Taming the Volcano: Hegemonic and Counter-Hegemonic Masculinities in the Middle Ages

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Abstract

Relying to Norbert Elias' process sociology and the Bourdieusian theory of practice, this article intends to outline the beginnings of the long-term transformation of Western masculine habituses. First, it concentrates on hegemonic knightly masculine dispositions, pointing out how these patterns are structured by the uncivilized libido dominandi, i.e. by the more or less free indulgence in physical violence. Next, it scrutinises the counter-hegemonic dispositions of clerics, based on internalised violence control. Finally, it argues that there are several transitory figurations between the two ideal types, i.e. the borders between the knightly and clerical masculinities are blurred. Consequently, as a result of changing structural constraints, by the end of the Middle Ages hybrid masculine habituses are being formed.

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Domar el Volcán: Masculinidades Hegemónicas y Contrahegemónicas en la Edad Media

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Resumen

Basándose en la sociología de procesos de Norbert Elias y la teoría de la práctica de Bourdieu, este artículo pretende esbozar los inicios de la transformación a largo plazo de los hábitos masculinos occidentales. Primero, se definen las disposiciones hegemónicas caballerescas masculinas, señalando cómo estos patrones están estructurados por la dominación civilizada de la libido, es decir, por la indulgencia más o menos libre de la violencia física. A continuación, se analizan las disposiciones contrahegemónicas de los clérigos, basadas en el control de la violencia internalizada. Finalmente, se argumenta que hay varias figuraciones transitorias entre los dos tipos ideales, es decir, los límites entre las masculinidades caballeresca y clerical están borrosos. En consecuencia, como resultado de las restricciones de las estructuras que son oscilantes, al final de la Edad Media se estaban formando hábitos masculinos híbridos.

Palabras clave: Edad Media, dominación civilizada de la libido, transformación a largo plazo, caballeros, clérigos, hábitos híbridos

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The earthly city was supported, it was believed, by two columns, and defended by two associated types of militia: the men who bore arms and the men who prayed to God. But what better place in which to pray than within the heavens of purity protected by the cloister walls? (…) Although the knighthood camped in the midst of Latin Christendom and held it firmly in its grip, it was the monks who reigned supreme in the enormous spiritual realm of mental anguish and religious fear.

(Duby, 1981, p. 58).

By concentrating on the beginnings of a long story, this paper represents the initial phase of a larger work. The aim is to outline, from a birds-eye view, the thousand-year-long dispositional transformation of Western masculinities. My thesis is that as a result of changing structural constraints, violent hegemonic dispositions, conditioned by the knightly life, are gradually built upon by pacified and civilized counter-hegemonic dispositions, rooted in the clerics' existence. Following Pierre Bourdieu, I conceive of masculinities as habitus, i.e. the incorporation of durable behavioural patterns that govern human praxis at the non-conscious level. By being perceptible, these "structured, structural structures" are liable to social classification and differentiation. However, similarly to my earlier article (Hadas, 2016), I intend to prove that Bourdieu is wrong when he claims that "the constancy of habitus (...) is one of the most important factors in the relative constancy of the structure of the sexual division of labor" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 95). I intend to emphasise the historically conditioned changeability and plurality of masculine dispositions. My aim is not to conceive of this process in terms of a linear story, but rather as a process of transformation during which, from period to period, different hegemonic and counter-hegemonic masculine dispositions emerge.

Besides Bourdieu, my most important reference is the process sociology of Norbert Elias. His opus magnum, The Civilizing Process (Elias, 2000), appeared in German in 1939, but was only released in English some thirty years later, after which it was translated into dozens of languages. In much of the world, it is now considered one of the most important sociological

books written during the 20th century. By analysing the long-term transformations in the behaviour of the secular upper classes in the West, Elias constructs a big-picture narrative about Europe as a whole. The core of his argument is that faced with external social pressures, people develop self-control mechanisms that suppress "uncivilized", animal-like behavioural elements based on violence. These suppressions function as feelings of shame. Elias characterises the everyday activity of a knight and his wife in the following way:

> 'He spends his life, we read of a knight, 'in plundering, destroying churches, falling upon pilgrims, oppressing widows and orphans. He takes particular pleasure in mutilating the innocent. In a single monastery, that of the black monks of Sarlat, there are 150 men and women whose hands he has cut off or whose eyes he has put out. And his wife is just as cruel. She helps him with his executions. It even gives her pleasure to torture the poor women. She had their breasts hacked off or their nails torn off so that they were incapable of work' (Elias, 2000, p. 163).

It is easy to understand the central thesis of The Civilizing Process if we reflect on the feelings and sentiments that overcome us while reading the above lines. No doubt, there is hardly any 21st century reader in whom the acts described in these sentences do not cause a feeling of embarrassment, confusion, puzzlement, abhorrence or shame. In other words, we have internalised violence control, which, according to Elias, is the decisive indicator of the civilizing process. After this description, he adds the following comment:

> Such affective outbursts may still occur as unusual phenomena, as 'pathological' degeneration, in later phases of social development. But here no punitive social power existed. The only threat, the only danger that could instil fear was that of being overpowered in battle by a stronger opponent. Leaving aside a small elite, raping, pillage, and murder were standard practice in the warrior society of this time.

> (…) Outbursts of cruelty did not exclude one from social life. They were not outlawed. The pleasure in killing and torturing others was great, and it was a socially permitted pleasure. To a certain extent, the social structure even pushed its members in this direction, making it seem necessary and practically advantageous to behave in this way (Elias, 2000, p. 163).

My third reference is Raewyn Connell, the most important researcher within the field of the studies on men and masculinities. As is well-known, the novelty of her approach was that since the late 1970s, s/he has concentrated on the plurality and changeability of masculinities. Her most frequently used term is "hegemonic masculinity", i.e. "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Nevertheless, Connell does not offer an fully-fledged analysis of the long-term transformation of masculinities. She covers the "history of masculinity" between 1450 and the end of the 20th century, in less than 20 pages: from the Protestant Reformation and the philosophy of Descartes, she passes via the issues of colonization, the growth of cities, gentry masculinity, the Boy Scouts of America, Bengalis in India to the "global gender order" of our time (Connell, 1995, pp. 185-203). Prior to offering this historical overview, sensing that her argument might not be sophisticated enough, s/he remarks: "What follows is, inevitably, only a sketch of a vastly complex history. It seems important to get even rough bearings on a history so charged with significance for our current situation" (Connell, 1995, p. 186). Similarly to Bourdieu, Connell also tends to ignore relations among masculinities that are not based on struggle or domination, but on co-operation and solidarity. Consequently, several decisive bonds within all-male communities (friendship; fanship; solidarity between soldiers, monks, classmates, members of subcultures, etc.) cannot be grasped through her conceptual framework.

To put it shortly, in the wake of Bourdieu, I conceive of masculinities as habituses conditioned in social practice. Following Elias, I assume that dispositional patterns are crystallised in the long run, as part of the Western civilizing process. My interpretation differs from the Bourdieuisan approach inasmuch as I aim to take the structurally conditioned plurality of habituses into account. Unlike Elias, I intend to ascribe greater emphasis to the study of non-secular (i.e. clerical) dispositional patterns. Compared to Connell, the novelty of my analysis lies in the fact that it tries to grasp the historical dynamics of both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic masculinities.

Knights and Clerics

Feudalism, which crystallised across Europe in the Middle Ages, represented a social system in which groups of people gave up their autonomy, and for security's sake subjected themselves to the protection of other people. This brought about a feudal formation with the lord paramount at its peak (the king, after the emergence of feudal states). Below him were the vassals personally beholden to him, then the vassals of the vassals, the under-vassals. These relations created a web of dependencies, the basis of which was the granting of some fief (land, castle, office, or a tax collecting, minting, or juridical right, etc.) by the lord paramount. The cement that held these feudal relations together were the personal networks of interdependencies in which the obligation of fealty and loyalty to the superior were asserted.

Military service was the duty of the knights, a particular subgroup of the nobility that embodied hegemonic masculine dispositions. In Bourdieu's view, a man conditioned by the urges of the libido dominandi pursues activities throughout his life, "the extreme form of which is war" (Bourdieu, 2001). For mediaeval knights, Bourdieu's 'extreme form' is the everyday reality of their existence that is taken for granted. The main activities of the knights are nothing else but warlike practices in their purest sense, denoting brutal physical violence. In other words, contrary to the Bourdieusian terminology that refers to symbolic violence, the knightly habitus is conditioned by a monopoly on the more or less free indulgence in physical

violence. Hence it is possible to introduce the concept of uncivilized libido dominandi in this context to designate a masculine habitus structured around the desire to fight, which manifests itself in real, often cruel murders. These drives constitute the core, around which further layers of masculinities, like the scales of an onion, are superposed as a result of the long-term transformation of social interdependencies.

Knights were professional warriors whose status as vassals brought them landed property with tax-paying serfs. Besides, they usually possessed sufficient fortunes to cover the costs of deploying heavy cavalry. According to George Duby, a leading mediaevalist:

> The vulgar dialect termed chevaliers [horsemen, knights] all men who sat high up on their war horses, looking down on the poor masses and terrorizing the monks. Arms and ability to fight – these are what brought them together. Some of them descended from the old nobility, (…) others were big village landowners. (…) The knightly class had been a disparate body; now it was more and more closely bound together by its privileges and its position at the peak of the political and social system. Its cohesion was due eve more to a single type of behaviour, a single hope, a single set of virtue – those of the specialists in war (Duby, 1981, pp. 38-39).

In an ideal-typical sense, the knight was a young warrior; a valiant and cruel champion who organised his life around fights and adventures. He did not renounce mundane pleasures: he lived in hedonistic zeal, loudly, rallying in bands, maximising the risks, merrily in high spirits. He was basically optimistic. He did not curb his aggressive urges or sexual desires. He was proud of his masculinity and sexual performance; when he caught sight of a woman during his adventures, journeys or raids, he took her sexually without hesitation. He was proud of his manly feats, his many children. He had fierce fits of passion and effusions of emotions; his adrenaline and testosterone levels were high; he tried to avenge the tiniest speck on his honour immediately, and to amplified effect. He acted on instinct, not restricting his

savage, bestial impulses or uncivilized drives; he felt at home in transitional states and was accustomed to uncertainty:

> Castle and manor, hill, stream, fields and villages, trees and woods still formed the background of their lives; they were taken for granted and regarded quite without sentimentality. Here they were at home, and here they were the masters. Their lives were characteristically divided between war, tournaments, hunts and love. (Elias, 2000, p. 181).

The knight's fundamental principle was to use every moment to give vent to his drives, to consummate pleasure and assert his strength, no matter how short his life might be. He took what he could: he acquired goods easily and squandered them just as easily. He was prodigal: he was in his element at festive rituals, knightly tournaments and bacchanals. He enjoyed being in a frenzy, revelling and wallowing in voracious pleasures. His cruelty was not only aimed at humans: he gladly killed game during hunts, and also took delight in causing pain, putting to the sword or torturing his victims. He was delighted to raze occupied settlements to the ground, and the cacophony of screams of the defeated was music to his ears. He spent little time at his home, whose primary function was to have a point of departure for his wars, adventures, conquests and plundering, and to have a place to return to with treasure. He was always on the move, away from home, for his life focused on arranging, often in an improvisatory manner, fights and physical struggle, sudden ambushes, battles and raids instead of the peace and quiet of the hearth.

As a matter of fact, a detailed examination would yield a somewhat more nuanced historical analysis of the knights. According to Elias:

> There are three forms of knightly existence which, with many intermediate stages, begin to be distinguishable in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. There were the smaller knights, rulers over one or more not very large estates; there were the great, rich knights, the territorial rulers, few in number compared to the former, and finally

the knights without land or with very little, who placed themselves
in the service of greater ones. It was mainly, though not exclusively,
from this last group that the knightly, noble Minnesanger came.
(Elias, 2000, p. 245)

We can distinguish two different ideal-typical forms of knightly
existence: the predatory knight and the courteous knight. The former might
be described as a mounted bandleader who hardly curbed his unruly energies,
attacking savagely at the head of his troops, his urges propelling him toward
conquest and seizure, i.e. the gratification of murderous drives. As a vassal
of greater landlords, the courteous knight was obliged to subdue his impulses
and internalise patterns of fidelity, solidarity and noble honour. The
difference between the two ideal types can be traced to structurally
conditioned dispositional factors that relate, first of all, to age and social
position:

> Youth were invited to prove their 'virtue' in the outside world so that
> families with women to marry off might promote the charade that
> these young men were capturing their brides by their own efforts.
> Even after they were married they could still tourney for a while. But
> once they took over their fathers' seigneuries and became 'new men'
> (…) then they had to settle down, installed in the family house beside
> their ladies and bound to them (Duby, 1983, pp. 281-282).

However, from our birds-eye perspective it seems legitimate to accept that
the dispositions of both the predatory and the courteous knights were
essentially structured by the desire to fight and the drive for killing. Both
intended to align their lives with the antique ideal of otium because they were
first of all professional warriors who were most familiar with situations of
war and tournaments. They were proud to stand aloof from ordinary people
and the other estates by the privilege to possess and use weapons, as well as
through their consistent display of courage and strength.

For historians of the Middle Ages, it is an axiom that the Church was
present in all spheres of society during this period, that is, the: "identification

of the church with the whole of organized society is the fundamental feature which distinguishes the Middle Ages from earlier and later periods of European history" (Southern, 1990, p. 16).

Consequently, mediaeval society cannot be understood without taking into account the history of the Church. In this regard, "the Middle Ages is unparalleled in European history, this institution possessing several coercive monopolies: judicial, forensic, tax collecting, public administrative, including the most effective sanction: outlawry by means of excommunication" (Southern, 1990, p. 20). On the market for salvation goods, the Church also had exclusive monopolies and licenses: the duties and sanctions entailed by baptism determined both this-worldly and otherworldly existence. It proclaimed that human society was part of the God-created, eternal cosmic universe and that only the Church had adequate knowledge by which the divine logic of the cosmic order could be comprehended and the true path could be signposted. Entering this path held out the promise of eternal life and salvation – or else the miserable souls who succumbed to the lure of the devil were outlawed, excommunicated and cast into the depths of hell. It followed that the emperors, kings, lords and secular leaders had no other choice but to usher the people towards the path of Christian life. No alternative could be conceived of or exercised during this age.

The Church fought against sin, the devil and Satan and opined that it was the clerics who could do most to alleviate the wrath of God. Monks incorporated the ideal-typical cleric: they were 'religious virtuosos' (Weber 2002), wishing to organise their life according to God. They lived in religious communities under the rules of religious orders (religiosi), which were permanent and irreversible communities for life, the centres of mediaeval religiosity, severed from earthly existence. They were meant to assert and embody values and a lifestyle in accordance with God as a perfect and impeccable example in the extreme. The elements of monastic life, the tenets elaborated in the rules and holy books, the commentaries to the sacred texts, and the components of the value system that laid the foundations of monastic life were a model not only for all other ecclesiastics, but also for the laity:

> Satan held his slaves prisoners by making them covet four things: meat and drink, war, gold, and women. Let men resist those temptations in preparation for the Day of Judgment. For centuries the monks had been doing just that: renouncing wealth, laying down their arms, fasting, observing continence. The Church now recommended that all Christians imitate the members of the religious orders, impose the same rules of poverty, chastity, peace, and abstinence on themselves and like monks, turn their backs on all that was fleshly in the world (Duby, 1981, p. 58).

With the help of its network of priests and parishes, the Episcopal Church tried to inculcate in everyday practice the examples incorporated by monks with the help of persuasion, control, punishments and threats, sometimes literally with fire and sword. That is, it tried to have this example internalised as a compulsory principle for living by means of the coercive techniques of the monopoly of domination. The monks' life followed the Rule of St. Benedict of Nursia (480-550), which, consisting of 73 chapters, was written as a guide for the autonomous Benedictine Houses. This 6th-century text regulated the daily life of the Benedictine Confederation, the earliest monastic community, which enjoyed considerable prestige for centuries. Its motto was pax, ora et labora [peace, prayer and work]. By the middle of the mediaeval period, the Benedictine Rule had been instated in most European monasteries and determined the patterns of daily religious practice. Its authority was stable and irrevocable. The ideal formulated by the Rule called on everyone to return to God, through the renunciation of one's own will and by arming oneself "with the strong and noble weapons of obedience" under the banner of "the true king, Christ, the Lord[1]".

One chapter prescribed "absolute obedience to the superior without fear, hesitation, half-heartedness, grudging or answering back"; another recommended "moderation" in the use of speech. There were chapters that specified a graduated scale of punishments for "contumacy, disobedience and pride" by means of "private admonition, public reproof, separation from the brothers at meals, excommunication or even corporal punishment". The aim was total self-negation. Monks owned nothing and had to accept poverty,

illness and rigour to find their way back to God. The Rule had precepts for every detail of life, regulating the daily practices of silence and singing psalms, reading the prescribed books and receiving visitors. Each monk was to obey the 12 degrees of humility laying down the rules of everyday conduct, including refraining from laughing readily, confessing one's sins, and showing humility in body posture: "Chapter 7 treats of humility, which virtue is divided into twelve degrees or steps in the ladder that leads to heaven. They are: (1) fear of God; (2) repression of self-will; (3) submission of the will to superiors; (4) obedience in hard and difficult matters; (5) confession of faults; (6) acknowledgment of one's own worthlessness; (7) preference of others to self; (8) avoidance of singularity; (9) speaking only in due season; (10) stifling of unseemly laughter; (11) repression of pride; (12) exterior humility[2]."

The Benedictine monastery worked like a quasi-family with the abbot at its head in the manner of a paterfamilias. The monks, forming a fraternal community: "fought battles quite as real [as] the battles of the natural world; they fought to cleanse the land from supernatural enemies" (Southern, 1990, p. 224).

If we look at the activities at the centre of the knights' and the clerics' respective ways of life, the differences become apparent. While the control of violence was at the core of existence on the one side, it was hardly asserted on the other. In an ideal-typical sense, the knights were masters of fighting and war; their vocation in life was to defeat, annihilate, capture or plunder the enemy. On the other side, clerics found the meaning of life in the study of sacred texts, and by praying, teaching and leading their flock on God's path. As opposed to battle, murder and violence, they pursued a peaceful and pacified spiritual life on the basis of self-restraint and asceticism. They controlled their desires and suppressed their violent urges and aggressive impulses through the routine, repetitive ecstasy of monotony. Their days were spent in moderation, silence, humility and discipline. They lived in communities, subordinating their daily life to the divine will mediated by their paterfamilias.

The knight was at home in the carnal and physical world; he was socialised to improve his martial knowledge, to become an expert on warfare. His working tools were weapons: the sword, lance, dagger and other tools of killing; the rest of his accessories (armour, helmet, gauntlets, horse, etc.) also abetted his handling of weapons. By contrast, the cleric was not at home in the realm of the body; he was socialised to perfect his spiritual knowledge, and his main working tools included, first of all, words and prayers. The priest's cassock, the monk's frock and the bishop's cape were meant to signify the eternal spiritual hierarchy created by God. A cleric made a vow of chastity, that is, he mobilised immense inner forces to be able to stifle his sinful carnal and worldly desires. Constancy and stability characterised his life: he looked upon his earthly existence as a transition, a preparation on the road to his primary goal: salvation, i.e. entry into heaven and the attainment of divine bliss. He lived for eternity, and not for the moment, and thus deplored the drive for earthly pleasures and temporary happiness. He tried to protect the sacraments, entrusted to his care by God. He did not squander: he tried to render service, humbly. He was free from worldly vanity and ambition, and made efforts to forgive those who sinned against him. If need be, he produced or traded, begged or collected alms, or devoted his life to the care of the feeble, the outcast and the sick and provided the laity with salvation goods.

In the case of the knights, life was organised around this-worldly existence: the body, flesh, blood, physical strength, athletic performance. As for the clerics, their universe comprised otherworldly, spiritual, intellectual, symbolic and transcendental stakes and values. The knight᾿s this-worldly existence centred on the body and the physical, most probably coupled with illiteracy and lack of education. By contrast, there was a good chance that the cleric was literate and educated. They mutually despised and disparaged each other: the cleric looked upon the knight from a position of intellectual superiority, whilst the knight scorned the cleric, convinced that his own physical skills and domination of this-worldly existence were superior to the spiritual and transcendental sphere. Contrary to the knight whose life was "divided between war, tournaments, hunts and love", the cleric was at home

in the house of prayer, in the church or in the monastery, i.e. places where the superiority of God was proclaimed. He hardly left the house of God: he existed in immobility, constancy, calm, humility and eternity, spending his days with work, prayers and vespers. He often uttered no words, bound by a pledge of silence. Silence and speechlessness helped him achieve gentleness and the absorption and introverted contemplation needed to achieve a more intense relationship with God and thereby gain a higher chance of receiving the gift of salvation.

The way of life of the monk aspired to spiritual perfection through disciplined asceticism that reached beyond the present: it was oriented towards heaven. That is, the monk existed teleologically, aiming at salvation goods to be collected, through this-worldly asceticism, for the afterlife. At the same time, these salvation goods had connotations for this-worldly life, as they exerted their effect in the here and now. It was the goal of the Catholic Church that striving for religious perfection should also become the organising principle of the laity in its this-worldly existence. Compared to the clerics, the patterns of the knight's life were more individual, as he gave himself more or less free reign to vent his urges, desires or libidinal impulses. Knightly communities were usually no more than temporarily constructed warrior bands of males bunching together to indulge in their libidinous drives. These fighting communities were not for life, irrevocably, as those of the monks. In other words, on the one side we have the ad hoc rallying of more or less free-raging, present-oriented individuals hardly capable of controlling their impulses, while on the other we find the monastic community, a set of incorporated Christs, religious virtuosi aspiring to eternal life. Hence, in the Middle Ages – unlike in the modern period a few centuries later – the future was not yet a world conceived in terms of this-worldly stakes, but an afterlife that was to be interpreted in the context of a divine order to which only clerics were anointed. In other words, owing to the particular structural weight of the Church, clerics, internalising the patterns of the civilized habitus, created a pole of counter-hegemonic masculinity. (Unfortunately, as mentioned above, Norbert Elias ignored the clerical roots

of the civilized secularised habitus in his opus magnum. One of the aims of the present paper is to make up for this deficiency.)

Besides their relation to violence control, hegemonic knightly and counter-hegemonic clerical masculinities can also be distinguished by taking into account the types of habitus internalisation. For the cleric, there were no backdoors, loopholes or extraordinary occasions, for he pledged himself irrevocably and irreversibly: his life had no alternative in this world as its objectives could only be reached in the world beyond – in the form of salvation. It was thus a decisive element of the internalisation of the cleric's dispositions that he strove for religious perfection; his social position excluded the possibility of dispositional relaxation. In other words, the patterns of counter-hegemonic masculinity were internalised through total disposition drill. By contrast, the knight's duties of obedience were not as strong. Undoubtedly, he also subordinated himself to his lord, and in the network of feudal dependencies he had to fulfil his duties of vassalage as well as his lord's orders: in certain circumstances (on his manorial estate, in collaboration with his spouse, in the company of his overlords, in a courtly setting, etc.) he had to adapt to the civilized constraints of these relations. However, the knight had the possibility of dispositional relaxation: for example, when he was away from his lord or from his family, he could give vent to the drives of the uncivilized libido dominandi. In other words, the patterns of hegemonic masculinity were internalised through partial disposition drill.

Nevertheless, it seems prudent to close this sub-chapter with two remarks. First, it should be pointed out that – similarly to the knightly habituses – the social and dispositional universe of counter-hegemonic masculinities was also differentiated: in a more sophisticated analysis, diverging sub-variants and internal oppositions can thus be discerned. Let us take the difference between a parish priest and a monk: the dispositions of the former, living among the believers and performing administrative and other secular tasks, were far closer to those of the laity than to that of the monk. Furthermore, there were noticeable dissimilarities between Benedictines, Cistercians, Augustinians, Franciscans or Dominicans as far as their class embeddedness,

venue of activity, lifestyle, economic strategies, attitude to property and wealth, relations to the laity and theological references were concerned. At the same time, they all shared the common denominator of subordinating themselves to the strictest rules to acquire salvation in the world to come.

Second, the dichotomy between men driven by the impulse of uncivilized libido dominandi, on the one hand, and men suppressing these uncivilized urges one the other, sheds light on an omission in the models of Bourdieu and Connell, both of whom mainly ignore forms of male bonding. In fact, the monastic communities (and, in certain situations, the ad hoc bands of warriors, too) could be considered as archetypes of later all-masculine institutions based on collaboration and alliances of brothers, friends, brethren, comrades, soldiers, etc. For these men admitted into the community by an initiation ritual, there was always a common goal, a common cause above and beyond the individual, to which each member had to submit and, if necessary, sacrifice everything: wealth, manly delights, family, wife, and even life. The monk suppressed the urges of uncivilized libido dominandi not only because the abbot demanded it, but also because he lived in a community. He was not only obliged to obey the abbot, but also had to adjust to the norms of an all-masculine community. In other words, collective control created a structural constraint as far as the internalisation of dispositions was concerned.

Hybrid Dispositions

In spite of these opposing world views, the borderlines between the knightly and clerical masculinities in the Middle Ages cannot be drawn quite so clearly, and there were transitional, blurred zones between the two ideal types. First, the social background of knightly and clerical elites was mostly identical: powerful knights, high priests and superior monastics were most likely the offspring of noble families. It was quite natural for a king or prince or count to appoint his son or another descendant as bishop or abbot. Secular powers were happy to support religious orders, to found monasteries and to endow them with considerable estates. Chapters set up next to castles

primarily served to provide a place to live and a source of livelihood for redundant males, notably for illegitimate children who were otherwise excluded from the hereditary order. In the feudal society, organised along an intricate web of kinship relations, there was no sharp difference in the way of life of the clerical and lay elites: members of both groups were feudal lords, managed their manorial lands, collected taxes, rode and hunted.

By way of a specific example, the Benedictine monastery of Cluny in France, an elite within the elite, adopted the aristocratic stance that sullying one＇s hands through manual work, ordered by God for slaves and peasants only, was unworthy of free people. Agricultural work, deemed inferior, was therefore left to serfs on the monastery's vast estates. Meanwhile, a number of priests who performed secular work (e.g. as lawyers or other officials) and executed various professional tasks became tied to this-worldly existence by a thousand threads. It was quite common for a priest or monk to have children in or out of wedlock, and priests often did not take interdicts issued by high ecclesiastical authorities all too seriously. For example, the popes banned knightly tournaments in vain, because, by the 13th century:

> At least French priests seem to have been willing to ignore the papal strictures against tournaments, even to the extent of offering a special weekday liturgy to suit the occasion. No doubt they expected a generous level of oblations from their knightly congregation (Crouch, 2005, p. 72).

Another factor was that laic and ecclesiastical positions were often interchangeable over the course of a lifetime. The cause could be the search for penance, and it was not rare for someone to become "clerical" at the moment of death in the hope of salvation:

> In 1234 Conrad, uncle and regent to the young Landgrave of Thuringia, joined the Teutonic Order. (…) Two years previously he had attacked the town of Fritzlar, massacring the inhabitants and burning down the church. Given time, he clearly regretted his actions and to show his repentance he offered himself to be flogged by

> Fritzlar's surviving citizens; his decision to join the order may have been likewise a sign of his contrition" (Morton, 2013, p. 95).

Knights were uncertain and afraid of the eternal fire in hell and thus sought to ensure a peaceful transition for themselves from this world to the next. They regarded it as a sort of "post-mortem life insurance" to convert at last when they were nearing their final hour:

> Virtually all lay Christians in the Middle Ages trembled at the thought of death and what followed. They busied themselves in finding ways of obtaining what Eamon Duffy frankly termed 'post-mortem fire insurance'. Duffy believes the late medieval parishioners he studies were overwhelmingly preoccupied with 'the safe transition of their souls from this world to the next, above all with the shortening and easing of their stay in Purgatory'. (…) All medieval folk knew that the punishment awaiting them on the far side of the grave was worse than anything endured on earth – the least pain of purgatory was commonly said to be more severe than the greatest earthly suffering (Kaeuper, 2009, p. 18).

The combination or even synthesis of the knightly and clerical realms was exemplified most perfectly by the religious military orders. These were founded for well-conceived, rational geo-strategic reasons. Before the 11th century, a constant military threat loomed over the Christian world on three sides: the Vikings to the north, the Slavs and Magyars to the east and the Arabs in the south. In this situation, it was strategically justified to set up an international military force that could take up arms against the foe. To this end, in 1095, Pope Urban II called on all the knights of the West to embark on the First Crusade. He asked them to join forces and go to Jerusalem, then under Muslim rule, to liberate the Holy Sepulchre. He held out the promise that those who went to war under the banner of Christ would be rewarded by having all their sins pardoned, and that the bishops would guarantee the safety of their property while they were away. It is also noteworthy that the crusading army of four divisions was placed under the command of a bishop.

Urban II and the theological authors of the time intended to legitimate the crusades with references to St Augustine and the military leaders of the Old Testament (mainly King David, Joshua and Judah Maccabee). They argued that St Augustine had differentiated between legitimate and illegitimate wars. A war was legitimate if centred on defence (in this case, that of Christianity), and the participants were not driven by the desire for personal gain or bloodshed, but by the pursuit of a true cause on legitimate grounds. In other words, the crusade served both pragmatic (this-worldly and military) and spiritual (otherworldly) goals and thus constituted a Christian justification and consecration of violence. In more trenchant terms: by promoting the crusades, the Catholic Church consented to murder. And the knights participating in these holy wars were not only able to perform their favourite activities – conquering, fighting, killing – but also to be acquitted of their earlier sins as well as those committed during the crusade itself.

One of the best known military orders was founded by the Knights Templars, who moved into the convent next to the Temple of Solomon (the Al-Aqsa mosque) in Jerusalem, submitting to a regime of poverty, chastity and obedience. Upon their request, St Bernard wrote his letter, in which the Cistercian abbot gave the Church's blessing to the activities of the order. The abbot's argumentation – a guideline of action for clerics – cropped up in later ecclesiastical manuals in pragmatic and simplified forms. St Bernard's letter was a masterpiece of rhetoric, containing in a condensed form all the arguments used by the clergy of his time to justify the war:

> A new sort of knighthood, unknown to the world, is fighting indefatigably a double fight against flesh and blood as well as against immaterial forces of evil in the skies. (…) Truly the knight is without fear and totally without worries when he has clothed his body with the breastplate of iron and his mind with the breastplate of the faith. Indeed, endowed with both sorts of arms he fears neither demon nor man. Nor does he fear death, for he wishes to die. Why should he fear, whether living or dying, since for him life is Christ and death is reward? (…) Life brings its rewards and victory its glory, but a holy death is rightly considered preferable to both. 'Blessed are they who

die in the Lord', but how much more blessed are they who die for the Lord?" (Bernard of Clairvaux's treatise, 2013).

Urban II's initiative to launch a crusade and St Bernard's supportive attitude toward the knights were not without precedents. Pope Gregory VII, who was socialised in the Benedictine monastery of Cluny, opened so many war fronts during his reign between 1073 and 1085, that he was regarded as the "most warlike pope who ever sat in St Peter's chair" (Kaeuper, 2009, p. 13). He constructed his enemies along cosmic, material and ontological dimensions, locating them inside and outside the Church. He regarded the knights as "the army of Saint Peter" (militia sancti Petri) who could be deployed when the need arose against heretics and all sorts of foes of the Church. There were other occasions, too, when laics and clerics went to war together:

> One bishop came to see Cid Campeador and told him, 'Today I said the mass of the Holy Trinity for you, then I left my village and came looking for you, for I would like to kill some Moors. I should like to do honour to my rank and to my own hands; and I want to be in the vanguard so as to strike all the harder'. When these prelates rode out on an expedition, helmets on their heads and lances in their hands, leading the armed band of young clerics from their church, the virtues of honour, loyalty, and valour were no less essential for them than they were to the knights they were about to face. Though they believed themselves responsible for God's peace, it did not mean they must refuse to fight" (Duby, 1981, p. 42).

Still, it cannot be stressed enough that the mediaeval Catholic Church was not monolithic. Consequently, its position on violence, war and knightly conduct was not homogeneous, either. Moreover, contradictory elements could be identified in a single person, too. Pope Gregory VII also proclaimed that "knighthood was a profession that 'can scarcely be performed without sin' and declared that a knight doing penance would normally have to set aside his arms while he atoned" (Kaeuper, 2009, p.13). There were

innumerable examples of clerics sharply criticising certain deeds of the knights and of knights in general. Pope Leo IX (1048-53) qualified the atrocities of the Norman knights in Italy as worse and more sacrilegious than the sins of the pagans. An early 13th century manual for priests accurately prescribed the questions confessors should ask about warfare. The confessors had to make it clear for the knights that they would have to atone for the sins committed:

> The confessor is to ask if the warrior extorted any money or collected illicit exactions, whether he killed anyone and under what circumstances or with what motives. (…) Those who kill for avarice are as bad as idolaters. Warriors must not follow their worldly lord and contemn their heavenly lord. (Kaeuper, 2009, p. 14).

Alain of Lille (ca. 1128 – 1202), a prestigious Cistercian scholar, repeatedly lambasted the knighthood for its violence. In his book, entitled the Art of Preaching (Ars predicandi), he warned against knightly theft and violence:

> Let him urge them to be content with their wages and not threaten strangers; let them exact nothing by force, terrify no-one with violence; let them be defenders of their homeland, guardians of widows and orphans. So, let them bear the outward arms of the world that they may be armed inwardly with the hauberk of faith. (quoted by Kaeuper, 2009, p. 14).

Searching for the dispositional basis of these interrelations, it can be argued that the fighting urge, the essence of uncivilized libido dominandi, was present on both sides. Both the knight and the cleric were destined to construct the world in terms of antithetical structures and to fight against enemies positioned on the negative pole. While the former fought and killed in a physical sense, the latter waged a symbolic fight against the enemy in this world and the next, and in this struggle he was ready to resort to the help of the secular knight. The knight and the cleric were thus allies, or, in a

structural sense, even accomplices. The knightly spirit infiltrated into the clergy while the spirit of the clergy imbued the estate of the knights. During this disposition circulation, the collectively grounded civilizing and disciplining drives of counter-hegemonic patterns were built upon the violent urges of hegemonic patterns. This is how the preconditions arose for the two universes to come gradually nearer to each other. From the 14th century onwards, the number of knights who were no longer illiterate but open and curious, familiar with both courtly and ecclesiastic culture, increased:

> In the fourteenth century a growing number of men were members of both formations at the same time. On the one hand there were the clerks who had been thrust into profane activities and gradually contracted the worldly habits formerly codified solely for men of war, and on the other, the milites literari, or 'lettered' knights, capable of acceding to book learning and eager to widen their knowledge. The courts, where the same tasks were assigned to knights and clerks indiscriminately, as they were expected to possess comparable abilities, offered the best meeting place (Duby, 1981, p. 206).

This route of mobility was available for more and more knights towards the end of the Middle Ages. In times of peace, they got in touch with other knights and dames of more or less equal social standing at the princely courts. In this new environment, it became natural for the courteous behavioural patterns toward the sovereign to be applied to other members of court society. These expectations were put down in writing in the codes of chivalry and honour, which prescribed, apart from the fulfilment of loyalty and duties to the feudal lord, the requirements of largesse, chivalry, honesty and literacy. Besides, expectations concerning proper religiosity, protection of the Church, gallantry towards women, righteousness, patriotism, and brave conduct in face of the enemy were also prescribed for them.

During their socialisation, clerics for centuries internalised the patterns of the uncivilized libido dominandi with natural ease, but as time passed, social

constraints obliged them to suppress and tame these un-reflected urges. The primary tools of taming were obedience, discipline and rationally grounded asceticism, which they internalised as members of all-masculine communities. These were the patterns they had to disseminate among the lay groups of society. Undoubtedly, the laity was not capable of achieving the same level of self-control and self-mortification practiced by the religious virtuosi, yet aware of the threat of eternal doom, they more or less internalised various elements of the imposition of violence control, asceticism and obedience. Consequently, in the long run, uncivilized hegemonic dispositions, conditioned by knightly life, were gradually built upon by civilized counter-hegemonic dispositions, rooted in clerical existence. Hybrid masculine habituses therefore crystallised as syntheses of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic patterns. In other words, the foundations for dispositional hybridity were structurally conditioned.

Conclusion

This paper, concentrating on the opposition between two ideal-typical forms of habitus ‐ the knightly and clerical masculinities ‐ sought to focus on the beginnings, in the Middle Ages, of the thousand-year-long transformation of Western masculinities. Internalising the violent, uncivilized libido dominandi, the knights represented the hegemonic pole. Owing to the particular power position of the Church, clerics, challenging the hegemony of knightly patterns, incorporated the non-violent, civilized counter-hegemonic masculine habitus. Contrary to the knight whose life was "divided between war, tournaments, hunts and love", the cleric was at home in the house of prayer, the church or the monastery, places where the superiority of God was proclaimed. Monks were obliged to obey not only their superiors, but also had to adjust to the rest of the ordained masculine community. It was the rational asceticism of the clerics, i.e. a teleological social practice focusing on the afterlife, which created the patterns of counter-hegemonic dispositions.

Knightly and clerical masculinities differed not only in terms of violence control, but also in the form of the internalization of the different dispositions. The cleric pledged himself irrevocably and irreversibly for life: his ascetic way of life had no alternative in this world, as it could only be reached in the world beyond – in the form of salvation. It was thus a decisive element of the cleric᾽s masculinity that it excluded the possibility of dispositional relaxation. By contrast, the knight enjoyed this possibility of dispositional relaxation: when he was away from his noble lord, or he was not at home with his family, he could give vent to his primary drives: murdering with relish in wartime or during hunts, or womanising freely. Hence, the patterns of counter-hegemonic masculinity became internalised through total disposition drill, while those of hegemonic masculinity were internalised through partial disposition drill.

Finally, this paper argued that the foundations for dispositional hybridity were structurally conditioned. Between the two ideal types, there were transitional, blurred zones, a synthesis of the knightly and clerical realms that was exemplified by the religious military orders. The crusades served both pragmatic (this-worldly and military) and spiritual (otherworldly) goals and were thus interpreted as a Christian justification and consecration of violence. Thus, in a structural sense, the knight and the cleric were accomplices: the knightly spirit infiltrated into the clergy while the spirit of the clergy imbued the estate of the knights. During this disposition circulation, the martial urges of the hegemonic patterns were built upon by the collectively grounded civilizing drives of the counter-hegemonic dispositions.

Notes

1) See more in: http://www.newadvent.org.
2) See more in: http://www.newadvent.org.

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