The social nature of serial murder: The intersection of gender and modernity

Abstract

The literature on the aetiology of serial killing has benefited from analyses which offer an alternative perspective to individual/psychological approaches and consider serial murder as a sociological phenomenon. The main argument brought to bear within this body of work identifies the socio-economic and cultural conditions of modernity as enabling and legitimating the motivations and actions of the serial killer. This article interrogates this work from the standpoint of a gendered reading of modernity. Using the Yorkshire Ripper case, it emphasises how, in addition to ~~the~~ political economy, gender relations and masculinity, shape the dynamics of serial murder and its representation.

Key words: ~~serial murder;~~ **gender violence; misogyny; masculinity; feminicide; late modernity**

Introduction

The literature on the aetiology of serial killing has benefited from analyses which offer an alternative perspective to individual/psychological approaches and consider serial murder as a sociological phenomenon. Leyton's (1986) *Hunting Humans* was one of the first to apply this type of socio-structural analysis, identifying class configurations during pre-industrial, industrial and postmodern periods as producing offender-perpetrator relationships specific to these historical eras. More recent work has built on this approach, claiming that the nature of the social as realised at various stages of modernity is central to the emergence of the serial killer both materially and culturally

(Haggerty, 2009; Wilson, 2012; Hall and Wilson, 2014). For instance, Haggerty (2009) discusses how modernity does not cause serial killing but provides a set of conditions, which enable and sanction it (see also Picart and Greek, 2007), arguing that the worldview of the serial killer reflects the values espoused ~~by~~in modernity. Likewise, Wilson's work (2006, 2012) builds on these themes, highlighting how widening inequalities, reduced state protection and the erosion of the social, which characterise neo-liberal late modernity, have brought about increases in violence and victim vulnerability.

On the other hand, feminist accounts of the serial murder of women situate it within a wider analysis of gender relations, misogyny and systemic male violence (Grover and Soothill, 1998), forming part of a wider feminist analysis where violence and its representation are identified as the means by which men secure and demonstrate power and control over women as part of patriarchy (Brownmiller, 1975; Kelly, 1987; Hanmer and Saunders, 1984; Mackay, 2015; Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Dworkin, 1976; Grover and Soothill, 1998).

The sociological contribution to the study of serial murder is valuable and innovative, but it overlooks feminist perspectives (see Grover amd Soothill, 1998 for an exception to this). This article approaches the Yorkshire Ripper murders precisely as an illustration of the gendered nature of serial murder in terms of its actuality and representation: the murders lay bare extreme and embedded cultures of misogyny, reflected in attitudes towards prostitutes, condemnatory discourses regarding women's respectability and sexuality, and subsequent victim blaming (Caputi, 1987; Hollway, 1981; Smith, 1992). Furthermore, various commentaries from the time

convey the effects of the murders on women in terms of fear and its consequences (Hollway, 1984; Hanmer and Saunders, 1984; Caputi, 1987; Ward-Jouve, 1987; Smith, 2013; Bindel, 2006), as well as the disdain and indifference directed at victims – particularly those involved in prostitution (Yallop, 1983; Ward-Jouve, 1987; Smith, 2013). As such these murders and the discourse surrounding them provide a powerful case study from which to observe how serial murder operates within the contexts of patriarchy and misogyny.

The article outlines and interrogates some of the more recent nuanced sociological approaches to serial murder which identify the structural and cultural conditions of modernity/(late) modernity and the current political economy ~~a~~ins constituting serial killers and victims (Haggerty, 2009; Wilson, 2012; Hall and Wilson, 2014). It is argued that although this body of work acknowledges women and particularly prostitutes as victims, the overriding analysis fails to sufficiently locate female victim and male perpetrator relationships in the context of gendered structural and cultural conditions and violence against women more generally (Grover and Soothill, 1998; Caputi, 1987; Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Walkowitz, 1982; Dworkin, 1976; Radford and Russell, 1992). After presenting, the Yorkshire Ripper case as an illustration of the above, the discussion progresses to ~~present~~ a more explicitly gendered analysis of these themes, exposing modernity itself as gendered and highlighting modernist discourses as misogynist, before considering how violence against women and serial murder plays out within the contemporary context of globalized, neo-liberal late modernity.

<mark>Modernity and the serial killer</mark>

Felski (1995) notes that the term modernity indicates an 'epochal' quality or an 'overarching periodical term to denote an historical era' and what has emanated from this broadly defined historical period in terms of the transformation of social life and the human subject, thus defines modernity. Modernity is thus conceived as the historical period post-enlightenment, during which modern capitalism, law and democracy emerged in the West. It is characterised by rationality, intellectual and scientific progress and the ordering and control of human populations and the human condition (Bauman, 1992; Morrison, 1995). Late or liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000) refers to the social and economic transformations of the late 20th Century when economic de-regulation ushered in by the ascendant neo-liberal orthodoxy of the late 1970s 'melted away' the expectations and certainties of solid and ordered modernity. Neo-liberal economies have created widening social inequalities, individualism and a decline in collective social life (Hall and Winlow, 2005; Hall, 2012); all of which create marginality and vulnerability and are integral to potential victimhood (Wilson, 2012). Haggerty (2009) notes parallels between modernity's defining features and the rise of serial murder, arguing that they enable serial murder in a situational sense and shape and legitimate it at the level of the subjective. This claim is borne out in increases in this type of killing since the onset of modernity.

Statistical evidence indeed reveals rises in serial killing in the last 200 years. For instance, Hickey (1990) charts the 'rise' of serial murder in the US between 1795 and 1989, highlighting a marked rise in cases after 1950. This is further explored in Hickey (2013) who identifies 367 cases of serial murder in the US between 1800 and 2004 with the majority (187) occurring between 1975 and 1995. Fox and Levin (2011) note similar increases in the latter half of the twentieth century with a significant peak in

the 1980s. Evidence notwithstanding, commentators keen to stress how serial killing transcends historical and cultural context offer up examples of mass and serial murder involving sadism and cannibalism which predates modernity (Schechter, 2003; Ramsland, 2005; Miller, 2014). Haggerty (2009) however, does not dispute the existence of 'sequential killing' prior to the modern period and concedes the shortcomings of his argument given that historical records are limited and that modernity cannot be conceived as a monolithic event 'that arrived fully formed in different locations' (p.170). Rather, he situates serial killing 'in the context of modernizing processes' and draws upon Foucault's notion of historical ontology to argue that specific 'types' of individual are a product of 'historical and cultural specificity' (p.171). This leads him to conclude that: 'In the absence of modern contexts, institutions and classifications, serial killers did not exist' (p.171). Haggerty goes on to identify six 'distinctively modern' pre-conditions which engender serial killing: mass media and celebrity culture; the society of strangers; value-free means/end rationality; the vilification and marginalization of specific social groupings; emergence of enhanced opportunities for victimization; and the notion of 'social engineering'. So for instance, the mass media as a means of identity formation provides the cultural outlet and locus of subjectivity for the serial killer. The 'society of strangers' and the privatization of space – another corollary of capitalist development and urbanization, create the context of anonymity, which enables killers to 'prey on strangers' (p.176). Furthermore, Weberian notions of value-free formal rationality central to the modernist project, the modern bureaucracy and the market, are also reflected in the mind-set of the serial killer.

Haggerty also discusses how 'opportunity structures' brought about by modernity facilitate easier access to victims. For instance, women have become more 'available' victims due to their increased presence in public space. Haggerty further argues that the categorization of populations as part of the modernist project has resulted in the 'denigration' of specific social groups set against the benchmark of 'idealised citizenry' (p.182). The hHolocaust is the most extreme example of this; thoroughly modern in its categorization and systematic elimination of those considered inferior by the Nazi state (Bauman, 1989). For Haggerty, antipathy, revulsion and the mission of 'progressive' eradication are values, which are shared by modernity and 'visionary serial killers': 'Through a distorted mirror, serial killers reflect back and act upon, modernity's distinctive valuations' (Haggerty, 2009: 181). This view is further reinforced by the failure of formal agencies to protect and secure justice for marginal groups who appear 'beyond the law' (p.179). Thus, greater accessibility, coupled with marginalization and inequality represent the 'mutually reinforcing operation of modernist frameworks of denigration and victimization opportunity structures' (Haggerty, 2009: 182).

Wilson's work builds upon this perspective Wilson, 2007, 2012; Harrison and Wilson 2008), exploring how the free market economies of neo-liberal late modernity have created widening social inequalities, individualism and a decline in collective social life which have exacerbated marginality, vulnerability and increases in violence (Dorling, 2004; Hall and Winlow, 2005; Hall, 2012). For instance, Wilson (2012) draws attention to social inequality and corresponding rises in serial murder, observing how 'as late capitalism has begun to widen the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots', the numbers of serial killers and their victims has grown accordingly' (p.22

Such structural analyses locate victims, perpetrators and the state within axes of power, inequality and marginality, but they do not identify this is as systemic gender violence, constitutive of the wider social context of gendered power relations and as an extreme and pathological expression of masculinity. An earlier commentary by Wilson (2007) on the Yorkshire Ripper murders connects them to masculine cop cultures and violence against women, but ultimately, the overarching analysis is similar - one which links serial murder to modernity, late capitalism and neoliberalism without fully considering how gender as a structure might play out in these contexts. The following section presents some background to the Yorkshire Ripper case and the misogyny which characterises it, before applying a gendered lens to modernity, late modernity and neo-liberalism.

The Yorkshire Ripper Case

Between 1975 and 1980, Peter Sutcliffe murdered thirteen women and attempted to murder a further eight. The murders took place across the North of England and predominantly in the cities of Leeds and Bradford. Seven of the murder victims were women involved in prostitution and early on in the case, the murderer was identified as a prostitute killer and compared to Jack the Ripper (Caputi, 1987).

After he was caught, Sutcliffe claimed to hear voices from God sending him on a divine mission to clean up the streets. However, a significant number of his victims were not prostitutes and there is some ambiguity as to whether several women were labeled pejoratively by the police due to their lifestyle and the police's perception that they were not 'respectable' women (Smith, 2013). Indeed, it is often assumed when sex-workers are murdered they are specifically targeted; however, they may merely

represent available and vulnerable female victims for those who wish to murder women (Kinnell, 2008). Sutcliffe's early attacks and his progressive indiscriminate murder of any woman would suggest a more general motivation to murder women rather than the claimed hatred of prostitutes.

Victims were approached from behind and hit over the head with a hammer. They were often then slashed across the breasts and abdomen with clothing rearranged to reveal mutilated bodies. At Peter Sutcliffe's trial the defence claimed the murders were not explicitly sexual and this was left unchallenged by the prosecution. Thus, it was assumed that Sutcliffe was not driven by sexual sadism but hatred of prostitutes. This was presented as rational by the prosecution, whilst the defence claimed it was symptomatic of schizophrenia with Sutcliffe pleading guilty to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility (Hollway, 1981; Bland, 1992; Kinnell, 2008). However, one victim was raped, another had a wooden plank inserted into her vagina and another was stabbed repeatedly in the vagina with a screwdriver. This has led several feminist commentators to question the distinction that male dominated legal and medical professions made at the time between a delusional 'divine mission' to kill women and sexual sadism (Hollway, 1981; Cameron and Frazer, 1987); both can be viewed as constitutive of misogyny, representing femicide (Radford and Russell, 1992), the most extreme point on a continuum of male violence against women (Hollway, 1981; Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Bland, 1992; Smith, 1992; Kelly, 1987; Wykes and Welsh, 2009).

Misogyny and the Yorkshire Ripper murders

Historically, prostitutes have been subject to persecution and regulation by a legal and justice system which has exacerbated their vulnerability and victimisation (Walkowitz, 1980; Self, 1998; Sanders et al., 2009). In Victorian Britain, from the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s and throughout the 20th Century to the 1957 Wolfenden Report, policy and legislation relating to prostitution is characterized by standards and a preoccupation with women's morality (Sanders et al., 2009). As such, the attitudes and actions of the West Yorkshire police investigating the Yorkshire Ripper murders can be understood as constitutive of the justice system's earlier hypocrisy and misogyny, alongside continued repressive policing of prostitution during the murders (Kinnell, 2008). All of which reflect the police service as a site where gender relations and inequalities are played out – evident in discrimination experienced by female officers and the treatment of victims of gender violence (Hearn, 1987; Heidensohn, 2003; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000).

> He has made it clear that he hates prostitutes. Many people do. We, as a police force, will continue to arrest prostitutes. But the Ripper is now killing innocent girls. That indicates your mental state and that you are in need of medical attention. You have made your point. Give yourself up before another innocent woman dies (Statement from Superintendent Jim Hobson, West Yorkshire police, 1979, in Smith, 1992).

In the above statement, the police appear to rationalize the actions of the killer: the murder of prostitutes is 'not entirely reprehensible' (Smith, 2013; Bland, 1992). From her own recollections of covering the case as a journalist, Smith (2013) documents the

contempt which the police held for victims. She has also discusses how this contempt was not merely reserved for prostitutes but any woman they perceived to be transgressing the boundaries of tightly proscribed feminine behaviour. Referring to a police dossier on the case containing details of the victims, Smith shows how the police categorized women as 'innocent' and 'non-innocent' based on class and lifestyle such as drinking, cohabiting and mental 'instability'. Furthermore, the police's preoccupation with the murderer as a Jack the Ripper figure who would be easily recognizable to them was, Smith claims, central to the inadequacy of the investigation:

> One of the chief ironies of the whole Yorkshire Ripper case is that police spent millions of pounds fruitlessly searching for an outsider when the culprit was just an ordinary bloke, a local man who shared their background and attitudes to a remarkable degree (Smith, 2013: 171).

Disregard for murder victims was not restricted to those involved in prostitution or perceived as disreputable. The folk hero status bestowed upon the killer (Yallop, 1984; Downing, 2013) evidenced in cultural artefacts such as chants of Police 0, Ripper 13 by football fans at Leeds United and the production of 'Ripper' badges reflects both the cultural celebration of the male murderer alongside a widespread disregard for victims. More recent cases in the UK involving the serial murder of women involved in prostitution highlight that police attitudes and practice have changed (Harrison and Wilson, 2008). Notwithstanding, the serial murder of sex workers and other marginalised groups continues to be met with indifference in terms of the efficacy and commitment of police investigations and the way in which women are represented

(Jiwani and Young, 2006; Quinet, 2007, 2011). Moreover, the regulation of prostitution, underpinned by criminalization and an abolitionist stance continues to place women at risk (Kinnell, 2008). More generally, enduring preoccupations with women's morality and respectability and cultures of victim-blaming, continue to shape the investigation and prosecution of rape and sexual violence, reflected in the construction of victims' credibility and skewed justice outcomes (Lees, 1997; Kelly et al., 2005; Wykes and Welsh, 2009; Hohl and Stanko, 2015)

In this sense, these murders retain contemporary relevance as they allow the opportunity to reflect on violence against women, victimhood and recourse to justice. Furthermore, the nature of the Ripper case supports the need for a fully gendered analysis of serial killing– both historically and contemporaneously. The following section revisits the theme of modernity to think through the relationships between modernity, late modernity and gender.

Modernity, Misogyny and Serial Murder

Haggerty's (2009) schema identifies the social conditions of modernity as the antecedents to the modern serial killer. However, he fails to see modernity itself as gendered (Felski, 1995: 17). For instance, the autonomous, rational, transcendent subject of the market, the law and the political sphere was not universal, but masculine. Indeed, modernity valorized masculine traits alongside the denigration of the feminine and the exclusion of women from the central sites of modernity (Morrision, 1995; Felski, 1995; Walklate, 1995; Taylor, 2012). As Morrison argues (1995), modernity projects a gendered reality and in doing so, shapes assumptions regarding masculinity and femininity, as well as the offender and the victim of crime. Indeed, Morrison (1995)

identifies early criminology as part of the 'construction process of liberal-philosophical modernity' (p.384). Criminology's misogyny is well-documented, where up until second wave feminism, women were either ignored, sexualised or caricatured (Smart, 1976; Klein, 1973; Walklate, 1995; Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1990; Klein, 1973; Heidensohn, 2012).

Furthermore, the serial killer as murderer of women exemplified in the figure of Jack the Ripper is identified by Downing (2013) as an artefact of 'burgeoning modernity' (p.95). According to Downing, this type of murderer was the harbinger of the serial killer as a modernist creation, coinciding with a number of 'modern cultural phenomena' which inscribed the lust murderer as a specific type onto the social imaginary: 'the anonymous Ripper became the archetype for that subject of modernity, the serial sex murderer' (p.73). Downing highlights how the sex murderer or 'lust murderer' was identified within the German pseudoscience of sexology as a killer who derives sexual gratification from murder rather than sexual penetration. This analysis of aggressive masculine sexuality was depicted as the flipside of the rational masculine subject and is misogynist in its depiction of a passive female sexuality constructed as the provocation for such violence. Moreover, Downing traces the Victorian fascination with the lust murderer and the celebration of 'male agency, potency and aggression', first embodied in the figure of Jack the Ripper, as occurring alongside the vilification of the women who were murdered (Walkowitz, 1981). As such, this creation, as realized across a range of modernist discourses, exemplifies links between modernity, serial killing and misogyny. The legacy of which can be seen in later 20th Century representations of sexual murderers – both fictive and actual - who are venerated, while many victims (especially prostitutes) are treated with

indifference and disdain (Caputi, 1987; Downing, 2013; Warkentin, 2010). As Downing (2013) notes, Jack the Ripper 'has remained a cultural figure of folklore through which the contemporary serial sex killer can be read and understood' (Downing, 2013: 89). The recent opening of the Ripper Museum in the East End of London is the most recent example of such a celebration (Orr, 2015). Furthermore, returning to the Ripper figure of Peter Sutcliffe, arguably he is the prototypical masculine subject of modernity whose violence is situated within a wider culture of misogyny and sanctioning of violence against women (Burn, 1994). Moreover, his normality as a typical masculine subject allowed him to hide in plain sight (Bland, 1992; Smith, 2013).

Violence against women in the neo-liberal context

Shifting attention to contemporary/late modernity, the neo-liberal social and economic order has been linked to widening inequality and social marginality which it is argued, has led to increases in violence, murder and serial murder (Dorling, 2004; Wilson, 2006, 2012; Hall and Wilson, 2014). As discussed earlier in the article, women involved in prostitution have been acknowledged as a vulnerable victim group; it is nevertheless useful to think through more explicitly how gender oppression and violence play out within this context. Firstly, Fraser's (2013) critique of feminism and neo-liberalism is noteworthy. Fraser asserts that the feminist denunciation of the welfare state and state protection colludes with the neo-liberal project to reduce the role of the state and the protection of citizens. This relates to how gender roles have been constructed according to the male breadwinner model within state policy which positions women in the domestic sphere. This is challenged by liberal feminism which identifies women's positioning in the public sphere as central to the achievement of gender equality. Fraser recommends that feminism reject the prioritisation of paid

work, arguing that the movement must look to the political economy to transform men's and women's lives via a more substantive configuration of work and care. However, Fraser's fleshing out of similarities between feminism and neo-liberalism misrepresents and over-simplifies the feminist project, overlooking its diversity and its achievements. Moreover, such an analysis fails to take account of the gender-specific damage wrought by neo-liberalism in its destruction of the social. For instance, Walby (2011) discusses how a 'hostile neo-liberal context' (p.249) erodes democratic engagement and thus presents challenges to feminist goals and women's political and civic participation. Walby further argues that public sector cuts following the economic crisis have disproportionately affected women because they are more likely to use and be employed in public services. This also has ramifications for the support and prevention of violence against women as services across public and voluntary sectors are limited due to budget cuts and the reconfiguration of funding processes (Towers and Walby, 2012).

Thinking more specifically about the connections between gender violence and neo-liberalism, the mass serial murder of more than 300 plus young women in the 1990s and early 2000s in and around the Mexican city of Juarez reflects how 'capitalist-patriarchy' (Mies, 1996), evident in the mutually reinforcing axes of the gender order and the globalised political economy, effects systemic violence against women (Ensalaco, 2006; Jeffries, 2013). Ciudad Juarez has one of the highest rates of violent crime in the Americas and it is the main northbound corridor for the importation of drugs into the US (Vuillamy, 2003). Since the late 1990s however, the bodies of young women who have often been tortured, mutilated and gang raped have been found in mass graves around the city. These women are mostly immigrants from poorer parts

of Mexico who have come to Juarez to work in US owned factories – Maquilas. The factories were established just across the US/Mexican border from the 1960s onwards and following the NAFTA (North American Trade Agreement) in 1994. Factories are located in Mexico because the free trade agreement means goods can be produced and exported to the US free from import tax and duty (Vuillamy, 2003). These US companies also pay no tax and there has been no investment in infrastructure to accommodate the growth in population as a result of the factories.

Vuillamy (2003) alludes to a powerful consortium of individuals from business, organised crime and the state committing the murders. The factories which employ the young women take no responsibility for their welfare and are indifferent to their murder. The weak and corrupt Mexican state and the police offer little protection, focusing on the actions of victims and their sexual propriety, failing to investigate effectively, concealing bodies, misrepresenting some of the murders and attempting to frame suspects. As Jeffries argues 2013): 'With its female-labour driven low-wage manufacturing, its large and profitable criminal economy and its hyper-privatised approach to urban development, Juarez is, in many respects, a neo-liberal test case' (p.302). In this sense, the neo-liberal order has fashioned the material conditions which enable the mass murder of poor young women as a result of weak state protection and non-existent infra-structure. Furthermore, these young women are part of the global market's disposable labour force of 'non-citizens' whose lives lack value and whose murder is therefore inconsequential (Schmidt Camacho, 2010).

But the murders in Juarez are also shaped by structural and cultural frameworks of patriarchy and extreme misogyny evident in the nature of the violence and the

representation of victims as culpable. Moreover, the state's failure to act means the murders are carried out with virtual impunity (Jeffries, 2013). Using the framework of femicide further emphasises the structural nature of this violence; femicide refers to the killing women as gendered subjects within the context of patriarchy (Radford and Russell, 1992). Those writing about the murders in Juarez use the Spanish term feminicidio or *femininicide* (Fregoso, 2000; Schmidt-Camacho, 2010; Jeffries, 2013) which as 'a juridical term for gendered genocide, is a way of politicising the murders, making the excessive violence at once public and globally significant through mobilising the language of international law' (Jeffries, 2013: 304). In addition, Segato (2010) identifies the murders as expressive and as non-instrumental – an expression of gender domination, enabled by neo-liberalism, but sanctioned and legitimized by patriarchal forces. As such, they represent a contemporary example of how violence against women is enacted amidst neo-liberalism's destruction of the social, whilst also reflecting capitalism's longer history of the dual exploitation of women across the public and private spheres where patriarchy and capitalism are conceived as 'one intrinsically interconnected system' (Mies, 1986: 38).

Conclusion

This article has discussed the significance of gender in shaping the dynamics of serial murder and its representation. The significance gender is a given within radical feminist analyses of the killing of women where it is defined as *gynocide* (Caputi, 1987), *femicide* (Radford and Russell, 1992) and feminicide (Monarrez-Fragoso, 2000; Schmidt-Camacho, 2010; Jeffiries, 2013), and is located within a wider analysis

of violence against women under the conditions of patriarchy. More recent significant contributions to work on serial murder identify the material and cultural circumstances of modernity and late modernity as fundamental to serial killing. where iIt is argued that social and economic transformation has led to increased marginality and vulnerability alongside a collective mind-set which has absorbed the classification of citizens based on economic value and the selfishness and amorality inherent to late capitalism (Haggerty, 2009; Wilson, 2012; Wilson and Harrison, 2008; Hall and Wilson, 2014). Although I am appreciative of how this work has advanced understandings of serial murder via the implementation of a socio-structural framework, I argue that insufficient attention is given to how gender relations and masculinity shape such violence. Even if patriarchy and misogyny cannot fully account for all manifestations of serial murder, this violence is for the most part, circumscribed by relations of masculinity and power (Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Downing, 2013). My aim has thus been to produce a feminist analysis of serial murder which acknowledges the value of the above work, but takes on board Miller and Mullins's (2011) recommendation that feminist scholarship should engage with 'broader criminological thought' (p.217) in order to 'both challenge and enrich the broader enterprise of criminological theory-building' (p.218).

In light of this, this article has thus sought to emphasise how patriarchal conditions (see also Grover and Soothill, 1998) combine with wider aspects of the political economy to shape the serial murder of women and the discourses which often surround it. I t-hasve drawn upon the Yorkshire Ripper case as a powerful example of this, arguing that these murders reflect extremes of patriarchy, masculinity and misogyny evident in the nature of and motivations for such violence, and its

representation (Hollway, 1981; Hanmer and Saunders, 1984; Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Bland, 1992, Smith, 1992).

Given the centrality afforded to modernity and late modernity within the sociological work on serial killing, the discussion has also considered modernity as gendered, evident in the privileging of the rational, masculine subject as the key agent of modernity, as well as the misogyny inherent to the scientific and philosophical discourses (including criminology) which define the period. This reading of modernity reveals the highly gendered nature of Haggerty's modern serial killer whose subjectivity is not just constituted via modernity but also by masculinity (Downing, 2013). Furthermore, in cultural terms, the murderer as a masculine figure has been celebrated since its inception within the modern period and remains a cultural reference point which reinforces and legitimates violence against women (Caputi, 1987; Downing, 2013).

To conclude, the latter section of the article considered the murder of women in the late modern neo-liberal context by focusing attention on the mass murder or femicide of young women in the Mexican border city of Ciudad Juarez. These murders serve to illuminate how structures/cultures of gender intersect with the current political economy at the global level in the development and commission of violence. The murders reveal the emergence of new vulnerabilities, sanctioned by discourses of disposability, where poor women are of negligible social value in the context of global labour markets and gender violence is committed with impunity, driven by localised cultures of masculinity and misogyny, while as the state stands aside indifferently. These murders highlight how gender relations and violence against women are

contingent upon time, place and culture (Miller and Mullins, 2011), but as earlier discussions of the Yorkshire Ripper case highlight, enduring features of the gender order (Connell, 2002), continue to determine victim and perpetrator relationships, and the representation of violence against women across history.

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