

CROSSING THE BORDERLINE

This book is about cultural borders, it is about borders set up and borders crossed: it is about borders steadfastly erected like some Weberian iron cage and about borders transgressed and broken, it is about borders which intimate difference and borders which facilitate vindictiveness. It is about borders which seem solid and secure, but which blur, hybridise, and dissolve. It is about cultural borders which have long lost their fixed spatial moorings, where culture and place no longer have constancy. It is about borders whose normative bases seem at first glance firm, and yet are riven with contradiction and incoherence. It is, in short, about the condition of modernity today which Zygmunt Bauman (2000) calls liquid modernity – where all that is solid melts into air, in contrast to the high modernity of the post-war period where the stolid, weighty, secure work situations of Fordism, undergirded by the stable structures of family, marriage, and community, presented a taken for granted world of stasis and seeming permanency.

What has generated this liquid modernity, this fluidity of norm, institution, and social category so characteristic of our present period? The factors which have brought about this change are well known – mass migration and tourism, the ‘flexibility’ of labour, the breakdown of community, the instability of family, the rise of virtual realities and reference points within the media as part of the process of cultural globalisation, the impact of mass consumerism, and the idealisation of individualism, choice, and spontaneity. Many of these are far from new, think of mass migration particularly in the United States where it is a key component of its development. Some of the most significant texts in classical sociology have talked about the impact of such forces. For example, Frederick Engels’ *Conditions of the Working Class in England* (1969 [1844]) graphically documents the miserable work conditions, family breakdown and social disintegration in mid-nineteenth century Manchester. Or Durkheim’s *Division of Labour* (1951 [1893]), which charts the anomie and rampant individualism consequent on the rapid industrialisation of France at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Indeed some of these developments characterise mid- to late-nineteenth century capitalism and industrialisation as much as they do our late modern world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Some, however, although with us throughout modernity, have been ratcheted up in the present period and have become a qualitatively different presence. Take, for example, the role of the mass media where its immense proliferation, its speed and immediacy, its technological advances and its global reach have transformed our existence. Lived experience, once localised and immediate has now become irrevocably interlaced with mediated experience (see Thompson, 1995). Virtual reference points, narratives, fictional and non-fictional, permeate every aspect of our lives. Such a commonality is despatialised, rapid and ever-present. Nor is the impact of the rise of such a mediated society limited to lived experience, it also profoundly affects and undermines our notions of the fixity and concreteness of social concepts. As Jeff Ferrell puts it, 'One of the great social interactionist insights of the last century – that meaning resides not in the thing itself, but in surrounding social and cultural processes – takes on even greater complexity and importance in a world where mass-produced symbols now circulate endlessly amidst the situated experiences of everyday life.' (2006, p. 270). And, as we shall see, such a contested, problematic social reality has resonances not only in the phenomenology of everyday life, but on the tenability and credibility of the social sciences.

Or, if we turn to individualism, we see similarly transformations of its nature and impact. Eric Hobsbawm, in his magisterial *Age of Extremes* (1994) characterises the late-twentieth century as experiencing a cultural revolution of an unparalleled nature. The American Dream of material comfort and the suburbs becomes replaced with a First World Dream extending across the world – harbouring the desires of the privileged and the envy of the rest. Here the point is not brute comfort and material success, but self-discovery and expression, it is not so much arrival as becoming and self-fulfilment, not of hard work rewarded, but of spontaneity and expressivity anew. The comfort-seeking creature of post-war modernity is replaced by the striving subject of late modernity. And if Durkheim's warnings of the *mal d'infiniti* in the late nineteenth century, or Merton's admonition of the incessant nature of material goals in the America of the 1930s (an aspect of his work sadly neglected), conveyed the notion of the human spirit always striving but never fulfilled, heightened individualism in an era of mass consumerism has granted it an even greater resonance today. We are therefore confronted with a combination of factors, some long existing yet unique in their combination, others pre-existent yet transformed in the present period. The impact revolves around three axes, the disembeddedness of everyday life, the awareness of a pluralism of values, and an individualism which presents the achievement of self-realisation as an ideal.

The disembeddedness of everyday life

Liquid modernity generates a situation of disembeddedness. This has dual levels: social and individual. Culture and norms become loosened from their moorings in time and place: normative borders blur, shift, overlap, detach. And this precariousness is experienced on a personal level. The individual feels disembedded from the culture and institutions he or she finds themselves in. And to such a situation is presented a pluralism of values: migration, tourism, the mass media and most importantly the variety of indigenous subcultures within society carry with them the constant nagging awareness that things could be done differently, that we could make different choices. And here it is often small differences, differences of a minor kind which are more disconcerting than norms which are manifestly distinct and somewhat alien. Finally, self-realisation, the notion of constructing one's own destiny and narrative, becomes a dominant ideal. There is overall a sense of detachment from the taken for granted social settings and with it an awareness of a situation of choice and freedom. So that which was once experienced as a thing – monumental and independent of human artifice – becomes de-reified and the social construction of reality is glimpsed particularly poignantly in everyday life, especially alarmingly at moments of personal crisis or sudden change.

All of this creates great potentialities for human flexibility and reinvention. Yet it generates at the same time considerable ontological insecurity – precariousness of being. To start with, the bases of identity are less substantial: work, family, community, once steadfast building blocks, have become shaky and uncertain. At no stage in history has there been such a premium on identity, on constructing a narrative of development and discovery, yet where the materials to construct it are so transient and insubstantial. But it is not merely the instability of work, family and community which make the writing of such a narrative difficult, it is the nature of the building blocks themselves. Work in particular is a locus of disappointment – it is the site of meritocratic ideals, of notions of reward and social mobility commensurate with effort, which very frequently it fails to deliver. It is the supposed font of self-realisation yet is all too usually is a mill of tedium. It is the workhorse of a consumerism which evokes self-realisation and happiness, but which all too frequently conveys a feeling of hollowness, and neverending extravagance, where commodities incessantly beguile and disappoint. Even the real thing seems a fake.

Work does not merely sustain family life, it manifestly intrudes upon it. It is the long commute which cuts into both ends of the day, and where the family becomes the place of tiredness and worn nerves. For the middle class work is the price to pay for the sparkling family home and the help to clean it and take care of the children while the dual career family is out at work,

yet in a strange sense it is often more of an image than a reality. It is real in the glossy magazines of home and garden, it is a caricature in reality. For the working poor, it is the two jobs which make life sustainable, while curtailing family and community, it is time off from seeing one's own children and very often it is the time taken to look after the children of others. None of this should deny for an instance the perennial human joys of companionship of work, marriage and partnership, raising children and the comforts of neighbourliness. It is simply to note that it is precisely these parts of human fulfilment that suffer most ... the shoe pinches where it is needed most.

What one finds in late modernity is a situation of contradiction and of paradox. The major institutions have both repressive and liberative potentials. The mass media, for example, carries hegemonic messages justifying the status quo of power – yet constantly in news story and fiction points to the blatant failure and unfairness of the world (see Young, 1981). Cultural globalisation propagates the tinsel values of Hollywood, yet it also carries notions of meritocracy, equality, and female emancipation, while in its global reach and its implosiveness, serves to stress the interconnections and commonality of the world across economic and social borders (see Thompson, 1995). Even consumerism, as Paul Willis has so ably argued in *Common Culture* (1990) not only sells lifestyle but generates a popular and autonomous demand for individualism and lifestyle of choice which develops, so to speak, on the back of the market place.

Disembeddedness, fluidity, can create the possibilities of seeing through the present institutional set up, of discarding the old traditions, of respect for authority which justify the status quo, of wealth and social division. It thus holds the possibility of a redistributionist approach to social justice and deconstructive approach to identity, yet it can paradoxically offer just the opposite: an acceptance of the world as it is, a mode of 'realism' and an essentialist notion of identity built around one's position of class, gender, ethnicity, place and nation. The outcome is not inevitable or, for that matter, random, but is a product of particular social and political configurations. Of great importance here are perceptual factors, that is the degree to which the basis of economic and social differentials are transparent. In particular I focus upon what I call the chaos of reward and the chaos of identity. As I will argue, the decline of manufacturing industries, the phenomenon of outsourcing, of core and peripheral work personnel, of freelance consultants and advisors, of a proliferating service industry of small restaurants, cafés, childcare and housework – all of these together make the comparison of rewards less obvious. The awareness of class distinction and inequalities was more obvious in the large Fordist bureaucracies of the post-war period, it becomes less tangible in late modernity – all that remains is a generalised feeling of unfairness, a failure of meritocracy which is underscored by widespread redundancies and changes in career. As for identity, the ideal of

self-development, of a narrative of self-discovery and personal achievement is difficult in a world where the building blocks seem so insubstantial and contested. All of this makes the creation of a personal narrative difficult. It breeds a feeling of incoherence of half-realised awareness and contradiction. It is not surprising then that at no time in human history has such a recourse been made to fictionalised narratives – the worlds of the soap opera, the thriller, and the romantic novel, a world where there is a beginning, a middle, and an end, a story of substance and fulfilment albeit in a virtual reality.

The genesis of othering

In real life the narrative of life pales beside the narrative of fiction or the ideals of meritocracy, self-fulfilment – the First World Dream. Our narratives seems unfair, they are frequently broken and discontinuous, they have no ending. None of this adds up to a satisfying account, a good story – rather it makes for a feeling of incoherence and bitterness, edged with strong emotions of unfairness both in terms of just reward and social recognition. Note also, it does not make for a neat narrative to be discovered by the diligent researcher: a clear, crisp story to be uncovered and revealed. Yet the longing for existential security, for certainty and solidity often exacerbated by the experience of denigration and stigmatisation remains. So, just as barriers are demolished and rendered permeable, new barriers are erected in the false hope of creating rigidity and secure difference. Such a generation of hiatus of rigid distinctions is seen in many spheres of human activity. Most clearly it is seen in cultural essentialism where, in the process of othering, the self is granted a superior ontology, whether based on class, gender, race, nationality, or religion, and is valorised, given certainty in contrast with the other. Two modes of othering are prevalent: the first is a conservative demonisation which projects negative attributes on the other and thereby grants positive attributes to oneself. The second, very common yet rarely recognised, is a liberal othering where the other is seen to lack our qualities and virtues. Such a *lacking* is not seen, as in the conservative version, as an essential and qualitative difference so much as a deficit which is caused by a deprivation of material or cultural circumstances or capital. They would be *just like us* if these circumstances improved. Thus, whereas for the conservative difference is rendered a perversion, or perhaps an inversion, of normality, for the liberal it is rendered a deviance from a lacking of the normal.

Liberal othering focuses largely on the poor constituted as an underclass, who are seen as being a fairly homogenous group. The poor are disconnected from us, they are not part of our economic circuit: they are an object to be pitied, helped, avoided, studied, but they are not in a social relationship with us. The poor are perceived as a residuum, a superfluity, a

dysfunction of a system. Their lives are a product of material or moral determinism, which accents the miserable and unsatisfactory nature of their lives. They are not a site of creativity, joy, or expressivity – but of a bleak and barren scenario which contrasts with the taken-for-granted satisfactions of the mainstream world.

Let me summarise the key components of liberal othering. ‘They’ – which is predominantly constituted as ‘the poor’ – are not so much different from us as suffering from a material or moral deficit, so rather they are a lacking from us. Their crime and deviance is the main focus of the othering, their ‘normal’ activities, for example their pattern of work and *legal* informal economies, are rendered invisible (e.g. the working poor). Their deviance is seen as a product of this deficit that can be remedied through education and the opportunity of work so as to make up the shortfall of the deficit. Our response to them is therefore not that of demonisation but of actuarial avoidance and judicious help. They are not connected to us either materially or symbolically, rather they are a residuum, separate from us spatially, socially and morally. There are therefore two moments in othering: *diminishing* (they are less than us) and *distancing* (we have no direct social relationship with them).

Both conservative and liberal othering have in common the notion of a gulf between ‘them’ and ‘us’, a distancing and both gain strength for the centre by diminishing the moral nature of the margins. The difference is that conservative othering involves the notion of suggesting that deviant is alien – an inversion of ‘our’ values while liberal othering stresses a lacking, a deficit. Correspondingly, whereas conservatives focus on policies which are punitive or exclusionary, liberals focus on inclusionary measures which are educational and rehabilitative. However, importantly, in both modes the deviant does not threaten order, the deviant – whether internal or external to our society – helps to shape up order. Othering, then, is a key process which maintains order. I wish to argue that this late modern binary, in either of these modes, permeates public thinking and official discourse about deviants in our midst and extends to images of other cultures, countries, nationalities and religions and, with it, notions of immigration and population movement. Further, that such a binary is pivotal in much social scientific thinking, not only in the conceptualisation of the other and the deviant, but in the production of knowledge itself.

Ontological insecurity then gives rise to the search for clear lines of demarcation, crisp boundaries in terms of social groups (both in terms of the othering of deviants and conventional notions of multiculturalism and ethnic distinctions). On the level of the social sciences, this is reproduced in the search for clear definitions and in the assertion of an objectivity which suggests a gulf between the investigator and the investigated, together with the denial that any social relationship occurs across this hiatus with the

implication of the rationality and integrity of the culture of the investigator and the relative irrationality and unsubstantiveness of the investigated.

The attractions of hiatus

Thus such a binary notion of human nature and social order extends throughout notions of ontology and sociology, into areas of social scientific epistemology and method. It was while working on *The Exclusive Society* (1999) that I encountered this problem of hiatus and dualism so characteristic of the social condition of late modernity. It is inherent in the particular notion of social exclusion as isolation – of a segment of the population being physically and morally excluded from the mainstream, detached from the body of ‘normal’ or ‘middle’ class people and above by impermeable physical and social barriers. It is encountered in the accompanying notion of cultural difference, whether expressed in the form of cultures alien to our own or more commonly cultures which lack our rationality and solidity. It is implied by the ontological or essential differences between people: it occurs in notions of cultural globalisation, where the dominant cultures of the First World are seen as being initially hermetically separate from the cultures of the Third World, and that these pristine worlds of difference are simply obliterated by global forces, as if there was a time quite recently when they were ‘uncontaminated’ and a time soon when they will disappear. It is the rhetoric behind the clash of civilisations where orientalist notions of the world conjure up an apocalyptic battle as if those ‘civilisations’ could possibly have been miraculously separate. It is the central weakness of much methodology in the social sciences which seeks to set up definitions of social entities as if they were akin to animal species having some Linnaean separateness or essence, a unique DNA, which we can simply grasp by an act of systematic description. Thus we ask what is terrorism? as if it were a fact out there and not a function of our phenomenological view, our perceptual position and does not blur irredeemably with conventional warfare. And the same, of course, is true of attempted definitions of all social categories; think of violence, pornography, prostitution, rape, the gang, or indeed suicide. A belief that there is some hiatus between the conventional and the deviant – clearly criticised by Durkheim in his elegant discussion of the blurring of the concept of suicide and underscored by his evocation of the society of saints, where lines of delineation are subject to change over time, yet are reaffirmed with the same intensity as to their naturalness and distinctiveness. And although such a concept of blurring and change, of ‘overlap’ and ‘shift’ (see Matza, 1969) is characteristic of all societies, I will argue that it is all the more so today, in the era of late modernity, where norms are daily contested, blur and where the movement in levels of social tolerance, the

process of defining deviancy up, has become a part of everyday life. Moral borders, in short, blur and move with a speed that is easy to perceive and palpable in their impact.

For the critical anthropologists Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson a major part of the misrepresentation of culture and politics is a presumed isomorphism, the assumption that place, space and culture inhabit a coincident territory. Globally this is seen in maps which present 'the world as a collection of "countries" ... an inherently fragmented space, divided by different colors into diverse national societies, each "rooted" in its proper place' and each with 'its own distinctive culture and society' (1997, p. 34). On a cultural level they point to various processes which, particularly in late modernity, drastically undermine such an isomorphism: immigration – the movement of people across borders, the mixture of cultures in the netherworlds of the borderlands which belie discrete demarcations, multiculturalism within societies and the whole phenomenon of hybridity where cultures transform by selective addition and recombination. And to this one should add a paramount factor: the existence of cultural reference points within the media which electronically criss-cross the world and show no respect for borders.

In a world where culture is less fixed to place, cultures are more capable of such hybridity and recombination. But note the immigrant group entering a 'host' culture is already changed, there is no distinct before and after in a world of globalised media. Immigrants arrive from abroad not with a pristine alien culture but with one which is already hybridised. The immigration myth of a hitherto pure culture facing assimilation and looking back home with nostalgia is far from the truth. Further, that of course hybridisation occurs both ways, both 'immigrant' and 'host' is transformed.

Yet less one should enter a freeform world of post-modern choice, a gymnastic of cultural dexterity and change, we should note the obvious. That is, not only do cultures blend and overlap, but such recombination occurs not in a situation of freedom, but in a world of power and domination. 'We all inhabit', as Renato Rosaldo puts it, 'an interdependent late-twentieth-century world marked by borrowing and lending across porous national and cultural boundaries that are saturated with inequality, power, and domination' (1993, p. 217). Further, as Gupta and Ferguson trenchantly argue, 'the presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography successfully to conceal the topography of power' (1997, p. 35). The notion of the separateness, spatial, cultural and social, occludes power.

Looking within societies, then, we could learn much from anthropologists with their more global perspectives. It would allow us, for example, to avoid what Paul Gilroy (1993) calls ethnic absolutism which would believe that 'white' and 'black' cultures are hermetically separate and distinct. Yet we must be aware of the power of dominant cultures. If we take New York City

for example, where a remarkable 37% of the population are officially born outside the United States – perhaps over 40% if we allow for the many people who have reason to avoid the census (and London and Toronto are not far behind in the size of their immigrant populations) we perhaps can no longer, as my students constantly remind me, talk of minority populations. Rather we have cities of minorities where people reinvent themselves, their traditions and their futures. Yet there can be little doubt about the strength of middle-class America, its culture of individualism, meritocracy and constitutionalism – its belief in itself and the American Dream. Hybridity then is not a relationship between equals – the biological analogy is to this extent a misnomer. The understanding of difference within the late modern cities must take cognizance of this just as it must be sensitive to resistance, separateness, recalcitrance and dogged difference. At the very least, methodology whether in survey work or in ethnography must take note of shadow opinions, ambivalence and contradiction as well as appraising the tendency of those lower in the social structure to give the ‘correct’ answer – the response of the hegemony, to those they surmise as being ‘above’ them in the social hierarchy.

The notion, then, of a disjointed world of hiatus and chasm obfuscates reality and disguises power; but as Gupta and Ferguson put it, ‘the irony of these times is that as actual places and localities become even more blurred and indeterminate, *ideas* of culturally and ethnically distinct places become even more salient. It is here that it becomes more visible how imagined communities come to be attached to imagined places. As displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places or communities in a world that seems increasingly to deny such firm territorialized anchors in their actuality’ (ibid., p. 39). And such an irony, of course, spreads to powerful groups who fondly imagine and recreate past worlds of homogeneity and tranquillity and extends to the social scientist who seeks just such a fixed anchor to establish claims of objectivity and dispassionateness. For positivistic social science, not unlike the insecure citizen of late modernity, desperately needs a secure narrative, an unquestioned structure, a reified world, with distinct borders and clear demarcations. It needs a steady platform from which to observe, and clear-cut entities to scrutinise and to measure. And just as the ontologically uncertain citizen attempts to assuage feelings of social vertigo and insecurity by the magic of othering, so positivist sociology and criminology attempts to achieve the scientific goal of objectivity by distancing from its subject, by creating a hiatus where social relationship is denied, by an act of scientific othering (see Young, forthcoming,).

Finally, let me add that corresponding to a sociology, ontology and methodology of hiatus there is a politics. That is for the right the lower part of the social structure is seen as detached and useless, it is at best a burden,

at worst a danger, a population of incorrigibles, largely composed of immigrants, who must be controlled, surveyed and excluded. They are a negative point around which politics must be mobilised; their very exclusion, an othering which gives identity to the politics of the 'normal majority'. For liberals they are an other who must be helped, manipulated, made to include through the regimens of education and work. Here we have a politics of inclusion but it is inclusion into a system of work tedium and little reward, an existing structure of inequality which is scarcely questioned.

The poor are either our problem (the right) or their problem (the liberal left) not that their problems are *our* shared problems, that the problems of instability of work, the family, community, the uncertainty of income and the vertigo of identity are spread right across the levels of the vast majority of citizens. Such exclusionary processes resonate through the social structure. What is necessary is not a politics of hiatus but of unity. Militating against this are two currents running through our social structure which enunciate fundamental differences and evoke schism.

The insecure citizen, beset by the forces of globalisation and change, seeks to escape the vertigo of the late modern world by reaching out for strong lines of identity and grasps out at difference. Let me give an example: Thomas Frank, in his fascinating book *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (2004), starts with the puzzle of how the poorest counties in the United States are often those most solidly Republican. How poor people, whose communities are decimated and lives are manipulated by big business, can vote for a party which represents the very rich and corporate America. A rural America, let us remind ourselves, where there are now more prisoners than farmers and where prisons and gambling have become major industries. His argument is that the Republicans have managed, in an ingenious manner, to claim to speak for the common man, and that this party of billionaires and CEOs have cast the liberal élite as the real enemy. It constructs an upright agenda of traditional conservative values, pro-life, anti-abortion, Christian virtues, and couples this with neo-liberal economic policies. This conservatism of the common man delivers them to the Republican ballot box which, with a dreadful irony, results in massive tax cuts for those earning over \$300,000 a year and economic policies which close down manufacturing industry and militate against the small farmer.

But there is more to this than sheer populism or, put it another way: one always has to explain the popularity of populism. The vertigo of late modernity leads, I would argue, large sections of people in the lower to middle part of the class structure to experience what Nietzsche called *ressentiment*, a feeling of anger, bitterness, powerlessness, which searches out culprits and mobilises difference. Such an attitude scorns what it sees as an alliance between the do-gooders and the ne'er-do-wells, between the liberal élite,

the latté liberals with their adherence to what Pope Benedict calls the 'dictatorship of relativism' and the urban poor of wastrels and losers. It draws firm lines of virtue like a cape around itself in terms of sexual property, military prowess, patriotism, Christian values and the conservative agenda. Such a moral revanchism receives a strong narrative from war, a narrative which the liberals incessantly try to undermine, it constructs a politics of hiatus, it is, as Nietzsche put it, 'through these opposed values that gulfs are cleft in the social plane which a veritable Achilles of free thought would shudder to cross' (2005, p. 2).

I am concerned then with this politics of hiatus: with the sociological basis of this process of othering and exclusion. Yet this is not the end of the story. In the meantime, below this populist discontent, lower in the atmosphere of unease, a parallel revanchism of virtue begins to unfold. For among a small but significant minority of immigrants to the First World, and most potently their children, an experience of embracing the Western values of liberty, equality and fraternity, yet witnessing exactly the opposite on the streets, in the slum estates, in the run-down schools, a revulsion occurs which poses an alternative vision of property, dignity and piety, a movement which would exclude the excluders, an attempt to create a counter orthodoxy of othering. This book will start by detailing the foundation of an underclass and end by examining the roots of terrorism; it will trace how the mechanisms of social exclusion attempt to deal with the vertigo of late modernity: with the fear of falling and the stigma of being cast out.

Core to this is a critique of the phenomenology of hiatus: that is of a gulf between subject and object, of the notion of an underclass detached from the class structure, of aetiologies which attempt to explain deviant behaviour whether it be crime, terrorism, or riots in terms of motivations and desires separate and distinct from those of the 'normal'. In engaging with this I will critique the process of othering whether of a liberal or conservative variety, and of methodologies whether based on survey research, the interview, or ethnography which propose a radical detachment between researcher and researched. To deny the sociology of hiatus necessitates opposition to any politics whether of the right or the left which reaffirms division either in the toleration of gross economic inequality or in the invocation of essential differences between individuals or groups within society. Our task, then, is to build a transformative politics which tackles problems of economic injustice and builds and cherishes a society of genuine diversity.

The vertigo of late modernity

Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, properly so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear venial to the layman

will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousnesses. If, then, this society has the power to judge and punish, it will define these acts as criminal and will treat them as such. For the same reason, the perfect and upright man judges his smallest failings with a severity that the majority reserve for acts more truly in the nature of an offense. Formerly, acts of violence against persons were more frequent than they are today, because respect for individual dignity was less strong. As this has increased, these crimes have become more rare; and also many acts violating this sentiment have been introduced into the penal law which were not included there in primitive times. (Calumny, insults, slander, fraud, etc.)

(Émile Durkheim *The Rules of Sociological Method*, 1964 [1895], pp. 68–9)

I have talked of how insecurities in economic position and status, coupled with feelings of deprivation in both these spheres, engender widespread feelings of resentment both in those looking up the class structure and those peering down. Such insecurities can be experienced as a sense of vertigo and, outside of the charmed sphere of the contented minority, such uncertainties are tinged with anger and dislike. Further, that such processes have a wide resonance throughout society, underscoring many of the anxieties and obsessions of contemporary life.

Vertigo is the malaise of late modernity: a sense of insecurity of insubstantiality, and of uncertainty, a whiff of chaos and a fear of falling. The signs of giddiness, of unsteadiness are everywhere, some serious, many minor; yet once acknowledged, a series of separate seemingly disparate facts begin to fall into place. The obsession with rules, an insistence on clear uncompromising lines of demarcation between correct and incorrect behaviour, a narrowing of borders, the decreased tolerance of deviance, a disproportionate response to rule-breaking, an easy resort to punitiveness and a point at which simple punishment begins to verge on the vindictive. Some of these things are quite blatant, they are the major signposts of our times, the rise in the United States of a vast Gulag of 2.2 million people in prison and 1 in 34 of the population in prison, on probation, or parole at any one time, the draconian drug laws, the use of terrorist legislation to control everything from juvenile gangs to freedom of speech. Some are quite banal, the obsession with the politically correct, the attempt to fit the population into rigid but ever-changing ethnic categories, the policies of zero-tolerance in the United States: the move from policing felonies to the policing of misdemeanours, the shenanigans of New Labour over the control of undesirable behaviour, ASBOs enters the English language (even becoming a verb: 'to be ASBO'd'), Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinators are advertised in the job columns of *The Guardian* (an anarchist's dream I would have imagined) while a British Home Secretary stands up at the 2005 Labour Party Conference and announces his intention 'to eliminate anti-social behaviour' by 2010 (a statement of Canute-like munificence – goodness knows what

he would make of Durkheim's society of saints). Moral panics abound, as I write, in Britain the media are obsessed with binge drinking, as if public drunkenness were some new phenomenon to these islands (see Hayward, 2006), while the concept of 'binge' shrinks palpably, now consuming four drinks in a row becomes considered a pariah act of wanton debauchery. The model Kate Moss is publicly pilloried for snorting a line of cocaine, an activity which a very large part of the upper middle class of London (including, of course, journalists and very many MPs) have got up to at some time or another. Journalists lurk in toilets with cocaine testing kits in order to hound those celebrities who have got beyond themselves. The great fashion houses and perfume makers withdraw their contracts and sponsorship, although as the fashion editor of *The Guardian*, Jessica Cartner-Morley (2005) has pointed out – make a great play on their edginess: of being risqué, of peddling the forbidden (witness the perfumes *Opium*, *Poison*, *Obsession*, the aesthetics of anorexia, juvenile sexuality, belts, buckles, bondage, etc.). Moss goes into rehab, like a penitent to a nunnery in the Middle Ages, although not for half a lifetime but for two weeks. And, spurred on by her newsworthiness, the sponsorship of the model near the end of her career is quickly renewed. Redemption is so much quicker in late modernity.

The sources of late modern vertigo are twofold: insecurities of status and of economic position. Although such a feeling of unsteadiness permeates the structure of society, it is particularly marked in the middle classes in the American sense of everyone from the middle level manager to the skilled worker, it is less so among upper middle class professionals, whose skills and professional organisations protect them from threat, or from the working poor and below who have precious little distance to fall. This involves, as all commentators concur, a wide swathe of workers, but particularly those whose status is closely welded to economic position. That is those whose lifestyle (holidays abroad, car, house, private education for children, domestic help, etc.) is so dependent on standard of living. Those for whom the realms of class and status are rightly fused. Here fear of falling is fear of total loss of everything – it threatens their loss of narrative, of a sense of modernity where life involves personal progress in career, in marriage, and in the community they choose to live in.

Pluralism, the shock of the different; the encounter with diversity face to face in the cities, on tourist visits abroad and through the global implosion of media imagery and actual realities, produces at the most a sense of disorientation. It points to the possibility that things could be different and that rational discourse need not lead to the same conclusions as in one's own culture; it de-reifies and de-familiarises – making the familiar no longer obvious and taken for granted. But disorientation alone does not precipitate feelings of anger and resentment. Indeed, among the secure and contented middle class, pluralism brings out the sense of the international flâneur; for

the sophisticate well versed in the cultures of Europe and the frisson and energies of the United States, the awareness and enjoyment of diversity is an integral part of one's lifestyle. And, of course, so too is the sampling of the myriad cultures and cuisines of the city. This is a key factor behind gentrification, the move back into the city – just as those more threatened moved out in the evacuation of the inner cities subsequently known as 'white flight'. Thus, for the secure middle class, such encounters with diversity corroborates rather than threatens their ontology, their way of life, their sense of themselves. But this is not so for a wide swathe of the middle class whose jobs are threatened and who feel resentment towards those that they perceive as an underclass detached from decent society yet living on their taxes and making none of the daily sacrifices that they have to make. Let us look at how this pans out in terms of seemingly unrelated events across the social structure.

Turbo-charged capitalism

Edward Luttwak, in an article written in 1995 entitled 'Turbo-Charged Capitalism and its Consequences', and subsequently expanded into a book (1999), presents us with three sets of figures. The US aeroplane company Boeing on 10th August 1995 had its share quoted at \$65, representing 77 times the earnings of the share in the previous four quarters, while in the same week the International Association of Machinist and Aerospace Workers (who are a major union at Boeing) publicised the findings of a survey which showed that 50% of their members, who overwhelmingly see themselves as middle class, felt their jobs to be insecure and only 20% felt themselves to have security of employment. Lastly, concomitant to this was the extraordinary size and nature of the American Gulag, by the end of 1994, 2.8 million Americans were either on probation, parole and in prison at any point of time – one American in every 189 being actually incarcerated: a total of 1.5 million in all Federal, State and local jails. Of course, as we have seen, the figures look bleaker every year: by today there are 2.2 million incarcerated at any one time. Luttwak asks us to look at these three seemingly disparate sets of figures abandoning the 'one-thing-at-a-time pragmatism' of Anglo-Saxon thinking and commit the 'teutonic vice' of looking for systemic connections in human life.

On our behalf, Luttwak ties together these three statistics. He starts with the process of globalisation: the deregulation of markets which opens up Boeing's aeroplane sales to the world while at the same time outsourcing the production of airframe parts anywhere in the globe where labour is cheap. Couple this with the computerising of much repetitive labour and one has a downsizing of the work force which results in remarkable acceleration of profits. Staff are laid off

not only in bad times, as in the past, but also, most significantly, in times of prosperity in order to achieve a more lean and effective core of workers. Thus we arrive at the second set of figures. Boeing employees are correct to feel insecure in their jobs and their anxiety is compounded by the fact that decent jobs in the primary labour market are harder and harder to find while marginal and low paid service sector jobs expand and both formal and informal support for the unemployed is in decline. As he puts it, sardonically:

what 'flexibility' amounts to as far as employed labour is concerned is that every year millions of Americans bereft of supporting families (forget the generous cousins that unemployed Andalusians and Greeks can still count on, or the functioning nuclear families of France or Italy – in contemporary America not even brothers and sisters help one another), and facing a six-month limit on unemployment compensation (as opposed to 12 or even 24 months in Western Europe) must and do accept even drastically reduced earnings to work at all, so that jobs in retailing and small service businesses of the dog-washing variety can expand *ad infinitum* (it will soon be unnecessary to brush one's own teeth). (1995, p. 6)

Thus a middle class sector of the population once part of Galbraith's vaunted 'constituency of contentment' has due cause for anxiety. For the shift is from a good job with fringe benefits to drastic drops in income, possible loss of highly mortgaged homes, and inability to sustain children in collect. Such stress inducing illness without the health insurance to support it. 'Health-cost trauma should become a recognised medical syndrome', Luttwak notes ironically, 'it is certainly more genuine than its Gulf War counterpart' (*ibid.*, p. 7).

He then turns to the final set of statistics: the awesome size of the American Gulag and its attendant system of 'corrections'. 'Turbo-charged capitalism' not only consigns a large section of the middle class into a state of insecurity and anxiety (entire industries rise and fall much more swiftly than before – downsizing proceeds apace) – it also generates an underclass who are *perceived* as economically useless and, in turn, high crime rates which have created no-go areas in each and every great American city.

'No society', he warns, 'can fail to pay a heavy price for widespread middle-class insecurity.' (*ibid.*, p. 7). One symptom of this insecurity is the draconian reflex of punishment which forms the core of the American prison explosion ('one strike and you are out', mandatory prison sentences, etc.) but more widely is the broader urge to punish and prohibit which characterises contemporary US society. He refers not only to the war against drugs which is the second reason for the prison expansion, but the vast range of new prohibitions: smoking, fatty foods, sexual harassment, pornography, use of derogatory language, etc. From the quasi-criminal to the politically incorrect, all manner of behaviour, attitude and gesture is subject to

taboo and control. The always criminal becomes more criminalised, the quasi-criminal becomes criminal, and around these large penumbra of informal prohibitions arise. Of course some of these activities are doubtful and unsavoury. Yet as Luttwak notes, 'Because each prohibition has its own plausible defence, only their sheer number and great diversity reveal their common origin. They are all expressions of the same deep resentment' (ibid.). And he adds a historical dimension: 'It is no coincidence that prohibitions multiply when the middle class is especially insecure. It has all happened before, and there is no need of a Gestapo when so many Americans volunteer to do the job themselves by pursing their lips, narrowing eyes (just ask any smoker or fatty eater in public), and by voting for the least tolerant candidate available in one election after another' (ibid.)

Take note of what Luttwak has achieved in a brief essay. He has grounded the changes both in crime and in penalty in the economy and the economic changes in the forces of globalisation. He has dealt with *both* crime and penalty and he has located the American prison expansion in the general culture of intolerance. Now there is much that could be criticised in these sweeping generalisations. There is a general lack of mechanisms: how and where is exclusion translated into crime? (it is automatic and obvious in Luttwak's formulation), how does the culture of intolerance give rise to more people in prison? (what about the role of law and order politicians, the prison industry, the judiciary?), how does insecurity and anxiety give rise to intolerance and scapegoating? (rather than sympathy and identification with the underdog). All of these things and more – some of which I will touch upon and develop in the next chapter, Edward Luttwak in his remarkably un-'Anglo-Saxon' way has suggested fundamental connections between the economy and the twin elements of crime and punishment.

Finally, Luttwak views 'turbo-charged capitalism' as the way of the future. It is most emphasised in the United States but, as his recent book points out, its source is the powerful current of globalisation, a process occurring in all advanced industrial countries. It involves a transition from the market place being used to support society to one where all of society is mobilised to support the market place.

Luttwak adroitly places globalisation, downsizing, the rising rate of imprisonment, crime in the inner cities, and the increasing intolerance of deviant behaviour (defining deviancy up in Daniel Moynihan's terms) as phenomena which exist in the same social system. He suggestively connects economic insecurity to punitiveness and intolerance but what he does not do is explain the mechanisms which bring these seemingly disparate facts together. I will in this book, through concepts such as moral indignation, resentment, bulimia and essentialism attempt to point to the social processes and psychodynamics which give rise to both widespread vindictiveness and transgressive anger.