

BEYOND THE IRON LADY: THATCHERISM, BRITISH CINEMA, AND THE RE-SHAPING OF WORKING-CLASS MASCULINITY IN *THE FULL MONTY*

DEMİR LEYDİ'NİN ÖTESİNDE: THATCHERİZM, BRİTANYA SİNEMASI VE *THE FULL MONTY* FİLMİNDE İŞÇİ SINIFI ERKEKLİĞİNİN YENİDEN ŞEKİLLENİŞİ

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Abstract

This study discusses *The Full Monty* (1997) within the socio-political aftermath of Thatcherism, concentrating on the shifting representations of working-class masculinity in 1990s British cinema. As Margaret Thatcher's neoliberal policies dismantled the industrial economy, they also destabilised the breadwinner role and traditional gender hierarchies that had long sustained working-class male identity. In the light of R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, the study explores how economic decline, unemployment, and deindustrialisation reconfigured masculine subjectivities. Special attention is given to the symbolic function of key spaces such as the steel factory, job centre, and working men's club, as sites where masculinities are both contested and redefined. Ultimately, the film is interpreted as a cultural response to the crisis of working-class masculinity in a post-industrial Britain, presenting alternative forms of male agency through performance, vulnerability, and collective reinvention.

Keywords: *The Full Monty*, working-class masculinity, Connell, Thatcherism

Özet

Bu çalışma, *The Full Monty* (1997) filmini Thatcherizm'in sosyo-politik etkileri bağlamında ele almakta ve 1990'lar Britanya sinemasında işçi sınıfı erkekliğinin değişen temsillerine odaklanmaktadır. Margaret Thatcher'ın neoliberal politikaları sanayi ekonomisini çökertirken, uzun süredir işçi sınıfı erkekliğini tanımlayan ekmek kazanan rolünü ve geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet hiyerarşilerini de istikrarsızlaştırmıştır. R.W. Connell'in hegemonik erkeklik kuramı ışığında yapılan bu çalışma, ekonomik çöküş, işsizlik ve sanayisizleşmenin erkeklik kimliklerini nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiğini incelemektedir. Çelik fabrikası, iş ve işçi bulma kurumu ile işçi kulübü gibi mekânların toplumsal cinsiyetin inşa ve dönüşüm süreçlerindeki simgesel işlevine özellikle dikkat çekilmektedir. Film, sanayi sonrası Britanya'da işçi sınıfı erkekliğinin krizine verilen kültürel bir yanıt olarak okunmakta; performans, kırılganlık ve kolektif dönüşüm yoluyla erkekliğin alternatif biçimlerinin nasıl ortaya konduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *The Full Monty*, işçi sınıfı erkeklik, Connell, Thatcherizm

Introduction

The Full Monty (1997), set in the post-industrial city of Sheffield, portrays the economic and emotional struggles of six unemployed steelworkers and their destabilised masculinity in post-Thatcher Britain. The film reflects the collapse of industries in the 1990s, fractured traditional notions of masculinity, and the significant breadwinner role of working-class men. In this respect, the close relationship between male unemployment and the male crisis becomes a central theme in *The Full Monty*. By foregrounding the effects of privatisation, a central element of Thatcher's economic policies, the film presents a poignant depiction of how

neoliberal policies redefined working-class life in northern England. Through a blend of social realism and comedy, *The Full Monty* reveals the economic and emotional marginalisation of working-class men who were once central to Britain's industrial economy. The portrayal of these six steelworkers in the film, who are compelled to redefine their masculine roles in the neoliberal 1990s, explores the intersection of the ideology of the Thatcher era, post-industrial decline and the transformations in working-class masculine identity.

Margaret Thatcher's tenure as the first female prime minister in Britain (1979-1990) marks one of the most significant periods in modern British history; hence, examining *The Full Monty* within Thatcherism is crucial to reveal the transformative effect of Thatcherite policies on the British socio-cultural fabric. The comprehensive neoliberal reforms of the Thatcherite era laid the groundwork for the structural and thematic shifts defining British cinema in the post-industrial era. British cinema, which could be defined within the post-industrial period, reflects radical changes by discussing the themes of economic hardship, fractured identities, and the loss of traditional class structures. Within this socio-political framework, *The Full Monty* emerges, not merely as a comedic narrative, but as a cultural response to the anxieties and redefinitions prompted by the Thatcherite transformation of British society. As the longest-serving prime minister through three successive electoral triumphs, Margaret Thatcher named an era in British political and socio-cultural history. The Thatcherite era is defined by political, cultural, and educational reforms that reestablished Britain's economic and social structure. As Friedman observes, Margaret Thatcher "radically changed the face of Great Britain, offering the citizens of her country a combination of economic, political, social, and ideological principles that so completely broke with the post-World War II consensus as to totally restructure British daily life" (2006, xiii). Thatcherism corresponds to the ideological doctrines of new Toryism, the political style of Margaret Thatcher, and the policies of the Thatcher government. These policies included a commitment to a free-market economy based on competition and free enterprise, privatisation, the end of the post-war consensus, law and order, anti-unionism, which modelled individualism in the face of social organisation rooted in collectivism, anti-welfare state and monetarism (Gamble, 1990, 333). Thatcher's economic policies, embracing monetarism and privatisation, led to high inflation rates, economic decline, deindustrialisation and unemployment. The working-class communities, particularly in the north, were devastated by the closure of traditional industries, such as coal mines and the declining manufacturing sector, which led to the marginalisation of the working class. Economic decline fuelled the civil unrest: the 1981 Brixton Riots exemplify the severe social

consequences of increasing economic inequalities and racial tensions. The Thatcherite era was also marked by political confrontations such as the Irish hunger strikes, miners' strikes and the Falklands War. These developments in the Thatcherite era marked a turning point in British society and culture, apart from an economic transformation, even long after Thatcher resigned from office.

Thatcherism's indirect yet consequential influence on British popular culture is undeniable in the characteristics of literature, drama, cartoons, films, and visual arts of the 1980s and beyond. The long-term sociocultural consequences of policy decisions and ideological undercurrents of the Thatcher era shaped the content of British cinema. Although Thatcher's government did not directly provide economic support for the British film industry, her ideology became a central subject in the cinematic expressions of the time. Many directors unavoidably responded to the social and economic upheavals with thematically rich films: "The majority of English films of the eighties never engaged in open critiques of Thatcherism, but the ethos she created seemed to become the implicit or explicit subject of many of the period's best films" (Quart, 2006, 17).

The depiction of working-class men in British cinema has evolved considerably, as seen in the contrast between the 1960s British New Wave and the more politically charged social realism of the 1980s and 1990s. The earlier films, produced during an industrial change, focused on male protagonists who opposed middle-class conformity and were attached to traditional working-class values of labour, locality, and male independence. As John Hill notes, these characters were often positioned in public and communal spaces, embodying a form of masculinity tied to employment, trade unionism, and authority within the workplace and the family (2000, 250-51). However, this portrayal transforms dramatically in films produced during and after the Thatcher era. The class identity and male subjectivity were reconfigured on screen due to the discharge of heavy industry, increasing unemployment, and declining unionism. In these later films, male characters are increasingly represented in restricted domestic settings, burdened by financial insecurity and a deteriorating sense of purpose. The crisis is not only economic but profoundly gendered: the collapse of manufacturing jobs and the weakening of union culture also damaged the very ideologies of masculinity that had long maintained working-class male identity. As industrial roles faded and male unemployment increased, working-class men were increasingly represented as vulnerable, emasculated, or disoriented. The working-class men could no longer perform the breadwinner role that once legitimised their social position. By contrast, female characters in Thatcher-era films are often

portrayed as having more agency in public spheres, challenging prior gender norms and engaging with struggles that male protagonists once faced. Visually and thematically, the transformation is apparent, as Hill underlines, “the iconography of rows of small terraced houses and cobbled streets characteristic of 1960s realism [had] given way to run-down housing estates with boarded up windows” (1999, 167), deserted factories, and a general sense of social abandonment. As Shafer underlines, “In focusing on unemployment and industrial decay in the north of England, the 1980s and 1990s films often suggest the crisis in masculinity associated with the collapse of those social roles as wage earner and head of the family that have traditionally sustained a sense of male identity” (2001, 12). These films of the 1980s and 1990s, while rarely offering direct polemics against Thatcherism, nonetheless criticise its influence by documenting the deep decay of class and gender stability. In doing so, they not only record the marginalisation of a once-central social group but also give cinematic voice to the broader ideological crisis surrounding masculinity and community in late twentieth-century Britain. As Julia Hallam observes, “Contemporary British films reiterate this approach: working-class identity is depicted not as the collective political unity of a group in society but as a site for exploring the personal stagnation, alienation and social marginalisation of their white male characters” (2000, 261). The cinematic portrayal of the working class in the 1990s witnessed a portrayal of a deepening crisis, as the compounded effects of global capitalism, industrial decline, and neoliberal labour reforms transformed the traditional image of the British worker into that of a marginalised, economically excluded “underclass” within a fragmented post-industrial society (Shi, 2011, 11).

In his *Citylife: Urban Fairy-tales in Late 90s British Cinema*, Robert Murphy categorises the dominant themes of British cinema emerging in the 1990s into three groups: The first group foregrounds social realism, representing the harsh realities of poverty, unemployment, and marginalisation through melancholy portrayals of working-class life. The second group concentrates on disillusioned youth who depend on drugs and crime as coping mechanisms in the face of socio-economic deprivation. The third category embraces a more optimistic, even comedic tone, suggesting symbolic narratives of fulfilment and collective resilience, such as steelworkers finding self-worth through stripping in *The Full Monty* (1997) or miners preserving community identity through band music in *Brassed Off* (1996) (2003, 292).

The first group of films suggests overt political criticisms, notably of Thatcher-era economic policies and their effect on working-class communities. Directors like Ken Loach and Mike Leigh produced in a realist mode to uncover the social costs of deregulation and the

downfall of unions. Loach's *Riff-Raff* (1991) illustrates a bleak setting of the exploitation of unprotected construction workers after the defeat of unions. *Raining Stones* (1993) centres on a father's desperation to provide for his daughter, exposing working-class masculinity's moral and emotional erosion under economic pressure. *Ladybird, Ladybird* (Ken Loach, 1994) shows institutional violence against people with low incomes, particularly the working-class family; masculinity appears powerless in the face of social services. Mike Leigh's *High Hopes* (1988), pervaded with irony, criticises class division and the breakdown of solidarity under Thatcherite values. In these films, masculinity is no longer constructed in labour, but is mirrored through instability, anxiety, and loss of control.

The second group of films explores the disillusionment and nonconformity of working-class youth, who are alienated from traditional masculine norms and mainstream opportunity. *Shopping* (Paul Anderson, 1994), *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996), *Twin Town* (Kevin Allen, 1997), and *Smalltime* (Shane Meadows, 1996) display young men in post-industrial surroundings depending on drugs and crime as forms of escape and survival. These representations deny the romanticism of the working-class hero and instead portray fragmented working-class masculinity caught between an absent past and an elusive future. In contrast to the first two groups, feel-good narratives of the mid-to-late 1990s pursued symbolic resolution to male unemployment and loss of dignity. *Brassed Off* (Mark Herman, 1996) and *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1997) both employ the emotional trauma of industrial ruin, but cover it with comedy. In *The Full Monty*, a group of unemployed steelworkers endeavours to reconstruct their devastated masculinity through male stripping, using humour to explore themes of emasculation, fatherhood, and collective struggle. Likewise, *Brassed Off* applauds the cultural traditions of a Northern mining town through its brass band, casting the men as victims of deindustrialisation. *Little Voice* (Mark Herman, 1998) underscores the emotional imperfections of working-class life; male authority figures are incapable or exploitative, challenged by female strength. *Billy Elliot* (Stephen Daldry, 2000) portrays a boy rejecting traditional gender roles through ballet; masculinity is reshaped through performance, sentiment, and aspiration.

A further group of films centres on masculinity in crisis within the domestic sphere, relocating male vulnerability from the public sphere to the private. In *Nil by Mouth* (Gary Oldman, 1997), the domestic setting becomes a site of violence and despair. *Naked* (Mike Leigh, 1993) explores existential male anger and alienation in a world devoid of collective or economic purpose. Films such as *TwentyFourSeven* (Shane Meadows, 1997) illustrate efforts to reclaim male identity through mentorship and collective solidarity. These films indicate that

the collapse of masculine identity as the breadwinner has left men emotionally hollow, isolated, or self-destructive, depicting them as “powerless, domesticated or even castrated figures” (Seino, 2010, 11) in contrast to the traditional representation of masculinity of British working-class men, facing a severe identity crisis.

The socio-economic and cultural upheavals of the Thatcher era were pivotal in reshaping representations of masculinity in British cinema. Films from this period mirror the struggles of men wrestling with the loss of traditional male roles in a rapidly changing society. Drawing from the concerns of masculinity studies, many cinematic narratives centre on disoriented, confrontational, or emotionally suppressed male protagonists, demonstrating the deep anxieties generated by economic instability, unemployment, and shifting gender expectations. British cinema thus became a critical area for dealing with the crisis of masculinity in post-industrial Britain. In this context, R.W. Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity presents a crucial framework for comprehending the fragmentation of masculine identities during this period. Connell argues that masculinities are not fixed traits but are socially constructed (Connell, 2000, 18) and hierarchically organised, with hegemonic masculinity representing the culturally idealised form, typically white, heterosexual, economically robust, and emotionally restrained (Kimmel, 1993, 3-4). As this dominant model became increasingly unattainable for working-class men facing post-industrial decline, many found themselves relegated to subordinate or complicit positions within the gender order. Drawing on Connell’s framework, this article discusses *The Full Monty* as a cinematic response to the collapse of traditional working-class masculinity. By situating the narrative within the realities of deindustrialised Sheffield, the film provides a lens through which these changing masculinities can be critically analysed. In this respect, this article also explores how the film navigates male identity in a moment of economic and social crisis.

The Representation of Working-class Masculinity in *The Full Monty*

Set in the post-industrial city of Sheffield, *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1997) portrays the story of six unemployed steelworkers who struggle to reclaim their demolished dignity and wounded masculinities by forming an amateur male striptease show in the wake of deindustrialisation and mass unemployment. Once employed in the prosperous steel industry, these jobless, disillusioned men struggling with familial and personal crises experience the collapse of their traditional roles as breadwinners. Following their attempt to reclaim agency in the aftermath of industrial collapse, the film explores themes of working-class disempowerment

and the crisis of masculinity, all framed within the humour and vulnerability of a community desiring to redefine itself in the ruins of Thatcher-era Britain. The six leading male figures in the film, Gaz (Robert Carlyle) who is divorced and has a son, Nathan (Wim Snape); married Dave (Mark Addy); and a middle-aged former foreman Gerald (Tom Wilkinson); Lomper (Steve Huison) and Guy (Hugo Speer) who are both gay; and a black man Horse (Paul Barber); each men's experience of masculinity crisis is shaped by their circumstances, social identities, and economic displacement. The crisis of masculinity leads to "the infantilization of unemployed males and sexual impotence" (Bromley, 2000, 64), which is evident in scenes of aimless male figures lingering in public parks, detached from both work and purpose. The responses to masculine crisis are equally diverse: Lomper ponders suicide, Dave struggles with body image and sexual impotence, Gerald adheres to the façade of employment to preserve his status, and Gaz, having lost authority as both worker and father, is paradoxically parented by his son, Nathan. These intersecting narratives highlight the emotional and social fragmentation endured by working-class men in post-industrial Britain.

The film opens in an empty steel factory where Gaz and Dave attempt to steal an old rusty girder from the site where they have worked for ten years. As a father, Gaz brings his son Nathan to the factory, telling him the best ways to steal and casually instructing him how to avoid punishment: "*You don't get a criminal record till you're sixteen*". This scene immediately casts doubt on Gaz's capacity to fulfil traditional fatherhood roles, presenting him as an unconventional and inadequate father figure. His masculine crisis is closely tied to this failure: unable to provide economically, he also struggles to embody the hegemonic masculine ideal of the responsible, protective breadwinner. Unable to pay seven hundred pounds for maintenance for his son and frequently behaving less responsibly than his son, Gaz fails to embody the authoritative and stable figure traditionally associated with fatherhood. In contrast, Nathan often assumes a more adult role, offering emotional support and functioning as his father's moral compass. In this respect, the masculine crisis is partly based on the traditional expectancies of fathering and failure in performing the hegemonic masculine ideal of a protective breadwinner father. This is further emphasised through the contrast with Gaz's ex-wife Mandy's (Emily Woof) new husband, "lives in a comfortable home, appears steady and confident, and engages in the kind of entrepreneurial performativity that Gaz and his friends never persuasively achieve" (Howard, 1999, 29). Thus, Gaz's masculine crisis is not only economic but deeply relational, grounded in his inability to conform to normative expectations of fatherhood and male authority.

In *The Full Monty*, the setting of post-industrial Sheffield, characterised by abandoned factories, working men's clubs, job centres and economically desolate public spaces, functions as a crucial arena for the performance of masculinity. In the light of R.W. Connell's framework, *The Full Monty* displays how masculinities are socially constructed practices shaped by specific historical, cultural, and economic forces, not biologically inherent. In this respect, the male-dominated environments in the film visually and symbolically emphasise the decline of hegemonic masculinity. Once the deserted factories have established their working-class masculinities, the job centre emasculates them now; nevertheless, the working men's club reconstruct their wounded masculinities. *The Full Monty* opens with a promotional 1970s film picturing Sheffield as a prosperous industrial city, "*a city on the move*", emphasising steel production, male employment, and leisure. This idealised image of working-class prosperity is unexpectedly damaged as the scene cuts to a present-day image of a quiet, decaying steel factory, where Gaz and Dave steal a steel girder from the ruins of their former workplace. The contrast is stark: the dynamic masculinity once constructed on labour and collectivity has been replaced by monotony and social dislocation. The empty factory becomes a site for audition and rehearsal space for the striptease group, Hot Metal. The brass band, still marching outside, rehearsing among this decay, offers a haunting nostalgia of their glorious past as Susan J. Smith notes, brass bands have been seen as "one of the most remarkable working-class cultural achievements in European history" (1997, 513), and here, their survival amid the ruins offers both a poignant comment on decline and a symbol of perseverance.

The working men's club in *The Full Monty* is a symbolic battlefield for the construction, decline, and eventual redefinition of working-class masculinity. Once a space of male companionship, the club is shown as overtaken by women watching a Chippendales striptease performance. This reversal of gendered setting provokes a deep sense of emasculation among the male characters, especially Gaz, who responds with alarm after witnessing a woman urinating standing up in the men's toilet, as a "symbolic appropriation of phallic power" (Hill, 2000, 184). The men's remarks at the job centre, "*When women start pissing like us, that's it—we're finished then. Extincto*", "*Genetic mutations, isn't it? They're turning into us*", "*A few years and men won't exist—except in zoos or summat. We're obsolete, dinosaurs, last year's news*", emphasise the masculine anxiety generated by the possibility of losing gendered territory and authority. Women's empowerment in the public sphere has altered the conventional perceptions of masculinity, and the female characters occupy nearly all the male spaces in the film, working men's clubs, factories, and streets. In this sense, the men's removal from the

steel factory and the working men's club illustrates their exclusion from traditional places of masculine identity. The working men's club, formerly a site of male solidarity, becomes the stage for a radical reconfiguration of masculinity. Here, the men attempt to reclaim agency through performance, not production, re-establishing their damaged masculine identities through vulnerability, humour, and collective action with their final performance.

The job centre in *The Full Monty* symbolises masculine disempowerment. Once defined by their influential roles in the steel factory, the men now find themselves in this job centre, deprived of economic purpose and masculine pride. For Gaz and Dave, hours spent at the job centre highlight their banishment from productive labour. On the other hand, the employment of Dave's wife and Gaz's ex-wife reverses the traditional gender roles, significantly in the public sphere. This reversal deepens the crisis of masculinity in the film by symbolically castrating their masculine identity. Gaz, thus, refuses to work for "*Two pound fifty an hour in the black hole of fuckin' Calcutta? No, thank you*", as a packer under his ex-wife's authority in the same workplace. Gaz attempts to preserve his dignity as an experienced and skilled former steelworker. This determination is evident in Gaz's remark to Dave, who is employed as a security guard in his wife's workplace, insisting, "*You're worth more than that*". When Gaz and Dave find out that Lomper has attempted suicide, they learn that Lomper works as a night guard in one of Sheffield's abandoned factories. The bleakness of his surroundings provokes Dave to state, "*No wonder he wants to kill himself*", a darkly humorous line that emphasises the despair and purposelessness shared by men left behind by deindustrialisation. "The collapse of the industrial economy forced a physical relocation of men from the (oftentimes male-dominated) workplace to the domestic (and thus feminised) space of the home. But, more significantly, it also enforced a subjective relocation from breadwinner to financial dependent, reliant on spouse, children or state for sustenance and support" (Godfrey, 2022, 31). Gerald also maintains the illusion of employment by suiting up every morning, leaving the house, and telling his wife that he will work. His wife prepares a meal for him to take with him. Gerald lacks the courage to tell the truth to his wife since he is still confined to the breadwinner role of the traditional family institution. As Hallam notes, what unites these men is "their masculine gender and a shared sense of powerlessness" (2001, 266). The job centre, then, is not merely a location of economic passivity but a gendered site of embarrassment, where traditional working-class masculinity is not only affected by obsolescence but painfully visible in its decline. The struggles in the personal relationships faced by the male characters in the film are closely connected to their unemployment. Gaz and Mandy's implied battle over Nathan's

custody, Gerald's obscuring of his job loss from his wife, and Dave's feeling of inadequacy within his marriage all originate in the more comprehensive destabilising effects of unemployment on masculine identity and domestic relationships. "The emancipated, empowered and independent woman, against whom the embattled, disempowered and dependent man is set" (Godfrey, 2022, 54) in *The Full Monty*. "The loss of work also deprives men of a public, homosocial space, feminising them and turning their interests towards their bodies" (Luckett, 2000, 95).

In *The Full Monty*, the crisis of working-class masculinity is articulated in post-Thatcher Britain through the male body. The film demonstrates ageing, unemployed men whose bodies, once secured with industrial labour and physical authority, now represent redundancy and vulnerability. This is evident in scenes where Dave wraps himself in cling film out of shame over his weight. Likewise, Lomper anxiously pinches his drooping chest, and Horse calls from a payphone for a penis enlargement, which is an ironic contrast to the hypersexual Black male stereotype cast onto him. Gerald, terrified of being mocked onstage with an unexpected and sudden erection, voices the group's collective anxiety: "*He's fat, he's thin, and he's a pigeon-chested little tosser*". The insecurity in their bodies occurs again in Gerald's house as the men tan on a sunbed, read *Cosmopolitan*, and train with an exercise bike, parodying exaggerated beauty rituals that humorously invert conventional gender roles. In the light of Connell's "bodily sense of masculinity" (1995, 55), the film demonstrates how unemployment undermines the performances that sustain male identity. Yet through the striptease show at the film's end, the men reclaim their bodies as an instrument of humour. Despite the title's implication of "the full monty", the final freeze scene avoids full-frontal nudity, keeping dignity while transforming the public stage into a space of collective re-masculinisation, on their terms, not through domination, but through exposure, vulnerability, and solidarity (Monk, 2000, 184). In *The Full Monty*, male anxiety around sexual performance is a recurring theme, manifested through humorous moments of concern about penis size, erection control, and timing, whether it is perceived as too small or too large, erects unpredictably, or fails to perform at all. This anxiety mirrors not only individual insecurity but also a broader cultural obsession with the penis as a defining feature of masculinity. As Ken Plummer notes, "Men's sexuality so frequently seems to come to focus on the penis (physical) and the phallus (symbolic)" (2005, 179). This duality strengthens the male characters' anxieties, as their physical bodies fail to live up to the symbolic expectations connected to male sexual performance and control. Despite their physical insecurities and social marginalisation, they reclaim the public space of the

working men's club and assert a new kind of masculine presence in the symbolic last scene. Dave captures this transformation when he tells the audience, "*We may not be pretty, we may not be right good. But we're here*", as a statement that proves physical presence and social and personal visibility. Their collective presence on stage reassures their masculine identity. Dave is cheered on and adored by his wife Jean, breaking through the emotional distance caused by his earlier insecurities. Gaz earns his son's and ex-wife's approval, relieving the former image of the unreliable father and reclaiming his role as a father-husband within the family. Guy and Lomper start a relationship which is often marginalised in working-class narratives, in contrast to the traditional heteronormative form of masculinity. Despite physical limitations resulting from his age, Horse contests stereotypes of ageing and impotence. Although he has lost his authority, Gerald reclaims his role as a leader by guiding the group to a successful performance. Their striptease performance metaphorically strips away the reversed roles in a post-industrial world to reclaim their well-deserved masculine identities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Full Monty* is a culturally vibrant response to the economic upheaval and social fragmentation caused by Thatcher-era policies, particularly its dismantling of traditional industries and the masculine identities bound to them. As discussed in the introduction, the Thatcher era restructured Britain's economic landscape. It profoundly reshaped its cultural output, especially in cinema, where narratives of working-class life became increasingly central to conveying discontent, displacement, and resistance. Within this context, *The Full Monty* challenges conventional portrayals of the working-class man, not through physical labour or economic productivity, but through masculine crisis, vulnerability, and collective reinvention. Through its minute portrayal of male characters wrestling with unemployment, bodily insecurity, and shifting gender expectations, *The Full Monty* questions dominant ideals of masculinity while reclaiming a sense of dignity and solidarity. Giving the striptease show as the only possible way to overcome financial hardships and consequent masculinity crisis of masculinity, the film "can be viewed more as black humour, taking sarcasm as silent political attack and striptease as cultural resistance toward the ruling class, suggesting the missing of any hope for more sensible and dignified solutions" (Shi, 2011, 273). As such, it exemplifies how post-industrial British cinema negotiates the crisis of working-class masculinity and reframes it within a framework of resilience, humour, and transformation.

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