Class, criminality and embodied consciousness:
Charlie Richardson and a South East London *Habitus.*

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Chain-smoking commuters cross Pearl River to run the factories Hong Kong has built in China's special economic zones. Some have families on both sides of the river: Chinese women still have lower expectations than the wives these plastic-Lion-King tycoons leave behind. There are a sprinkling of Westerners on the ferry too, in search of bargain-basement manufacturing deals or pedalling hi-tech equipment to entrepreneurs in the making. From the other direction come teenage hustlers lugging suitcases full of pirate CDs pressed in army-owned factories, and mainland gangsters in white socks, clutching briefcases and mobile phones.

The two sides of the river are as inextricably linked, and as uneasy about each other, as are Westminster and Southwark, divided by the Thames. **Deyan Sudjic**, *The Guardian* 24/6/95

If there is a modern equivalent to early Southwark it might well be Tijuana, the seedy town just south of the Mexican-American border. Each settlement has made its living by becoming the pleasure-ground for a more closely regulated area to the North, and allowed fugitives from its neighbour to take shelter. The Thames may not be the Rio Grande, but medieval Southwark certainly had a Wild West atmosphere. In the taverns, brothels and gaming - houses of Bankside sudden violence was common, and its causes were the stuff of cowboy films: having driven cattle to town, the unwary would take their pay and go in search of a good time, only to meet a greedy lady of pleasure, a card-sharp or a bully. Stage-coaches would arrive with their passengers robbed or wounded, after an ambush by masked men lurking by the roadside.....This was the flavour of Southwark life for centuries**. Richard Byrne**, *Prisons and Punishments of London*

Is it not also possible that within this city and within its culture are patterns of sensibility or patterns of response which have persisted from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and perhaps even beyond ? Does the passage of the city through time create its own energies that exert a pressure upon our perceptions and our understandings,

which is all the more powerful for being normally overlooked? **Peter Ackroyd**[1]

Ackroyd's question is a fascinating one, and warrants serious consideration. It is indeed possible, I would suggest probable, that particular structures of feeling and patterns of culture have been generated by London, its history and its people[2]. These have assumed specific forms, dimensions and characteristics out of the historical process of the growth of London and its at times spectacularly novel and particular social dynamics. As an historically unique kind of city it has produced unique and arguably specific forms of working class-metropolitan culture. I want to attempt to delineate and interpret something of these processes, however, with reference to some comparatively prosaic cultural reproduction theorising rather than in terms of Ackroyd's opaque and supernatural essences and energies. These may or may not exist. What certainly does exist is the lingering influence of that long, complex and processually peculiar historical development which has given the city its particular atmospheres, and its people their particular characteristics and patterns of culture.

These 'patterns of culture' might be more usefully understood in their empirically specific dimensions if we relate them to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Richard Jenkins[3] has observed that Bourdieu's sociology is an extremely valuable and practical one to think with, to *use*. This is especially possible with the habitus, an invaluable theoretical tool in the attempt to think through and characterise the temporal continuities of specific working class, or non-bourgeois, collective groupings and their social practices. It is of particular usefulness in the attempt to consider how elements of cultural continuity may be reproduced in always shifting circumstances in ways that are both adaptive *and* cohesive. It has, of course, the additional and important benefit of maintaining a focus on the structural-processual positionings of class based collectivities, collectivities largely abandoned by the postmodern turn in social theory. The tendency to collapse social class as a meaningful sociological category is, of course, characteristic of the work of those intellectual elites which, as Bauman notes, have developed and maintained the various conceptual frameworks of postmodernity in response to anxieties deriving from recent changes in their status and function[4]. The many

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[1] Quoted in The New York Review of Books, September 21, 1995, p. 49
[2] 'People' should, of course, be in the plural here - London has always been a city of remarkable social diversity. My focus, howerver, is in general upon those broadly working class settlements historically characteristic of the area under consideration. I am thinking primarily, though by no means exclusuvely (see note 11), of those white working class communities which have, until relatively recently, been predominanat within the area.
[3] Jenkins, p. 175
[4] Bauman, p. 217

thousands of Londoners currently enjoying the thrillingly postmodern experience of long-term structural unemployment have, by and large, other things with which to occupy their minds.

The Habitus, then, is a system of durable and transposable collective dispositions which ensure the active presence of past experiences, and which

> 'deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the "correctness" of practices and their consistency over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms. This system of dispositions - a present past which tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices, an internal law through which the law of external necessities, irreducible to immediate constraints, is constantly exerted - is the principle of the continuity and regularity which objectivism sees in social practices without being able to account for it; and also of the regulated transformations that cannot be explained either by the extrinsic, instantaneous determinisms of mechanistic sociologism or by the purely internal but equally instantaneous determination of spontaneist subjectivism'.[5]

A central, and particularly theoretically useful, element of the habitus is bodily hexis. Here Bourdieu offers an account of the ways in which the perceptual, identificatory and communicative dimensions of the Habitus are inscribed in the body at the level of implicit consciousness.[6] This idea of communicative

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[5]Bourdieu, (1980), p. 54. It is important to note the 'impossibility of reducing (theoretically) the habitus to the economic conditions prevailing at a given moment' Bourdieu (1984) p. 375. The style of life and orientations of groups are capable of surviving the conditions which produced them, and structures of perception and disposition can retain their force - and continuity - over extended periods. The *concept* of habitus posits, crucially, a form of social consciousness (see note on *Algeria 1960*, below) which invests in masculine embodiment, bodily skills and prowess in the face of a precarious physical environment consistent with the historical development of forms working class practice in parts of London. The notion of a kind of social reproduction which also invests in the mimetic capacities of the body in the context of a primarily oral culture is also vital.No other theory of social reproduction posits such a sense of class practice with a degree of resistance to time and change than a habitual one rooted in bodily second nature, making the concept of habitus appropriate to a speculative account of the key historical characteristics of particular geographically and culturally located groups *and* any lingering contemporary manifestations of those processual-cultural characteristics.

[6] Bourdieu (1991), p. 81-89 is especially interesting in his discussion here of the class dimensions of bodily hexis and masculinity. Especially important is the argument that 'popular' forms of masculine embodiment differ markedly from their bourgeois counterparts and are not reducible to purely verbal and discursive communicative practices.The parallells with Bernsteinian linguistic implicitness are clear: in connection

embodiment in working class socialities becomes especially powerful if its congruence with Bernstein's work on class and language codes is recognised.[7]

This possibility of a collectively generated social consciousness retaining its integrity, its 'schemes of perception' over time is critical for what follows: the attempt to identify the dimensions and content of particular forms of class based 'practical' consciousness[8] generated by the metropolitan experience, and lingering manifestations of these in contemporary London life. This attempt to trace the history of some of the practices, sensibilities and orientations of sections of the London working class[9] proceeds from the

with the Kabyle of Algeria,for example, he suggests that 'The system of honour values is enacted rather than thought, and the grammar of honour can inform actions without having to be formulated '(1979), p. 128

[7] Bernstein (1979) contains a clear and concise outline of the theoretical framework. One of the most important aspects of Bernstein's work relates, at the schematic level - and it is always made clear that it *is* a schematisation - to differences between linguistic coding and class. Very broadly, where 'middle class' language tends towards elaborated, explicit ,reflexive and highly individuated discourse, the 'working class' model is one characterised by implicitness, social-contextualisation, metaphor and communalised speaker roles. It follows that the latter allows greater scope for both the expressive associates of speech and non-verbal communication.

[8]The notion of 'practical' reason is critical for its counterposition to 'bourgeois' reflexivity: 'It was necessary to take back from idealism the "active side" of practical knowledge which the materialist tradition, notably with the theory of reflection, had abandoned to it. Constructing the notion of habitus as a system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment or as classificatory principles as well as being the organizing principles of action meant constituting th social agent in his true role as the practical operator of the construction of objects, Bourdieu (1990, p.12). Bourdieu characterises this practical social sense as a 'feel for the game' or a 'particular, historically determined game - a feel which is acquired in childhood, by taking part in social activities.....The good player, who is so to speak *a game incarnate*, does at every moment what the game requires. That presupposes a permanent capacity for invention, indispensible if one is to be able to adapt to indefinitely varied and never completely identical situations' (ibid, p.62.) Practical sense thus defined is a deeply embedded characteristic of working class life, and is consistent with the notion of a distinctive form of consciousness and self awareness predisposed towards implicit (embodied) enactment and, in the sphere of language, a collectively structured, metaphoric expressivity.

[9]The term is, of course, problematic. For the purposes of a long term historical overview beginning in the twelfth century, it is a practically meaningless categorisation.Thompson repeatedly stresses, in his seminal work in this area, that the the term is a descriptive one which evades as much as it defines.Observing that classes must be regarded in terms of process rather than static,reified or final groupings, he says that a class is a 'very loosely defined body of people who share the same congeries of interests, social experiences, traditions and value-system, who have a disposition to behave as a class, to define themselves in their actions and in their consciousness in relation to other groups of people in class ways. But class is not a thing, it is a happening' (1963) p. 939. In the modern age, I would suggest, a vital impetus of class consciousness and dispositions thus concieved has been towards defining sovereign, embodied working class identities and cultures in contradistinction to increasingly hegemonic bourgeois ones. This historically

possibility that they may contain a highly durable core. I am thinking in particular about what appear to be striking historical continuities in patterns of masculine London-working class practice and identity. The heterogeneous and highly differentiated nature of the historical city makes the attempt to develop a definitive, singular Habitus untenable. It might, rather, be possible to identify a range of historically coherent themes which have demonstrably characterised the development of particular groups of working class Londoners - particularly those that might fall loosely into the latter part of the classical respectable/disreputable schematic construction of the peoples of the city. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive or fully rounded account of these continuities here. This would of course be a vast undertaking. The partial and selective nature of what follows is intended, however, as a speculative and suggestive account organised around a number of exemplifying moments in the history of the city.

My focus is on that inner portion of South London which runs along the Thames from Bermondsey to Deptford, and westwards from the river to incorporate the boroughs of Southwark, Lewisham and the more western sections of Lambeth. This inner core is what I mean, for practical purposes, by South East London. I will concentrate, in particular, on Southwark, the City of London's first suburb[10],and the site of historically continuous settlements as old as the City itself. The patterns of culture which I take to be characteristic of the area are best approached via the social history of those particular localities which grew up - in the first instance on the South Bank of London Bridge - from the middle ages. This is not to say that Southwark has an utterly distinct identity and tradition, for there are clearly similarities of history and development with, in particular, East London. What I do suggest is that particular patterns of practice, sensibility and response have demonstrably characterised the development of the area and its people, and have been reproduced over time - though not of course entirely homogeneously or evenly - in such ways as to have generated particular, nuanced inflections of social identity.

It is a characteristic of accounts of the phenomenon of London to stress its uniqueness: of its size, transformations, bewildering profusion of peoples[11],

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continuous (if uneven) tendency of class based cultures towards a kind of implicit ,albeit often defensive, sovreignty cannot easily be matched by a continuity of terminology which can accurately define these developing processes. I choose to use the term, despite its problematic nature and its status as one among many over differing historical circumstances, primarily in the interests of thematic and linguistic consistency.
[10]Johnson, ch. 1
[11]The complex multicultural nature of early modern London and its class culture is routinely effaced in social histories of the city. Fryer (1985,p.72), notes that many of the 10,000 or so black people thought to be living in Britain throughout the eighteenth century, for example, were at the centre of London culture and politics. Any account of class and

trades and lifestyles, its historically staggering heterogeneity and scope. Raymond Williams is not alone in seeing eighteenth century London as a distinctively novel kind of place, generating new patterns of social organisation, senses of human possibility and, in effect, modes of consciousness and identity.[12] This sense of expanding possibility and decisively novel experience was accompanied, as we shall see, by the equally powerful and simultaneous pull of the locality. The bewildering size and variety of London has, in fact, generated a social patchwork of intensively localist culture and sentiment, a series of highly differentiated social spaces within the Metropolis. By the nineteenth century, Richard Sennett observes, London was in effect a conglomeration of 'Class homogenous, disconnected spaces'[13]. Extreme localist identifications in the context of a vast and ultimately unfathomable whole thus became a primary characteristic of the historical development of London's working class communities, differentiating them from their provincial counterparts. It is little wonder, given this variety and diffusion of communities and of the obscurely folk-taxonomic ways of interpreting and representing them, that so much of London tends to be missing from its social history. This is most acutely true of South East London, an area which remains chronically underhistoricised. This is primarily due to the fact that social historical accounts of London invariably revolve around the easily juxtapositionary cognitive scheme of East/West. These apparently obvious and reassuring polarisations, between rich and poor, grandeur and squalor, light and dark and order and chaos become translated into contrastive analyses of relationships between West and East London. South London is marginalised in this conceptual framework by its location on the *other side*, its separation marked symbolically as well as spatially by the Thames. The effect of this separation has led to its demarcation as an obscure and unknown (at least to bourgeois professionals) space, a region of darkness nestling, in the case of Southwark, hard by the very heart of the Metropolis. We will see that when it appears in social histories of London at all it tends to do so as a shadowy region of crime, disreputability and 'incipient decay'.[14]

South East London therefore enjoys a specific and resonant position in those folk-taxonomic schema which so characterises life in the city, and its close association with 'crime' - itself an absolutely central sphere in historical

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culture in the modern period must be alert to this presence. Working class London (the riverside districts in particular) was certainly not percieved at the time as monocultural: 'When one goes into Rotherhithe and Wapping, which places are chiefly inhabited by sailors, but that somewhat of the same language is spoken, a man would be apt to suspect himself in another country' - John Fielding (17760, *A Brief Description of the Cities of London and Westminster*, in Linebaugh, p. 135.
[12]Williams, ch. 14
[13]Sennett, p. 322
[14]Ash, p. 39

relations between the metropolitan classes - marks it out as an especially significant site in the ongoing dialectics of class and culture, of social identities embodied and ascribed.This particular tradition and iconography - from medieval criminal quarter and pleasure ground to Fagin and the definitive Dickensian criminal warren at Jacob's Island in Bermondsey[15], from the original nineteenth century Hooligan (sometimes identified as a denizen of the Elephant and Castle)[16] to the first Teddy Boys (more securely located at the Elephant)[17], from classical gangland enclave to home of the archetypal football thug at Millwall - marks South East London out as a very particular and historically significant place. We may now begin to look a little more closely at some of the ways in which the iconographic status of the area is routinely invoked in popular representation.

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In his recent social history of London Roy Porter - himself a native of the south east - paints a vivid picture of the kind of impending municipal apocalypse now central to debates on the future of the metropolis. The routine and apparently unavoidable litany of those political, economic and cultural ills which are destroying the social cohesion, urban ecologies and healthy civic sociality of contemporary London life is laid out in stark and persuasive terms : the Thatcher years ; the diffusion and attenuation of local government and resulting infrastructural collapse ; unemployment, crime and social division ; the awful and anti-human implications of transport 'policy',. All of these and more are detailed in Porter's elegaic account of the apparently irreversible decline of the once glorious world city. The shift, in particular, from post-war corporate cohesion to contemporary chaos is exemplified in his contrastive accounts of New Cross then and now. The area is characterised as being, in the period after the war, a 'stable if shabby working class community completely undiscovered by sociologists[18] .These days, however, 'Dossers and drunks litter the gardens, and some of my students were mugged there last year. South London has gained a mean reputation for drug-dealing, racial violence, gangland crime and contract killing'[19]. As a device with which to convey a sense of recent social collapse this typification of the changing fortunes of South London is as good as any. But it misses a vital point : inner South London gained its mean reputation far longer ago than this account suggests, and Porter's rather florid emphasis on the more contemporary manifestations of this 'meanness' - 'drug dealing' and 'racial violence' - obscures the extent to which 'gangland crime' may rather

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[15]In *Oliver Twist*
[16]Pearson, p. 225
[17]op. cit. p. 21
[18]Porter, p. xiii
[19]op. cit., p.xv

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represent a sphere of *continuity* in the life of the area. Porter rightly identifies the area as one to which there accrues a highly particularised system of representation and symbolic imagery and which enjoys a distinct place in what we might call the popular consciousness. I would suggest, however, that the central elements of this repertoire - apparent predispositions among the populace towards criminality, violence and generalised disreputability - are rooted in a much longer and more continuous dialectic of social identity and representation, and cannot merely be used to form part of an account of post war decline

The story of these ways of seeing and representing South London is, naturally, a long and complex one and a full and detailed account of it lies well beyond the scope of this piece.   But I do hope to demonstrate that particularised folk-taxonomic conceptions of South East London centered upon disreputability and criminality have been in circulation since the middle ages, and that though the dimensions of these are historically variable, the themes and imagery through which they are expressed are continuous. They express a way of thinking about the area which I suggest inform both external attributive representations of the area *and* the symbolic repertoire of cultural identifications subscribed to and utilised by sections of its population[20]. Of particular importance here are archetypal representations of masculinity. Before examining the constitutive elements of these archetypes in detail let us briefly consider, at the level of representational imagery, the highly specific urban ecologies in which South East London man is situated. Porter's invocation of the twin markers of meanness and disreputability is characteristic of many accounts of contemporary life in the area. A representative perusal of references to the area in popular writing will serve to illustrate the point.

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[20]The dynamics of an ongoing dialectics of social identity are complex and various, and it is clear that the latter cannot be usefully concieved of as stable and unchanging. See Massey (1994, ch.7) for a discussion of the relationships between place and the construction of essentialist local identities. Cultural identities are, as Hall (1990, p. 225) notes,'a matter of "becoming" as well as "being".....Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power. Far from being groundrd in a mere "recovery" of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.' I am particularly interested, for present purposes, in the ways in which key (symbolic) elements of a traditionally conceived locality/identity schematic are articulated - again, from both within and without - in forms of recollection and/or ongoing processes of invention geared towards the recovery/maintainence of an essentialist,'authentic' white South Londonism.It is likely that the underlying workings of a particular habitus will orient groups towards those preferences for specific symbols and patterns of identification defined as 'Traditional'.

A recent edition of the London listings magazine Time Out features a series of articles contrasting life north and south of the river. In a range of pieces interesting in that they have South London as their focus at all ,the explicitly caricatured and stereotypical representations of the respective regions contrast, as we might expect, the civilised north with the backward and barbarian south. These explicit and humorous stereotypes are interesting in the way that they express widely diffused, folk-taxonomic ways of thinking about the area[21]and the profound psychosocial divisions which characterise London life. In an echo of Sudjic's awareness of the powerfully symbolic role of the Thames in these matters, it is felt that 'The Seine in Paris and the Tiber in Rome pull their respective capitals together, but the muddy waters of the Thames are an impenetrable psychological barrier'[22].Further pieces develop and press the point home in forthrightly comedic terms. From the perspective of North London, Andrew Mosby tells us that: 'In the South, if you listen to the conversation long enough you soon realise that everyone is called John, Kev or Vanka, and there is an unwritten rule that if you look at someone else's pint its the equivalent of looking at their dick and merits a "spanking". Spanking and all other forms of violence, along with television, are the two most popular activities in South London.......A typical North London car will have either a golfing umbrella in the back or a Panama hat, suggesting a day enjoyed at the races. In South London the norm is a baseball bat or a sawn-off shotgun, suggesting that the owner is a habitual user of anabolic steroids and hoping to commit violent crime if he or she hasn't already'.[23] In addition, and before moving on to say that in South London homosexuality remains illegal and men 'have women's names tattooed on their arms to prove they're not queer', Mosby rehearses one of the central images of the divide: *Black cabs never go South of the River.*

There is no attempt to play this kind of imagery down from the perspective of the South. Rather, Rick Jones boasts that 'No one does much work here. Crime is more or less the only form of commerce.' The Old Kent Road is included on the Monopoly board only because it is where 'Northeners habitually get mugged on their way to the continent'. Later in his piece he makes, with some acuity, a flitting attempt to do something much more ambitious when he identifies Southwark with particular psychosocial states of mind and patterns of sensibility: 'Shakespeare and his tarts, pimps, boys and cronies spent their days scoffing at the pompous struttings of those who went in and out of the city. Today the germ of their cynicism lurks in the S bend of the Thames at Southwark. It seeps, if not into the South Bank arts complex or into the newly built Globe, then out into the tributary streets of lovely SE and SW postal districts, where untainted youth picks it up like a sexually

[21]Time Out, Sept 6-13 1995, p.33
[22]ibid
[23]ibid Time Out

transmitted disease'[24].We will return to look in more depth at these matters presently. For now I would note that while these kinds of representations are clearly not to be taken seriously as analyses of social relations south of the river, they are interesting for the ways in which they illustrate some of the dimensions of a London-archetypal, attributive and folk-taxonomic way of thinking.

These humorous accounts address what can be without doubt a harsh social reality. The London borough of Southwark, which constitutes the core inner South East London, is classified by the Department of Environment, out of analysis of a wide range of socioeconomic indicators, as the second most 'deprived' local authority area in England and Wales[25]. There is another type of account of the area, in which an awareness of specifities of this urban ecology are articulated alongside a particularistic iconography of working class/gangsterish masculinism. There is a widely diffused stock repertoire of interpretation and imagery which derives from this latter. John Williams, offering his expert's view of the Millwall hooligan problem in the aftermath of the infamous Derby play-off disturbances of June 1994, gives us the following: 'I believe it has something to do with the nature of the area where the club is based. It is strongly working class and a very tough neighbourhood. It has a strongly masculine culture in which young men were brought up to express themselves by being tougher than other parts of the capital'[26]. This sense of a specific and localised type passes over easily from a discussion of Millwall fans to one centered on more generalised patterns of masculine culture and practice. An *Independent* article on the Brinks Matt bullion robbery - Britain's biggest ever armed robbery - is representative of these kinds of accounts, with its routinised invocation of the 'run down council flat on the Bonamy estate, just off the Old Kent Road '. This specifically understood urban ecology is the context for that 'South East London gangland which has produced 'some of Britain's most notorious criminals'[27]. I would stress here that assessing the accuracy or otherwise of these claims is not of primary importance. What is significant is the way in which so many accounts of the area, and particularly of its darkly conceived masculine subcultures, revolve around the manipulation of a particular, and consistent, symbolic repertoire of meanings and identifications.

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Social histories of London have Southwark firmly entrenched as the resort of criminals and other assorted unruly elements by the twelfth century. A sense

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[24]ibid Time Out
[25]Guardian, 5/6/94
[26]Guardian, 20/5/94
[27]Independent, 15/4/94

of two distinct, mutually hostile settlements emerges clearly in accounts of the time. Johnson[28] notes that the period is characterised by a continual contest for civic control of Southwark between the 'City' and the 'Borough', and that the presence of criminal communities in the south reflected the far more stringent municipal organisation of the former. Thus Southwark became the first site of escape from the juridicial rigours of the centre, and the river - easily traversible by boat in times of flight - exists already in the twelfth century as a concrete and symbolic boundary between north and south, order and chaos, the rule of law and the fugitive colony. By 1155, the year of the institution of the first City guild, the 'disorders of Southwark were an affront to the increasingly well regulated city' [29].This highlights another important theme in the development of north/south relations, namely a tendency in the latter towards a less formalised, regulated and guilded occupational culture premised, even at this early stage, upon an ambivalence towards institutionalised power in the economic sphere. This pattern of dubiously legal, autonomous work in infringement of trade regulations is, I suggest, a second important theme which should be placed alongside those more overtly criminal practices from which it was seldom unambiguously discrete. Here may be the origins of particular kinds of South East London Habitus, and it is perhaps not too far fetched to speculate on the lives and practices of some of these distant forebears of Del Boy Trotter[30]. This condition of criminal disorder and civic and economic irregularity in Southwark remained, according to Johnson, 'substantially unchanged until the Nineteenth century'[31].

It was during the period 1550-1700 in fact that, in McMullan's[32] assessment, the sphere of crime became a deeply institutionalised characteristic of the city's socio-economic structure. Criminal practice, and the kind of social consciousness which must surely have been its concomitant, are in this view deeply embedded historically in plebeian/non-bourgeois cultural formations and must be seen as central rather than peripheral. The growth of what he calls an 'opportunity structure' for crime is indivisible, for McMullan, from the history of the growth of the City's economy itself. [33]The new density of

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[28]Johnson, p. 35

[29]op. cit., p.40

[30]Del Boy is the central figure in BBC TV's 'Only Fools and Horses' series. A rather spectacularised caricature embodying these themes, he is characterised, most of all, by his skill in 'ducking and diving': pursuing a form of resolutely autonomous, marginal entrepeneurialism in which the boundaries between legal and illegal, crime and speculative endeavour, are always ambiguously defined.He lives in Peckham. See Hobbs (1988) for an account of 'ducking and diving' in East London.

[31]op. cit. p. 61

[32]The Canting Crew (1984)

[33]McMullan identifies five key areas in this growth and institutionalisation: ' (1) wider structural opportunities for theft, (2) a secrecy of operations ,(3) established criminal

population enabled criminals to become sufficiently concentrated to form 'discrete social networks of their own through which the skills and techniques of crime could be refined and generationally transmitted'[34]in the context of 'an agglomeration of monitored and unsupervised enclaves' characterised by weak communal policing, decentralised administration and outright defiance. Primary among such enclaves was Southwark, 'probably the area of London with the most venerable reputation as a resort of criminality'.[35]

This vividly criminal Southwark appears to have found its fullest expression in Elizabethan London, at the time of the emergence of a more fully developed and recognisable type. Elizabethan and Jacobean comedies produced, says Johnson, a new and particular stock character: 'The witty but unscrupulous Londoner',[36] relieving the guileless of their money. This sense of urban living by wit and guile, and a theatricalised self presentation in social practice, is echoed in the consolidation of another surprisingly modern looking theme in the social relations of South East London: a deeply rooted antipathy towards the policing authorities. Johnson relates an account involving seven Southwark ruffians who, 'on seeing the forces of law advancing on them,...turned with a cry of "down with the constables", and set upon them as well'[37]. Thus, in 1546, a full four four hundred years after Southwark first gained its unambiguous reputation for disorder, the problem of how to deal with lawlessness in the absence of a strong local authority remained.From medieval high jinx to Elizabethan thuggery to the lionisation of police killers in contemporary football chants [38] and the indestructible hatred of the police frequently displayed by members of the South London gangland fraternity [39], these themes have been consistent characteristics of a particular South East London habitus.

Beyond descriptions of this picaresque environment, it is important to speculate on the kind of historically developing metropolitan consciousness being matured in it. These critical themes - fugitive sanctuary ; patterns of criminality ; widespread 'disreputability' in a specifically constructed urban context ; an always imprecise blurring of the line between legitimate commerce and illicit hustling, formal occupation and autonomous guile ; poverty and squalor and, lest we are tempted to push these points too far, a

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habitats, (4) networks of criminal association, and (5) an elaborate black market for disposing for criminal goods, (p. 15)
[34]ibid, p. 20
[35]ibid, p. 56
[36]Johnson, p. 63
[37]op. cit., p.68
[38]*The Harry Roberts Song* and *Kill, Kill, Kill the Bill,* in circulation at Millwall and other London Football grounds for the last few decades, are prime examples.
[39]The autobiographies of Frankie Fraser and Charlie Richardson, for example, exemplify this orientation

profusion of relatively stable and hardworking communities - express a stark and difficult social landscape. It was to become particulary so from the late seventeenth century. The history of proletarian[40] Londoners and their cultures was marked, from this time, by an intensifying and long term struggle over identity and practice - both leisure and occupational - with 'crime' as a dimension of ideological contest at its centre. In thinking about the course of this struggle we can glimpse in perhaps their starkest relief those specific qualities and elements which come to characterise the cultures of working class London as it enters the early modern period.

By the mid-eighteenth century, as Porter notes, London was less a mere city than a novel and exhilarating social phenomenon. It had, arguably, generated - out if its rule by commerce and cultural entrepeneurialism rather than by King, Court or Church - something unique and extraordinary in the modern period: a confident, sometimes arrogant, proud and frequently unruly metropolitan populace.[41] This astounding city, this new kind of crowd, of noise, of energy, was generated, for Porter, by a unique 'alchemy of money and the masses, its popular commercialism run by capitalists great and small'. This is a conception of a new London consciousness forged out of the Hustle: wit, mental toughness, the impulse to autonomy and an extreme materialism generating a particular kind of working class-metropolitan response to early Capitalism[42]. This new people emerge out of what Raymond Williams calls a new 'moral arena': 'As London grew, dramatically, in the eighteenth century, it was being intensively observed, as a new kind of landscape, a new kind of society'[43]. Londoners were a new kind of population, forged out of novel and exhilarating social relations and economic arrangements, both *of* the great Metropolis and displaying an acutely proprietary attitude towards it. They were a harsh and difficult people 'in love', as Porter puts it, 'with themselves'. In the coming times they were to need all of their confidence and resourcefulness.

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[40]Linebaugh, p. 122-23, notes that this descriptive term first appears in the 1660's to describe the lowest of the social low whose origins, as a group, were held to lie in the multinational, or 'deep sea', flotsam to which London - the great mercantile, *maritime and slaving* centre - was host. This early London proletariat was, Linebaugh repeatedly illustrates, a grouping of immense ethnic and cultural heterogeneity. Indeed, given for example the pivotal role of Olaudah Equiano - born in Nigeria - in events during what Thompson regards as the genesis of the 'English working class', Linebaugh feels that it would be more accurate to speak of 'the working class *in* England', p. 416.
[41]op. cit., p. 183
[42]Peter Burke notes of this period ' the appeareance of the entrepeneur as popular hero, a type apparently without any European parallel', p. 158
[43]Williams, in Porter p. 184

Peter Linebaugh's work - focussed primarily upon eighteenth century London - develops a critical point made by E.P.Thompson. This relates to what Thompson calls 'sub-political traditions', 'popular attitudes towards crime, amounting at times to an unwritten code, quite distinct from the laws of the land.....this distinction between the legal code and the unwritten code is a commonplace at any time. But rarely have the two codes been more sharply distinguished from one another than in the second half of the eighteenth century. One may even see these years as ones in which the class war is fought out in terms of Tyburn, the hulks and the Bridewells on the one hand ; and crime, riot and mob action on the other, [44]. This positioning of 'Crime', Thompson stresses, within patterns of culture and sub-political, oppositional sensibility is a characteristically London phenomenon, of a people who 'astonished foreign visitors by their lack of deference'[45]. This places discussions of 'crime' within a much broader framework of social history. The location of the social sphere of crime is thus a highly specific one and is interpreted by Linebaugh as, primarily, a matter of both practice and sensibility generated in response to the intensifying effects of the early capitalist recasting of social relations in the early eighteenth century. This latter process had particular implications for the London working class, for whom the long term struggle over social practice, culture and identity was especially acute. Resistance to the confining and oppressive effects of this emergent form of economic and social reorganisation - premised upon the institution of private property rights and of the wage - took place in London primarily in the realm of sub-political, 'criminal' action. Crime and criminality can therefore be interpreted ,in extended and subtle ways, as a vehicle for the expression of a particular kind of class consciousness, and not merely a matter of illicit economistic practice pure and simple. For sections of the population the practice, the idea, the *consciousness* of crime has been an important oppositional sphere in which struggles over not only material realities but embodied social identities themselves have been fought. I would suggest that elements of this sub-political culture of crime - as a means of making a living *and* an important realm of activity in the process of resistance to bourgeois cultural hegemony - continue to linger here and there in London, and nowhere more so than in the South East.

The early eighteenth century in Europe has, of course, been defined by Foucault as the age of the 'great confinement' [46]. Linebaugh concurs, but identifies important countervailing tendencies at the level of sub-political resistance: 'Doubtless, incarceration, in its many forms and for many purposes, was a major theme that can easily and exactly be particularised for London in the early eighteenth century. Yet the theme of incarceration

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[44]Thompson, p. 64
[45]op. cit., p. 66
[46] Foucault (1979)

brought with it the counter theme of excarceration. As the theme of incarceration was played out in workhouse, factory, hospital, school and ship, so the counterpoint of excarceration was played out in escapes, flights, desertions, migrations and refusals [47]. The refusal of subordination, Linebaugh thinks, was a characteristic of the London labour force, and we have already encountered those earlier expressions of a particular social consciousness - a proprietary metropolitanism, lack of deference and history of relatively autonomous occupational practice - which would have generated such attitudes. It is this refusal of subordination which militated against any easy institutionalisation of Londoners during the age of confinement and explains, in Linebaugh's view, why 'new experiments in industrial organisation, like the factory, were placed outside London' [48].

The popular culture generated by this difficult and resolutely non-bourgeois urban population was vivid, colourful and often explicitly focussed on the widely circulated exploits of emblematic superstar criminals. The greatest of these was Jack Sheppard, a housebreaker and specialist escaper who, Linebaugh notes, was once the single most well known name from eighteenth century England. Frank and Jesse James and Ned Kelly were amongst his global following [49]. His adventures were circulated and followed in the media of that other history of 'historians, pantomime and song. The oral history of Sheppard has *maintained* his memory within human contexts where books were scarce and working class resources for an independent historiography were non-existent... At a time when economists have been hard put to explain how the labouring people could actually live given the wage rates that prevailed, Sheppard's life can raise the question of the relationship between thievery and survival'[50]. The long and spectacular career of Sheppard, and his status as a clearly emblematic figure can tell us a good deal about the experiences and responses of the London labouring classes from which he emerged. When in prison under sentence of death, for example, and harangued by the Ordinary of Newgate to concentrate his energies upon spiritual preparation for his impending afterlife rather than further attempts at escape, Sheppard replied that 'one file's worth all the Bibles in the world'[51]. This alerts us to some of the other important characteristics of the London consciousness that we will consider presently: irreligion and a steadfast materialism. After his execution Sheppard became an even greater folk hero, 'to be used for bitter political satire or to be admired for his tenacity and indomitability. His elevation to fame was a rise neither with, nor without, his class. Almost as a figure of sport, he attained

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[47]Linebaugh, p. 23
[48]op. cit., p. 24
[49]op. cit., p.
[50]op. cit, p. 8
[51]op. cit.,p.33

an "individual fame" that united the "mob"[52]. The stories of Sheppard and others found their way into archetypal representations widely circulated in the popular consciousness, and 'The popular theatre of Southwark or Bartholemew Fair kept cockneys laughing at themes of repression and resistance'[53].

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Gareth Stedman-Jones' work on the development of nineteenth century working class London enables us to trace the development of these themes throughout a period of change still more intense, and to add some further strands to an analysis of the relationships between class, consciousness, (often implicit) resistance to even nineteenth century bourgeois cultural hegemony ,and crime. I want to look briefly at what was happening in South East London whilst the social landscape of the nineteenth century city was being utterly transformed, and the dimensions and perspectives of what Stedman-Jones calls a 'culture of consolation'[54] - which solidified towards the end of the century and arguably continues to significantly characterise sections of the London working class - were being formed. It is necessary therefore look at some of the types of activity - that is, largely *criminal* activity - which if anything provided a kind of continuity of response to changing material realities in South East London in the period following the great confinement, and up to the mid and late century.

Pearson, Stedman-Jones and Himmelfarb, amongst others, have examined the social, political and economic processes which underpinned the 'Condition of England' debate of the latter part of the nineteenth century. Interest in the conditions of the poor and outcast of London was central to this debate, as were historically continuous attempts to define, redefine and shape thinking about class, culture and identity. The impulse to categorise and interpret London's' various plebeian groupings, which finds its fullest and most detailed expression later in the century in the work of Charles Booth, crystallises in mid- century in the work of Henry Mayhew. There are clear

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[52]op. cit., p. 38

[53]op. cit., p.40

[54]Stedman-Jones (1983), sees the latter third of the century as a period in which the dimensions and character of London Working class culture were reshaped. Following on the defeat of Chartism, 'working people ceased to believe that they could shape society in their own image....Capitalism had become an immovable horizon.' This recogition of capitalism as the immovable frame of social action, and the acquiesence that this involved, was reflected in the capital in the formation of a parochial, defensive and overwhelmingly politically conservative 'culture of consolation' centered upon the Music Hall. p. 237. Elsewhere, Stedman-Jones (1971) notes that those dispositions of the London 'casual poor' which were to underpin the development of this conservatism emerged from a material reality which provided 'no focus for any growth of collective loyalty upon which a stable class-consciousness could be based', p. 344.

problems, as Himmelfarb[55] demonstrates, in simply using Mayhews' descriptions of London street life as unproblematic historical or proto-sociological data. His work, however, if treated with caution, palpably demonstrates two main themes: first, an obsessive and essentially prurient bourgeois interest in the lives of the swarming Victorian underclasses and their means of subsistence and, second, the apparent existence of a plethora of vivid and highly differentiated criminal subcultures. One of the most prominent - though not the only - sections of the city in which the latter appear to have thrived was, as we might expect, inner South East London. Mayhew throughout his work demonstrates a particular penchant for the area. Apparent swarms of thieves and swindlers, many of them street children or 'arabs', were, he says, operating in the 'New Cut, Lambeth and Borough'[56] This latter area - just south of London Bridge and, as we have seen, the historically exemplary neighbourhood in these matters, is characterised as the site of a subculture of 'Irish-cockney teenage thieves'[57] and of the practice of 'snatching with violence'[58], which Mayhew regards as the Victorian equivalent of the highway robbery of Sheppard's era. A set-to in the New Cut reminds us of an already noted and deep rooted reservoir of anti-Police sentiment, with a crowd forming against arresting officers and urging 'let 'em go'. [59] The Thames - on both its South Eastern and Eastern banks - is the focus of a teeming riverside underworld almost too widespread and complex to categorise. The impression conveyed by Mayhews' work, in fact, is of a set of highly differentiated criminal subcultures (in South East, East and central North London) almost as heterogeneous and arcane as the city's' virtually incomprehensible employment structure. One thing is clear: if Mayhew is in any sense a credible witness of the street life of nineteenth century London, the criminal proclivities of large sections of the working class - in South East London above all - were both a continuing feature of London life and, in the workings of particular kinds of Habitus, consistently adapting in terms of practices and strategies of survival to shifting material realities.

The position of South East London is even more central, in addition, in accounts of law and disorder in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Pearsons' account of Victorian 'hooliganism' begins on familiar ground, noting 'fierce traditions of resistance to the Police in working class neighbourhoods, so that not uncommonly Police attempting to make street arrests would be set upon by large crowds - sometimes numbering two or three hundred people - shouting "Rescue, Rescue" and "Boot him !'. This is

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[55] Himmelfarb, p.708
[56] Mayhew, p.133
[57] op cit, p. 142
[58] op cit, p.234
[59] op cit, p.138

from a *South London* Chronicle report of 1898.[60]This period is characterised, for Pearson, by an early media panic centered on an emergent 'hooligan' phenomenon. His account of this process is generously illustrated with archive material from South London newspapers, indicating once again the pivotal role the area has played in shaping historical understandings of law and order. In 1899, for example, Clarence Rooks' *The Hooligan Nights* locates the origins of the 'hooligan gangs', in an echo of Mayhews' 'Irish-cockney teenage thieves', in 'Irish Court' at the Elephant and Castle.[61]While the details of this account of the birthplace of Victorian hooliganism are a matter of dispute, the point is made: in 1899 the 'Elephant and Castle' was understood to be sufficiently coterminous with disorder, violence and criminality to make it the primary site around which bourgeois anxieties and folk-taxonomic attributive schema could be focussed.This is the period in which it was said that the gangs of South London wore 'boots toe-plated with iron, and calculated to kill easily'[62], a good sixty five years before the emergence of the Skinhead. Press reports of London street life at the time of the 1898 Bank Holiday were filled with accounts of assaults and robberies, pickpocketing, gang fights and stabbings, vandalism and 'free fights'. One such of the latter, 'a Bank Holiday bust-up in the Old Kent Road...consumed the energies of 200 people'[63].

The context for these apparently large scale and uncontained incidents of mob violence and 'Social Crime'[64] in London is one in which patterns of disorderly, violent and criminal behaviour were widespread and deep rooted. This was a 'bustling, potentially violent and effectively unpoliced street life'[65]in which 'one in four of London's' Policemen were assaulted each year - 3,444 cases were reported in 1899, for example, when the constabulary strength was 13,213 men and I,949 sergeants.'[66]Thus does Pearson characterise turn of the century London - with the South as the exemplar- as a place of 'violent

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[60]Pearson, p.74
[61]op cit, p. 255
[62]op cit, p.77
[63]op cit, p.81

[64]Humphreys (1995, p. 151) uses the concept of Social Crime to encompass 'the inumerable minor crimes against property commited by working class children and youth that were condoned by large sections of both the youth and parent cultures as legitimate, despite their illegality'.The context is, of course, one of extreme material hardship.In an echo of MaCmullan's notion of 'structures of opportunity for criminality', established in a much earlier period, Humphreys says that 'The temptations and enormous opportunities for crime offered by markets, shops and department stores, the depersonalisation of relationships in the anonymous city crowd and the independent street culture of young people, which resisted adult interference and control, were all powerful influences that encouraged juvenile delinquency' (p. 165)
[65]op cit Pearson, p.89
[66]op cit, p.88

neighbourhood rivalries, robberies and attacks on Policemen'.[67]All of this is played out in a period of increasingly differentiated and heightened subjectivities, and expresses conflicts' 'built around the human meanings that are attached to the social realities of class, physical appearance and territory'.[68] Here Pearson is identifying some of the central constitutive elements of those particular Habitus' which so characterise the late century in working class London, shaped and developed out of particular historical circumstances. To a propensity for lawlessness, disorder and criminality among sections of the South East London populace, we must consider in detail the third of Pearsons' categories: *territory*. Porter[69], Sennett[70] and a great many others have documented and explored the unprecedented - and fragmentary - spatial and demographic metropolitan explosion which characterised the nineteenth century.   This is a critical element in London life, and should be considered alongside the historically continuous tendency towards non-institutional autonomy as decisively formative.

One of the most important characteristics of nineteenth century London was, as we have seen, the intensifying development of disconnected and class-homogenous urban spaces. The parochial and localist sensibilities fostered by this pattern of development were informed, in part, by particular occupational sensibilities and cultures. Charles Booth, in his carefully microcosmic accounts of the various parts of London, repeatedly stressed the staggering multiplicity of traders, and the localisation of their trades [71]. At no point in his vast analyses of the labouring people of London does Booth purport to provide generalisable insights into the nature of life in the metropolis as a whole - a recognition that the specifities of its patchwork of communities rendered such a task untenable.[72] He constantly stresses heterogeneity, diversity, multiplicity and smallness of scale as the main characteristics of the London occupational structure. O'Day and Englander note, in their survey of Booth's work, that 'Neighbourhood and community - patterns of sociability, of language, of dress and politics - often reflected the needs and norms of the trade[73]. The proletarian London of the nineteenth century is probably best viewed, given this, as a collection of discrete, parochial, intensively localist, occupation (legal or otherwise)-based communities, reflecting nuanced differences of speech, comportment and, to an extent, sensibility. This is the period in which a folk-taxonomic, cognitive map for the apprehension of the metropolis - an objectively impossible proposition, given its magnitude and heterogeneity - would have become

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[67]op cit, p.98
[68]op cit, p.81
[69] Porter, ibid
[70] Sennett, ibid
[71]O'Day and Englander, p. 104
[72]Op Cit, p. 196
[73]Op Cit, p. 122

profoundly nuanced, complex and arcane.   This proliferation of localised communities is one of the primary characteristics of nineteenth century London.   Nowhere would these localisms have been more keenly experienced than in the South East, with its highly particularised urban ecologies and continuing spatial *and* cultural status as an obscure *other* of the metropolitan centre. A peculiar fusion of elements, then, appears to characterise this London: a profusion of deeply entrenched criminal subcultures ; the heterogeneity its of non-institutional, small scale enterprises ; the lack of a genuinely cohesive class consciousness ; and the primacy of localist, parochial and nuanced urban socialities. To these we must also add another element in this historical London tendency towards a rigorously materialist worldview: irreligion.

Booth devotes a great deal of attention, in his 'Religious Influences' series, to the status and practice of religion throughout the city. Some of his considerations of South East London are especially interesting. He was clearly alert, in the period of 'class conciliation' and bourgeois evangelism, to the class limitations of the religious effort in inner London. In his descriptions of South East London, published in 1902/3, he considers the 'worsening' of the situation in the area between the Borough and Blackfriars Road and the problems of making religion felt in that area: 'There is in this part a great concentration of evil living and low conditions of life that strikes the imagination and leads almost irresistibly to sensational statement.....the character of these places varies somewhat in detail, but in general it is lowness and wickedness here rather than poverty'[74]. Further South, the church of St. Saviours 'hardly pretends to grapple with local needs.....what role can religion play in the cure of these evil conditions ?[75]. Though Booth's judgmental speculations on the culture and experiences of South East Londoners are very much of their time and should be approached, like Mayhews', with caution. His work is useful, however, for its illustration of inner urban resistance - largely expressed at the level of implicit refusal rather than explicit critique - to the missionaries. For Stedman -Jones, this impulse is not so much an expression of irrecoverable nihilistic despair as of communal pride and class autonomy at a time when these things were under intense attack, and when church attendance signified abject poverty and the loss of self respect[76]. Porter observes, in this connection, that 'three surveys (1851, 1866 and 1903) document this popular paganism. East and South London had the nation's lowest church attendance. In working class inner city areas fewer than one in five attended a place of worship. London was no

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[74]Op Cit, p.194
[75]Op Cit, p. 195
[76] Stedman-Jones (1983) p.196

city of God' [77]. There is thus one strand of submission, of deference, of institutionalisation ,of, perhaps, *humility* - but also of possible social cohesion and collective consciousness - which has never featured significantly in the cultural life of South East London. The historical tendency towards a worldly materialism was never, in other words, checked by any profound communal embracement of a non-worldly perspective. In an episode of 'Only Fools and Horses' Del Boy enters a church as if he is stepping onto another planet. At no point do his mental universe and the meanings which he dimly takes to inhere in the church meet. He devises a scam, in fact, for profiting on an apparently weeping statue of the Virgin. White South East London is represented here with some degree of accuracy - as an area with a spectacularly underdeveloped religious culture. It is the guiding hand of Mammon, and not that of the Lord, which has by and large moved the successive generations of worker, entrepreneur and criminal in the area.

Here then are the dimensions of some of those schemes of perception and patterns of practice within which working class South East Londoners entered the twentieth century. It is plain that the various groupings which comprise the latter have never been constituted as an homogenous mass. It is therefore untenable to posit the outlines of a definitive, all-encompassing Habitus. Rather, it may be possible to summarise a number of key themes which, even in their unevenness, have structured particular sensibilities and orientations out of extraordinary processual histories. The spatial arena of this history is a unique one in this country, its primary characteristic being its constitution as an obscure, mysterious and darkly conceived other place close by the very heart of the metropolis.

This unique experience of simultaneous proximity to and exclusion from a great world city has generated a sensibility in which metropolitan arrogance and a kind of conservative, defensive assertiveness may be fused. The routinised romanticisation of East End life has arguably left the South East with a sense of underhistoricised, underglamorised but ultimately *authentic* Londoness. A proprietary attitude toward the city can therefore coexist with a kind of embittered isolationism, which is often as fractious towards other sections of the English working class as it is to a more obviously antiethical bourgeois culture. I would suggest that it is a largely implicit consciousness of these matters that is at the heart of particular embodiments of South East London culture and identity. The majority of South East Londoners are not, of course, Charlie Richardson. But Charlie Richardson is a South East

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[77]Porter, p.298. See also Pelling (1979,),who notes that 'Working Class religious commitment in the ninteenth century seems to have been most complete in isolated single-occupation districts, where a new sect could secure a high degree of identity with the whole community', (p.20.) Elsewhere, he feels that generalised claims that the urban Working Class was positively anti-religious are exaggerated 'except perhaps in relation to London' (p.27).

Londoner. It will be instructive to look briefly now at that South East London cult of the gangster which both expresses many of the foregoing themes *and* provides the masculinist subcultures of the area with their particular mythic repertoire.

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The Teddy Boy phenomenon of the 1950s' is almost universally regarded as the first and defining moment in British youth subculture, the first expression of a distinctively novel post war 'teenage' impulse. Pearson demonstrates, however, that the Teds represented something much more like a particular strain of cultural continuity. [78]Many of the constituent parts of the Teds' stylistic and behavioural repertoire were, in fact, in evidence even before the war - a fact completely effaced in media constructions of the 'phenomenon'. The Teddy Boy first emerged from the 'slum neighbourhoods of London', in particular the Elephant and Castle in South East London.[79]That the area should be the focus of a moral panic in the media comes as no surprise - this was but a further expression of its historical role in these matters. But what kind of place was this almost mythical 'Elephant and Castle' at the time of the Teds?

Michael Caine, who grew up in the area, reminisces :' The Elephant was not exactly a classy district. The streets were as rough and dangerous as it was possible to get without anybody actually declaring war'[80]. Nobody ever said the whole phrase, 'Elephant and Castle': 'If you were asked where you came from, you only said "the Elephant", and if you could keep a reasonably straight face, this was usually enough to strike terror into anyone from outside the area' [81]Continuing his characterisation of life in the area in the late forties, Caine notes the infamous presence of some 'very vicious groups of criminals', the VIPs - London backslang for 'spivs[82]'. In Caines' rhetorical schematic the two types - 'Teds' (one of which he attempted to become) and 'vicious criminal gangs' are condensed into a single mode of representing the nature of the area: hard and tough, violent and dangerous, *criminal*.   If Caine's memoirs remind us at this point of the centrality of issues relating to the complexities of reality and representation in these matters, they also

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[78]Pearson, p.22
[79]op cit, p.21
[80]Caine, p.38
[81]op cit, p.37
[82]The 'spiv' is an important iconic figure from the immediate post war era. As Hebdige points out in *The style of the mods* (1974, p. 5) observes, this London variant on the New York mafioso prototype, possessing a highly developed and Italianate style consciousness more contemporary than that of the Teds was, along with his increasingly visible Jamaican 'hustler' equivalent, amongst the formative influences on that most metropolitan of all youth subcultures, Mod - primarily a phenomenon of South East and East London.

demonstrate a very deep-rooted and widespread folk conception of life in the area, of the close detail of lived experience in a heavily mythologised urban landscape. In the twentieth century the bulk of this mythology has both attended, and been significantly derived from, South East London gangland culture.

Gilbert Kelland is a former head of Scotland Yards' CID. In 1951, a newly promoted young sergeant, he was posted to Carter street station in the Walworth Road, 'about half way between the Elephant and Castle and Camberwell Green in South East London. The Walworth and Elephant and Castle were tough neighbourhoods, but they were good places to learn some facts about coppering'[83]. Kelland, if his Walworth Road is a little more benign than Caine's, still portrays the area as characterised by teeming markets in stolen goods and illicit gambling. He also notes the significance of an important local sphere of activity - the scrap metal business - and was not surprised to find that a decade after his tenure at Carter street 'it was in the Walworth area that the Richardson brothers became notorious criminals with extensive interests in the scrap metal business'[84].

All of this, as well as the more historical themes outlined in the foregoing, coalesce in the figure of Charlie Richardson. The details of Richardsons' biography have been well documented,[85] and I will not rehearse them here. It is important to note, however, that his empire grew out of his scrap metal business, an arena in which that dividing line between street level trading and outright criminality was never clearly drawn. To this day Richardson portrays his past career as that of an energetic and adventurous businessman . Tough, ruthless, exacting and 'creative' in his business dealings, his severest contempt is reserved for those things sought by the sheepish common man :'Caution and security stop people from really living'[86]His larger than life and bellicose appetite for material success is one theme we are now familiar with. He combines it with two others - an inviolable masculine toughness and a still more intense sense of autonomy. His refusal to submit to the humbling indignities of National Service is a case in point.[87]Richardson did not, and this was a view shared by a good many of his peers, need the army to 'make a man' of him. He was a man already, with allegiances to only himself, his immediate associates and a fierce hunger for material success. This is the primary message of his autobiography. The extent to which his almost Nietzschean desire for an autonomy of self is a matter of temperament or culture is open to speculation. I would suggest, however, that in his

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[83]Kelland, p.30
[84]ibid
[85]By Campbell, Morton and Richardson himself
[86]Richardson, p.52
[87]op cit, p.102

exaggerated and self consciously archetypal self representations Richardson is expressing a South East London insistence on autonomy and the freedom to 'trade' which can be intermittently traced back to the eleventh century. Charlie Richardson is one particular London Habitus, or orientation towards material reality, personified - subsistence or success through wit and guile, violence when necessary, no messing about. It is not, as Richardson himself recognises, an especially spectacular gangsterism. James Morton, in his survey of London's' underworld, concurs: 'until recently the East End villains have always had a much greater press coverage than their South London counterparts, but informed observers have always regarded the latter as more dangerous, perhaps because they have displayed a greater ability to keep their heads below the parapet'[88]. The Richardsons (brother Eddie was known in his youth as 'King of the Teds') neither sought nor achieved the same level of public notoriety as did the Krays, whose almost cinematically spectacularised careers brought them a much broader audience. With the Richardsons, it was a South London thing: the Krays from the East, feted by West End celebrities and living like film stars, the Richardsons in the South East, getting on with *business* in their dark, mysterious, *other* London.[89]It is from his embodiment of this South East London masculinist Habitus that Charlie Richardson draws his power as an archetype. He *represents* the area in a particular cultural sphere and discourse, and he and the identificatory possibilities which inhere in his persona are in their turn situated within that repertoire of symbols via which definitions of what it means to be certain types of South East London *man* are constructed.

Richardson's autobiography is a fascinatingly constructed mixture of condensed metaphor and explicit reflexivity which cannot easily be read in terms of the working class restricted linguistic coding posited by Bernstein[90]. This draws our attention to two things. First, that individuals in increasingly complex and highly differentiated societies are not always confined in their

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[88]Morton, p.95

[89] Hebdige considers the contrast in his *Kray Twins: A study of a system of closure*

[90]This is not the case with the autobiography of Frankie Fraser (1994), a former associate of Richardson's. His story, as told to James Morton, is an almost entirely unreflexive account of a life spent in prison and in organised crime. The long and remorseless catalogue of beatings, for example, inflicted upon him whilst in prison are the product of his extraordinary intransigence and sense of inviolability. Yet Fraser tells us little or nothing about their psychological sources - he simply details (in a striking echo of the Algerian sense of honour described by Bourdieu) his *enactment* of them .This hatred of policing and penal authority is an antiestablishmentarianism minus the politics, an autonomous, oppositional impulse defined implicitly in social embodiment rather than reflexively articulated. Born in Waterloo in 1923, he is the product of a London only a generation after Booth. Whilst he is clearly in many ways an exceptional figure, it is arguable that he embodies some of those dispositions and orientations taken by Pearson, for example, to be characteristic of particular kinds of ninteenth century London habitus.

communicative practices to the linguistic Habitus of their class background[91] ; and second, that Richardson's book was to an unknown extent co-authored by Bob Long. Despite these ambiguities of narrative, it is clear that Richardson realised his success almost purely on the basis of *embodied* practice - it was built by his own hands and the force of his own personality.It is in this sense - as someone who both acquired and realised this particular set of orientations and desires experientially, and at the level of practice - that makes Richardson a genuinely emblematic figure for certain South East Londoners.

In telling the story of the Brinks'-Mat bullion robbery, Hogg, McDougall and Morgan have also to provide an account of the culture of Richardson's gangland antecedents. By the 1980s, they note, an interesting phenomenon became apparent to detectives investigating the growth of the well organised armed robbery :'An inordinate number of men convicted for the more professional type of robbery, and a number of others thought to be likely suspects, came from just one area - South East London'.[92]The geographic and demographic peculiarities of the area, the authors feel, are of particular significance. It was the largest unbroken tract of an entrenched white working class left in the city, an unbroken sprawl of ungentrified, *ungentrifiable* 'modest or run-down housing developments'[93]stretching from the south side of the Thames to Kent without interruption and therefore entirely unleavened, presumably, by those pockets of bourgeois civilisation which characterise even the dourest regions north of the river. This is the context of a particular South East London criminality, an obscure phenomena which they seek to account for - in the absence of a 'full soicological survey' - by using the assessments of those who have policed the area. In these accounts, the core of the problem is seen as the 'widespread disregard for law and order that has existed for centuries among certain families of

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[91] Bernstein (1979) notes that, as primary agents of socialisation, it is families which predispose children towards particular realisations of linguistic code. He is unambiguous that families of either code-type (restricted and elaborated) exist empirically within each class. His more recent work, particularly (1990), attempts to detail, at a high level of complexity, precise relationships between social class, occupational structure and linguistic predisposition. Class background does not, it is clear, straightforwardly or unambiguously determine linguistic orientation.
[92]Hogg et al, p. 69
[93]op cit, p.70

dockers in the riverside Bermondsey[94]and Rotherhithe areas, where pilfering cargoes was once a way of life'.[95]

This localised culture, then, is in general an example of a specific Habitus at work through the centuries and in particular a continuation of South East London themes which have their origins in the period of Linebaughs' analysis of the central role of the riverside in historical class relations[96]. It is interesting that these police-sociological attempts to account for this localist underworld revolve entirely around the effects of historically continuous patterns of material culture and practice. It would appear that the detectives of the Met - whether or not they have read Bourdieu - are fully aware of the broad outlines and workings of the Habitus. It is the cohesiveness of these communities, in fact, that is significant: 'Until the very recent dockland developments (the authors are writing in 1988) those ties remained virtually intact. The East End of London may have been decimated by the German air force in the second world war and the city planners afterwards, but in the South East one of London's' largest working class communities, centered on the Old Kent Road, stayed put.'[97]These attempts to explain the phenomenon in material sociological terms are supplemented by an awareness of a powerfully symbolic dimension to these matters :' The Great Train robbery too had a part to play in the process - most of the robbers came from South East London. The heroic status they were to achieve in the eyes of many was nowhere more evident than on the streets where they grew up. Even though guns were not used on that occasion, armed robbery took on a romantic hue.'[98]These processes - of the cultural valorisation of the gangster and of embodied dispositions and orientations derived from a dialectics of identity forged in particular material social realities - have clearly generated some fairly distinctive forms of working class-masculine culture. The 1987 statement of a senior flying squad officer would appear to confirm this: 'Some 60 per cent of all armed robberies in the country take place in London, and about three quarters of those which take place elsewhere are committed by Londoners. Proportionally, the chances are high that an armed robber is from South East London'.[99]

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[94] See 'London's meanest manor ?', *Time Out* no. 1252, in which Bermondsey 's reputation for being the 'roughest place in the capital' is said to have existed since the Victorian era. Jacob's Island, 20's Bare - knuckle fighting, the Richardsons and Frankie Fraser, the Arif brothers, Millwall football club, contemporary boxing culture and racism are all invoked in a short and rather obvious article purporting to assess the current state of play in the area. The results are, to say the least, inconclusive.

[95]Hogg et al, p. 70

[96] Linebaugh, ch. 12,examines the importance of the docks, in particular, in struggles over customary practice, the redefinition of crime and the extension of anti-working class moralising discourses to policing, legislitative and economic policies throughout the late eighteenth and early ninteenth centuries.

[97]Hogg et al, ibid

[98]ibid

[99]op cit, p.71

The point, of course, is not to suggest that the area is swarming with volatile and dangerous armed criminals[100], but rather to note this crucial possibility: that the raw symbolic material of the construction of localist working class masculinities - a process played out in differing ways in every city in the country - is of a particular sort in South East London, where an archetypal manliness is as likely to be flavoured by a kind of no-nonsense, rather gansterish inviolability as it is by a legacy and iconography of industrial-proletarian toughness. It is from the examination of these kinds of contemporary embodiments of historically continuous schemes of perception and orders of meaning - or 'traditions' - that the concept of Habitus may derive its interpretive force.

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[100] Although this is not, apparently, the view of the US State Department: 'The Yanks aren't coming. At least not to Peckham, rated by US Government experts to be as dangerous as a Latin-American hell-hole. According to State Department mandarins you are as much at risk on Peckham Rye as in Guatemala, where the streets are stalked by death-squads.....the State Department has 'Red-Flagged ' Peckham, Brixton and Lewisham... Red-Flagging means American tourists should avoid at all costs, and is normally applied to some of the world's worst trouble spots' runs an understandably indignant report in the *South London Press*, 5/1/96

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