant Howie, who cannot understand. As is typical of so many films, the protagonist here functions as a representation of the dominant ideology (and by implication the audience’s predominant beliefs) within a new environment which is enigmatic. His antithesis (in all senses of the word) here is Christopher Lee’s svengali Lord Summerisle, who is never villainous but rather controlling, standing up for his people and his beliefs. An audience reads the villainy into Lee because of his past performances as Hammer’s great Count Dracula but his performances actually goes to some lengths to emphasise Summerisle as a beneficent but perhaps unsteady figure. Fundamentally, however, the juxtaposing of the two
men is one which accentuates the different masculinities they represent: both are remote men on
the fringes of mainstream society physically and psychologically.

Remote places have always been locations where things can happen outside society but
with enough reference to the mainstream, to a kind of reality, to make them appear neutral to a
passing eye (and here I include not just the concept of the playboy island or the remote religious
community but also the kinds of activities which are accepted as part of the sociality of seaside
resorts or naturalist communities), and because, as I set out earlier, *The Wicker Man* can be
identified with a narrative continuum in British films, Howie enters the action, as our
representative, with little expectation of anything happening which is truly beyond the limits of
society. Yet Howie’s virginity is itself problematic. He is a good role model within Christian
beliefs (as shared by many non-pagan religions) but he is clearly mocked at the beginning of the
film by his own colleagues and his constant restrain in his outwardly behaviour is tied repeatedly
to his repressed sexual desires. Consequently, Howie represents the straight man who is abjected
by those who do not understand him, is dejected because he does not want to be like them until he
is a married man, but who is also a ‘pillar’ of the community. In many ways he epitomises the
hypocrisy in modern societies which profess to be founded on religious beliefs: his beliefs, which
shape his actions, are the very cause for his demise despite them being beliefs which British
society avows as part of what makes modern Britain what it is. Fundamentally, the morality Howie
believes in is corrupt on the mainland... but, to his standards, it is even more prurient on the off
shore Summerisle.

Lord Summerisle, by contrast, is every inch the sexual predator in performance and power.
This is largely due to Christopher Lee’s presence again, as one of the few British hypermasculine
actors – not characters- of this period (alongside Sean Connery). Lee has one of British cinema’s
richest and most distinctive voices, which because of its depth, resonates and exudes a
stereotypical straight masculinity in a way few other actors have achieved. In contrast, whilst
Edward Woodward’s voice is not actually high-pitched by any means within the film, because it is
still inherently raised, the contrast makes Lord Summerisle sound more ‘macho’. I use the word
‘macho’ here for a specific reason because, as a concept itself, it seems particularly appropriate to
the period (as much because of The Village People’s ‘Macho, Man’ from 1978 as anything), but
Summerisle’s machismo is also represented through his juxtapositioning to a series of images of
naked women, rendering him as a Scottish Hugh Heffner with his own Playboy mansion.
Summerisle and Howie will always be at odds with each other because they are diametric opposites: the svengali and the virgin, the spider and the fly.

However, they are both authority figures, the policeman and the laird, and in providing a society into which Howie must fit for the narrative and its actions, the authority of both is deconstructed for the moment of the sacrifice: Howie becomes the “willing king for a day, virgin and fool” whilst Lord Summersisle cross-dresses in a flowing white robe. This deconstruction of power is however incredibly pertinent in the ability of Summerisle to have the upper hand in the climax of the film because Lord Summerisle is transformed from patriarchal power to matriarchal priestess: power is a trait of women in religions of fertility and the important gods are in fact goddesses. These final actions then, in turning the patriarchal structures ‘on their head’ are central to how the masculinities of The Wicker Man can be read and how both men, dejected from the mainstream and believers in different ideals (although Lord Summerisle is implicated in the island practices primarily for economic gain), are given places of value within alternative social structures. The only problem is that Howie’s place requires his death.

*Tommy*

As I observed earlier, death is also central to the transformations present in Ken Russell’s film of *Tommy* and in terms of the sheer variety of masculinities being represented in the film, the movie provides a panoply of masculinity covering the whole of the thirty year period between 1945 and 1975, from Tommy’s heroic RAF officer father, mythically lost in battle, to the paedophile in the family, Tommy’s uncle and Tommy himself as a messianic figure with his own cult near the film’s end. As an example of how British film in the seventies collated the issues with which this chapter concerns itself, *Tommy* is extremely rich and warrants detailed analysis here but I want to start by examining the psychological engagements with masculinity in this and one of the other films being analysed, *The Wicker Man*.

A striking feature of *Tommy* for much of the film’s duration is the idolization by Tommy (Roger Daltry) of his long-dead father (played by Robert Powell). The film begins by establishing a myth for the young, hearing and speaking Tommy, that his father was killed in an air battle as a great war hero. This presents Tommy as part of a generation for whom fathers were significantly absent through service during the war itself or absent, later, due to death or illness. It links him to Colin Smith in *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* and Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in
Anger in terms of fathers destroyed by war and killed by cancer but, more directly, gives Tommy a specific link to the idea of the father as hero and, because he is played by Robert Powell, makes Tommy himself appear as the son of an icon. Admittedly, the reading of Robert Powell by audiences today is dominated by Powell as Christ in Zeffirelli’s extravaganza Jesus of Nazareth, which was made in 1977; but the iconography that is used to represent Tommy’s father in this film is replete with heavenly and religious symbolism by situating the character within the sky and providing him with halo-effects, making Tommy’s perspective clearly one of father as God rather than God the father.

Religion is a recurring theme throughout the film, which is unsurprising given the destination for Tommy’s character, but the most striking deconstruction of worship is seen in the Church of our Lady Marilyn Monroe, to which Tommy’s mother takes him. This is one of the key points at which Tommy is played as a child by Roger Daltry the adult, which problematizes a number of scenes by using adult imagery and knowledge to shape an experience from a child’s perspective (another being the scenes around Tommy’s abuse by Ernie and the sadistic cousin played by Paul Nicholls – who was a long runner Jesus in the Lloyd Webber musical during the 1970s in London). These juxtapositionings of Tommy as character and his performance by Daltry eloquently emphasise the performativity of masculinity within the film. In having an adult man play a child-like role, what makes a man is called into question by the film. Tommy is sexually challenged on a number of fronts, including the explicit presentation of his mother’s sexual desires driving their life with Reed’s violent spiv stepfather. Yet, ironically, it is only by disavowing all the roles that those around him try to impose upon him (i.e. by rejecting social constructions of identity) and becoming a true individual, that Tommy can achieve man-hood. To be ‘his own man’, he must reject everyone else’s model of him. Here, the abjection and dejection that the film frames is encouraged by Tommy himself, because of his own opting out of society. Rejected, then idolised, then disavowed, then dejected, the film oscillates as a tug of war over Tommy’s masculinity until he makes the choice himself and controls his rejection of what society, in the film, constructs as masculine.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show

In contrast, The Rocky Horror Picture Show’s deconstruction of masculinity is based upon the Tension between the desire to be part of society and the desire to be liberated from society. Charles
Grey’s narrator is an important part of symbolising the overshadowing by society of the film’s representations and is mirrored in the film by the professor, chiefly. However, even Grey’s patriarch is neutralised as the entire cast reveal fishnet stockings near the film’s resolution: and it just as important that Grey’s character leads the ‘Timewarp’ instructions at the other end of the film. The key abiding theme of The Rocky Horror Picture show is ‘how to make a man’ (bearing in mind the explicit reference to Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein), but the film explores it more widely than purely as a psychological concept, which the literal construction of Rocky by Frank ‘n’ Furter based upon his admiration for the Charles Atlas image of a masculine Adonis: ‘In just seven days I can make you a man’. This image, and the industry which sprung up around Atlas’ claim that he could take a weakling (and hence not masculine, the soft body) and transform him into a bodybuilder rippling with muscles (and therefore masculine, the hard body), is something to which popular culture returns occasionally and is even evoked in the superhero transformations of many Marvel heroes (a good example being Spiderman) and shapes the images of hypermasculinity in film which dominated the 1970s and 1980s in particular. Rocky, however, also references Greek myth as the Adonis shaped by Furter and is clothed, albeit scantily, as an adult cherub, a version of Eros.

If we, momentarily, consider this in terms of psychoanalytical interpretations beyond the Kristevan basis upon which the discussion of dejection hinges, Rocky is inherently destined to be Furter’s downfall as a love he cannot have, or at least has and then loses: he is a fetish made real but, as the god of Love, Apollo, his can also be configured (to recall Deleuze on the work of Sacher von Masoch), as the masochistic third figure who will always destabilise any relationship. He only problem is that Furter is not so much as a masochist than a hedonistic figure whose power is not as much as the film initially presents (it is in fact Riff-Raff who is the controller, the one in charge). If anything, Furter has a child-like quality which echoes the polymorphous perverse Freud maintained all children are inherently. This makes Rocky his toy and his rage, when Janet seduces Rocky, a temper tantrum. Furter has to have what he desires and when he does not, Tim Curry performs a marvellously sulky face and personifies petulance. Yet there is a kind of joy in Furter as the centre of the film against the repression of the narrator, Brad Majors and Janet Weiss – his actions emancipate them from social restraint. Until they have sex with Furter, Brad and Janet are represented as idiotic prudes but their libidos are ‘released’ by both Furter and Rocky. At which point the performance of their sexual identities is transformed, their movements become more
fluid, their voices change and their costumes are transformed from small-town America to fetish-wear.

At the beginning of the film, Brad is framed as a dominant straight man, with Janet obeying his every word with the simpering high-pitched voice she is given for the first half of the film. Brad’s sexuality is, however, challenged by Furter both ideologically and actually as a dominant bisexual man, the ‘transsexual transvestite from Transylvania’, the polymorphous perverse manifested linguistically within the musical itself. This aspect of the narrative which is playfully explored as a positive development for Brad and Janet, breaking them free from puritanical sexualities, cannot but return us to that concept of performativity again from Judith Butler and recall her assertion that heterosexuality means love of all sexes: and by implication that to be a complete human being, we must acknowledge this in our explicit and implicit relationship with sexuality. Thus, in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, amidst its heterosexuality, the ‘normal’ man is represented as the sexually liberated figure and not the restrained virgin. There are echoes here of *The Wicker Man* but Furter’s comparison to Lord Summerisle can only go so far because Furter is ultimately a disempowered, frustrated would-be human and not a powerful, satisfied would-not-be Christian.

Style note US spellings and single quote marks

Sweet Transvestites from Transsexual Transylvania

Frank ‘n’ Furter as Queen and Quean

Transvestite and Transexual as terms in development

“We’ve got to get out of this trap before decadence saps our wills”. Dr Everett Scott before he unveils his fishnet stockinged legs and stiletto heels.

Frank ‘n’ Furter is a bisexual alien and thus separated gradually from concepts of masculinity and femininity in the film making the complete acceptance and sympathy for him at the film’s conclusion less difficult for audiences to accept (perhaps explaining why the film has such a wide fan-base).

*Jubilee*
Androgyny – Ariel, Mad and Bod (through make-up, mannerisms and physique)
“Consider the world’s diversity and worship it. By denying its multiplicity you deny your own true nature. Equality prevails not for the gods’ sake but for man’s. Men are weak and cannot endure their manifold nature” (Ariel)
“The world is no longer interested in heroes” (Mad)
Butchness in women – refs images of lesbianism but they are actually asexual
Femininity in men – refs glam-rock and youth above all else, hence the Kid being called ‘the Kid’ (and being Adam Ant, this pre-figures the new-Romantics.

Gender-bending: Feminisation
Man’ as a mobile signifier of masculinity.
Masculinity therefore can be feminine
or varying sexualities
performed
Femininity, therefore, also becomes flexible:
femininity does not automatically mean subservient
women can be seen as strong
is also performed
Consequently, sexuality and gender are both untied from the symbols spectators are used to reading in film and identity becomes, above all, human.

Disability as Deviance - A brief tangent
Discussion of masculinity linked to disability typically view the disabled man as impotent and asexual.
In each of the films’ representations of physical and psychological disability, the ‘performance’ of disability questions normative assumptions about the disabled as incapacitated and thus another form of the Other, in these cases masculine, is challenged and another form of deviance from the norm as embraced (e.g. Dr Scott, Tommy especially).

Drugs and Death
The druggie/ stoner/ hippy become interchangeable names for the addict
Images are tied to death – the pale addict, the hedonistic (high) addict – and sex – the loss of inhibition
Inhibition, however, is framed negatively so is the double bind that drugs are implied as ‘good’?

The Rocky Horror Picture Show

Riff Raff – skeletal, pale, tramplike
Eddie – consistently referred to as being influenced by the “wrong
crowd” or lost in drugs - he ends up dead but looks like a zombie throughout.

YET

They eat Eddie – is he the drug that leads to the high hallucinations of the floorshow?

Jubilee

Punk aesthetic
make-up – darkened eyes, pale faces
costume – make-shift, constantly changing, recycled and personalised
Nihilism: the end of history
Amyl Nitrate wants to write her own condensed history of England.
Mad wants to destroy it all.
The London of the film is a cipher but the past is more important than the present in creating “a mirror for our time” – for example, the scene with Adam Ant at the Albert Memorial reading the composers’ names and even Kid (Ant), Angel and Sphinx talking of past Christmases on the tower-block roof.

Tommy

Drugs as Sexual awakening Tina Turner’s drug queen and prostitute
Tommy’s father who dies twice (Robert Powell just before Jesus Of Nazareth but as Christ-like Father figure).
Tommy is the film in which death is most important (despite the death in The Wicker Man the film is more concerned about life-cycles). The father’s first death makes Tommy a special child who worships the memory of a father who was fleeting but his second death sends him into silence and it is surely not insignificant that religions as cults are a theme throughout the film. Drugs, however, are linked to hallucinations and ‘awakenings’ within the film. Aldous Huxley’s “doors of perception” are tangible in the narrative for Tommy and his mother.

Punk Patriotism?
The mid-70s was a time when the aesthetics of rebellion and punk develop (being another phase of post-war rebellion aesthetics following on from a) rock, b) mod, c) mini-skirts, d) anti-style hippy, e) high-style glam-rock to f) anti-style punk).

Punk has always been heavy with the ironic use of national iconography (e.g The Sex Pistols’ ‘God Save the Queen’ cover/t-shirt) something misappropriated by the BNP.
The Rocky Horror Picture Show
Furter’s Union-jack leather jacket with badges and the use of tatoos and hair as statement in Rocky Horror.

Jubilee
Amyl Nitrate’s ‘Rule Britannia’
“She’s England’s Glory”
Elizabeth I vs Elizabeth II (the new Elizabethans)
Churchill as debateable hero
“Negative world status”
Buckingham Palace
The Royal Albert Hall
Borgia Ginz’ Soviet stately home with Hitler in the drawing room

Figures of the establishment (policemen, the bishop) as sexual creatures
killers
sadists

Britain as decay. Life as anarchy: “as long as the music’s loud enough we won’t hear the world falling apart” (Borgia Ginz)

Rolling into the ’80s/’90s
Rocky Horror specifics. The normalisation of roles:
Charles Gray becomes Mycroft in the Granada Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
Christopher Biggins become a camp clown (Adam Painting) in Rentaghost – also Granada.
Barry Bostwick as naieve and idiotic in Spin City (ABC, 1996-2002)

Tommy specifics. Continuities and contrasts:
Roger Daltry as father-figure in Buddy’s Song (1991).
The Wicker Man specifics. Remoteness and religion (which of course harkens back to both abjection and hermitages and the removal from society): Father Ted (Channel 4, 1995-1998).
Jubilee specifics. Jarman’s punk-romance aesthetic:
     Adam Ant and Toyah as performers. Into the new-Romantics but also iconography of the strike era in the 1980s.
Labyrinth
     A ‘straight’ Rocky Horror? Look at the Bowie make-up: it’s Bowie and Furter combined.

Neo-masculinity in British Cinema
The films of the 1970s which engaged with atypical masculinities, masculinities on the edge of normative behaviour established a
dialogue for the representation of men beyond masculinism. The men represented in The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Jubilee, The Wicker Man and Tommy are all very different but are afforded Character flaws which are inextricably tied to their identities as Men existing within societies. This variability of characterisation, symptomatic of variance in gender performativity elsewhere in the ’70s, opened the possibility for masculinity to be re-framed within the contemporary and removed from masculinism’s outdated patriarchal-Empire building ideals. As such, a neo-masculinity is given reign to express itself. One seen in films as varied as Chariots of Fire and Billy Elliot.

Conclusions
The representation of deviance is only possible when the ‘deviance’ itself is less deviant and made comprehensible by a sense of ‘normality’. Concepts of the ‘what is masculine’ are permitted development when untied from history. The ‘unholy’ trio of sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll remove sexuality and gender from social niceties and afford debate and growth in the films analysed.

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