"Hey, Look Me Over"

"Hey, Look Me Over":

(Re)Visioning and (Re)Producing

Contemporary Masculinities

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2003) MCMASTER UNIVERSITY
(English) Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: "Hey, Look Me Over". (Re)Visioning and (Re)Producing Contemporary Masculinities

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NUMBER OF PAGES: viii, 351

Abstract

The situation of male subjectivity in North America has become problematic and this is

reflected in current popular culture The ways of looking at men have changed, and with them, the

ways of becoming and being a man. Since its appearance, the cover of the June 1978 edition of

Hustler magazine, which depicts a woman in a meat grinder up to her torso, has been regarded by

many as the worst example of the patriarchal view of women, both literally and metaphorically It

is a sign of our times, then, that this image was echoed in a recent Toronto Star montage of a man

being melted in a pot of wax up to his torso (15 June 2000, J1). These visceral images frame a

period of significant debate and political negotiation over gender roles and the second calls our

attention to major shifts in how masculinity is seen The image of masculine diminishment makes

us ask—since masculinity may be in decline, but the actual numbers of men are not—how men

learn how to be men.

The diminishment of masculinity has not come without significant costs. Pulitzer Prize-

winner Susan Faludi's books, Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women (1991)

and Stiffed. The Betrayal of the American Man (1999) attempt to detail these costs In her

research, Faludi finds that in an age in which corporations are constantly downsizing and out-

sourcing in order to increase profits, men can no longer look to these traditionally patriarchal

institutions for paternal acceptance and confirmation of masculine success The image of the boss

or company as a fatherly provider has been replaced by the pink slip. Indeed, "there is no passage

to manhood in such a world" (Stiffed 39). Yet, men are told that they are the masters of their

world — by the men's movement, by advertisers, by the media. It is important, then, to produce

increasingly sophisticated work that elucidates recent shifts in male subjectivities, through a

discourse that is conversant with feminist theory since the ultimate goal is the same the elimination of the patriarchal enforcement of rigidly defined gender roles Without such work, the backlash against women and the betrayal of men that Faludi documents will be perpetuated and a void between males and females will continue to widen Moreover, victimized or oppressed persons will be trapped between competing discourses.

Given the shifting ways in which men are represented in popular media, my dissertation will examine three general areas: 1) how shifts in the location of masculine endeavours are conveyed by shifts in media genres, 2) how the roles of spectators or participants in certain new media actually reshape gender roles and relationships, and 3) how exclusions of men from certain roles in popular media circumscribes potential points of coalition between profeminist activism and masculinity studies. In the first area, I examine the lone hero fighting an oppressive state system, a type Paul Smith finds in 1970s westerns (Clint Eastwood, 1993) and William Warner finds in 1980s action films (*Rambo*, 1992). As an example, this figure now fights a corporate power, or even his boss, in professional wrestling storylines. Similarly, the father-son narrative that Susan Jeffords traces in action films from the 1980s (The Remasculinization of America, 1989) and which she claims had disappeared by the early 1990s (Hard Bodies, 1994), has in fact been taken up by the sports film genre, but now it is the father-figure rather than the son who is searching for redemption. The second section considers shifts in masculine identification such as the cross-gender identification Carol Clover suggests is possible in horror films (Men, Women, & Chainsaws, 1992). This can now occur for players of virtual reality video games typified by *Tomb Raider* and *Dino Crisis*. These feature female protagonists in traditionally male roles. Female wrestlers such as Chyna and the recent film, *Girl Fight*, provide similar opportunities for cross-

gender identification in the earlier cited genres. As well, Laura Mulvey's critique of the "male

gaze," a critical commonplace for over twenty years, cannot account for the viewing of these

productions ("Visual Pleasure," 1978). In the words of Robert Connell, these media once

portrayed "competition and hierarchy among men, exclusion or domination of woman [producing]

social relations of gender both realized and symbolized in bodily performances" (Masculinities,

1995 54). Now men's bodies are objects of the gaze and of domination, nurturing supersedes

violence, and instead of excluding women, men are encouraged to identify with them. The final

area considers one of Faludi's conclusions, that being a man is less about dominating than about

not being dominated, in terms of the media treatment of men who have been victimized. The TV

movies depicting former NHL player, Sheldon Kennedy, who was abused by his coach, provide

excellent examples of how men are silenced by a society that refuses to accept that men can be

victims. This chapter is a fitting end to the work since it combines previous discussions of body

image, gender stability, and gender performance in a pressing area of commonality between

feminism and masculinity while providing a discursive link between the two.

Acknowledgments

Like the paradox I present in the title of my dissertation and return to many times throughout its hopefully intelligible course, the project of writing and studying is both a state of being and a process of becoming. Since my field of research is contemporary popular culture, my material is always at hand. Everything I see and experience is a potential source. And so, I owe a debt of thanks to the many unconscious contributors. Foremost among these are the staff and especially the students of St. Joseph and St. Francis Xavier schools in Mississauga, Ontario. Watching you negotiate your own states of being and processes of becoming taught me much and pointed me to the latest fads and flops. My hope is that you manage to be "independent together."

Supervising a dissertation is another shifting balancing act. I was blessed with a triumvirate of different approaches, disciplines, experiences and personalities: Dr. Daniel Coleman is the supervisor of a popular culture thesis and yet he avoids it; Dr. Anne Savage is the medievalist who embraces technology and new media; Dr. Philip White is the Sports Sociologist from Kinesiology who welcomed a dissertation in English. Thank you all for knowing when to get up in my grill and rattle my dome and when to let me go about my business. Thank you for picking your spots. Thank you most of all for coming strong and correct when I was really gripping it. Props.

Perhaps most valuable and yet most unseen is the support of those closest to me. The greatest thanks go to my parents and to Michelle. Representing forever and three days — er, a long weekend.

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Introduction

And therfore at the kynges court, my brother,
Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother

Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale," <u>Canterbury Tales</u> (323-4)

Not Another Book About Men

Although its primary focus is masculinities, this dissertation does not attempt to answer

questions of biological or social versions of an "ideal" masculinity, nor is it interested in settling

disputes regarding sex or gender differences and roles. More than enough of this ground has been

covered and re-covered in what sociologist Robert Connell simply calls "Books About Men" (ix).

Connell quite rightly observes that in academic circles there is some deserved

> consternation at the claims [in popular books on masculinity] that
> have captured media attention. For the most popular books about
> men are packed with muddled thinking which either ignores or
> distorts the results of the growing research on the issues. The burst
> of publicity has brought back obsolete ideas about natural
> difference and true masculinity. It has also provided cover for a
> neo-conservative campaign to roll back the rather limited advances
> against discrimination made by women and gay men in the last two
> decades. (ix)

Like Connell, I am wary of quick and easy answers which tend to belie the elusiveness of defining

the terms, "masculine" and "feminine": and I join him in suspecting that this elusiveness derives

from "the character of gender itself, historically changing and politically fraught. Everyday life is

an area of gender politics, not an escape from it" (3). Indeed, by examining representations of

masculinities in several popular cultural forms of everyday life — advertising, sports, film,

professional wrestling, video games, and other texts — I hope that this project raises as many

questions as it answers regarding the stability of masculinity in North America since the Reagan

era.

As a corollary goal, I hope to find areas of convergence with feminist thought, especially in areas in which men, too, are exploited and/or victimized. This may prove difficult, for in contemporary North America at least, "what are generally assumed to be male interests and identities (which vary significantly from the actual interests and identities of particular men) contribute to the widespread perception that the relationship between feminism and men is necessarily antagonistic. Men are expected to resist feminism and feminists are often assumed to hate men (Digby 2). Nevertheless, feminism provides thorough knowledge of the structures of (male) power and privilege The presumed

> oppositionality between men and feminism is rooted in the gender
> binary that is typical of patriarchal cultures, according to which
> every (or almost every) human being is rigorously confined within
> one of two mutually exclusive categories, man or woman. While in
> contemporary North America this gender binary is beginning to
> crumble around the edges of popular culture [. . .] it is unavoidably
> the case that to the extent a culture is patriarchal, it must strive to
> maintain the integrity and oppositionality of the gender binary.
> (Digby 2)

What is often overlooked is feminism's dependence on the critique of (perceived) patriarchal structures for its existence. This is a significant proviso given that "any diminution of the oppositionality of the gender binary undermines dominance, and any loosening of the binary undercuts gender oppositionality" (Digby 2). Articulating areas in popular culture which undermine gender oppositionality, and thereby threaten binary constructions, is the primary goal of this project. These areas, and the extent to which oppositionalities are challenged in them, are central to understanding how the task of ending oppositionality is being accomplished rather than illustrating why it should be done

It is important to note that two commonly used terms will not be defined in the course of the studies which follow. In fact, the words "masculinity" and "patriarchy" will be avoided as much as possible, in the general sense of both words In their Introduction to <u>Constructing Masculinity</u>, Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson observe that "Masculinity, the asymmetrical pendant to the more critically investigated femininity, is a vexed term, variously inflected, multiply defined, not limited to straightforward descriptions of maleness" (2) Based on their experience in organizing a conference and editing a volume on the subject, the trio conclude, "When masculinity has been subjected to the critical gaze of [academic] practices, it has inevitably been reinscribed as a complex and discursive category that cannot be seen as independent from that of other productive components of identity" (2). Although they acknowledge that masculinity is difficult to define since it is shaped by more influences than the mere state of being male, Berger, Wallis, and Watson note that there is a preferred state within the dominant culture This should be distinguished from an ideal or essential state. They explain:

> Within the ideological structure of patriarchal culture, heterosexual
> masculinity has traditionally been structured as the normative
> gender. Rather than simply seeking to overthrow this standard or
> focusing on the social determinants of sexual difference, many
> feminists have challenged the fixity of all subject positions. This
> approach has emphasized the multiplicity of identity, the ways in
> which gender is articulated through a variety of positions,
> languages, institutions, and apparatuses. (2)

In other words, while one subject position — heterosexual masculinity — is considered the norm, and often has an accompanying privileged status, it is not necessarily the only position. It may not even be the ideal position, and increasingly this diminished status is proving to be the case

Moreover, there may be multiple positions within this categorization Cognizant of this

fact, Berger, Wallis, and Watson observe that in their collection, "Masculinity is realized here not as a monolithic entity, but as an interplay of emotional and intellectual factors — an interplay that directly implicates women as well as men, and is mediated by other social factors, including race, sexuality, nationality, and class" (3). More than just being male and heterosexual, masculinity is dependent upon social structures (of power) for its composition. Indeed,

> Far from being just about men, the idea of masculinity engages,
> inflects, and shapes everyone. [. .] any examination of these
> relations of power — and any hope for the social repositioning of
> the masculine — must include a nuanced examination of the
> emotional, spiritual, intellectual, economic relationships of men to
> the rest of society as well as a radical speculation on just what form
> these refigured masculinities, cognizant of the reality of social
> difference, might take. (7)

Considering the fixity of gender and its determinants, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick takes the position further. She cautions scholars against "an inquiry [that] begins with the presupposition that everything pertaining to men can be classified as masculinity, and that everything that can be said about masculinity pertains in the first place to men" (12). A far more outspoken view comes from Abigail Solomon-Godeau. In contrast to the views stated by Berger, Wallis, and Watson, Solomon-Godeau considers "the term 'masculinity' as a more or less symmetrical pendant to the concept of femininity developed within feminist theory. In other words, masculinity, like femininity, is a concept that bears only an adventitious relation to biological sex and whose various manifestations collectively constitute the cultural, social, and psychosexual expression of gender" (71). Solomon-Godeau nearly completely dismisses any connection between biology and gender. In fact, these are coincidental in her view.

What is not left to chance is the impact of alterations in masculinity Responding to so-

called "soft masculinities," in which men are sexual objects or nurturing caregivers, Solomon-Godeau reacts with trepidation bordering on resentment.

> my argument is meant as a cautionary reminder that the articulation of soft masculinities, like the related appearance of a men's movement concerned to excavate male fears, anxieties, and desires, or a discourse on gay male sexualities that celebrates the relinquishment of mastery and control, or the theoretical revision of male masochism, need not necessarily have much to do with the relinquishment of the privileges of patriarchy, and certainly need not have anything to do with female emancipation, empowerment, or liberation. (76)

This could be taken as a "What's in it for me approach" to criticism and it is not an uncommon one. It also hints at homophobia based on the belief that male homosexuality is the ultimate exclusion of women. The final roundtable of the "Unmasking Masculinities Conference" at the University of Southern Mississippi, in 2000, took as one of its themes the ways in which the advances made by feminism might be used by men, (not for, but) against feminism. It was generally agreed that the final prepositional phrase is redundant. The assumption was that all men's uses of feminism are antithetical to its interests. These are by no means exceptional statements. For example, while purporting to have shifted from feminist to gender studies, Elaine Showalter warns in the Introduction to Speaking of Gender that male critics might "appropriate, penetrate, or exploit feminist discourse for professional advantage" (7). Tania Modleski echoes these concerns, fearing that Gender Studies "might yet prove to be the phase out of feminist studies" and asks pointedly, if not selfishly, "what's in these new developments *for feminism* and for women?" (5).[1] Any advance made by men is *de facto* to the detriment of feminism, according to the majority view at the round-table and in these scholarly works. Child custody fights in cases of divorce, in which the care of the female parent is shown to be culturally constructed rather than

biologically based, were cited as the most important example

Yet, the expansion of masculine and feminine "roles" to include non-traditional forms has

been one of the goals and accomplishments of feminism. There is a general fear that if men

assume more roles then it may come at the cost of the exclusion of females, but this assumes the

automatic oppositionality between genders cited above. Solomon-Godeau cites the artistic works

of postrevolutionary France as emblematic of a society in which this occurred·

> through a narrative role reversal, the masculine may be repositioned
> so as to occupy the conventional place of the feminine. [. . .] these
> narratives and morphologies of idealized masculinity suggest a
> colonization of femininity, so that what has been rendered
> peripheral and marginal in the social and cultural realm, or actively
> devalued, is effectively incorporated within the compass of
> masculinity. [. . .] the feminized masculinities of postrevolutionary
> culture represent the ultimate flight from sexual difference and are,
> if anything, the logical extension of the "real" historical event of
> women's expulsion from the public sphere. (73)

But what is really happening in Solomon-Godeau's analysis? Despite her earlier remarks about the

social construction of gender, she throws them out in the subsequent look at what happened when

men occupied "feminine" roles, for "within the compass of masculinity" really means "occupied by

men " This is based on a faulty assumption. True, there is always a danger that any radical

practice, once institutionalized, will lose its insurgent effectiveness. This is a reasonable and

constant worry for Queer, Afro-American and Women's Studies. However, Solomon-Godeau

assumes that "men" equals "masculinity" equals "patriarchy" in her formulation. This formula

becomes obvious in her concluding remarks

> It is all very well and good for male scholars and theorists to
> problematize their penises, or their relations to them, but is this so
> very different from a postmodern mal de siècle in which, once
> again, it is male subjectivity that becomes the privileged term? [. .]

> feminists and men who support feminism should be careful to
> distinguish a shared emancipatory project from intellectual
> masturbation. More disturbingly, the very appeal of approaching
> masculinity as a newly discovered discursive object may have less
> to do with the "ruination" of certain masculinities in their
> oppressive and subordinating instrumentalities than with a new
> accommodation of their terms — an expanded field for their
> deployment — in which the fundamentals do not change. (76)

Very clearly, Solomon-Godeau equates penis with phallus and masculinity with maleness and all

of these with oppression.[2] While she reacts with vehemence, Solomon-Godeau does express a

valid concern

For some, the history of scholarship is nothing but masculinity studies since so much of

life was structured around the male of the species. But, this returns Solomon-Godeau to her own

point regarding masculinity's relationship of pure chance — "heads-or-tails" — with biology; that

is, with problematic penises. Nevertheless, the developments that cause Solomon-Godeau so

much worry should "caution us against assuming that the expression of nonphallic masculinities

constitutes any particular quarrel with patriarchal law and order. Nor, for that matter, does it

particularly subvert it" (73). Again, Modleski puts it bluntly: "men ultimately deal with female

power by incorporating it" (7). The only way to assuage Solomon-Godeau, Modleski and those

who share their fears is to heed the advice of Berger, Wallis, and Watson: "men must do more

that (sic) admit their complicity in patriarchy; they must begin to rethink the very boundaries that

shape and define what it means to be a man" (7).

Connell suggests that the varying and often contradictory forms of knowledge about

gender imply the presence of similarly varying and contradictory social practices regarding

gender. In order to be (more) complete, the study of masculinity at both the quotidian and

scientific levels must consider the practical as well as the theoretical.

> For instance, common-sense knowledge of gender is by no means
> fixed. It is, rather, the rationale of the changing practices through
> which gender is 'done' or accomplished' in everyday life —
> practices revealed in elegant research by ethnomethodologists. [. . .]
> The knowledge offered by constructionists from the oppositional
> politics of feminism and gay liberation, and from the techniques of
> academic social research. (6)

In effect, Connell calls for a much more nuanced view than the visceral one espoused above.

Well-known pro-porn feminist Varda Burstyn expresses a similar view:

> By the mid-1980s [. . .] I felt a profound dissatisfaction with the
> unifocal emphasis [of feminism] on women and femininity [. . .] It
> seemed to me that we needed an understanding of the construction
> of men and masculinity equally [as] sophisticated as the one we had
> developed of women and femininity. This was critical if we were to
> understand the whole ecology of gender, and the problems in
> heterosocial relations that so many feminist struggles were
> highlighting (5)

As part of the effort to develop a more sophisticated approach to the study of men and

masculinity, and to help avoid reductive binary oppositions, the term "patriarchy" has become the

second of the problematic euphemisms cited above. It is, perhaps, the most overused and under-

defined term in gender studies. Yet, its formidable presence is nearly always assumed

It is, in part, its "taken-for-grantedness" that renders "patriarchy" an ineffectual term.

Moreover, it has come to be used as a collective noun, referring to the reproduction, and

therefore maintenance, of universal masculine privilege For example, Thomas E. Wartenberg

begins his discussion of "Teaching Women Philosophy (as a Feminist Man)" with the assumption

that "our society and those from which it developed are characterized by patterns of male

dominations" (132) However, he avoids the question of how to define or describe the assumption

on which his entire argument is based Wartenberg admits, "Although the question, 'What

constitutes male domination?' requires a good deal of analysis, for the purposes of this paper, I

shall simply assume the fact of male domination as a general background for my discussion"

(132) For the purposes of many papers — *e.g.*, those of Solomon-Godeau and Modleski —

gender relations are reduced to a binary of patriarchy *vs.* women.

This easy answer is increasingly less satisfying. When considering the available methods of

analyzing pictures of muscular, yet erotically posed men in advertisements, Sean Nixon finds the

concept of patriarchy to be ineffectual:

> One central problem concerns the way in which [the term
> patriarchy] advances a universal model of the power relations
> between the genders — one that is weak on the historical specificity
> of the categories of gender and variations in the relations between
> them in different periods. In particular, the concept of patriarchy is
> weak at explaining the relations of power between different
> masculinities. I think that an adequate account of the field of gender
> relations, in addition to analysing the relations between masculinity
> and femininity, also needs to explore the relations of domination
> and subordination operating between different formations of
> masculinity. (300)

Wartenberg does not seem to know that the type of work he call for has been done by Connell.

Simply put, the patriarchy model assumes too much Men derive various amounts of what Connell

calls a "patriarchal dividend," a windfall, if you will, by virtue of fortuitous (male) birth according

to this model (41). Even Thomas Wartenberg allows that there are limitations to the approach

because there are obvious omissions inherent to it. Disarming potential criticisms on these

grounds, Wartenberg admits, "the topic of this paper is paralleled by questions of what difference

it makes [to] members of other minority or dominated groups" (132). The assumption is that they

are "feminized" because to be dominated means to be feminized in the general usage and the same

goes for "oppressed." Yet the common complaint is that the male view traditionally has been *the* view Therefore, the female view is the *other* view, since there must be two views to satisfy what is really a good *vs* evil binary

It is also too easy to criticize approaches built around the assumption of patriarchy as well as the benefit of fortuitous birth by pointing out the absent nuances of class, ethnicity, wealth, education, *etc.*[3] In fact, as will be demonstrated in succeeding chapters, it is just as easy as equating "oppressed," or "looked at," with "feminized." It is necessary, as Nixon explains, to advance more specific approaches.

> Rather than mobilize the concept of patriarchy, then, I want to
> suggest that we need to move away from a picture of the field of
> gender relations as always divided in the same way around the poles
> of masculine domination and feminine subordination. Rather, a
> more plural model of power relations is needed — one which
> grasps the multiple lines of power which position different
> masculinities and femininities in relation to each other at different
> times. (300)

Moving beyond what have become criticisms of convenience allows scholars to investigate the subtle and often contradictory uses of power and definitions of gender. Rather than comprehensive approaches, it is important to recognize that "definitions of masculinity are deeply enmeshed in the history of institutions and of economic structures. Masculinity is not just an idea in the head, or a personal identity It is also extended in the world, merged in organized social relations To understand masculinity historically we must study changes in those social relations" (Connell 29). Such a viewpoint considers that "gender is not fixed in advance of social interaction, but is constructed in interaction, [which] is an important theme in the modern sociology of gender" (Connell 35). Thus, adapting a multi-faceted and interdisciplinary methodology to the

study of masculinities is not only recommended, but necessary, given the diversity entailed by the topic.

Lest we be satisfied with our acknowledgment of diversity, Connell admonishes us to the contrary. Taking a view similar to the one put forth by Sean Nixon, Connell writes: "To recognize diversity in masculinities is not enough. We must also recognize the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity. relations of alliance, dominance and subordination. These relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit, and so on. There is a gender politics within masculinity" (37). Neither is this level of inquiry sufficient, for it leads to further questions, which take the topic further away from a binary view of gender relations For example, Connell observes that "Once we recognize the institutional dimension of gender it is difficult to avoid the question: is it actually masculinity that is a problem in gender politics? Or is it rather the institutional arrangements that produce inequality, and thus generate the tensions that have brought 'masculinity' under scrutiny?" (42-3). Yet, there is a danger inherent in answering this question. Once again, easy answers lead back to gender binaries and what is effectively a game of blame-denial.

Lending credence to Modleski's anxiety, there is a growing number of so-called "masculists" who do use knowledge of the workings of institutionalized power against feminism Perhaps the best (or worst) spokesman is Warren Farrell.[4] Formerly a member of the Board of the National Organization for Women, Farrell is now an advocate for ending male powerlessness, which he blames on the feminist movement. In an argument reminiscent of a playground spat refrain of "Yeah, so," Farrell summarizes gender hierarchies, as he sees them:

> The professional woman — or a powerful woman — often has the

> most difficulty understanding male powerlessness Why? The
> powerful woman tends to connect with a powerful man. (The less
> powerful man — like the garbage man — is invisible to her.) [   ]
> The powerful woman is more likely to know the name of her
> secretary than of her garbage man [. . .] The powerful woman
> doesn't feel the effect of her secretary's miniskirt power, cleavage
> power, and flirtation power Men do. The powerful woman tends to
> use these forms of power much more cautiously in the workplace
> because she has other forms of power. Taken together, all of this
> blinds the professional woman to the powerlessness of the great
> majority of men — who are not at the tip of the pyramid but at its
> base. And without the sexual power of the females at its base. (21)

Farrell's polemic does not merit an analysis of its obvious misogyny in the name of improving

gender relations. What is unstated is that by professional women, he most certainly includes, and

probably means singularly, academics. It is a commonplace to dismiss the arguments of female

feminist academics on the basis that they are insulated, educated, and privileged so that they are

blind to any barrier other than gender. This is as facile an argument as suggesting that the only

barrier keeping me from playing in the NBA is height.

Stiffed, or "We hardly knew ya"?

Regardless of Farrell's misogyny, there are powerful women and there are powerless men.

There are also female academics who consider gender as the impediment to their (continued)

success. For example, in "The Worth of Women's Work," Nina Lee Colwill laments

> I remember the day it struck me, overwhelmed me. The work of
> women is less valued than the work of men. I suppose I'd always
> known it at an intellectual level, for I'd studied women and work
> for nearly half my life, but on the day I truly understood, with a
> logic beyond logic [. .] I wasn't collecting a pay cheque, or
> reading in the library, or consulting for some organization, I was in
> the *Reichsmuseum*, in Amsterdam, with my husband Dennis. (339-
> 40)

Colwill wept openly at the sight of unsigned needle works in a museum filled with the signed

works of masters such as Vermeer. To Colwill, the implication is obvious the needle works are unsigned because they are the works of women. They are less valuable as a result In a radio interview about the passage, Colwill adds "This had been my academic area all through undergraduate, graduate school, and my years as a professor and in my consulting career" (as qtd.). Not once does Colwill acknowledge the privilege in her life which allows her to go to Amsterdam and which separates her from the women who produced the needle works, not as art to be viewed by academics, but as necessary household items Nevertheless, Colwill claims a kinship with the women based only on the coincidence of birth and the *idea* of a shared economic position, yet their positions are hardly equal. How then to take both Farrell's and Colwill's viewpoints seriously without sounding like either? Walking such a fine line necessitates a vigilant approach which is willing to question itself. Connell suggests that

> To understand the current pattern of masculinities we need to look
> back over the period in which it came into being. Since masculinity
> exists only in the context of a whole structure of gender relations,
> we need to locate it in the formation of the modern gender order as
> a whole — a process that has taken about four centuries. The local
> histories of masculinity recently published provide essential detail,
> but we need an argument of broader scope as well. (185)

The reasons for changes in masculinity are many and complex, but Connell suggests three are central within the white European or North American tradition: "challenges to the gender order by women, the logic of the gendered accumulation process in industrial capitalism, and the power relations of empire" (191). Following his study of the history of masculinity, Connell concludes masculinities are not only shaped by the processes of the dominant culture, "they are active in that process and help to shape it. Popular culture tells us this without prompting" (185). As its contribution to the process Connell describes, this dissertation takes as its focus several popular

cultural "texts" of roughly the last twenty years. In so doing, it is mindful of one of Connell's

provisos

> Masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, which
> have meaning in relation to each other, as a social demarcation and
> a cultural opposition This holds regardless of the changing content
> of the demarcation in different societies and periods of history.
> Masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in-
> relation [. .] To put the point in another and perhaps clearer way,
> it is *gender relations* that constitute a coherent object of knowledge
> for science. Knowledge of masculinity arises within the project of
> knowing gender relations (44).

This is not to restate a binary opposition model of gender relations but to emphasize that nothing

is fixed. Rather gender relations — among men, among women, between men and women —

provide greater insight into masculinities. This work will confine itself, for the most part, to

relations among men and masculinities while remaining watchful for effects on women and

femininities In this regard it takes its cue from the work of Pulitzer Prize-Winner Susan Faludi,

one of North America's best-known feminists. Despite her continued feminism, Faludi is moved

to ask of the contemporary situation of masculinities: "If men are the masters of their fate, what

do they do about the unspoken sense that they are being mastered, in the marketplace and at

home, by forces that seem to be sweeping away the soil beneath their feet? If men are

mythologized as the ones who *make things happen*, then how can they begin to analyze what is

happening to them?" (Stiffed 13). Faludi's earlier work, Backlash: The Undeclared War Against

Women, details the institutionalized systemic sources of resistance to feminism and women's

advancement, but now she considers men as the subjects rather than the creators of their world

Examining men as being anything but in control and thinking of masculinities as meaning,

or deriving, from something other than control is a radical shift. This is true not just for feminists

like Faludi. It is also hard to conceive for men themselves. The mythologies surrounding "what it means to be a man" are various and many, but Michael Kimmel offers an excellent summary of the main myths of North American manhood

> (1) No Sissy stuff: Men can never do anything that even remotely suggests femininity. Manhood is a relentless repudiation of the feminine; (2) Be a Big Wheel: manhood is measured by power, wealth and success. Whoever has the most toys when he dies, wins; (3) Be a Sturdy Oak: manhood depends on emotional reserve. Dependability in a crisis requires that men not reveal their feelings; and (4) Give 'em Hell; exude an aura of manly daring and aggression. Go for it. Take risks. (9-10)

While some might argue that the qualities Kimmel attributes to the essential North American men are redeeming — strength, power, reliability, fearlessness — they can have truly ugly converses — misogynist, greedy, indifferent, arrogant. In short, "To be a man," says Faludi, means "being ever on the rise, and the only way to know for sure you were rising was to claim, control, and crush everyone and everything in your way" (<u>Stiffed</u> 11).

The myths of manhood perpetuate because of their relationship to the culture in which they occur. It is a process in which the culture shapes masculinities which in turn influence cultural production. This process ensures the reproduction of both. Faludi illustrates the cultural web in a richly allusive passage:

> The man controlling his environment is today the prevailing American image of masculinity. A man is expected to prove himself not by being part of society but by being untouched by it, soaring above it. He is to travel unfettered, beyond society's clutches, alone — making or breaking whatever or whoever crosses his path. He is to be in the driver's seat, the king of the road, forever charging down the open highway [. .] He's a man because he won't be stopped. He'll fight attempts to tamp him down; if he has to, he'll use his gun. It seems to us as if it has always been thus, ever since the first white frontiersman (<u>Stiffed</u> 10)

The construction and the conformity entailed by masculinities are part of a cultural web Faludi invokes nearly every (North) American myth and symbol to expose their association (and *vice-versa*) with masculinities She refers to "soaring above" society, ever vigilant, just like the bald eagle, the American national symbol which is notable for its ubiquity. It appears on items such as the Presidential Seal, currency, stamps, and on the uniform of comic book heroine, Wonder Woman. There are several ironies related to this symbol, not the least of which is the bird's actual behaviour: it is as much a thief and scavenger as it is a soaring and solitary hunter. Faludi also associates myths of the "old west" and the frontier. She goes into detail regarding the unsavoury characters of the real Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett to expose the related apocrypha. But Faludi's attention to masculine mythologies includes those not associated with nature. None of the industrial myths — that is, wholly constructed — is more important than those involving the automobile. Learning to drive is a rite of manhood and owning a car is a measure of the same; at least that is how the story goes. As before, there is a sinister side involving violence, conquest, and divine right. We know that women are often the victims of the latter qualities, but Faludi finds herself surprised that there has been little attention paid to men who do not fit the model and/or have suffered as a result

Faludi's study in Stiffed leads to two important areas for further investigation which will be discussed later in the Introduction and at length throughout this dissertation But, arriving at these points of departure involves a further visit to the perceived opposition between feminism(s) and masculinity. Herein lies an important, and perhaps irreconcilable paradox: the debt any study of masculinities owes to feminism. Faludi seems cognizant of the debt, but often attempts to restate her thesis from Backlash, that there is an unjustified backlash against feminism and that the

men who do not conform and/or who are victimized take out their resultant anger on feminism

(and women):

> [Men] would rather see themselves as battered by feminism than
> shaped by the larger culture. Feminism can be demonized as just an
> "unnatural" force trying to wrest men's natural power and control
> from their grasp. Culture, by contrast, is the whole environment we
> live in [. . .] To say that men are embedded in the culture is to say,
> by the current standards of masculinity, that they are not men. By
> casting feminism as the villain that must be defeated to validate the
> central conceit of modern manhood, men avoid confronting
> powerful cultural and social expectations (Stiffed 14)

Yet feminism does have a role in destabilizing masculinities, as Connell mentions (and which was

cited earlier) Indeed, this is one of its aims. One important feminist, Laura Mulvey, observes that

"the demands of feminism also prefigure the changes brought about by the malign chaos of free-

market forces and a social structure in decay; women participate more in the labour force, the

nuclear family structure is under strain and sex roles become more flexible" (xiv). Mulvey is one

of the most outspoken critics of (so-called) patriarchal culture and has gone as far as being

arrested to make her views known, but she recognizes what Faludi refuses to see.

Faludi's main failing is not her refusal to admit that feminism, or women, have played any

part in destabilizing masculinity.[5] Rather, her understandably vigorous defense of feminism

prevents her from realizing the actual extent of the valid and valuable insights contained in her

study. Faludi does come close on several occasions. For example after meeting the wives of laid-

off McDonnell Douglas workers, she comments "Women see men as guarding the fort, so they

don't see how the culture of the fort shapes men. Men don't see how they are influenced by the

culture either; they prefer not to. If they did, they would have to let go of the illusion of control"

(Stiffed 14). She says this but then goes into a diatribe about how feminism bears the brunt of the

anger, which she feels is misplaced Faludi feels that feminism is innocent because its motives are good and it has positive effects, therefore, feminism plays no negative role but instead is only a scapegoat This theme will reappear, on occasion during this dissertation. Moreover, while Faludi is interested in examining the victimization of men, she does not at any time consider men who have been victimized — that is, physically or sexually abused — nor do these men fall under the umbrella of her claim. Such men comprise groups that would seem to have the most in common with her cause The binary opposition she formulates renders Faludi incapable of recognizing them as such, despite statements such as "Even the most 'powerful' man has had at least as much happen to him as he has made happen" (Stiffed 16). Nevertheless, recognizing that men are influenced by culture changes the focus, in part, from what men have done to what has been done to them

It is in this regard that my study owes a debt to feminism for without feminism's exposure of the problems inherent to the dominant North American culture, much of my analysis would not be possible. For example, Betty Friedan, in the Kennedy-era The Feminine Mystique, stated "I came to realize that something is very wrong with the way American women are trying to live their lives [. . .] There was a strange discrepancy between the reality to our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform" (7). Women were said to be "living inside a box" because of the lifestyle imposed on them Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," is an oft-cited tale reflecting this reality It is certainly not an attempt to belittle or denigrate the feminist cause to say that the concept of the box can also be applied to the situation of men. The difference between the situation of men and that of women is that Friedan was writing nearly forty years ago; that is, the problem as it pertains to women has long since been

identified Nevertheless, feminism provides the language with which to describe the enforced

gender order. Faludi's second book would not be possible without her feminist vocabulary. For

example, she writes:

> Men feel the contours of a box, too, but they are told that box is of
> their own manufacture, designed to their specifications. Who are
> they to complain? The box is there to showcase the man, not to
> confine him. After all, didn't he build it — and can't he destroy it if
> he pleases, if he is a *man*? For men to say they feel boxed in is
> regarded not as laudable political protest but as childish and
> indecent whining. How dare the kings complain about their castles?
> (Stiffed 13)

In addition to the box of conformity, Faludi introduces the theme of silence to the discussion.

Again, this is a topic more commonly found in studies of the oppression of women and colonized

peoples.

All that glitters: Ornamental Culture and the Gaze

While silence is an important theme, and will be discussed several times in the chapters

which follow, it forms only half of the saying "seen and not heard." The first part, "seen," is a

more important term in western popular culture because that culture is increasingly visual. In

attempting to answer the question of his title, "What is Visual Culture?" Nicholas Mirzoeff finds

"One of the most striking features of the new visual culture is the visualization of things that are

not in themselves visual. Rather than myopically focusing on the visual to the exclusion of all

other senses, as is often alleged, visual culture examines why modern and postmodern culture

place such a premium on rendering experience in a visual form" (6) This trend and its offshoot,

"ornamental culture" form a dominant trope in Faludi's analysis. In North America, she writes,

> Where we once lived in a society in which men in particular
> participated by being useful in public life, we now are surrounded

by a culture that encourages people to play almost no functional
public roles, only decorative or consumer ones. [. .] Ornamental
culture has no [public] counterparts Constructed around celebrity
and image, glamour and entertainment, marketing and
consumerism, it is a ceremonial gateway to nowhere. Its essence is
not just the selling act but the act of selling the self [and] every man
is essentially on his own [. .] with no paternal [influence] to guide
him. In an age of celebrity, the father has no body of knowledge or
authority to transmit to the son. (Stiffed 34-5)

The effects of ornamental culture go beyond the visual sphere. They impact the reproduction of

masculinities — the passing of skills and other learned attributes from fathers, biological or

otherwise, to sons. She adds that the dominant culture reshapes the "basic sense of manhood by

telling [men] as much as it tells celebrity that masculinity is something to drape over the body, not

draw from inner resources [. . .] manhood is displayed, not demonstrated" (Stiffed 35). The

culture they live in, says Faludi, "has left men with little other territory on which to prove

themselves besides vanity" (Stiffed 35). This is the same type of language one finds in Friedan's

exposé of the plight of the suburban housewife who was left with little to define herself beyond a

clean floor, a kitchen full of gadgets, and a happy husband.

Without acknowledging the full breadth of the applicability of feminist concepts to the

study of masculinities, Faludi at least makes it explicit: "The fifties housewife, stripped of her

connections to a wider world and invited to fill the void with shopping and the ornamental display

of her ultrafemininity, could be said to have morphed into the nineties man" (Stiffed 40). The fact

that the same language applies to both genders implies the penetration of consumerism into North

American culture. Whereas women traditionally have been seen as the victims of an ornamental

culture which dictates their appearance above all else, men are increasingly coming under the

same sorts of influences This indicates that the binary oppositions patriarchy-feminism and men-

women are not necessarily synonymous and that the relations are more nuanced than any binary is

able to accommodate in its scope This is not to say that the positions of Faludi, Friedan,

Solomon-Godeau, *et al*, are incorrect, but rather, that their unrealized implications call for more

work. The concept of ornamental culture, and its influence on masculinity as something to be

looked at, leads to a discussion of men not only as subjects, but also as objects in popular culture.[6]

Although she does not go so far as to consider men as objects, this is the first of the two areas

Faludi opens up, for any discussion of looking and objectification must consider what has come to

be known as "the gaze." This topic, for which Laura Mulvey is famous, forms the basis of several

discussions in the chapters which follow and is well worth considering now.

Ornamental culture — that is, a culture based on appearances above all else — necessarily

provokes questions about the processes involved in looking: who is allowed to look and who is to

be looked at.[7] This topic has proven to be a fruitful and important area for critical theory and

especially feminism(s). One of the earliest and most significant studies is Ways of Seeing by John

Berger's group, in the early 1970s Their aims were modest: "None of the essays pretends to deal

with more than certain aspects of each subject: particularly those aspects thrown into relief by a

modern historical consciousness. Our principal aim has been to start a process of questioning" (5).

This statement is from a note to the readers of the book, which is also concerned with "ways of

seeing women and on various contradictory aspects of the tradition of oil painting" (5). Berger

and his colleagues stress the importance of seeing because "seeing comes before words" and also

"It is seeing that establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words

but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it" (7). They privilege sight over all

other senses and suggest that the rest of us do too, either consciously or otherwise. They also

suggest that pictures are part of an attempt to replace the lack caused by the absence of that

which has had an image made of it. This suggests a psychoanalytic basis for "the gaze," which

Mulvey picks up in some detail in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In addition to the

images themselves, the context of viewing interests Berger's group. The context is formed by the

viewer's preconceptions and those of the maker of the image: "Every image embodies a way of

seeing. [. . .] Every time we look at a photograph, we are aware, however slightly, of the

photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights. [. .] Yet, although

every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also

on our way of seeing" (10) In spite of this admonition, they are still willing to say, "the essential

way of seeing women, the essential use to which their images are put, has not changed. Women

are depicted in a quite different way from men — not because the feminine is different from the

masculine — but because the spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of woman is

designed to flatter him" (64). But who is making the assumption. the producer of the image, the

viewer of the image, or the critic of the image? This viewpoint assumes patriarchal

heteronormativity as much as that which it purports to criticize. In other words, the theory

depends on the "feminized" image as much as the look does. The feminization of the object being

viewed depends on an assumption that is, in fact, larger than the assumption of a

(heteronormative) masculine viewpoint. The critic assumes this viewpoint — both in terms of

presupposing its prevalence and in terms of taking that point-of-view — in order to make the

judgments entailed by it. Moreover, it cannot work unless "feminized" is synecdochal for all

oppressed and subjugated peoples, but it does not stop there, because not everyone who is being

looked at is oppressed or subjugated; some are (only) objectified, and others are simply viewed.

Surely given its modest aims, the position of Berger, *et al*, cannot be expanded to include all of

the possibilities entailed in viewing others, nor was it intended to do so.

A more ambitious study of looking, and consuming the look, comes from Laura Mulvey,

as mentioned earlier. According to Constance Penley, the importance of Mulvey's "Visual

Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" is that it provides "the theoretical grounds for the rejection of

Hollywood and its pleasures," and it offers "the first feminist consideration of the play and conflict

of psychical forces at work between the spectator and the screen" (6). Not just ambitious, Mulvey

declares war on Hollywood cinema: "it is said that analysing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it. That

is the intention of this article. The satisfaction and reinforcement of the ego that represent the high

point of film history hitherto must be attacked" (16). In so doing, she hopes to inspire new visual

forms which transcend "outworn or oppressive forms" (16). Instead, she has created, albeit

unintentionally, an analysis which transcends it aims. It has become an institution (within academic

circles) rather than a polemic against (patriarchal) institutions.

Mulvey's analysis includes both Freudian and Lacanian concepts in its course, but the

latter are actually more important. She sets up what she calls the two contradictory aspects of the

pleasurable structures of looking in the conventional cinematic situation. Mulvey explains:

> The first, scopophilic, arises from pleasure in using another person
> as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second,
> developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego,
> comes from identification with the image seen. Thus, in film terms,
> one implies a separation of the erotic identity from the object on the
> screen (active scopophilia), the other demands identification of the
> ego with the object on the screen through the spectator's
> fascination with and recognition of his like. The first is a function of
> the sexual instincts, the second of ego libido. (18)

"Visual Pleasure" focuses on male-centered cinema because "in a world ordered by sexual

imbalance. pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (19).

Mulvey (therefore) characterizes the portrayal of women as also having been reduced to two

actions in cinematic depictions. According to Mulvey,

> Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as
> erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic
> object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting
> tension between the looks on either side of the screen. For instance,
> the device of the show-girl allows the two looks to be unified
> technically without any apparent break in the diegesis. A woman
> performs within the narrative; the gaze of the spectator and that of
> the male characters in the film are neatly combined without
> breaking narrative verisimilitude. (19)

In terms of the present project, two points are tremendously important. In the hands of

subsequent critics, the male and female roles have been fixed so that males are always active and

females are always passive. The second, related, point is that women then become the only figure

that is objectified.

In this line of criticism, the images are constructed so that the male figure on the screen

and the male spectator always control the gaze. Whereas the pleasures Mulvey describes are

based on Freudian terms, scopophilia and narcissism, the action of the look that produces the

pleasure is grounded in Lacanian terms, "through the spectator's fascination with his like." This

last psychoanalytic figure is derived from Lacan's "mirror phase," the importance of which

Mulvey explains:

> The mirror phase occurs at a time when children's physical
> ambitions outstrip their motor capacity, with the result that their
> recognition of themselves is joyous in that they imagine their mirror
> image to be more complete, more perfect than they experience in
> their own body. Recognition is thus overlaid with misrecognition:
> the image recognised is conceived as the reflected body of the self,
> but its misrecognition as superior projects the body outside itself as

> an ideal ego, the alienated subject which, re-introjected as an ego
> ideal, prepares the way for identification with others in the future
> This mirror moment predates language for the child. (17)

Two things are elided here. First, the mirror phase is pre-Oedipal as it predates language. Second,

it prepares children, even in Mulvey's words, to identify with others, not just members of the

same sex. Lacan himself teaches that

> We have only to understand the mirror stage as *an identification*, in
> the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the
> transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an
> image [. . .] This jubilant assumption of his [or her] specular image
> by the child [. . .] would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation
> the symbolic matrix in which the *I* [or individual] is precipitated in a
> primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of
> identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in
> the universal, its function as subject. (2)

In Lacanian terms, language is a part of the "symbolic matrix," as above, or more commonly, the

"Symbolic Order." According to Alan Sheridan, the Symbolic Order is "the determining order of

the subject, and its effects are radical: the subject in Lacan's sense, is himself an effect of the

symbolic" (ix). This leaves open the possibility for multiple viewpoints and multiple identifications

not accounted for in Mulvey's original statement. To overcome this shortcoming in the original

paper, she attempts to deal with female-centered narratives in later essays such as "Afterthoughts

on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema '"

Mulvey eventually recognizes that female spectators might look at the female figure on the

screen. Nevertheless, she never considers men as being looked at in any way in film. In fact,

Mulvey contends that

> The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the
> representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look
> of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralise the

extradiagetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle. This is
made possible through the processes set in motion by structuring
the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator
can identify. (20)

Again, while the spectator is always male, heterosexuality is assumed, and the image is always

female. In spite of this,

in psychoanalytic terms, the female figure poses a deeper problem.
She also connotes something that the look continually circles
around but disavows: her lack of a penis, implying a threat of
castration and hence, unpleasure. Ultimately, the meaning of
woman is sexual difference, the visually ascertainable absence of the
penis, the material evidence on which is based the castration
complex essential for the organisation of entrance to the symbolic
order and the law of the father. Thus the woman as icon, displayed
for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the
look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified.
(21)

Mulvey's position never considers the prospect of identification between males and females, in

part because of the assumptions she makes. As Mary Klages explains, in the Lacanian sense, "The

Law-of-the-Father, or Name-of-the-Father, is another term for the [. . .] the centre of the system,

the thing that governs the whole structure — its shape and how all the elements in the system can

move and form relationships. The phallus anchors the chains of signifiers [. .] stops play [and] is

the centre of the Symbolic Order, of language" (6). Moreover, in Lacan's terms, the "Name-of-

the-Father [. .] refers not to the real father, nor to the imaginary father, but to the symbolic

father" (Sheridan xi). Klages also notes that the symbolic father, "rather than being a real person,

becomes a structuring principle of the Symbolic Order" (6). The phallus and the penis are not the

same thing. Moreover, the "Law of the Father," is most simply understood as "Thou shalt not

desire what was my desire" (Lapsley & Westlake 73). The threat of castration is entailed by

looking at, but not by identifying with the female. That is, there is no prohibition on identifying

with a female. This topic will be discussed in greater detail in several sections of this dissertation

The singling out of the male gaze at the female image in "Visual Pleasure" constitutes one

of the areas in which Mulvey's theory needs revision or expansion. For example, it does not

handle the male look at the male. Paul Willemen and Steve Neale both attempt to incorporate this

look into Mulvey's theory. While he acknowledges that the looker is traditionally male, Willemen

stresses that Mulvey's position needs greater flexibility. In "Visual Pleasure," says Willemen,

> Mulvey doesn't allow sufficient room for the fact that in patriarchy
> the direct object of the scopophilic desire can also be male If
> scopophilic pleasure relates primarily to the observation of one's
> sexual like (as Freud suggests), then the two looks distinguished by
> Mulvey (i.e. the look at the object of desire and the look at one's
> sexual like) are in fact varieties of one single mechanism. the
> repression of homosexuality.

Steve Neale agrees with Willemen and takes up the point in several articles, as well as in his

textbook for film studies, Genre. In fact, he expands the envelope of gaze theory by suggesting

that the female figure is the focus of the look as a defense against a homoerotic look. In this

respect, according to Neale, "patriarchy does not so much institute the woman as sexual object in

the cinema as offer the female as an accepted and acceptable image on to which to deflect the

erotic component in the scopophilic drive" (57). In addition to concluding that the gaze functions

to avoid looking at males, Neale takes up the topic of female-centred films Mulvey, too, adds

these films to her repertoire in essays following "Visual Pleasure " Whereas Mulvey concludes

that these require a "masculinisation" of women, Neale argues that "the stress on women seems

simultaneously to involve a feminisation of men" (59), which is to say "they involve an

eroticisation of the body of the male" (60). However, as will be discussed, many cultural forms

both recent and old — beefcake photos, professional sports, advertising — feature

hypermasculinized males as the only objects of the gaze(s). In professional sports, for example,

the emphasis is on anything but feminization. The homoerotic gaze is undeniable, but it cannot be

assumed to be universal.

Interestingly, both Mulvey and Willemen provide a mechanism to describe another form of

viewing males, *via* the Mirror Phase. In their articles, Mulvey and Willemen refer to the

recognition of one's own like or one's surrogate on-screen. Yet the implications of the statement

are not pursued by either critic. Nonetheles, the topic of visual identification has been a popular

topic of academic papers, magazine articles, and talk shows; that is, the processes of identification

among females, and especially the effects on their body images, when they view media

representations of other women. Female body dysmorphia is a commonly discussed issue, and

images in the popular culture are said to be a contributing factor. The reason is that women are

said to compare themselves against the often unrealistic images they see. Naomi Wolfe's The

Beauty Myth is among the most famous studies of this phenomenon. Yet, Robert Connell admits

his own version of such practice:

> To be an adult male is distinctly to occupy space, to have a physical
> presence in the world. Walking down the street, I square my
> shoulders and covertly measure myself against other men. Walking
> past a group of punk youths late at night, I wonder if I look
> formidable enough. At a demonstration I size up the policemen and
> wonder if I am bigger and stronger than them if it comes to the
> crunch — a ludicrous consideration, given the actual techniques of
> mass action and crowd control, but an automatic reaction
> nevertheless. (as qtd. 57)

In Connell's anecdote, albeit the anecdote of a professional in the field, every other man, and

especially those who might be a source of threat or competition, is held up as a mirror. The reason

is a point of comparison: "How do I measure?" Rather than a source of homoerotic pleasure or a

mechanism for objectifying women, the gaze can also be a source of affirmation, or

disapprobation, for males. Though under-developed in previous analyses, the topic of a

comparative gaze will be visited throughout the dissertation.

One of the more surprising critiques of Laura Mulvey's position in "Visual Pleasure"

comes from Linda Williams. What makes Williams' critique more astonishing is her topic,

hardcore pornography. Nevertheless, in Hardcore: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the

Visible," Williams argues that the viewing of pornography involves much more than the fetishistic

consumption of the female form. Even homoerotic pleasure, which some male viewers might

enjoy thanks to the frequent presence of male performers, does not account for the remainder of

the viewing process. Williams develops the thesis that cross-gender identifications can be fostered

by (the) pornographic images and that these identifications are male-to-female. That is to say,

male viewers identify with female performers, even as the former derive pleasure from the

process. Williams draws on the earlier works of Teresa de Lauretis and Carol Clover in

formulating her theory of multiple identifications. In Alice Doesn't, de Lauretis puts forth a

bisexual model in which viewers "alternate" between masculine and feminine identifications (142-

3). Such a view helps to account for productions in which the characters' roles are not fixed

permanently, as Mulvey would suggest. Carol Clover, in Men, Women and Chainsaws, finds that

the adolescent male viewers of horror films do not necessarily identify "with men" and "against

women" (202). That the character who kills the monster or bad-guy at the end of these films is

both active and female "emphasizes the ambiguous gender of both the [monster] and the girl"

(Williams 207). Given these findings, Williams concludes "that there is often a more complex

'play' of gender roles in films and fantasies than can be accounted for by appealing to either a sadistic 'male gaze' or to a pre-oedipal masochistic merger [. .] In the wake of Laura Mulvey's influence, projective identification has not been adequately appreciated by film theory" (207-8). By projective identification, Williams means males identifying with females. The reverse is treated briefly in Mulvey's "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure'" and extensively in Constance Penley's studies of so-called "slash lit," but the male-to-female variant is still an undeveloped critical domain.[8] Williams actually finds hardcore pornography to be the one form (that she had found) that features both males and females who are actively seeking pleasure but which "does *not* regularly punish the woman for actively seeking her sexual pleasure" (208-9). The key difference between the hardcore heroine and the horror heroine is that the former does not defend her virginity, figurative or otherwise. Both Williams and Clover underappreciate the fact that the "heroines" they describe are not traditional heroines in the sense that they are not admirable people who do honourable deeds. They are simply "stars." In the context of ornamental culture, being a star is more than enough. Female stars have this status in common with performers in all of the popular media. As well, Clover and Williams do not consider fully the role of narrative and especially generic conventions in situating the male and female protagonists where they can be stars. As well as being a visual form, film is also a narrative form and as such it does not exist in a vacuum but is instead related to other forms of story-telling. This relationship will be taken up in the following section.

"There's a story in this": Narrative and Genre

Although it is still significant, Mulvey's work has a limited scope and has been stretched to accommodate an ever-increasing number of texts. Typical critiques point out the lack of attention

to race, ethnicity, class, and sexual preference as well as the admitted absence of a female

spectator. Yet, these are rather easy targets. Such attacks are based on what is not said and avoid

taking on what is said. Several expansions of the thesis in "Visual Pleasure" have been made. In

Alice Doesn't, Teresa de Lauretis fosters an understanding of both the work that has been done

and the work that lies ahead: "Valuable as that [past] work has been and still is, as a radical

analysis of what Mulvey calls 'the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions,' its

value for feminism is severely curtailed by its discursive context, its 'purposefulness,' and the

terms of its address" (68). De Lauretis focuses instead on articulating

> the relations of the female subject to representation, meaning, and
> vision, and in so doing to construct the terms of another frame of
> reference, another measure of desire. This cannot be done by
> destroying all representational coherence, by denying "the hold" of
> the image in order to prevent identification and subject reflection,
> by voiding perception of any given or preconstructed meanings.
> The minimalist strategies of materialist avant-garde cinema — its
> blanket condemnation of narrative and illusionism, its reductive
> economy of repetition, its production of the spectator as the locus
> of a certain "randomness of energy" to counter the unity of subject
> vision — are predicated on, even as they work against, the
> (transcendental) male subject. (68)

In other words, Mulvey's goal of destroying (a kind of) pleasure is predicated on the existence of

that pleasure. This stands to reason, but it also has a reductive effect on women, as Constance

Penley explains:

> The representation of woman as signifier of castration thus induces
> in the spectator's unconscious the mechanisms of voyeurism and
> fetishism (scopophilia, disavowal) as a defense against that threat. If
> all of this is true, Mulvey suggests, then feminists have no choice
> but to reject the forms of classical cinema inasmuch as they are
> constructed on the basis of a male fantasy entirely detrimental to
> women, one which inevitably makes the woman a passive recipient
> of the aggressive male look. (7)

The continued application of Mulvey's analysis depends on the continuation of the monolithic (viewpoint of) patriarchy. In addition it gives limited actual aid to women because they are fixed in a passive role.

Nevertheless, there is a tendency to cling to Mulvey's original statement. Often, the reason provided is the lack of a better alternative: "The importance of Mulvey's essay, marking and summing up an intensely productive phase of feminist work with film, is not to be diminished by the limitations of its theoretical scope. Indeed the fact that it has not yet been superseded is a major argument for our continued engagement with its problematic and the questions it raises" (Alice Doesn't 59). De Lauretis acknowledges only one major limitation of Mulvey's essay: "'intellectual unpleasure' [. . .] seems the unavoidable consequent in a binary set whose first term is visual pleasure" (59). Mulvey feels that patriarchy will take control of everything that is not its antithesis — hence she wants to replace pleasure with unpleasure — because patriarchy controls pleasure and control is what patriarchy does. However, when considered in a larger context, which is her own aim, de Lauretis' argument is reminiscent of arguments in defense of western capitalism. That is to say, given the fall of the Soviet Bloc and the seeming failure of communism as an alternative to market economics, those who acknowledge the flaws of capitalism are quick to counter that there is no program to supersede it. Capitalism is part of the system that Mulvey and de Lauretis would attribute to the patriarchy. Curiously, de Lauretis' affirmation of Mulvey employs an argument used to defend the superstructure she wishes to dismantle.

Spectatorship is an important part of the process of consuming popular culture, but it is neither the only function, nor does it operate in isolation. Rather, it is combined with other elements of the production, most notably genre As Linda Kauffman explains, genre has

"important implications for theories of spectatorship" (71). Since she acknowledges that Mulvey's

statement in "Visual Pleasure" is "the most important theory of spectatorship in the past twenty

years," Kauffman reminds us that "it is worth revisiting some of Mulvey's original points, which

have sometimes been lost in translation" (71). Kauffman continues:

> It is ironic that her essay has taken on a life of its own, dispersed
> across multiple genres, because it is an argument about *genre* —
> narrative fiction film in classical Hollywood cinema, with specific
> emphasis on film noir and Hitchcock [. . .] Furthermore, many who
> took Mulvey to task for being "reductive or un-objective" failed to
> notice that the essay itself belongs to a very specific genre: it is a
> manifesto. As in the Futurist Manifesto and the Surrealist
> Manifesto, objectivity is hardly the aim. (72)

Kauffman suggests that Mulvey's original thesis has become, in the hands of well-meaning

academics, a totalizing theory of spectatorship, which was never the intent. Instead of the theory

being expanded and supplemented to incorporate alternative forms of cinema and new types of

visual media (such as video games), these have been forced to fit the envelope of Mulvey's

critique. It is also worth recalling that in the original essay, Mulvey only considers films by von

Sternberg and Hitchcock. Kauffman considers the life of Mulvey's manifesto to be ironic because

it has become that which it seeks to destroy: a master narrative. This is the first of two points that

are often overlooked by critics when applying Mulvey's analysis.

The second routinely forgotten point is found in the second half of Mulvey's title:

"Narrative Cinema." In this regard, Kauffman reminds us that "Far from taking Freud literally,

Mulvey is interested in the ways these master narratives of Oedipus, Pandora, and others are

disseminated over and over in films from *Citizen Kane* to *Blue Velvet.* [. . .] Far from exhorting us

to ban even the classics, Mulvey merely *analyzes* them, while exhorting filmmakers to consider

new strategies in avant-garde filmmaking" (74). Given Mulvey's attention to Freud and Lacan,

analyses which concentrate solely on spectatorship tend to give reduced accounts based only on

psychoanalytic models. In her Introduction to Feminism and Film Theory, Constance Penley

explains that she includes essays which seek to

> address the claim of psychoanalytic film theory (following Roland
> Barthes' analyses of bourgeois narrative form in S/Z) that classical
> film narrative perpetually restages the Oedipal drama solely from
> the masculine side, following the hero through his difficult
> separation from the mother to eventual identification with paternal
> authority. [However,] classical film narrative is, in fact, more
> ambiguous and irresolute than the Oedipal model of film theory has
> proposed. (2)

While the cinematic apparatus is unquestionably structured around spectatorship, it is the

production's narrative which occasions the gaze.

The importance of narrative, and the genre to which a narrative belongs, lies in

understanding the ways in which a film adheres to or differs from the norm. De Lauretis, in Alice

Doesn't, also pays attention to narrative, since

> narrative and visual pleasure need not and should not be thought of
> as the exclusive property of dominant codes, serving solely the
> purposes of "oppression." If it is granted that the relations between
> meanings and images exceed the work of film and the institution of
> cinema, then it must be possible to imagine how perceptual and
> semantic contradictions may be engaged, worked through, or
> redirected toward unsettling and subverting the dominant
> formations. (68-9)

Indeed, de Lauretis believes that "narrative and visual pleasure constitute the frame of reference

of cinema, one which provides the measure of desire" (Alice Doesn't 67). Although visual

representations have become conventionalized, they are still a relatively new form given the

extensive history of narrative. As well, the images are often visual depictions of narratives.

The kernel stories of Oedipus, Pandora, *etc.* have come to us from mythology and through literature. Rather than operating exclusively, narrative and spectatorship combine to make the whole work. Northrop Frye reminds us that "form and content are not quite the same thing: they are two things that have to be unified" (Scripture 40). Given that filmmakers apply literary methods to the development of their cinematic vision, it would be unwise for critics to dismiss or ignore theories of narrative. Indeed, the student of literature is equipped to recognize these master narratives and their relationship to the gaze, for filmmaking is another mode of story-telling. Steve Neale elaborates: "The focus of the cinematic institution, of its industrial, commercial and ideological practices, of the discourses that it circulates, is narrative. What mainstream cinema produces as its commodity is narrative cinema, cinema as narrative" (Genre 19). However, in Neale's estimation there is a larger context in which cinematic narratives must be understood. He turns to the study of genres, for

> Not only a set of economic practices or meaningful products,
> cinema is also a constantly fluctuating series of signifying processes,
> a 'machine' for the production of meanings and positions, or rather
> positionings for meaning; a machine for the regulation of the orders
> of subjectivity. Genres are components in this 'machine.' As
> systematised forms of the articulation of meaning and position, they
> are a fundamental part of the cinema's 'mental machinery.'
> Approached in this way, genres are not to be seen as forms of
> textual codifications but as systems of orientations, expectations
> and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject.
> (Genre 19)

In this way, cinematic genres are reliant upon the spectator's familiarity with the genre involved. This extends beyond film into other cultural texts.

The most common source material is, of course, literature. Few scholars match the attention to literary genres of Northrop Frye. In his Anatomy of Criticism, Frye explains the basis

of his criticism, "the study of genres has to be founded on the study of convention," and the

reasons for such a focus: "The criticism which can deal with such matters will have to be based on

that aspect of symbolism which relates [works] to one another, and it will choose, as its main field

of operations, the symbols that link [works] together" (96). To these he adds, "The purpose of

criticism by genres is not so much to classify as to clarify such traditions and affinities, thereby

bringing out a large number of literary relationships that would not be noticed as long as there

were no context established for them" (Anatomy 247-8). Frye's limitation is perhaps his strength.

He is more interested in symbols, themes, characterizations, *etc.*, that link works together than he

is in ideological concerns. In Secular Scripture, a subsequent study of the fictional form, the

romance, he observes that

> There is still a strong tendency to avoid problems of technique and
> design and structure in fiction, and to concentrate on what the book
> talks about rather than on what it actually presents. It is still not
> generally understood either that "reality" in literature cannot be
> presented at all except within the conventions of literary structure,
> and that those conventions must be understood first. [. . .] The right
> next step for criticism, it seems to me [is] to realize that all fiction is
> conventionalized, and that it is equally a *tour de force* of ingenuity
> to get good characterization and social insight into a story" (43-5).

Frye is often criticized, sometimes rightly, for avoiding ideological analyses altogether. However,

Frye's focus on the purely literary — elsewhere he claims that a poet creates a poem simply for

the sake of creating a poem — allows for flexibility in that there is no particular limiting text or

issue, as in Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure."

The connection brought out by an approach such as Frye's can then be supplemented by

analyses which deal with the ideological concerns therein. Such an approach is provided by Steve

Neale. For him, "genres are not simply bodies of work or groups of films, however classified,

labelled and defined. Genres do not consist only of films: they consist also, and equally, of specific systems of expectation and hypothesis which spectators bring with them to the cinema, and which interact with films themselves during the course of the viewing process" ("Questions" 46). Since cinema is a narrative form, it is not separable from the ideological implications of narrative itself Thus, writes Neale,

> at a general social level, the system of narration, adopted by
> mainstream cinema serves as the very currency of cinema itself,
> defining the horizon of its aesthetic and ideological possibilities,
> providing the measure of cinematic 'literacy' and intelligibility.
> Hence, too, narrative is the primary instance and instrument of the
> regulatory processes that make and define the ideological function
> of the cinematic institution as a whole. (Genre 19-20)

In order to study the soap opera genre, Christine Gledhill borrows from Neale. She explains that in order to examine genres as such, it is necessary to apply "concepts that can handle the work of its conventions and stereotypes in relation to the social world of the audience, without presuming either a fixed reality or a fixed set of codes for representing that reality" (351). The significance for this dissertation is that, as Gledhill recognizes, within a "flexible set of shifting antimonies the opposition, masculinity/femininity, constitutes one of the ideological tensions played out" (357). Thus, gender can also be considered as being among the elements that constitute a particular genre

This stands to reason given the highly conventionalized nature of gender in North America. Gender, as cited earlier, is associated with myths and as such, it too is a narrative of sorts. In discerning conformity and breaks from the norm, knowledge of generic and narrative structures can be a powerful critical tool. As Neale observes,

> These systems provide spectators with means of recognition and

> understanding. They help render films, and the elements within
> them, intelligible and therefore explicable. They offer a way of
> working out the significance of what is happening on the screen: a
> way of working out why particular events and actions are taking
> place, why the characters are dressed the way they are, why they
> look, speak and behave the way they do, and so on. ("Questions"
> 46)

The key is remembering that everything is working within a system. Just as visual and narrative

systems combine, so do generic elements. Therefore,

> What defines the genre is not the specific convention itself, but its
> placing in a particular relationship with other elements — a
> relationship which generates different meanings and narrative
> possibilities according to the genre: for example the gun wielded
> against the wilderness in the western, or against society in the
> gangster film; the wedding as a concluding integration of warring
> parties in the romantic comedy or the wedding as the start of
> marriage problems in soap opera. (Gledhill 357)

As such, narrative has implications for the spectator as well as for the images produced. It also

has implications for the author of a project such as the present one, since a dissertation, by its very

definition, is imbricated with narrative.

I told you that story to tell you another:

In this respect, it is well worth reconsidering Mirzoeff's point regarding visual culture.

The tendency, he explains, is to "render experiences" in a visual form. Typically, this is achieved

by constructing a narrative. This latter category comprises the second area of discussion opened

up by Faludi, along with the relationship between ornamental culture and narrative as they pertain

to the depiction of masculinities. Faludi's desire to place everything in a binary scenario limits the

depth of her analysis and leads to some facile and reductive conclusions. One of the contributing,

and unacknowledged, factors is Faludi's own narrative; that is, she is telling a story rather than

writing a truly analytical text. Stories, by their nature, have two sides: good and evil. Although

corporations and the government fill in occasionally, the two opposing sides in <u>Stiffed</u> are usually

women and men. For example, Faludi frequently chastises laid off workers for having irrational

anger towards women. Of men formerly employed by aerospace giant, McDonnell Douglas, she

writes, "They resented women abstractly for 'taking their jobs away,' and they resented individual

women personally — wives, girlfriends — for having abandoned them" (88). She frequently

frames the narrative with comments from the workers such as "The feminist movement has

destroyed what was a perfect society with a few infractions. I'm just tired of being emasculated"

(90). Clearly, the man who uttered these words is attempting to rationalize a situation that is

totally beyond his frame of reference and is looking for easy answers. But so is Faludi. She calls

the men eager "to lay [their] troubles on women, most especially on the women's movement"

(89). Yet in her eagerness to cast feminism as an innocent bystander, Faludi fails to grasp that

<u>Stiffed</u> is a collection of stories and to acknowledge her own narrative which binds them.

Although she recognizes that "below [men's] resentment lay a deeper well of shame and fear"

(88), Faludi fails to recognize the full extent of a wife's comment that "I felt hurt, like I couldn't

trust him anymore. I just felt that maybe it was him who goofed up, even though the whole

department was laid off" (64). This is victim blaming. Rather than examine the victim blaming,

Faludi contributes to it. There is an obvious double standard here, in which men are still expected

to be providers and are also expected to accept that they are no longer the primary breadwinner.

Several of the laid off men whom Faludi interviews were abandoned by their wives. This is

analogous to wives being abandoned by husbands in favour of "pretty young things." Whereas it

is easy to suggest that patriarchy does this to women, it is not so easily put when men are similarly

turned aside, in part by women whose power is both institutionalized and a result of hard fought

victories for the feminist cause. Access to divorce was supposed to help women avoid being

victims of bad marriages, not to allow them to be victimizers. Unfortunately, the only ones who

speak out against this phenomenon are Warren Farrell and his ilk. This is not to agree with them

but to say that they cannot be allowed to monopolize the topic. Reducing the account to men *vs.*

feminism — in either fashion — fails to consider the larger implications of a culture which

suggests that everything is a commodity — beauty and usefulness, femininity and masculinity —

and is therefore disposable.

Narrative is an unavoidable consequence of a project such as Faludi's or even the present

one. This is not the problem; the problem is what one does about it. At the risk of imposing a

standard based on the "masculine" mode of detachment and scientific authority, in Faludi's case,

she strays too far into the realm of story-telling and therefore into the realm of the romance, or

quest narrative, which Northrop Frye calls "the structural core of all fiction" (Scripture 15).

Considering Stiffed in these terms leads to several surprising revelations. Near the end of the first

chapter Faludi foreshadows her tale: "Eventually I came to believe that, far from being

antagonists, [men and feminists] were each poised at this hour to be vital in the other's advance.

But that answer came at the end. First I had to begin" (42). This statement does not necessarily

contradict anything that has been argued above, for it is agreed that studies of masculinity have

much to learn from feminism(s), but this is not to say that feminism is the "unassailable rock" or

"unanswerable argument." Second, Faludi's words echo those of T.S. Eliot in the Four Quartets'

"East Coker": "In my beginning is my end" (1). An analysis of Eliot's poetry is beyond the scope

of this project, but his statement reveals a great deal about the art of story-telling. In Frye's

words,

> The story proceeds toward an end which echoes the beginning, but
> echoes it in a different world. The beginning is the demonic parody
> of the end, and the action takes place on two levels of experience.
> This principle of action on two levels, neither of them
> corresponding very closely to the ordinary world of experience, is
> essential to romance, and shows us that romance presents a *vertical*
> perspective which realism [. . .] would find it very difficult to
> achieve. The realist, with his [or her] sense of logical and horizontal
> continuity, leads us to the end of his [or her] story; the romancer,
> scrambling over a series of disconnected episodes, seems to be
> trying to get us to the top of it. (Scripture 49-50)

Stiffed indeed takes place on two levels of experience and this is the point of Faludi's statement

about the beginning and the end of her story. It is, she says, "the story of a feminist's travels

through a postwar male realm [. . .] It is also a reflection of my own mental journey as I struggled

to understand the perilous voyage to manhood undertaken by the men I once knew as boys" (47).

Like Eliot, she infuses the language of the epic — in this case the *Odyssey* — with her own tale,

to make it seem epic in scope. Yet it also pushes her story closer to the domain of the romance.

One of the more surprising of Faludi's findings is that the cultural pressures men face are not new.

She cites the works of authors Richard Matheson, William Whyte, David Reisman, and C. Wright

Mills, in the 1950s, as evidence. While she still characterizes hers as a tale of discovery, of finding

something new, Faludi frequently draws on these texts — The Incredible Shrinking Man, The

Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, *etc.* — to find analogies and to illustrate the points she is trying to

make. Referring to familiar cultural artifacts might help the reader's understanding but it leads to

an area between fact and fiction.

The final part of Frye's categorization, episodic structure, is also to be found in Faludi's

text and, in fact, is integral to it. Again, this is noteworthy because it strays from documentary

decorum. She goes from Los Angeles to Cleveland, to Waco, Texas, and back to Los Angeles

during her journey. There are visits with Promise Keepers, Citadel cadets, fundamentalist

extremists, and pornography stars. Her encounter with the men who exposed the My Lai

massacre is telling. Faludi waits until the third page of the description of the massacre, twenty-

seven pages into the chapter, to reveal that the subject is My Lai as well as the significance of the

men she interviews. The practice of making the reader wait is done to heighten the suspense of

the chapter. This is curious, for as Frye explains,

> In realism the attempt is normally to keep the action horizontal,
> using a technique of causality in which the characters are prior to
> the plot, in which the problem is normally: "given these characters,
> what will happen?" Romance is usually more "sensational," that is,
> it moves from one discontinuous episode to another, describing
> things that happen to characters, for the most part, externally.
> (Scripture 47)

As evidenced by her subjects, Faludi is fixated on sensational topics, especially violence. She

admits, "I had my own favorite whipping boy, suspecting that the crisis of masculinity was caused

by masculinity on the rampage. [. . .] male violence was the quintessential expression of

masculinity run amok, out of control and trying to control everything in its path" (7).The focus on

the sensational is thus related to the binary that is maintained throughout, for the

> vertical perspective of romance partly accounts for the curious
> polarized characterization of romance, its tendency to split into
> heroes and villains. Romance avoids the ambiguities of ordinary life,
> where everything is a mixture of good and bad, and where it is
> difficult to take sides or believe that people are consistent patterns
> of virtue or vice. The popularity of romance [. . .] has much to do
> with its simplifying of moral facts. (Scripture 50)

All of this is not to say that Stiffed is a worthless document, but rather to illustrate the pitfalls into

which it drops. There are no easy answers because of the ambiguities of ordinary life. Although

this dissertation is a collection of seemingly discontinuous episodes, often drawn from the sensational, it is hoped that an awareness of the dangers inherent in such a project will help it to avoid easy answers. Unlike the worlds of TV, film, wrestling, and video games, there are few clear cut villains and fewer heroes

Scope of the Project:

The growing field of Masculinity Studies is marked by its persistent polarities. The tendency has been to examine the outliers in the cultural spectrum. The need exists, then, for scholars to make intelligent interventions in current theorizing about masculinities. Three areas of contemporary (popular) culture are central to an examination of contemporary masculinities: 1) how shifts in the location of masculine endeavours are conveyed by shifts in cultural genres, 2) how the roles of spectators or participants in certain new media actually reshape gender roles and relationships, and 3) how exclusions of men from certain roles in popular culture circumscribes potential points of coalition between (pro)feminist activism and masculinity studies. The perspectives taken must be cognizant not only of men as subjects — as opposed to creators — of their world, but also that men can be and are often objectified in contemporary culture. Throughout I have tried to select texts and subjects that intersect in key locations, though they may seem isolated and fragmented. Most important, I have tried to survey mainstream — rather than extreme — texts through analyses that are conversant with feminist discourse because it is as important to know and to reproduce successful strategies as it is to identify and dismantle those that are not.

The first chapter, "'See me, Touch Me, Feel Me'· (Im)Proving the Bodily Sense of Masculinity," stems from two cultural strands which intersect in one cultural form, self-

improvement advertising aimed at men. The first of these is the figure of the "new man," which appeared in the mid-1980s. The novelty lies in the positioning of masculine bodies precisely for the purpose of being seen. The available criticism at the time was not equipped to account for these positionings. The second cultural strand, the proliferation of technologies which alter the body itself, as opposed to its coverings, makes the gap in the criticism more apparent. The two cultural trends intersect most noticeably in the advertisements for the products and procedures aimed at enhancing the bodily sense of masculinity. Product plugs and placements not only reflect societal trends, their entire purpose is to convince consumers that they "need" the good or service portrayed. Thus, the advertisements examined must be considered as an important part of the modern normalizing machinery of power, in general, and especially as it functions to reproduce gender-relations. While this has become a critical commonplace in terms of the impact on the perception and production of femininity, the representations of contemporary men in body enhancement advertisements demonstrate the ways in which idealized masculinities are portrayed and even enforced.

Continuing the themes of reproducing masculinity and gazing at men that were introduced in the first chapter, "'Everybody Else Ain't Your Father': Reproducing Masculinity in Cinematic Sports," considers the formula of the sports film genre — a genre that has rapidly increased in popularity since the Reagan era — and demonstrates the shifts that have occurred, specifically in the relationships between fathers and sons. The typical sports film involves an aging coach (usually looking for redemption), an aging veteran (sometimes the two are combined), a young player (generally from a different background than the coach/veteran pairing), who is in need of guidance, a tenuous relationship between players and management, and a female intrusion into the

masculine world of sports. The younger and older men struggle to relate to one another. Eventually, the older player becomes a father figure to the younger player's son and the latter passes into manhood. Once this relationship solidifies, victory is achieved. This formulation reflects not a change in masculinity, but in what contemporary society is doing to men: there are increasingly fewer opportunities and venues through which males can learn how to be men. The chapter cannot possibly examine every sports film within the space provided, nor does it need to do so. As Northrop Frye notes, we are often "led very quickly from what the individual work says to what the entire convention it belongs to is saying through the work" (Scripture 43; see also 60, 86, 139). Therefore, by showing how, and how frequently, the basic formula of the sports film is repeated, it becomes clear that finding and being a father is a paramount concern for contemporary males.

The spectacle of the athleticized male body in another genre that borrows from the actions films of the 1980s appears in the third chapter, "'If you want to be the man, you've got to beat the man:' (Pro)Wrasslin' with Masculinity." In the 1990s, professional wrestling transformed radically. In a rare television interview, on TSN's *Off the Record*, World Wrestling Entertainment owner Vince McMahon explains that without its storylines professional wrestling would be "just two men, in their underwear, fighting." In "Looking at the Male," Paul Willemen suggests that male heroes in western movies are portrayed in two distinct but inter-related ways: first as spectacle and second as a physically beaten body As Paul Smith points out in "Eastwood Bound" a third and final stage occurs once the hero has triumphed. Professional wrestling depends on just such a structure. Thus, this chapter examines the sadistic and masochistic frameworks behind the first two stages mentioned above Such an analysis is problematized by the notion that a male

body must be "feminized" in order to be objectified. While such a view follows from Laura Mulvey's critique in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and is held by scholars such as Steve Neale, in "Masculinity as Spectacle," it cannot account fully for the production and viewing of pro-wrestling since it derives, at least in part, from the conventionalized objectification of the male body found in most professional sports. While the chapter relies on previous analytical models such as those of Mulvey and Neale, it provides a serious challenge to the concept of the male gaze as an *a priori* as well as the stability of gender.

The following chapter, "Two Guns, a Girl, and a PlayStation: Cross-Gender Identification in Video Games," continues the themes of expanding (beyond) "gaze" theory and of challenging the stability of gender by considering the (as yet under-explored) possibility that males can identify with female protagonists. Although it is a seeming departure from the earlier studies, this topic has been alluded to in the preceding chapters through the invocation of the Cinderella story in Chapter Two and the presence of powerful female wrestlers who compete with the men as described in Chapter Three. Not only do video games outsell movies, they represent the widest spread form of cultural production to have an almost exclusively male audience while at the same time frequently employing female protagonists, especially the action-adventure variety of role-playing games. Although it was not the first video game to feature a female lead, *Tomb Raider* is one of the most successful ever, with more than sixteen million copies having been sold world-wide and it serves as a prototype for games that have followed. Criticism of *Tomb Raider* focuses mainly on male spectatorship. However, the virtual reality created by the cinematic animation of the game produces an environment for male-to-female cross-gender identification. Male-to-female identification is a topic that has received little critical attention. For example, in

"Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film," Carol Clover briefly mentions the possibility of

such an identification between the largely male audience and the stereotypical "final girl" who

defeats the "bad guys" in slasher films and calls for more research into this phenomenon (216).

More than ten years later, in Bad Girls and Sick Boys, Linda Kauffman writes, "Since Laura

Mulvey's groundbreaking work on spectatorship, the male gaze has become a critical

commonplace, but [Carol] Clover suggests the need for further research about men's identification

with women" (132). Said another way, while it is acknowledged that such a relationship exists, no

work has been done in this area. To rectify this gap in the criticism, the fourth chapter examines

the cross-gender identification between the (male) audience and Lara Croft and her successors.

While the reverse phenomenon, females identifying with male protagonists, has been explored my

study is (currently) unique.

From males identifying with females, the final chapter turns to males who (should) have

much in common with females, and especially feminism, and yet are persistently ignored. "The

Inaudible Man: Finding a Discourse for Males Who Have Been Sexually Abused" draws from

Roland Barthes' short article, "Dominici, or the Triumph of Literature," in which he examines the

case of a farmer who was on trial as much for his use of language (or lack thereof) as for his

crime. Barthes' words serve as a poignant reminder of what can happen if one's voice is

supplanted or appropriated. Precisely such a condition does exist for males who have been

sexually abused. Currently, there is no discourse — medical, psychological, political, literary, or

otherwise — that encompasses the experience of this group of people. While the reasons for this

situation are many and complex, in each instance the victim is trapped between competing

discourses and has no grammar through which to elucidate his experience. The resultant state is

one that echoes the words of rapper Chuck D in describing the urban African-American male:

"Don't believe the hype!" The myths and stereotypes surrounding the sexual abuse of males force

men who have been victimized to conceal their situation by maintaining their silence lest they be

branded by society not for something they have done, but for something that was done to them.

Thus, the chapter examines the factors that combine to rob men who have been victimized of

(their) language in the hope of finding a space in which a discourse might exist. In order to

succeed, such a study must stand in opposition to Farrell and others who espouse a rhetoric of

exclusion. Moreover, it must find an area of commonality with feminist discourse for they share a

common goal: the end of the (patriarchal) enforcement of rigidly defined gender roles and

constructions. Yet this must be achieved without ignoring the experience of particular victims and

the differences therein since the victims in question are male.

Chapter 1

"See Me, Touch Me, Feel Me": Reading the Slender Male Body

What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how in-
finite in faculties, in form and moving, how express and ad-
mirable in action, how like an angel in apprehension, how like a
god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals.
And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?

William Shakespeare, Hamlet (II, ii, 292-6)

Introduction

This chapter traces two cultural strands which intersect in one cultural form, self-

improvement advertising aimed at men. The first of these is the figure of the "new man," which

appeared in the mid-1980s. The novelty lies in the positioning of masculine bodies precisely for

the purpose of being seen. The second cultural strand, the proliferation of technologies which

alter the body itself, as opposed to its coverings, makes the gap in the criticism more apparent.

The two cultural trends intersect most noticeably in the advertisements for the products and

procedures aimed at enhancing the bodily sense of masculinity. Product plugs and placements not

only reflect societal trends, their entire purpose is to convince consumers that they "need" the

good or service portrayed. Thus, the advertisements examined must be considered as an important

part of the modern normalizing machinery of power, in general, and especially as it functions to

reproduce gender relations. While this has become a critical commonplace in terms of the impact

on the perception and production of femininity, thanks in large part to Susan Bordo's pioneering

work in the area, the representations of contemporary men in body enhancement advertisements

remain to be examined for the ways in which idealized masculinities are portrayed and even

enforced.

When the "new man" appeared, the available criticism of the time was not equipped to account for the new positionings of male bodies. This is not to say that the criticism is inherently flawed. In fact, the line of critique Bordo and others employ provides the basis of my own analysis and provides an excellent starting point for a conversation in which I engage in this and succeeding chapters. To paraphrase T.S. Eliot, feminist critiques of enforced bodily regimes constitute "that which we know" ("Tradition" 433).[1] This should not mean, however, that they do not need reevaluation. Basically, I feel that the middle — that is, the approaches and analyses — are tremendously useful, but the ends — the starting assumptions and the conclusions — are only half right. For example, Lois Salisbury, former President of media watchdog Children Now, claims that female video game characters are overly sexualized and that "this causes young girls to have low self-esteem and poor body image." I concur, although two things give me pause. First, this type of viewpoint has been prevalent for at least twenty-five years and seems to have had little effect. Second, Salisbury adds that male characters in video games are not similarly sexualized and if the same self-esteem problems afflicted young males, there would be "massive public outcry." Despite the justifiable complaints about the sexist content of the *Duke Nukem* series of games, for example, the title character, complete with an exaggerated muscular physique, is highly sexualized. In the games' stories, women find Duke irresistible. Professional athletes are similarly sexualized and idealized and this does impact young boys negatively.[2] Nine-year-old "Paul," one of the respodents to a <u>Toronto Star</u> call for youth opinions on cloning wants a big brother cloned from WWE wrestler Rob Van Dam so he can "learn all the moves" to defend himself from bullies (qtd. in "Brand New Planet" 8). This is one anecdote, but in 2001, the United States government's National Institute on Drug Addiction (NIDA) survey reports that "25 percent" of

male weight-lifters who use steroids "reported memories of childhood physical or sexual abuse, compared with none who did not abuse steroids" (3). The previous year, the NIDA's "Monitoring the Future Survey" found that steroid use among high school students had nearly doubled over the four years preceding the study and that boys are more than twice as likely to take steroids. Clearly, then, young boys *are* similarly affected yet the response is silence rather than outcry.

Two parts of masculinity appear to be juxtaposed in this "new" reality: masculine behaviour and masculine bodies. In the previous regime, the two had, more or less, been inextricably linked. Robert Connell, recognizing that this is the case, writes: "True masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies — to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body. Either the body drives and directs action, or the body sets limits to action" (45). Indeed, in terms of physical labour, the body *is* the behaviour for all intents and purposes. What, then, happens when the bodily functions are no longer required or, as in many cases, are insufficient for the given needs? In the latter regard, aircraft and race cars are capable of performing beyond the physical capabilities of even the fittest people. IBM's famous Big Blue has humbled the Grand Masters of chess. This poses a serious difficulty, for, as Connell explains, "Arguments that masculinity should change often come to grief, not on counter-arguments against reform, but on the belief that men *cannot* change, so it is futile or even dangerous to try. Mass culture generally assumes there is a fixed, true masculinity beneath the ebb and flow of daily life" (45). So if men cannot change and mass culture assumes there is still a "fixed, true" masculinity, then how does mass culture reconcile the fact that the marketplace for masculinity has changed? Examining how this problem is negotiated in mass or popular culture then becomes the task at hand. Masculinity, though still something to be performed, is

increasingly something to be seen, to be looked at, which makes it not so much an active as a passive existence.

As was discussed in the Introduction, I feel it is necessary to borrow from and expand feminist critiques surrounding the representation of (female) bodies and femininity in popular culture. Connell notes that

> Approaches that treat women's bodies as the object of social symbolism have flourished at the meeting-point of cultural studies and feminism. Studies of the imagery of bodies and the production of femininity in film, photography and other visual arts now number in the hundreds. Closer to everyday practice, feminist studies of fashion and beauty [. . .] trace complex but powerful systems of imagery through which bodies are defined as beautiful or ugly, slender or fat. Through this imagery, a whole series of body-related needs has been created: for diet, cosmetics, fashionable clothing, slimming programmes and the like. (49)

Connell cites several exemplary works which trace how the images of the beauty and fashion industry, especially advertisements, come to be imposed on women and their bodies. Indeed, such analyses have become critical commonplaces. These critiques, Connell concludes, are "supported, and often directly inspired, by the post-structuralist turn in social theory. Michel Foucault's analysis of the 'disciplining' of bodies is a corollary account of the production of truth within discourses; bodies became the objects of new disciplinary sciences as new technologies of power brought them under control in finer and finer detail" (49). Generally, the power and the message of these advertisements is assumed to impact women only, or at least primarily. Yet, as will be discussed below, men's bodies began to be similarly informed, viewed, and even consumed in the 1980s.

The attraction of theoretical approaches based on Foucault's analyses of power is that

they foreclose notions of biological essentialism in favour of social constructions. In their

Introduction to <u>Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science</u>, Jacobus, Keller and

Shuttleworth state the prevailing assumption:

> It goes without saying that the body, whether masculine or
> feminine, is imbricated in the matrices of power at all levels, and not
> just or even primarily, on the level of theory; but the feminine body,
> as the prime site of sexual and/or racial difference in a white,
> masculine, western political and sexual economy, is peculiarly the
> battlefield on which quite other struggles than women's own have
> been waged. (2)

Placing the focus on discourse means concentrating on what can be changed; that is, the social. In

their view, even the supposed essential field of nature is constructed in and through discourse.

The trio write:

> Rhetoric surrounding the feminine body and its functioning or
> malfunctioning intersects with, and in some cases serves as a
> displacement of, contradictions in society at large; it requires,
> therefore, an analysis of the ways in which discourses themselves
> vie for power. However we look at it, the field of nature turns out
> to have been colonized already; language has always been there
> before us. (7)

Nevertheless, there are limitations to this viewpoint. Jacobus, Keller and Shuttleworth offer a hint:

"But language is of itself a means to power as well as a reflection of power relations. If we believe

that representations and discourses are a part of the ideologically shaped reality we inhabit, then

exploring the power of discourses and representations to construct that reality is one way to

understand and hence to subvert the workings of ideology in us and through us" (7). While they

allow that analyzing the power within is one way of considering discourses and representations,

few critics elaborate more than one approach.

In one of the essays included in the Jacobus, Keller, and Shuttleworth collection, Susan

Bordo considers several advertisements for the beauty and fashion industry.[3] The first image she studies (see Appendix A, Fig. 1), and her analysis of it provide both an exemplary critique and a sense of what needs to be added.[4] Bordo begins her brief examination of the image with a disclaimer: "Decoding cultural images is a complex business — particularly when one considers the wide variety of ethnic, racial, and class differences that intersect with, resist, and give meaning to dominant, normalizing imagery" ("Slender" 86). Though she admits many variants and multiple meanings, Bordo gives voice to only one, and in only one way. Bordo applies Foucault's distinction between two arenas of the social construction of the modern body, which the French philosopher calls the "intelligible body" and the "useful body" (136). Foucault applies the term "docility" to link the two constructions of the body. A docile body, then, is one "that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (136). For Bordo's purposes, the intelligible and useful bodies become "(1) the representational, and (2) the practical, direct locus of social control, through which culture is converted into automatic, habitual bodily activity" ("Slender" 85). Of concern to the present study, the intelligible body is taken by Bordo to include scientific and aesthetic representations of the body, norms of beauty, and models of health among its categories of analysis. It follows, then, that these become the *de facto* legislation prescribing the appropriate manners through which the intelligible body becomes the useful body, through which a docile body is improved. It is necessary, therefore, to consider both the practices through which the body is "maintained" and the representations through which meaning is transmitted, for in Foucault's formulation, "discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile bodies'" (138). That said, the primary focus of this chapter (and much of the remainder of the dissertation) is on the representational body — in this case, the cultural images of idealized masculinity. When

Bordo turns her method to the first photograph she overlooks its implications for masculinity.

From left to right, the image features a woman, a man, and the limbs of a third person. Bordo focuses mainly on the female figure, but does not explore fully the implications of the picture or even her analysis of it. The female's "boyish" slenderness might suggest "a new freedom, a casting off of the encumbrance of domestic, reproductive femininity" ("Slender" 86). This is not Bordo's preferred reading, however, for "when the same slender body is depicted in poses that set it off against the resurgent muscularity and bulk of the current male body-ideal, other meanings emerge. In these gender/oppositional poses, the degree to which slenderness carries connotations of fragility, defenselessness, and lack of power over against a decisive male occupation of social space is dramatically represented" ("Slender" 86).[5] I dispute nothing in Bordo's comments; rather, I question their rigour. In the picture, the central male body is shirtless, and perhaps in parallel, the female's midriff is bare. The musculature of the respective torsoes is similar and both are hairless. In North America, at least, there is a prohibition on publicly exposed female nipples but this means there is greater exposure of the male, which suggests a raw sexualization of his body. His tan heightens this impression. She wears a white skirt while he wears jeans. Whereas the white of her outfit suggests purity, even virginity, his jeans suggest something much different. The difference might not be as obvious otherwise. John Fiske's research on the statements jeans make, depending on who wears them and how they are worn, has become a staple in Cultural Studies classes. Although his students report that jeans provide "freedom" through their "facade of ordinariness," Fiske recognizes a normalizing tendency therein (2). Ironically, being an individual in youth culture means choosing the most popular garment. Such a contradiction is played out in Gap ads which feature celebrities wearing

the company's jeans while proclaiming, "This is original." Of course, there is nothing original

about jeans, nor did Gap invent them. The fact that the jeans are torn in the picture is no less

normalizing, for as Fiske remarks, "the wearer of torn jeans is, after all, wearing jeans and not, for

instance the Buddhist-derived robes of the 'orange people': wearing torn jeans is an example of

the contradictions that are so typical of popular culture, where what is to be resisted is necessarily

present in the resistance to it" (4). Adolescent rebellion, for example, falls into this category. Its

origins — that is, the source or impetus behind it — and "necessity" are assumed and never

questioned. Frequently, it is little more than a marketing ploy.

In any case, the jeans and the freedom they suggest also point to a sexualization of the

male body. Yet Bordo tells us that such advertisements are all about (and only about) sexualizing

and objectifying the female body. If anything, the female figure is de-sexualized through colour-

coding and her androgynous appearance. Moreover, the male is in the fore-ground and the centre

of the picture. This too, undercuts his independence because of the fact that she and we are

looking at him. When Bordo writes of the contrast between the two bodies' bulk suggesting

female fragility and masculine muscularity, she may be right. But she only considers the former to

be enforced by the normalizing power of this picture and others of the same variety. She does not

consider the implications for masculinities within the same picture. Robert Connell's statement

cited in the introduction regarding "occupying space" as a requirement of masculinity applies

here.[6] In this regard, it is equally possible that the male is commanding, even demanding the gaze

as a way of measuring himself against other men. The automobile (old, big, and "cherry") is also a

prerequisite for an adult male. This recalls Michael Kimmel's statement about being a "big wheel,"

the star, the centre of attention.[7] Ornamental culture dictates this approach to masculinity. The

impact of the male figure and his positioning calls into question Laura Mulvey's much cited

assertion regarding the gaze: "the pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and

passive/female" (19). In her formulation, the look of the spectator is aligned with the male

character because the male figure is coded as the bearer of the look. Therein lies another paradox:

the man cannot "decisively" occupy the space without becoming the focal point of the gaze. It is a

heterosexual gaze, at that, for although he is talking to an off-camera male (based on the pants vs.

skirt coding), he is definitely still the centre; he has the power, yet he is the one who is sexualized.

Focusing exclusively on the female body misses the disciplinary practices required —

legislated in Bordo's economy — to achieve and maintain the muscular male body depicted in the

advertisement. Perhaps the most demanding of these practices are those which reshape the body.

In this regard, Bordo observes that being thin is insufficient:

> The increasing popularity of liposuction, a far from totally safe
> technique developed specifically to suck out the unwanted bulges of
> people of normal weight (it is not recommended for the obese),
> suggests how far our disgust with bodily bulges has gone. The ideal
> here is of a body that is absolutely tight, contained, "bolted down,"
> firm (in other words, [a] body that is protected against eruption
> from within, whose internal processes are under control).
> ("Slender" 90.)

This is an important insight because many procedures, such as Botox, liposuction and collagen

injections are not gender specific. In addition, "Areas that are soft, loose, or 'wiggly' are

unacceptable, even on extremely thin bodies. Cellulite management, like liposuction, has nothing

to do with weight loss, and everything to do with the quest for firm bodily margins" ("Slender"

90). Bordo claims that this perspective helps illuminate an important continuity of meaning

between compulsive dieting and bodybuilding in our culture. These seemingly disparate images

are only superficially different for they are both aimed against "the soft, the loose; unsolid, excess flesh" ("Slender" 90). If we consider the situation as it pertains to masculinities, there is only one choice — the so-called "hard body" option — and the discipline, and disciplinary practices, required by such a regime. Youthful firmness, vigour, sex drive, and hair (or lack of hair) are the only options available. In many ways masculinity has been reduced to these phenotypic features.

Admittedly, the re-reading of the picture Bordo discusses adds another methodology to her Foucauldian framework. Through the mechanism of the gaze, psychoanalysis is added to the fold. However, the two approaches are neither mutually exclusive nor incompatible. Jacobus, Keller, and Shuttleworth allow that

> Methodologically dissimilar, psychoanalytic film criticism on one
> hand, and a Foucauldian approach to the cultural production of
> meaning on the other, suggest some of the ways in which the
> feminine body is produced, reproduced, and forcibly reduced in
> popular contemporary representations, mutating in response to the
> demands of scientific, political, and economic culture. (8-9)

The major difference between the two approaches lies in psychoanalysis' emphasis on sexuality as the bedrock of identity. Nevertheless, the recognition of a plurality of critical approaches stems from a need to deal with the myriad means by which disciplining discourses are disseminated. In terms of the "Foucauldian approach" Jacobus, Keller, and Shuttleworth explain: "contemporary eating disorders can be viewed as an aspect of the regulation of the female body; [therefore,] a semiotic analysis of the cultural representation of slenderness reveals the contradictions on which a consumer society is predicated even as traditionally gendered divisions of labor break down" (8). Observing that the various technologies of visual representation are also technologies of power, they add: "Here feminist analyses of the functioning of technology in film and the

technology of power in contemporary advertising offer an account of the modern (or future) Eve

tamed by the very revisions in the traditional representation of women which she seems to

initiate" (8). It is interesting to note the reference to "Eve" with its connotation not only of the

Biblical, but of the divinely created, as well. The analogy is curious in that it also infers that there

is something with which humans should not tamper: something essential, which in this case is the

human (female) body.[8] However, it was Eve who led Adam to the forbidden fruit. The analogy

then, becomes more questionable given the considerable increase in the occurrence of males

submitting to similar disciplinary practices.

"(Every Girl's Crazy 'Bout a) Sharp Dressed Man": The "New Man"

The primary underlying assumption in critiques of the enforcement of societal standards

regarding the female body is that females are the only ones affected. However, this does not

preclude a complementary analysis of an enforced idealized masculinity. Connell notes that

"Though work on the semiotics of gender has overwhelmingly focused on femininity, at times the

approach has been extended to masculinity" (50). But while there is hope for such analyses, the

primary focus remains on the female body as the exclusive recipient of societal disciplinary power

over the body. Sufferers of eating disorders represent a small portion of the population who are

outside the norm, but according to Bordo in spite of their obsessive "preoccupation with fat, diet,

and slenderness," anorexia and bulimia patients are not outside the norm: "Indeed, such

preoccupation may function as one of the most powerful 'normalizing' strategies of our century,

ensuring the production of self-monitoring and self-disciplining 'docile bodies,' sensitive to any

departure from social norms, and habituated to self-improvement and transformation in the

service of those norms" ("Slender" 85).[9] She asserts that the focus on pathologizing behaviours

diverts recognition from a central means to the reproduction of gender, since women are "more

profoundly [and] more ubiquitously" subject to such controls than are men ("Slender"85).

Without citing any specific sources, Bordo adds that, "It has been amply documented that women

in our culture are more tyrannized by the contemporary slenderness ideal than men, as they

typically have been by beauty ideals in general" ("Slender" 101). One truly hopeful and unique

aspect of Bordo's analysis is her suggestion that the "tyranny" of slenderness might represent

liberation from "a domestic, reproductive destiny" as much as it represents the containment of

female desire ("Slender" 103). These contradictory aspects might, she says, be part of the

compelling attraction for such a "look" during periods of gender change. In fact, she sees the

slender image and its anorexic extreme as part of a gender rebellion — by refusing to sustain the

body, the anorexic assumes total control over the body, its future and its shape — against

maternal, domestic femininity. Extreme anorexics will lose their menses which effectively

eliminates (one of the biggest sources of) biological differences. Bordo also sees the slender body

as part of the acceptance of the female into the male world of business because it abandons the

sexualized "hour-glass" figure. However, it could be the opposite, too: female professionals do

not want to be viewed as sex objects or as using sex to further their careers. Either way, the

slender body is related to increased power for women and liberation from reproductive destiny,

although it too has homogenizing effects.

Sandra Bartky, author of the influential essay, "Foucault, Femininity, and the

Modernization of Patriarchal Power," was among the first to apply Foucault's theory of power to

the study of the disciplined female body. Nevertheless, she finds that this approach has limits:

"Foucault treats the body throughout as if it were one, as if the bodily experience of men and

women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life. Where is the account of the disciplinary practices that engender the 'docile bodies' of women, bodies more docile than the bodies of men?" (63). Bartky's statement of the problem relies on the same assumptions with which Bordo begins. The problem does not lie in the belief that diffuse and often contradictory structures or technologies of power work to produce what Bartky calls a body "which in gesture and appearance is recognizably feminine" (64). Rather, Bartky's claim is (perhaps unconsciously) essentialist in that "recognizably feminine" implies that we all know what that is. Nevertheless, Bartky outlines three key categories of such practices: "those that aim to produce a body of certain size and general configuration; those that bring forth from this body a specific repertoire of gestures, postures, and movements; and those that are directed toward the display of the body as an ornamented surface" (64). In this regard, she examines the "nature of these disciplines, how they are imposed and by whom" (64) (pun intended?).[10] Although this suggests that such practices are part of an essentially feminine "experience," there is nothing whatsoever which precludes disciplinary practices from producing a similarly regimented masculine body based on a similarly assumed notion of an essential or ideal masculine body.

To an extent, analyses such as Bartky's and Bordo's become critiques of percieved patriarchal power rather than examinations of disciplinary practices. In Connell's words, the advantages of their approach can be a disadvantage:

> Social-constructionist approaches to gender and sexuality
> underpinned by a semiotic approach to the body provide an almost
> complete antithesis to sociobiology. Rather than social
> arrangements being the effects of the body-machine, the body is a
> field on which social determination runs riot. [However,] with so

much emphasis on the signifier, the signified tends to vanish [and]
the problem is particularly striking for that unavoidably bodily
activity, sex. (50-1)

it seems that Connell has his terms reversed here. What he means to say is that the signified — or

more properly, the ideology it represents — receives most of the attention while the signifier —

the physical, corporeal body through which the message is conveyed — gets overlooked. Connell

reminds us that "Bodies, in their own right as bodies, do matter. They age, get sick, enjoy,

engender, give birth. There is an irreducible bodily dimension in experience and practice; the

sweat cannot be excluded" (51). In contrast with purely constructionist approaches, "On this

point we can learn even from the sex role literature. One of the few compelling things the male

role literature and Books About Men did was to catalogue Problems with Male Bodies, from

impotence and ageing to occupational health hazards, violent injury, loss of sporting prowess and

early death" (Connell 51). Indeed, Warren Farrell dedicates eight chapters of The Myth of Male

Power to these topics. His chapter titles reflect both his topic and his personal take on it:

3. Are "Power," "Patriarchy," "Dominance," and "Sexism" Actually
Code Words for Male Disposability?
4. The Death Professions: "My Body, Not My Choice"
5. War Hero or War Slave?: The Armed Prostitute
6. The Suicide Sex: If Men Have the Power, Why Do They Commit
Suicide More?
7. Why Do Women Live Longer?
8. The Insanity Track
9. Violence Against Whom?
10. If We Cared As Much about Saving Males As Saving Whales,
Then . . . (7)

Like some of the feminists he derides, Farrell's bombast is as laughable as it is typical of the genre

to which his writings belong. This quality of "Books About Men" leads Connell to jest, "Warning:

the male sex role may be dangerous to your health" (51) As simplistic (and silly) as Farrell's

contentions appear, a critique like the one Susan Bordo offers for the picture above actually lends

credence to Farrell's preposterous claims. If, as Bordo claims, the female is coded as fragile and

defenseless, the male then becomes, as Farrell might suggest, her "unpaid body guard." Such a

role is no less imposed, no less legislated, making a critique more, not less, necessary.

Eventually, depictions of passive and/or sexualized males became common enough for

critics to consider their significance. The term "new man" was applied in recognition of the new

positioning of the male body. Sean Nixon attributes the term to a series of advertisements for

menswear in the mid-1980s that simultaneously depicted muscular masculinity and a passive mode

of male sexuality. Considering the clothing ads, Nixon notes that

> It was the innovations in menswear design — for example, broader
> shouldered suits, more flamboyant coloured ties, shirts and
> knitwear, figure-hugging sportswear lines — which established the
> key terms for the coding of the "new man" as a distinctive new
> version of masculinity. It was through the presentation of these
> menswear designs in popular representations that the "new man"
> was often coded. (295)

The trend in clothing has continued, with broad-shouldered double-breasted jackets giving way to

more fitted three and four-button single-breasted jackets (see Appendix A, Figures 2 & 3). The

white dress shirt has been replaced by boldly coloured shirts with matching ties and, more

commonly, knitwear. However, there was more to the "new man" than just wearing the right

clothes. When considering how the image of the "new man" is consumed, we are reminded

immediately of Laura Mulvey's critique of the male gaze, as was discussed in the Introduction.

In Mulvey's work, and much of the work that has followed her, the main controlling

figure is assumed to be male and the object of the heterosexual gaze is consequently female.

Given the premise that the visual media exist to portray women as passive sexual objects for the

consumption of the male gaze, it is not surprising that the "new man" advertisements seemed

somewhat new and paradoxical to scholars. The possibility that men could be anything other than

controllers of the gaze had yet to be given a great deal of critical attention. However, the "new

man" may not necessarily be entirely new. Instead, the ways of looking at the man, both literally

and metaphorically, have changed, and with them, the ways of being and becoming a man may be

shifting. For Nixon, what stood out about the "new man" advertisements was "a new framing of

the surface of men's bodies; one that emphasized not so much the assertive power of a muscular

masculine physique as its passive sexualization. [. . .] These were men's bodies openly inviting a

desiring look" (304). Yet this is still in keeping with Connell's position regarding the body:

> in our culture at least, the physical sense of maleness and
> femaleness is central to the cultural interpretation of gender.
> Masculine gender is (among other things) a certain feel to the skin,
> certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of
> moving, certain possibilities in sex. Bodily experience is often
> central in memories of our own lives, and thus in our understanding
> of who and what we are. (52-3)

While Nixon writes about clothed bodies, they are bodies nevertheless. The difference lies

primarily in the fact that these are masculine bodies positioned precisely for being seen.

Examining advertisements of the same era Nixon considers, Andrew Wernick surmises that men

have slipped into a narcissistic mode, "as being naturally in love with an image" of themselves

(292). However, the opposite is the case. Like women, men are increasingly made to feel that

their appearance and their bodies are inadequate.

"How, Ya Like Me Now?" The "Promise" of Cosmetic Enhancement

The advertisements for the products and procedures of body enhancements for men

provide a prime location of intersection and fusion for the two cultural trends of the "new man"

and the new body enhancements I have been tracing in this chapter. In keeping with feminist

critiques of analogous cultural texts, the focus of the remainder of this chapter is on the

contemporary preoccupation with "improving" the male body as part of a larger analysis of

representations of contemporary masculinity within a modern normalizing machinery of power in

general, and, in particular, as it functions to reproduce gender relations. Considering the

representations alone is not enough. In "The Body and the Representation of Femininity," Bordo

observes that "the study of cultural 'representations' of the female body has flourished, and it has

often been brilliantly illuminating and instrumental to a feminist reading of culture. But the study

of cultural representations alone, divorced from consideration of their relation to the practical

lives of bodies, can obscure and mislead" (27). However, representations are still the primary

focus of the discussion for several important reasons. Advertising is omnipresent and invasive. As

well, ours is an increasingly visual culture. The images with which we are bombarded serve as role

models and measuring gauges for both ourselves and our lifestyles. Thus, they become both the

curriculum and the rubric by which the self is disciplined and evaluated.

In addition to the coming together of cultural strands, there is a joining of critical thought.

Sean Nixon's approach to the "new man" is part of a movement to "advance a more general

argument about the representation process itself, its centrality to the formation of cultural

identities (in this case masculinities), and to reflect on the role of spectatorship and looking in this

process" (295). Although he considers the social and economic aspects of power entailed by the

"new man" trend, Nixon does not consider the actual body. Bordo explains the need for the

inclusion of the body in feminist work: "Exposure and cultural analysis of such contradictory and

mystifying relations between image and practice is only possible if one's analysis includes

attention to and interpretation of the 'useful' or [. . .] practical body" ("Body" 27). This type of

analysis, which Bordo characterizes as theoretically unsophisticated, lacking in theoretical rigour

and essentialist (due to the focus on the body), was abandoned subsequently: "for the feminisms

of the present decade, such focus on the politics of feminine praxis, although still maintained in

the work of individual feminists, is no longer a centerpiece of feminist cultural critique" ("Body"

27). Yet Sandra Bartky finds that "normative femininity is coming to be more and more centred

on woman's body [. . .] its sexuality [and,] more precisely, its presumed heterosexuality and its

appearance" (81). In her work, which precedes Bordo and Nixon, Bartky examines

representations and their impact; however, she considers not the draping but the shaping of the

body through the coercive nature of the exemplary images. She elaborates:

> This disciplinary power is peculiarly modern: it does not rely upon
> violent or public sanctions, nor does it seek to restrain the freedom
> of the female body to move from place to place. [But there is]
> regulation that is perpetual and exhaustive — a regulation of the
> body's size and contours, its appetite, posture, gestures and general
> comportment in space, and the appearance of each of its visible
> parts. (80)

Not surprisingly Bartky claims that "since it is women themselves who practice this discipline on

and against their own bodies, men get off scot-free" (81). In her formulation, men are absolved of

any responsibility for enforcing or serving the "sentence" involved.

However, Bartky's lack of foresight is not unique, nor should she be dismissed because of

it. Neither Sean Nixon nor Robert Connell, both specialists in Masculinity Studies, foresaw men's

rush towards cosmetic enhancement as the technologies became widespread. The following

passage from Connell is especially poignant when one recalls that his study was published as

recently as 1995. Connell observes:

> Cosmetic surgery now offers the affluent an extra-ordinary range of
> ways of producing a more socially desirable body, from the old
> 'face-lifts' and breast implants to the newer surgical slimming,
> height alterations, and so on. [. . .] cosmetic surgery is now thought
> natural for a woman, though not for a man. Nevertheless, the
> technology now extends to the surgical production of masculinity,
> with penile implants, both inflatable and rigid, to the fore. (50)[11]

The technologies have not only expanded but so has the acceptability of the procedures for men.

In cases such as body hair removal, it is becoming more socially acceptable to have cosmetic

procedures than not to have had any. For example, male models, for both fashion and fitness,

rarely have chest hair. Back hair never appears. Ian Fleming's James Bond has gone from a hairy

Sean Connery to a hairless Pierce Brosnan. Action heroes, body builders and professional

wrestlers shave body hair to enhance their muscle definition. In the last instance, only the bad

guys have chest or back hair. Body hair represents a more brutish, unrefined lifestyle and/or

person. Retired professional athletes have long endorsed pain medications and, since the late-

1980s, hair replacement products. Such is the reach of the enhancement products that *active*

professional athletes — the ultimate representatives of mainstream hegemonic masculinity in

North American culture — including the Texas Rangers' all-star first baseman, Rafael Palmeiro,

and NASCAR drivers Mark Martin and Derrick endorse Viagra and similar products!

The current emphasis on improving the male body comes at a time when that body is

having its usefulness reduced.[12] Connell recognizes new technology's impact on masculinity. With

respect to the influence of computers, he writes

> The new information technology requires much sedentary keyboard
> work, which was initially classified as women's work (key-punch
> operators). The marketing of personal computers, however, has
> redefined some of this work as an arena of competition and power
> — masculine, technical, but not working-class These revised

> meanings are promoted in the text and graphics of computer
> magazines, in manufacturers' advertising [. . .] and in the booming
> industry of violent computer games. Middle-class male bodies,
> separated by an old class division from physical force, now find
> their powers spectacularly amplified in the man/machine systems of
> modern cybernetics. (55-6).

This is in partial contrast to the previous emphasis on masculine qualities in the work force. As

opposed to desk work, "Heavy manual work calls for strength, endurance, a degree of

insensitivity and toughness, and group solidarity. Emphasizing the masculinity of industrial labour

has been both a means of survival, in exploitative class relations, and a means of asserting

superiority over women" (Connell 55). In either case, competition and power are part of the

equation. It has been a given that superiority over women is inherent to any assertion of masculine

power, but superiority over other men — the perceived main competitors — is just as important.

In terms of the representations of masculinity, one of the more interesting developments

has been the so-called "business casual" or "geek chic" trend in menswear. This look is typified by

Microsoft bosses Bill Gates and Steve Ballmer (see Appendix A, Fig. 4). The primary claim for

this suitless, tieless wardrobe is that it represents a "relaxed" and "non-threatening" manner. The

reality is that the poster-boy, Gates, is incredibly threatening in his business practices and, as

wealthiest man on earth, can dress any way he likes (Rushe).[13] In contrast is the trend of

"bigorexia," a body dysmorphic disorder which affects men who feel they do not have enough

muscle development (see Appendix A, Fig. 5) (AP). Admittedly, this condition afflicts a very

small proportion of the population. Dr. Eric Holland of Mount Sinai School of medicine explains

that "Body dysmorphic disorder affects probably 1 to 2 per cent of the U.S. population" (AP).

This figure includes both "bigorexics" and male anorexia patients. The latter category represents

"about one in 10 people currently in treatment" for body dysmorphic disorders (Kane). I have juxtaposed the images of Gates and Ballmer with the image of the body builder to depict extremes. Yet this is precisely the method of Susan Bordo and Sandra Bartky; they extrapolate their conclusions to the general population based on observing the extremes. In "The Body and the Representation of Femininity," Bordo concentrates on hysteria, agoraphobia, and anorexia. What is important is that we find that "all women aspire to a coercive standardized ideal" ("Body" 16). Although she never really addresses the problematics of trying to universalize from the extremes, as psychology often does, Bordo attempts to extrapolate from the extremes to the mainstream. While this is also a common practice in social or cultural criticism, the problem is that the worst-case scenario overlooks the "coercive standardized ideal" that applies to masculinity.

In a later essay, "Reading the Slender Body," Bordo points out that the body indicates one's place in society. As the cultural emphasis on the appearance of the body grows, "Increasingly, the size and shape of the body has come to operate as a marker of personal, internal order (or disorder) — as a symbol for the state of the soul" ("Slender" 94). As proof, she cites the changes in attitudes towards the muscular body. Whereas "muscles have symbolized masculine power," today "the well-muscled body has become a cultural icon; 'working out' is a glamorized and sexualized yuppie activity [. . .] the firm, developed body has become a symbol of correct *attitude*; it means that one 'cares' about oneself and how one appears to others, suggesting willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, the ability to 'make something' of oneself" ("Slender" 94). The theme of progress, or improvement, entailed in "making something of onself" is one of the foremost naturalizing techniques employed to sell body improvement products and programs. That is to say, progress is part of the normalizing discourse.

Obviously, progress is also part of the normalizing discourse of western capitalism. In fact, this is part of the argument for cosmetically altering — usually permanently — the body. There is even a magazine, Elevate, devoted to the subject. Greg Robins, editor of Elevate claims in a headline, "Cosmetic enhancement is natural" (8). Robins confidently asserts, "People have been changing their looks for thousands of years, and now we have science and expertise to alter our very bodies to suit our whim. There is nothing unnatural about this at all" (8). Here, Robins invokes the nature-culture debate in his defense of cosmetic procedures. In doing so, Robins cites the second argument offered as a legitimation for cosmetic enhancement: scientific discourses. Frequently scientific discourses find popular expression in the form of medical practices because medical expertise is virtually sacrosanct in North America. Feminism has been quick to criticize these discourses, particularly as they pertain to female bodies. For example, Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Keller, and Shelley Shuttleworth begin their collection by asserting that "Increasingly in the modern world, scientific discourses have come to articulate the authoritative social theories of the feminine body" (1). They recognize the ideological underpinnings of these discourses and how they function. Instead of empirical objectivity, Jacobus, Keller and Shuttleworth note that the

> discourses of science, so far from transparent or objective, are
> animated by narratives. Especially [when] peopled by feminine
> bodies, they are viewed in ways at once conservative and
> regressive, technological, and biologically impelled. [. . .] twentieth-
> century discourses make the feminine body the site of its
> contradictory desires and social theories, including those of
> feminism, itself. (9)

Similarly, perceived shortcomings of the male body, especially those caused by aging, have been appropriated by scientific discourses. A free mailing I recently received from The Hair Club For Men, "Hairloss Update," features an interview with Dr. Angela Cristiano of Columbia University.

Cristiano explains that there are two basic forms of hairloss, "Androgenetic Alopecia" and "Alopecia Areata" (4). The latter form affects far fewer people and stems from environmental causes; it is nobody's fault. In contrast, Androgenetic Alopecia — "male pattern baldness" — affects "over 50% of men above the age of 50 [and is] the result of maybe 6 or 8 or 10 genes working together under the influence of hormones to bring about the disease" (4). Lack of certainty aside, baldness is presented here as a *disease* caused by faulty genes. The language puts it on par with serious, actual diseases with genetic causes.

By itself, baldness is completely harmless. For Bordo, the effect of imposed scientific discourses is clear: "Through the exacting and normalizing disciplines of diet, make-up, and dress [. . .] we are rendered less socially oriented and more centripetally focused on self-modification. Through these disciplines, we continue to memorize on our bodies the feel and conviction of lack, insufficiency, of never being good enough" ("Body" 14). While researching a story about men's increased emphasis on appearance, James Deacon complained to a "representative from one of the cosmetics companies that her firm was selling to men the way it had always snared women — by telling them they have a problem that they didn't know they had and then offering the products to fix it" (32). The response was "Yeah? So?" (qtd. in Deacon 32). Herein lies one contradiction. Satisfaction is never attainable. Sandra Bartky summarizes nicely:

> The strategy of much beauty-related advertising is to suggest to
> women that their bodies are deficient; but even without such more
> or less explicit teaching, the media images of perfect female beauty
> that bombard us daily leave no doubt in the minds of most women
> that they fail to measure up. The technologies of femininity are
> taken up and practiced by women against the background of a
> pervasive sense of bodily deficiency (71)

Yet this is in keeping with the underpinnings of North American consumerism. In the famous

words of Charles Kettering, "the key to economic prosperity is the organized creation of

dissatisfaction" (qtd. in Rifkin 17). Although Kettering was a top executive at General Motors,

the application of his axiom is in no way restricted to automobiles.

The strategy that led to planned obsolescence for computers and cars has been turned, to

an extent, on the male body. The pair of advertisements depicted in Appendix A, Fig. 6 — one for

hair removal, and one for sexual dysfunction — operate together, as one text. In these ads, two

seemingly contradictory discourses are at work, yet they are part of the same overall process. The

male figure in the first ad has his (muscular and well tanned) back to the camera. This could be

interpreted as refusing to be looked at, but the text indicates that back hair removal is one of the

treatments offered. Once a sign of having reached sexual maturity, male body hair now has

negative connotations attached to it. In this regard, Mark Kingwell observes, "Hair plays a large

role in male entry to adulthood, of course, from the first sproutings on groin and chest to the first

shave, an act of initiation so common and apparently unremarkable as to have escaped sustained

theoretical attention. But that is too bad, because the act of shaving, for many boys, marks their

passage to a self-image of manhood" (336). Dr. Frank Beninger, a plastic surgeon in Toronto

notes that "approximately 70 per cent" of his patients have back hair removed and "almost 30 %

do their chests" because these are "associated with being older" (qtd. in Paradkar). Erectile

problems and diminished sex drive are also "associated" with getting older.

Bordo acknowledges that much has been made of eating disorders or body dysmorphic

disorders from psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives but she wants to pursue the images in

another direction than that of gender symbolism: "I want to consider them as a metaphor for

anxiety about internal processes out of control — uncontained desire, unrestrained hunger,

uncontrolled impulse" ("Slender" 89). What is interesting is that she then cites several (then) contemporary films in which images of erupting bodies function symbolically in the way she describes. Interestingly, all of the movies she cites — *The Howling, A Teen-Age Werewolf in London, The Fly, Alien* — feature male, not female, protagonists whose "new, alien, libidinous, and uncontrollable self literally bursts through the seams of the victims' old flesh," yet Bordo does not remark on this at all ("Slender" 89). For example, the monster bursts from the abdomen of a male crew member in the legendary scene in *Alien*. She admits to overlooking gender symbolism in her study but does not delve into the "deeper psycho-cultural anxieties [which] are being given form" when the figure is male ("Slender" 89). In a later essay about the male form, Bordo goes little farther than expressing surprise and delight over clothing ads depicting men offering themselves "nonaggressively to the gaze of another" (Male Body 171). She focuses primarily on the look and asserts that such advertising is not aimed at heterosexual men. Rather, Bordo suggests the ads and products target gays and minorities so that these already marginalized groups are further victimized by the power of consumer culture. I cannot disagree. However, many ads for products which enhance masculinity appear in newspapers' "Sports" sections, which are aimed directly at white, middle-class, heterosexual men. The Hair Club For Men's "Hairloss Update" brochure features "before-and-after" montages of thirty clients. Three African-Americans, two Latinos, one Asian and one South-Asian are depicted. The cover photo and the largest spreads feature white middle-class males.[14] I can say middle-class with some certainty since the costs of the Hair Club's procedures are substantial. The non-surgical application involves the weaving of a "matrix of invisible synthetic fibers" to which replacement human hairs are attached "strand by strand" (8). The process is time-consuming and needs to be repeated every three to five years.

The remaining hair then has to be cut frequently, using a special technique, to maintain the proper appearance. Finally, many ads and before-and-after montages feature female companions with the "finished product." Hair Club includes two pictures of men with (their) children to emphasize both heterosexuality and virility. Many of the "after" pictures feature men exercising. None have hairy backs or chests. Moreover, bald men and men with hairy backs in the "before" pictures are always alone.

Although they were not published together, the next pair of advertisements (Appendix A, Fig. 7 & 8) add another layer to the message. Figure 7 exclaims "Sex for life" and depicts a doctor-figure: he has a lab coat, a stethoscope, a pocket protector, and an authoritative look. This type of discourse of legitimation was practiced frequently at the "New You" trade show I attended in Toronto, 11-13 January, 2002. Lab coats abounded among the exhibitors at this cosmetic enhancement show. It did not matter whether the presenter was a doctor, a technician or a salesperson. Nevertheless the ad's message is clearly that being an aging male is a medical condition. The ad for hair removal in Fig. 8 introduces sex to that procedure. The female is draped across the man's chest — a medal or trophy — as he stares defiantly into the camera. He is demanding to be looked at. The headline directly addresses the viewer, who is most likely heterosexual. Hair has become a bodily discharge — not unlike urine, feces, saliva or sperm — that needs to be rejected, and desire is something over which one can now have precise control, based on the timing and number of pills one takes.

Thus, in consumer culture, we are increasingly what we consume, or purchase. Much has been written on this topic and I am not really engaged in a study of consumer culture's effects on the self. Neverthless, the self becomes the contested terrain. This creates a double-bind in that the

body must be both controlled and satisfied. Bordo neatly summarizes the double-bind: "we must be capable of sublimating, delaying, repressing desire for immediate gratification; we must cultivate the work ethic. [Conversely,] we serve the system through a boundless capacity to capitulate to desire and indulge in impulse; we must become creatures who hunger for constant and immediate satisfaction" ("Slender" 96). Bulimia provides an example because of the purges involved. But going to the gym after a weekend of indulgence is a purge too. The impulses to consume are turned towards the control of the body, solving the double-bind by fulfilling both sides alternately; that is, indulgence followed by gym-time. Bordo claims "total submission or rigid defense become the only possible postures" ("Slender" 99). I disagree. Hair needs "product" to maintain it. Men embarking on Rogaine applications will have to do so for the rest of their lives if they wish to maintain their hair. A commercial for the product advocates beginning use before hair loss occurs, just to be sure. The practice has been extended to commercials for Nicorette gum and Nicorest patches. These smoking cessation gimmicks, or "aids" require similar discipline and dedication; that is, repeat purchases. The body needs clothes, which have to show off the body and be updated as part of the ethic of caring for oneself. An entire lifestyle of consumption can be built around the precise control of the body in which you live that life. Weekends of indulgence can be "purchased" through compensatory hours in the gym. The consumer then becomes a self-regulating and self-perpetuating consumer. The work of control is done entirely by the individual. This is how power is seamlessly applied, but we need to think of power in terms of acceptance and proliferation as well as collusion and complicity.

No one is forcing men to attempt to mimic the men in the ads. In the pictures and captions for Progenis, for example, most if not all of the legitimating discourses come together (Appendix

A, Fig. 9 & 10). Although it is supposedly a potency enhancing drug, neither Progenis nor the website has been reviewed by the American Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Since it is a "natural," or "organic," substance — that is, an extract from a plant or animal — as opposed to a synthetic chemical produced by a pharmaceutical manufacturer, Progenis does not fall under the auspices of the FDA. This means that neither its safety nor its effectiveness has been evaluated. These are assumed because the product is "organic." It is not with a little irony that I recall Sophocles' hemlock and Coleridge's opium, among other "organic" products. Progenis offers "nature" as a discourse in other ways. It depicts heteronormative couples, as do the ads for hair removal. It claims to put a "tiger in the tank." The tiger, of course is the largest member of the cat family and a fierce predator. Sadly, its body parts are said to have healing powers and this has led to its being hunted to near extinction so that several forms of "traditional medicine" can be practiced, many of which involve supposed aphrodisiacs. There is a discourse of technologization as well. The slogan, "put a tiger in your tank" is still used by an oil company to sell gasoline. Once again, the "classic" image of man and automobile is invoked and conflated. Moreover, on the website for Progenis, the manufacturer makes several "scientific" claims for the success rate of the potion. This is in spite of having neither FDA testing nor approval.[15] Ads for similar "natural" or "organic" products frequently appear as Internet "spam," or unwanted emails.

However painful plucking, sugaring, waxing, shaving, lasers or electrolysis might be for removing body hair, neither these procedures nor pills like Viagra or Progenis are particularly invasive procedures. Indeed, this is part of their appeal. One of my colleagues who is also a laser technician reports that many men now have the hair on their necks below the jaw-line removed to avoid the repeated agony of shaving the area. Kathryn Morgan, applying Bordo and Bartky's

method to plastic surgery observes that "Now technology is making obligatory the appearance of youth and the reality of 'beauty' for every woman who can afford it. Natural destiny is being supplanted by technologically grounded coercion, and the coercion is camouflaged by the language of choice, fulfillment, and liberation" (274). Morgan does not elaborate on her definition of "natural destiny;" it may mean the aging process, it may suggest something essentially feminine, or both. Susan Faludi, in Stiffed, expresses a similar opinion regarding masculinity·

> the culture reshapes [a man's] most basic sense of manhood by telling him as much as it tells the celebrity that masculinity is something to drape over the body, not draw from inner resources; that it is personal, not societal; that to embody manhood is displayed, not demonstrated. The internal qualities once said to embody manhood — surefootedness, inner strength, confidence of purpose — are merchandised to men to enhance their manliness. What passes for the essence of masculinity is being extracted and bottled — and sold back to men. Literally, in the case of Viagra. (35)

The question, then, is not what is the "essence" of masculinity or femininity, but what is the definition now and who decides what it should be. Morgan points the finger at the technologization of the body. She summarizes:

> The beauty culture is coming to be dominated by a variety of experts, and consumers of youth and beauty are likely to find themselves dependent not only on cosmetic surgeons but on anaesthetists, nurses, aestheticians, nail technicians, manicurists, dietitians, hairstylists, cosmetologists, masseuses, aroma therapists, trainers, pedicurists, electrolysists, pharmacologists, and dermatologists. All these experts provide services that can be bought, all these experts are perceived as administering and transforming the human body into an increasingly artificial and ever more perfect object. (265)

It is the relentlessness and the variety of the procedures available that helps the current preoccupation with beauty — both male and female — to proliferate In addition, the seeming

harmlessness of the "treatments" makes them easier to endure.

Dr. Lary Freemont, a Toronto-based plastic surgeon, has made a career out of the speed and ease of his hair transplantation techniques. He has also made himself famous in the process. At the "Everything To Do With Sex" trade show, in Toronto, 26-29 October, 2001, Dr. Freemont performed a hair transplant in his booth. Only a window separated the "client" from the crowd.[16] Unfortunately, cameras were not allowed inside the building so I was unable to record the event. A picture from the Toronto Star of Dr. Freemont performing a "hair restoration" on another man is included in Appendix A, Fig. 11. Freemont is a world leader in hair transplant technique and he has clinics in eight countries; like McDonalds, this is a franchised business. Part of his notoriety is due to frequent "live" hair transplants to attract media attention. At the 2002 "New You" show he performed an eyebrow transplant! For the 2003 "New You" show, Dr. Freemont went back to performing a hair transplant. Usually the client is a media personality and the event is broadcast on radio or TV. The surgery at the earlier trade show was representative, so the associates said, of what happens in the office. The man was seated in a dentist-style chair and alternated among sipping coffee, reading a newspaper, and listening to music. Dr. Freemont estimates "about 10,000 transplants are done annually in Canada" (Mitchell). They cost between $3,000 and $10,000, depending on how many 5" x 1", or longer, "donor strips" of scalp have to be removed and diced into individual hairs. Each donor strip leaves a scar like the one in Appendix A, Fig. 12. The hairs are then stuffed, like pimentos, into thousands of slits in the scalp. Although they were not performing anything at the show, Esteem Cosmetic and Laser Centre claims similar comfort and convenience. A typical laser wrinkle removal is depicted in Appendix A, Fig. 13. The dark glasses are not necessary for most hair removal procedures. The client is able to relax while skin

and hair are burned away. I was given a "free consultation" by an associate — it was not free, it cost $15 to enter the show. The estimate for hair removal was four to six treatments for the chest and two to three for the back, just to be sure. This is about average. Each session costs $750, which means a total of $4,500 to $6,000. Competitor LCI boasts a two-year warrantee for its procedures.

"The Man in the Mirror": Gaze and Ornamental Culture

The part that struck me most as I watched the hair transplant was not what this had to do with sex. That is "obvious": without a youthful head of hair and a youthful hairless body, sex is not likely. Sandra Bartky lists the requirements: "skin must be soft, supple, hairless, and smooth; ideally it should betray no sign of wear, experience, age, or deep thought. Hair must be removed, not only from the face but from large surfaces of the body as well, from legs and thighs, an operation accomplished by shaving, buffing with fine sandpaper, or applying foul-smelling depilatories" (68). Since she leaves out chest and back hair, Bartky obviously writes about women, but the regimes are nearly identical. Rather, what struck me was that I was watching a man in a fish bowl. Though hardly an original thought, the notion of always being-watched recalls another critique of the normalizing discourses of the beauty industry. Foucault's notion of the Panopticon, which he borrows from Jeremy Bentham's prison design, offers an interesting line of criticism. The major effect of Panopticism is its power to

> induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility
> that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange
> things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is
> discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend
> to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural
> apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power
> relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that

> the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they
> are themselves the bearers. (Discipline 201)

According to Bartky, "a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment. Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other" (72). Kathryn Morgan echoes this view. She believes that

> In some ways, it does not matter who the particular judges are.
> Actual men — brothers, fathers, male lovers, male beauty "experts"
> — and hypothetical men live in the aesthetic imaginations of
> women. Whether they are male employers, prospective male
> spouses, male judges in the beauty pageants, or male-identified
> women, these modern day Parises are generic and live sometimes
> ghostly but powerful lives in the reflective awareness of women.
> (270)[17]

Both Morgan and Bartky allow for a same-sex gaze. For Bartky, "who but someone engaged in a project similar to my own can appreciate the panache with which I bring it off?" (72) Nevertheless, both Bartky and Morgan posit the female gaze as a surrogate for the male gaze. Bartky claims the "female gaze is trained to abandon its claim to the sovereign status of seer" (67). Morgan is more direct and damning: "A woman's makeup, dress, gestures, voice, degree of cleanliness, degree of muscularity, odors, degree of hirsuteness, vocabulary, hands, feet, skin, hair, and vulva can be all evaluated, regulated, and disciplined in the light of the hypothetical often-white male viewer and the male viewer present in the assessing gaze of other women" (270). What is interesting is that Morgan and Bartky arrived at the same conclusion — that a woman's gaze is actually a white man's because it has been imposed on her — via different critical paths.

Bartky bases her conclusion on a combination of Foucauldian thought and object-relations

psychoanalysis. The leading proponent of the latter school of thought, Carol Gilligan, boldly

states "women have traditionally deferred to the judgement of men" (69). The rationale behind

assertions such as Bartky's and Gilligan's is that there is an essential feminine experience and a

resultant essential feminine mode of reasoning, based on an ethic of care. A critique of these

assertions comprises a large part of the next chapter. In contrast, Morgan's assertion is based on

John Berger's claims in Ways of Seeing. With respect to the female figure in art, Berger

generalizes:

> A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually
> accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking
> across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father,
> she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping. From
> earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey
> herself continually (46).

Berger's belief is that there is a specific way of looking at women and even a way in which a

woman looks at herself. Naturally, this is different than the ways in which men are viewed. Berger

summarizes the difference between looking at men and looking at women: "*men act* and *women*

appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only

most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The

surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object

— and most particularly an object of vision: a sight" (47). One of Berger's main points of

emphasis is that the person being looked at knows she is being observed. This occurs because of

the arrangement of the image. Berger puts it simply: "Women are depicted in a quite different way

from men — not because the feminine is different from the masculine — but because the 'ideal'

spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him"

(64). The bit between the dashes is key. Berger does not necessarily assert mutual exclusivity.

Instead, the emphasis is on the construction.

Of course, Berger's analysis of the processes of looking inform Laura Mulvey's later

psychoanalytic perspective. As was mentioned previously, there are several deficiencies in

Mulvey's formulation. These become more noticeable when we consider the advertisements for

masculine enhancement. Like Steve Neale's later work dealing with the gaze when it is turned on

male bodies, Berger only considers subconscious, homosexual looks. For Sean Nixon, the

problem is that

> in line with much psychoanalytically informed work, both Mulvey
> and Neale foreground questions of sexual difference — differences
> between masculinity and femininity — and play down differences
> within these categories. The inability to consider differences
> between masculinities leads to their failure to consider the
> organization of other forms of sexual desire in the cinema. (320)

With respect to still photographs, Nixon observes that the model Neale and Mulvey propose has

further limits: "the look is conceived of as a fixed gaze within the environment of the cinema

auditorium. The conditions for this staging of the look are clearly not met in relation to the visual

representations that concern us here" (320). This immediately causes us to refocus questions of

spectatorship.

In the Neale/Mulvey formulation of identity, the subject is always based on the

fundamental positions Freud posits; that is, the Oedipal order. In this way

> Historical and social factors which determine identity are [. . .]
> reduced to [. . .] psychosexual structures. In addition, the emphasis
> on psychosexual structures produces a reductive account of identity
> conceived fundamentally in terms of sexual difference [with] the
> acquisition of gender and sexual identity as the bedrock of identity.
> Other determinants upon identity (such as class) are effectively

sidelined. (Nixon 321)

In addition, other view points, especially male-to-female identification and a platonic, or a

homosocial, even comparative, male-to-male look, are overlooked. This occurs because the

Neale/Mulvey position "pitches 'secondary' processes of identification only at the level of primary

processes and sees identity only in terms of sexual difference" (Nixon 321). Thus, while an "ideal"

male spectator may be aware of the female gaze — how he is seen by women — he may also be

aware of the male gaze as well — how he is seen by men.

Both of these gazes reveal themselves in Hair Club For Men's testimonials. Joey Cowan

relates "Every time I would walk in front of a mirror [. . .] I saw a receding hairline that [. . .]

definitely hurt my self-esteem" (12). Cowan reports being hurt by teasing but now claims "I can't

believe I spent a couple of years wondering and worrying what people thought about my hair

loss" (12). Fellow Hair Club client, Lee Marshall asserts that hair replacement "gave me back my

self-esteem" (13). "Mario," whose rhinoplasty was the subject of an episode of TLC's *A Personal

Story* expresses similar sentiments.[18] He had a bump caused by a breakage removed from his nose.

Mario enjoys his "finished" look: "So many people worry about pleasing other people. I've done

that for thirty-four years. Now I don't have to worry about what other people think." Life

Network's comparable program, *Skin Deep*, offered an episode about "Bruce T," a fitness trainer

who undergoes liposuction to remove a "spare tire" that exercise could not. Bruce T competes in

marathons and triathalons but does not think he "looks" the part. The strange thing is that in the

last two cases, those closest to the man know of the procedure before it occurred and were asked

for advice. In other words, no attempt was made to hide the procedure. Appearance is all. Clearly,

then, a panoptic observer resides in the minds of these men. A latent homosexual gaze may be

part of the process, but since heterosexuality is assumed (and enforced) a female gaze inhabits the

male psyche. Heterosexual males want to be attractive to women while at the same time

measuring up to competitors. All of these gazes possess and police, but do not belong to the

proverbial "man in the mirror." Actually, the ads — certainly *Skin Deep* and *A Personal Story*

have more in common with infomercials than with documentaries — and processes covered in this

chapter seem intent on seeing identity mainly in terms of sexual difference. It is merely the cost of

the "treatments" that separates the levels of men.

Although psychoanalysis of spectatorship is not the only mode of analysis, as it is in

Mulvey, the looks elicited add to an understanding of an image as a text. Stuart Hall explains

what is entailed: "You can tell a great deal about how the picture works as a discourse, and what

it means, by following the orchestration of *looking* — who is looking at what or whom. *Our* look

— the eyes of the person looking at the picture, the spectator — follows the relationships of

looking as represented in the picture" (59). John Berger's statements regarding the positioning of

women were derived from his observations of the tradition of oil painting. Of this form, he

explained that "Oil painting did to appearances what capital did to social relations. It reduced

everything to the equality of objects. Everything became exchangeable because everything became

a commodity. All reality was mechanically measured by its materiality" (87). Although such works

of art are no longer the predominant mode of visual representation, the manner in which oil

paintings were composed continues to influence contemporary images. The most significant of the

current forms is what Berger calls "publicity" (131). Berger creates the nice category of

"publicity" to deal with such things as advertisements: "Publicity is not merely an assembly of

competing messages: it is a language in itself which is always being used to make the same general

proposal. [. . .] that we transform ourselves, our lives, by buying something more [which] will make us in some way richer — even though we will be poorer by having spent our money" (131). Berger summarizes: "publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour" (131). The connection between oil painting and publicity lies not just in the composition, but also in the fact that both are "derived from the principle that *you are what you have*" (139). They are forms of "showing off" one's accumulated wealth. A person's success and standing in society are directly proportional to accumulated capital. As it pertains to the current discussion of masculinities, the concept of publicity has a definite analog in Susan Faludi's concept of "ornamental culture."

Contrary to her previous assumptions, Faludi finds that ornamental culture has actually had a more profound impact on males than on females. In North America, Faludi asserts that "Where we once lived in a society in which men in particular participated by being useful in public life, we now are surrounded by a culture that encourages people to play almost no functional public roles, only decorative or consumer ones" (35). Faludi attributes the rise of ornamental culture to a fundamental shift in the organization of North American society. Although she still tries to place her argument in terms of masculine and feminine, Faludi (without realizing it) hits on the essential aspect of ornamental culture when she observes

> Ornamental culture has proved the ultimate expression of the
> American Century, sweeping away institutions in which men felt
> some sense of belonging and replacing them with visual spectacles
> that they can only watch and that benefit global commercial forces
> they cannot fathom. Celebrity culture's effects on men go far
> beyond the obvious showcasing of action heroes and rock
> musicians. (35)

Faludi persists in referring to the culture of sexualized, passive display, of appearance over substance, as being essentially "feminine." This is not necessarily the case.

More properly, ornamentalism is the reality of the dominant North American culture that shapes the sensibilities of women *and* men. For example while Faludi recognizes that "It's often been observed that the economic transition from industry to service, or from production to consumption, is symbolically a move from the traditional masculine to the traditional feminine. But in gender terms, the transition is far more than a simple sex change and, so, more traumatic for men than we realize" (38). Unfortunately, she persists with dichitomizing masculine and feminine rather than exploring the intersections and interstices. The following passage, though illuminating, is typical:

> In a culture of ornament [. . .] manhood is defined by appearance,
> by youth and attractiveness, by money and aggression, by posture
> and swagger and "props," by the curled lip and petulant sulk and
> flexed biceps, by the glamour of the cover boy, and by the market-
> bartered "individuality" that sets one astronaut or athlete or
> gangster above another. These are the same traits that have long
> been designated as the essence of feminine vanity, the public face of
> the feminine as opposed to the private caring, maternal one. (39)

Faludi, like the other feminists cited in this chapter is quite right about the state of things. It is the underlying assumption of essential difference and patriarchal domination that falls apart under scrutiny and begs to be re-articulated. In this case the essential difference is a combination of constructed and innate qualities. Vanity is constructed; the capacity to give birth is not.

Again, the key lies in ornamental culture, or in Berger's term, publicity. The two terms would seem to be virtually interchangeable, especially as they pertain to masculinity. In the case of the former, Faludi laments

> Constructed around celebrity and image, glamour and
> entertainment, marketing and consumerism, [ornamental culture] is
> a ceremonial gateway to nowhere. Its essence is not just the selling
> act but the act of selling the self, and in this quest every man is

> essentially on his own, a lone sales rep marketing his own image
> with no paternal [influence] to guide him. In an age of celebrity, the
> father has no body of knowledge or authority to transmit to the son.
> Each son must father his own image, create his own Adam. (35)

In her slightly purple prose, Faludi compares the situation of contemporary men not only to *the*

Biblical myth, Genesis, but also to *the* critique of the American dream, Death of a Salesman. Her

reason for these allusions to American destiny is that "By the end of the American Century, every

outlet of the consumer world — magazines, ads, movies, sports, music videos — would deliver

the message that manhood had become a performance game to be won in the marketplace, not the

workplace" (37). This is simply part of a process of taking the message of the oil paintings Berger

considers to its fullest extent: you are what you can buy. In this regard, Kingwell cautions that

> The unspoken tragedy of urban life in our century is the constant
> struggle to afford the self-presentation we desire. I don't have to
> want the baggy convict-wear and brand-name jackets of the urban
> scene to appreciate the yearning evident in the startling statistic that
> the average inner-city African American spends $2,440 on clothes
> in a year, compared to the $1,508 considered sufficient by the
> average US consumer. (343)

Dr. Mark Kochman, a prominent Toronto cosmetic dental surgeon, concurs. Speaking of the

demographics of his clientele, Dr. Kochman notes that they are more likely to be "stock boys than

CEOs" (as qtd.). The rationale behind such seemingly outlandish expenditures is the desire to get

ahead and to obtain any possible advantage in doing so. In contrast, CEOs have little to prove.

The idea of publicity, Berger explains, is to make oneself an envied object. An envied

object has to be looked at; moreover, it becomes an object of desire. This occurs, in Berger's

words, because

> Publicity begins by working on a natural appetite for pleasure. But
> it cannot offer the real object of pleasure and there is no convincing

> substitute for a pleasure in that pleasure's own terms. [. . .] This is why publicity can never really afford to be about the product or opportunity it is proposing to the buyer who is not yet enjoying it. Publicity is never a celebration of a pleasure-in-itself. Publicity is always about the future buyer. It offers him an image of himself made glamorous by the product or opportunity it is trying to sell. (132)

The pleasure is actually in being looked at, in being envied. Berger observes, "Publicity is about social relations, not objects. Its promise is not of pleasure, but of happiness: happiness as judged from the outside by others. The happiness of being envied is glamour. [. . .] The power of the glamorous resides in their supposed happiness" (132-3). This accounts for the unfocused looks Berger notes in many advertisements. The people in the ads are looking over the people who envy them. They do not notice their inferiors and they have better things to look at than the rest of us. The logic is that we envy those in the ads, despite their haughty or indifferent looks, and will be envied once we buy the product. There is a definite connection between the language of the ads and their success with an aging population. Elevate and "New You" are forthright in their focus on "Baby Boomers." Life Network's Alfons and Amos Adetuyi hope to attract the same demographic with *Skin Deep*: "the series gets under the skin of cosmetic surgery, one of the fastest growing medical specialties. Baby boomers — from 35 to 50— had 46 per cent of all cosmetic procedures in 1997" (qtd. in Habib). Berger asserts that publicity is "in essence, nostalgic. It has to sell the past to the future. And so all its references to quality are bound to be retrospective and traditional" (139) The past, the way things were, becomes something to be envied. The ads for cosmetic enhancement claim to "restore," "renew," "revitalize," "replace" or "regain" some lost object.[19] As Berger summarizes, "The purpose of publicity is to make the spectator marginally dissatisfied with his present way of life [   ] It offers him an improved

alternative to what he is" (142). The present is insufficient because it is the lived experience. The

past and future live, unblemished, in fantasy.

"What a Man": Conclusions

The ultimate fantasy being sold is the same type of false individuality John Fiske attributes

to blue jeans. It is in this regard that Faludi most misses the mark. She assumes ornamental culture

is an essentially feminine experience; that is, part of the experience of inhabiting a female body.

Even as it relates to men Faludi considers ornamental culture in these terms:

> The aspects of this public "femininity" — objectification, passivity,
> infantilization, pedestal-perching, and mirror-gazing — are the very
> ones that women have in modern times denounced as trivializing
> and humiliating qualities imposed on them by a misogynist culture.
> No wonder men are in such agony. Not only are they losing the
> society they were once essential to, they are "gaining" the very
> world women so recently shucked off as demeaning and
> dehumanizing. (39)

Faludi sees men encountering experiences that were previously perceived to be specific to women,

but she does not note the full implication of the observation. The reality is that the dominant

culture increasingly focuses on consumers who happen to be gendered as opposed to the other

way around. Berger recognizes this situation: "Publicity is the life of this culture — in so far as

without publicity capitalism could not survive — and at the same time publicity is its dream"

(154). The ultimate goal of any producer is repeat customers. In other words, docile, disciplined

bodies. Maclean's editor, Anthony Wilson-Smith, suggests "it's tempting to describe the primping

and preening process that many men subject themselves to these days as the final revenge of

femininsts: now males undergo the same cosmetic rituals that have driven generations of women

to despair. But it's unfair to hang the rap on women: guys are doing this to ourselves." No one

forces North American men to spend "$10 billion annually on their 'look.' [. . .] And insiders estimate its growing at more than 10 per cent each year" (Graham). Bartky has trouble directly attributing the influences on femininity. She claims that since "the disciplinary practices of femininity produce a 'subjected and practiced,' an inferiorized, body, they must be understood as aspects of a far larger discipline, an oppressive and inegalitarian system of sexual subordination. This system aims at turning women into the docile and compliant companions of men just as surely as the army aims to turn its raw recruits into soldiers" (75). While the analogy is bombastic and dated, it is not entirely without merit. The disciplinary practices of masculinity and femininity do produce subjected and practiced, inferiorized bodies.

Bartky cleverly returns to the notion of the Panopticon to describe the mechanism through which power is enforced. At some point, "knowing that he may be observed from the tower at any time, the inmate takes over the job of policing himself. The gaze that is inscribed in the very structure of the disciplinary institution is internalized by the inmate: modern technologies of behavior are thus oriented toward the production of isolated and self-policing subjects" (80). While she calls self-surveillance a form of obedience to patriarchy, it is also the means through which repeat customers are established. Hair colour needs to be reapplied every four to six weeks. Shaving, for instance, is a daily ritual. Indeed, Mark Kingwell remarks on the importance of such rituals for the reproduction of masculinity: "Learning how to shave – to remove the very hair that marks puberty – thus takes its place in the set of routine skills that modern urban fathers routinely pass on to their sons" (336). However, this ritual is no longer passed from fathers to sons. Fathers are no longer the ultimate role models. The (ever-changing) norms are dictated by the consumer culture. Increasingly, this culture is a visual one. The feminist scholars cited throughout this

⊂⊓aᴏter recognized the pervasiveness and power of the media on femininity. However, they

underestimated its power by assuming it impacted only women. Clearly, something more complex

is occurring.

Returning to the military analogy Bartky develops, we should recall the absolute

uniformity of the soldiers. They are stripped of any individuality and their appearance — clean

shaven, shorn hair, drab uniforms, caps pulled over eyes — is a key contributing factor. This is the

end result of cosmetic enhancement. Bartky observes that

> In the language of fashion magazines and cosmetic ads, making-up
> is typically portrayed as an aesthetic activity in which a woman can
> express her individuality. In reality [. . .] making-up the face is, in
> fact, a highly stylized activity that gives little rein to self-expression.
> Painting the face is not like painting a picture; at best, it might be
> described as painting the same picture over and over again with
> minor variations. (70)

A stable revenue stream needs a predictable consumer group. Although she does not acknowledge

it, Bartky's statement regarding mass produced uniformity suggests comments about mass culture

made by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their famous essay, "The Culture Industry:

Deception as Mass Enlightenment." The Frankfurt School thinkers turn to the automobile as the

best example of the effects of North American consumerism: "the difference between the Chrysler

range and General Motors products is basically illusory" (34). They consider individuality to be an

illusion in an age of mass production. In their view, the individual "is tolerated only so long as his

complete identification with the generality is unquestioned" (40). Adorno and Horkheimer refer to

the effects of the consumption of mass produced goods; mass produced bodies were not yet a

reality. Their Marxist view point is no more satisfying than any of the myriad positions –

materialist, psychoanalytic, post-structuralist, essentialist – presented earlier, for contained within

their statements is the assumption that consumers are duped by producers and marketers.

Therefore, the dominant culture actively enforces its will on the general population. This is clearly

not the case.

On the contrary, the exhibitors at the "New You" shows were fairly explicit about the

costs, pain, and recovery involved in their procedures.[20] Consumers know in advance the cost, the

pain, and the superficiality of the procedure involved and choose to do so anyway. Speed then

becomes a primary concern. Recovery time should be minimal in order for the process to seem

"natural." As well, it is ideal to be the first person in one's peer group to acquire, as opposed to

achieve, a perfect body. This results in a false sense of individuality based on the perceived ability

to stand out in a crowd. However, the need to "keep up with the Joneses" — that is, progress for

the sake of progress — means that others will endure similar treatments lest they stand out

negatively. Sadly, this substitute for individuality is more short-lived than the effects of most

treatments. More telling, though, are men's reactions to the need to "keep up." Heather Hodgson,

the practice manager at a prominent Toronto area clinic, explains the attraction of botox and

liposuction among her middle-aged male clients: "They're talented and experienced, but

nowadays, appearance is more important than ever in business. They're just doing what they have

to do" (qtd. in Deacon 33). Andrew Wernick predicts such an eventuality and he outlines three

negative effects of the increased emphasis on men's appearance. Wernick cautions that "where

embodied in socially real-seeming representations [gender] masks the inequities that still really

prevail [. . .] In this way male and female [. .] become the mere stuff of cultural coinage" (293-

4). For Wernick this means that men, "like women are encouraged to focus their energies not on

realizing themselves as self-activating subjects, but on maximizing their value as tokens of

exchange" (295). Wernick's conclusions could not foresee the reaction Hodgson indicates. Men

just "do what they have to do." They react with silent acquiescence; every purchase says so.

Faludi expresses astonishment at men's silence.[21] She recognizes that North American men lack

the type of coherent voice feminism offers women. In some ways men are easier targets because

of their silence. This is not to suggest that men always react to every cultural shift with silence.

Rather, men's silence tends to be overshadowed and ignored. This theme figures most

prominently in the final chapter, but the notion of men's acquiescence to revised gender roles in

contemporary cultural productions — especially those that emphasize the body — underlies the

remainder of my project.

Chapter 2

"Everybody Else Ain't Your Father":

Reproducing Masculinities in Cinematic Sports ·

"It breaks your heart. It is designed to break your heart. The game begins in the spring, when everything else begins again, and it blossoms in the summer, filling the afternoons and evenings, and then as soon as the chill rains come, it stops and leaves you to face the fall alone."

Dr. A. Bartlett Giamatti, President Emeritus, Yale University and Commissioner of Baseball

Introduction:

The previous chapter considered depictions of masculinities as they are constructed

physically — that is, medically and cosmetically, as opposed to aesthetically — and argued that

like feminine beauty, masculine appearance has become both a token of exchange and a perishable

commodity in (the culture of) contemporary North American capitalism. Men's reaction, in

contrast to the strong voice of feminism, has been silence. Sports seem a logical cultural form for

further analysis of these trends. The demand for physical prowess places an emphasis on the body

and often dictates its appearance. As well, athletes, especially in professional sports, know that

they and their bodies have a "shelf life." In the language of sport, men often "suck it up and take

one for the team;" that is, they accept what is required of them and perform accordingly. Rather

than actual sports, however, I have chosen the sports film genre to discuss the social and

psychological dimensions of contemporary portrayals of masculinities. Although they depict the

competition of sports (with varying degrees of success) sports films peer into the characters and

their relationships and they depict idealized versions of sporting culture. Most of the action occurs

away from the field and the "good guys" always win, though not always on the field. In

considering the genre of sports films, I introduces several themes which will be central to the

remainder of the dissertation: the intergenerational relationships, especially those between sons

and their (figurative) fathers, the passage into "manhood," and the presence of men in non-

traditional roles which might provide points of intersection between feminism(s) and studies of

masculinities. The male body is not ignored in this treatment. Thus, the theme of the spectatorial

gaze, and its composition when men are its objects, is rejoined in this chapter, as it will be

throughout the entire work. Taken together the social practices described above, and their

representations in the popular media, inform the process of be(com)ing a certain kind of man in

contemporary North America; a process for which there are increasingly fewer avenues. A

consideration of the formula of the sports film genre — a genre that has rapidly increased in

popularity since the Reagan era — demonstrates the shifts that have occurred, specifically in the

relationships between fathers and sons.

In order to present plots and characterizations that are readily recognizable to the viewer,

the typical sports film involves an aging coach (usually looking for redemption), an aging veteran

(sometimes the two are combined), a young player (generally from a different background than

the coach/veteran pairing), who is in need of guidance, a tenuous relationship between players and

management, often with the folding, sale, or movement of the team looming, and a female

intrusion into the masculine world of sports, most frequently in a management position. The

younger and older men struggle to relate to one another. Their struggle corresponds with the on-

field performance of the team, which is always enduring a seemingly interminable losing streak.

Eventually, the older player or the coach becomes a father figure to the younger player's son and

the latter passes into manhood. Once this relationship solidifies, the team's fortunes are reverse

and they achieve victory. This formulation and its variations reflect not a change in masculinities,

but in what contemporary society is doing to men: there are increasingly fewer opportunities and venues through which males can learn how to be men.

Several important cultural themes combine in the sports film genre. First, there is the importance of being a "star," as opposed to a hero, who is interested only in self-promotion, in being the object of the gaze. Masculine nurturing, from coaches and teammates, provides a direct counterpoint to the first. Varda Burstyn points out in <u>Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport</u>, "sport became a major site for male sexual display in the late nineteenth century and benefited most directly from the homoerotic interest of the male gaze" (218). The "benefits" of the homoerotic gaze extend beyond sport, for as Burstyn recognizes and as demonstrated in the last chapter, that gaze "was mobilized in the twentieth century to sell men's fashions and grooming aids" (218). While acknowledging that men can be and are objects of the gaze, Burstyn insists that when the gaze is focused on men (by men), it is homoerotic in nature. As discussed previously, the homoerotic gaze is not the only (type of) gaze that attracts men to "fashions and grooming aids." Comparison and competition — the need to "keep up" — provide (as) much of the motivation in terms of appearance and in terms of sports. Similarly, the homoerotic gaze accounts for half of the paradox posed by the male figures in sports films. Although the passive sexualization of the objectified male might suggest that he is feminized, the muscular masculinity in most competitive sports immediately interrogates this position, as does the masculine display and the competition entailed in sport.[1] As well, the homoerotic thesis gives no weight to viewpoints of females and heterosexual male viewers. Men are only considered in terms of homoeroticism — no other dimension is considered — and females are presumed not to enjoy looking at anything.

More important, critiques of the gaze are more interested in sex than in gender. That is to

say, they are concerned with looking at a sexualized person as opposed to being or becoming a

gendered person. This point relates to the second important theme of the current chapter:

nurturing. The concept of masculine nurturing is not entirely without controversy.

Feminists such as Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein called for men to assume a larger

role in the upbringing of children in the early 1970s. Their hope was that greater fatherly

involvement in the child-rearing process would alleviate two problems at once: first, it would

eliminate, or at least lessen, the effects of absent or distant fathers, especially for boys; second, it

would reduce the workload imposed on women by their exclusive nurturing, or domestic, role.

Nevertheless, the possibility of increased masculine involvement is not always viewed in positive

terms. For example, Tania Modleski feels threatened by the concept. Regarding its treatment in a

cinematic form, in movies such as *Mr. Mom* and *Three Men and a Baby*, in the late 1980s and

early 1990s. Modleski fears that these movies depicting "male mothering" demonstrate

> the insufficiency of this solution to the problem of misogyny: it is
> possible, the film shows, for men to respond to the feminist demand
> for their increased participation in childrearing in such a way as to
> make women more marginal than ever. In the final analysis, the
> effect [of masculine nurturing] is simply to give men more options
> than they already have in patriarchy: they can be real fathers,
> "imaginary" fathers, godfathers, *and* surrogate mothers. (89)

Modleski is convinced that the end result of masculine nurturing will be the elimination of females

from yet another role in society. The limitation of her view is that she equates masculine

participation as an attempt to further patriarchy and hence the enforced exclusion of women. That

notwithstanding, Modleski never actually defines what patriarchy is nor does she elucidate her

fear This is in part because Modleski's unstated assumption, in contrast to Chodorow and

Dinnerstein's, is that patriarchal domination is the inevitable consequence of masculine involvement in childrearing.

"It's a Simple Game": Genre

Sport is an important cultural phenomenon, for as Varda Burstyn recognizes, it organizes bodily activities that are transhistorical and cross-cultural in scope: "The existence of a physical contest is taken as the defining criterion for sport. There is considerable merit to this perspective. The basic repertoires of bodily gestures (running, jumping, throwing, swimming) do appear transhistorically and cross-culturally" (Burstyn 14). In North America, sport plays an important role in our culture. Each of the four major professional sports leagues (basketball, baseball, football and hockey) has added teams in the last decade after little or no growth in the 1980s.[2] These leagues are so dominant that several upstart competitors — including women's leagues — have generally failed miserably. These four sports also dominate contemporary sports films. Coverage of sports at all levels has also increased through the addition of all-sports television networks and even a few, such as SpeedTV and The Golf Channel, that are dedicated to a specific variety of sport. It is not surprising, then, that Burstyn concludes:

> Sport is everywhere in contemporary society: in schools,
> community centres, summer camps, public recreation systems,
> country clubs, union halls, and corporate offices. As a result, the
> identification spectators feel with the spectacle is based to a large
> extent on personal sports participation in childhood and
> adolescence, especially for boys and men. In this sense the spectacle
> of modern sport is not, as some would have it, only a passive and
> nonparticipatory experience. There still exists a shared, common
> experience between players and their legion of fans. (141)

In terms of its significance for men, sociologist Robert Connell explains that "In historically recent times, sport has come to be the leading definer of masculinity in mass culture" (54). Only a very

select few become elite athletes: the rest can compete at much lower levels, fantasize, or

participate vicariously. Thus, sports films help to compensate for the disparity between those who

cannot be and those who are professional athletes by contributing to the fantasies of the former

group. By translating athletics to a cinematic venue, the film maker is better able to foster an

identification between the characters and the viewers by placing the protagonists in situations that

cannot be viewed in a regular sporting event. The combination of sport and film then becomes an

ideal location for the portrayal and revision of contemporary masculinities.

It may seem trivial to recall that genre refers to the categorization of a group of works

according to plots, characterizations, settings, themes, formulas, stereotypes and other common

features. However, it is worth recalling this term because it signals viewers' expectations about

the kinds of stories and affects they offer — even for those who rarely watch a sports movie or

for those who would watch a sports movie but not a professional (or other) televised sporting

event. Our expectations mean that we will know roughly what kind of story will unfold because of

our familiarity with the codes and conventions of the genre. Christine Gledhill suggests these

conventions "represent a body of rules or codes, signifiers and signs, and the potential

combinations of relations between, signs which together constitute the genre" ("Soap" 351).

More significantly, familiarity with (a) genre allows viewers to discern differences and variations

when they occur. In this regard, Steven Neale differentiates between verisimilitude and realism,

since the latter is a "highly problematic category" ("Soap" 360). Neale divides verisimilitude into

two categories that he refers to as "cultural verisimilitude" and "generic verisimilitude." Gledhill

nicely summarizes the distinction: "Whereas generic verisimilitude allows for considerable play

with fantasy *inside* the bounds of generic credibility, cultural verisimilitude refers us to the norms,

mores, and common sense of the social world *outside* the fiction" ("Soap" 360). In fact, Neale

states that verisimilitude is "complicated by the existence of genres, as each genre has its own

particular conventions of verisimilitude, over and above those of mainstream narrative fiction as a

whole" (Genre 36). In a later article, Neale further elaborates his position: "The concept of

verisimilitude is central to an understanding of genre, as is the question of social and cultural

functions that genres perform" ("Questions" 45). By verisimilitude, Neale means "'probable' or

'likely'. It entails notions of propriety, of what is appropriate and therefore probable (or probable

and therefore appropriate)" ("Questions" 46). Furthermore, Neale maintains that

> verisimilitude is never a question of "fidelity to the real" (however
> one defines the real). It is always a function of systems of credibility
> [. . .] genres function so as to provide and to institutionalise a
> variety of the possibilities of fictional credibility allied to a variety of
> the possibilities of 'cinematic credibility,' thus binding the two
> together all the more strongly as the very ground of cinematic
> address, as the very basis of the relations between cinema and its
> spectators. (Genre 36-7)

Generic verisimilitude ensures that films within a specific genre will resemble each other enough

to be recognizable as members of that genre. In Neale's words, generic verisimilitude "is a

question not of particular and exclusive elements, however defined, but of exclusive and particular

combinations and articulations of elements, of the exclusive and particular weight given in any one

genre to elements which in fact it shares with other genres" (Genre 25). The individual elements

of a particular genre may appear in other, often seemingly different, genres. It is the arrangement,

then, of the elements that separates the genres from one another. Generic verisimilitude

guarantees the (type of) outcome that is likely, which cannot happen in "real" life.[3]

In contrast, cultural verisimilitude measures the extent to which a narrative form mimics

"real" life. Since cinematic sports depend on viewers' identification with the subject matter, and given the mass appeal of sports, the genre necessarily emphasizes cultural verisimilitude. In such a genre, there is consequently a need "to maintain the recognition of existing audiences and attract newly emerging ones, together with the constant need for new story material and the need for an edge over competitors, makes topicality, being up-to-date, controversy, all vital factors in the form's continuance" ("Soap" 361). These factors contribute to the cultural verisimilitude of the form and ensure that the films reflect the society that produces them. Therefore, sports films, with their heavy investment in cultural verisimilitude as conveyed in "life-like" portrayals of physical, masculine competition are likely to exhibit shifting patterns of masculinities, should they occur. However, Neale cautions that "genre films and their conventions tend to be collapsed in the 'reality' which is held to motivate them. Hence, two impulses are constantly at odds, their mutual incidence engendering a further set of contradictions, most notably between general statements with regard to a genre and its socio-historical 'roots' and particular analyses of specific genre films and conventions" (Genre 15). In historical films, the balance is often between "accuracy" and drama. Similarly, the realistic elements of sports films — physical competition — are in tension with the generic elements — nurturing relationships.

In addition to the relationship between cultural and generic verisimilitude, Neale considers the extent to which "generic regimes of verisimilitude can ignore, sidestep, or transgress [. . .] broad social and cultural regimes" ("Questions" 47). Thus, as will be shown, the generic elements of sports films — elements which it shares not only with sports but also with other movies and narrative forms — can also transgress the prevailing social and cultural regimes by playing with those elements The salaries and privileges athletes receive make identifying with them very

difficult for most fans. Excessive or extravagant displays of wealth, especially at a young age, alienate the fans who pay players' salaries through the purchase of exhorbitantly priced tickets. Ohio high school basketball star Lebron James has become the most controversial figure in recent memory. Without ever having played a game at the collegiate level, let alone the NBA, James continues to receive gifts, such as limited-edition replica jerseys, shoes, jewelry, tickets and an $80,000 Hummer. The Hall of Fame has asked for James' high school uniform for a display. With his Hummer, the eighteen-year-old has committed several traffic offenses, including backing over another car at a stop sign. The collision occurred, says James' mother, because people jealously hound him. The woman he hit had no idea who was driving. In all fairness, James will need to improve the ostentation part of his game to keep up with his future colleagues.[4] For some athletes, flaunting wealth and privilege combines with detachment from the rest of the world, which further alienates fans. Tampa Bay Buccaneer Simeon Rice found himself the target of angry fans following an interview on the *Jim Rome Show* on 7 Feb. 2003. Rome asked Rice about his former teammate, Pat Tillman, who gave up an NFL career to join his brother in the U.S. Army Rangers. Rice could not understand why fans might admire Tillman: "He wasn't that good." Moreover, Rice claimed Tillman has "some sort of Rambo thing" he needs to resolve. Rice also questioned the wisdom of giving up easy money. Fans reacted angrily to Rice's comments Although they may fantasize about being professional athletes, they relate as well to their often extravagant lifestyles as players seem to relate to quotidian concerns. More than anything, fans scorn athletes who fail to appreciate their good fortune — perceived or otherwise — and who fail to love the game.

"Know your role": Where Sports Films Fit

In considering the sports film genre, it is important to consider how it is related to other genres. As discussed earlier, Steve Neale suggests that films within a particular genre also share traits with films belonging to other genres. The sports film is no different and its affinities reflect the affinities of sport "in real life." Sports films have much in common with action movies, such as the *Rambo* and *Missing in Action* series that were made during the 1980s because both genres employ the father-son relationship that occurs within a context of organized, ritualized violence and masculine competition.[5] These movies featured fierce, often grossly exaggerated, depictions of combat situations whereas contemporary sports films depict equally fierce, and often equally exaggerated depictions of sporting events. However, the connection between organized sport and war and the resultant gender order should not be overlooked. In this regard, the main contribution of Varda Burstyn's <u>Rites of Men</u> is that she connects contemporary sporting culture with Susan Jeffords' study of action films, <u>The Remasculinization of America: Hollywood, Gender, and the Vietnam War</u>. Jeffords analyses action films in terms of their attempts to re-articulate the American experience in Vietnam; that is, to win (in Hollywood) the war that was lost (in Vietnam) and redress the national humiliation stemming from that loss. Jeffords argues that the efforts to "remasculinize" the cultural and political situations in the United States are reflected in what she calls the movies' "Vietnam representation," which includes "films, novels, personal accounts, collections of observations and experiences, and political and social analyses" (1). She suggests that "Vietnam representation is emblematic of the general restructuring and circulation of ideological production in America today" (1). The restructuring Jeffords cites centres on "the shift from ends to means, the proliferation of techniques and technologies, the valorization of

performance, the production and technologization of the male body as an aesthetic of spectacle,

and the blurring of fact and fiction" (1). Burstyn finds these terms to be appropriate for the

consideration of sports culture in general: "Jeffords sees this tide of Vietnam representation as

having been central in re-creating narrative and symbolic forms that — like those of sport —

served to validate what she called 'masculinity' and the 'masculine point of view'" (174)

Moreover, Burstyn suggests that the strategies Jeffords enumerates are "familiar from sport

culture, a partner with Vietnam representation in this larger remasculinization [. . .] Most to the

point here, however, is that equally within sport and Vietnam representations, as Jeffords puts it,

'the framework through which each of these operations is enacted [. . .] is that of gender'" (174).

Perhaps surprisingly, sports films do not figure in either Burstyn's or Jeffords' analyses. Yet,

especially in the case of the former critic, sports films comprise a genre which combines nearly all

of the aspects the author wishes to critique. Indeed, it occupies an interstitial space between the

two commentaries.

At the risk of seeming arbitrary, I consider *Slapshot*, a 1977 comedy about a minor-league

hockey team, as the prototype of the contemporary sports movie. While there were hundreds of

movies dealing with sports prior to *Slapshot*, in the period between World War II and the early

1970s, they were mainly of a biographical nature.[6] The plot and characterizations of *Slapshot*

reveal its comic version of Vietnam representation. The aging player-coach, Reg Dunlop (Paul

Newman), and the young star, Ned Braden (Michael Ontkean), represent two very different

generations. Braden is college-educated and certain to do better than his figurative father,

whereas Dunlop came up through the junior and minor leagues Braden is also a member of the

generation of college students who protested against the Vietnam war The action of the movie

centres on Braden's refusal to play the new style of mindless, violent, "goon" hockey that Dunlop

adopts. The rest of the team is forced or coerced into fighting because the style is successful; that

is, might makes right. Braden wants to go back to the old style of cooperation and fair play, but

unlike the other players he has a choice. The closing of the steel mill, coming on the heels of the

fall of Saigon and the oil crisis, is a reminder of the failure of the fathers' generation and the lack

of opportunities for the sons to succeed, in both senses. For example, Johnny, the team's captain,

joins the fighting grudgingly because his only alternative, the oft-repeated "Fucking Chrysler

plant, here I come!" entails begging his brother-in-law for a job in an auto plant. In the end, Reg

briefly changes his ways only to go back to fighting when he finds out that scouts are in the crowd

for the championship game. A bench-clearing brawl — *i.e.*, full-scale war — erupts but Braden

does not join the fray. When Ned sees his wife in the crowd, he leaps from the bench and strips

out of his hockey equipment in a mock-epic reversal of the ritual of dressing for battle.

Non-violent protest and disarming win the day. Tim McCracken, the captain of the Chiefs'

opponent, interrupts the brawl to protest Braden's "disgusting" display. The referee, recognizing

the irony, refuses and is punched by the evil McCracken. The referee then declares a forfeit and

awards the Chiefs the trophy, which the naked Braden snatches from Dunlop Braden then

parades around the ice with the trophy In addition to the clear references to Vietnam-era politics,

Slapshot includes two important features that have remained significant in the genre: economic

uncertainty and a powerful female presence. In *Slapshot*, these two elements are concentrated in

the person of the owner. This figure is repeated in *Major League* and *Any Given Sunday* but the

uncertain future for the team and some form of female "interference" are central to all [7]

Previously, as in *Grand Prix*, the female was merely the final piece of a love triangle.[8] The setting

of *Slapshot* in Charlestown and its team, the Chiefs, are based closely on Johnstown, PA, and the Jets hockey franchise. In 1983, Johnstown would serve as the setting for *All the Right Moves*, a movie about high school football, featuring a very young Tom Cruise. In both movies, the closing of the steel mill, the town's largest employer, because of a recession, looms large.[9] As well, these movies end with the player-coach relationship solidified because the latter adapts to the player. They then move together to a new team, in a new city.

In terms of the present paper, the relationships between fathers and sons figure most prominently in sports films and action (war) films. This relationship is common to both genres because "War is the time of social fathers — the Fatherhood — organized by men across family ties and divisions of colour and class. For the Fatherhood, individual parenting has been displaced or superseded by the allegiances of collective warriorhood. For many, if not most, boys, the template is first cast in childhood by sport" (Burstyn 179). War can be a proof of manhood, but sport is a more mundane part of the reproduction of masculinity. Although Burstyn chooses the words "the Fatherhood" rather than the more common refrain of "the patriarchy," the effect is little different. As with the usual term, "the Fatherhood" receives little definition. Sports and war are inextricably linked in the web depicted. Films are also implicated in this seeming conspiracy, from which Burstyn acknowledges few benefits. She agrees with Jeffords' proposition that "during the Reagan era popular culture became the mechanism not simply for identifying but for establishing the relationship between the people and the State, through the articulation of that State as the unified national body of masculine character" (Hard Bodies 13) However, unlike Burstyn, Jeffords asserts that the masculine character depicted in popular culture underwent a transition following the Reagan administration.

Jeffords' follow-up study to <u>The Remasculinization of America</u>, <u>Hard Bodies: Hollywood</u>

<u>Masculinity in the Reagan Era</u>, also focuses on action films but adds other versions of the father-

son narrative to the analysis. In addition, she considers the periods of the first Bush presidency

and the beginning of Clinton's first term. Although she does not attribute a direct causal link

between Ronald Reagan and the films during and after his presidency, Jeffords does suggest that

there is nevertheless a relationship Seth Cagin and Philip Dray summarize the dynamic involved.

> Whatever the precise chemistry involved, when the movies are
> reassigned to a new position in the hierarchy of popular culture they
> must reestablish a rapport with their audience, to justify their
> existence, for when they no longer have something to offer a
> *popular* audience, the movies as we know them will cease to exist.
> [. . .] Hollywood movies [.] can only be manufactured in a spirit
> of confidence that the film makers know what audiences want to
> see. (xii)

To be sure, Cagin and Dray express a demand-side view of the economics of film-making. In this

view, genre films supply the audience with what it wants to see. However, as Jeffords points out,

concurrent social and political trends can also provide insight into what audiences want.

In both of her books, Jeffords looks at the "heroic masculinity which attracted Robert Bly

and seems to structure so many popular narratives of the 1980s — the father/son relationship"

(<u>Hard Bodies</u> 22). In the second book she also considers how films of the "later years of the

1980s indicated changes in the hard-body mythology, particularly in the apparent negation of that

body in favor of a more internalized and emotional kind of heroic icon" (<u>Hard Bodies</u> 22). In fact,

the movies Modleski cites in her study can be seen as part of this trend Jeffords concludes that

not only did the "heroic icon" change in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but the father-son

narratives took on less importance In these years,

> the moviegoing public's fascination with the father/son plots
> seemed to have dwindled with the appearance of many popular
> films celebrating brother and buddy films again over father/son
> narratives. Perhaps the growing recession, increasing joblessness,
> and decreasing U.S. economic standing have led some viewers to
> feel less concern about continuity than about the need for a
> "revolution" in their own economic positions, a tendency that the
> presidential campaign of [. . .] the Clinton/Gore ticket [indicates,]
> that the father/son narrative [. . .] may, in the 1990s, no longer be a
> dominant narrative for the construction of U.S. masculine
> subjectivities (Hard Bodies 90)

What is interesting about Jeffords analysis is that in the chapter from which the preceding passage

is drawn, she cites the father-son narrative as being instrumental in facilitating or dealing with

change. In fact, father-son narratives are ideal in such times because they "help to make change

possible (the son replaces the father) and to prevent the change from taking too radical a form

(the son models himself after the father" (Hard Bodies 90). Jeffords also uses the word

"revolution" to describe the impact of Ronald Reagan's presidency and claims that the father-son

narrative was a key to this revolution.

However, she sees little or no place for the father-son narrative in the era following the

Reagan administration's terms, despite her outline of the changes that did occur. Jeffords almost

completely ignores two important events that took place during the first Bush term — the end of

the Cold War and the stunning (popular) success of the first Gulf War — in terms of their impact

on father-son relationships. These two events went a long way towards purging American grief

over Vietnam and restoring pride They also signal what came to be called a "New World Order"

in which global nuclear war receded as an omnipresent threat and the American way had been

vindicated. According to Jeffords, these events contributed to the demise of father-son films and

the rise of buddy films Jeffords does not look at sports films in either work Burstyn, too, ignores

this body of cultural production. Yet sports films are the logical successors to the action films since they overlap both Jeffords' and Burstyn's critiques in the crucial area of the father-son relationship. Moreover, sport is war without guns and involves an analogous proof of manhood through physical competition [10] Change and continuity can both be accounted for by the unifying discourse of sport: the seasons and players may change, but the sport will always be present. Given the virtual *a priori* guarantee of continuity, a great deal of fluctuation can be accommodated within the framework of sport.

"I love a man in uniform": The Gaze and Sports (Films)

When examining the "new man" in cinema, we are reminded that the classic narrative film is, as Laura Mulvey points out, structured "around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify" (20). In Mulvey's work and much of the work that has followed her, the main controlling figure is assumed to be male and the object of the heterosexual gaze is consequently female. One of the final scenes in *For Love of the Game* seems designed precisely to question Mulvey's paradigm. As Billy Chapel, played by Kevin Costner in one of his three baseball-related roles, stands in the airport while waiting for his flight, he is viewed from the opposite side by Jane (Kelly Preston) [11] As in Mulvey's examples, the object of the gaze is not aware that he is being viewed, and as such is in a passive position and is receiving a desiring look Through a window, we see Jane watching Billy; a mirror-like effect. The angle reverses and eventually moves to sharing Jane's gaze in an I-camera view.[12] As mentioned previously, Mulvey's position cannot account entirely for this type of spectatorship for it is tautological. the viewer must be male and what he views must be female because he is male; the viewer cannot be female because the object is female because the viewer is male. As will be discussed later in this

chapter, Mulvey slightly reconsiders her formula, in terms of melodrama.

In the chapters which follow her discussion of the gaze, Mulvey examines Douglas Sirk's *oeuvre*, and, more specifically, King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun*. In any case, Mulvey's critiques are not prepared for looking at males. As she relates in the next chapter, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun*," in the earlier piece

> I was interested in the relationship between the image of woman on
> the screen and the 'masculinisation' of the spectator position,
> regardless of the actual sex (or possible deviance) of any real live
> movie-goer. In-built patterns of pleasure and identification impose
> masculinity as 'point of view'; a point of view which is also
> manifest in the general use of the masculine third person. (29)

Although she relents a bit here and admits that there might be female viewers, Mulvey still only allows for one view point, which still only allows for one object of that view: passive females. The position does not change; in the first line of the second paragraph of her brief "afterthoughts," she asserts, "I still stand by my 'Visual Pleasure' argument," lest anyone, Mulvey included remain unconvinced (29). As cited in the previous chapter, Sean Nixon feels that what stood out about the "new man" advertisements was not an assertive, muscular masculinity, so much as a passive sexualization. Importantly, Billy Chapel is not a "new man" according to Nixon's criteria. In fact, he is an old man by baseball standards and in terms of the wear-and-tear on his body. Moreover, being the object of the gaze is not entirely new to him, either. He has been the object of the gaze since boyhood, as evidenced by the montage of press clippings and home movies from his youth with which the movie begins. The pitcher is the most visible player on a baseball field A pitcher is the only player who participates in every play in the game. The game cannot happen without him Moreover, his position in the middle of the diamond, on a mound — a pedestal, if you will —

guarantees that he is the centre of attention. A baseball axiom states, "you're only as good as your

next pitch" Billy knows his arm is a perishable commodity and his only marketable asset. If

anything is new for Billy it is the prospect of not being the object of the gaze any longer and his

ability to adjust to life without it. Clearly, this prospect is intensified because Chapel is a pitcher.

It is also one of the positions of this chapter, and indeed my entire project, that men are

frequent objects of the gaze. Certainly male athletes have always been the focus of a gaze. A film

like *For Love of the Game* represents the recognition that men can be looked at, Laura Mulvey

notwithstanding, and that there needs to be a corresponding articulation of what this entails.

Recalling photographs depicting males as the objects of the gaze during the age of vaudeville,

Thomas Waugh writes in Hard to Imagine that

> The circulation and consumption of the male nude and the nude in
> general automatically constitute a sexual articulation in our culture,
> no matter how vigorously disavowed [. . .] Like most of the
> emerging cultural forms of mass production, the institution of
> looking at the male body at the turn of the century was male —
> overwhelmingly so in terms of its control, its operation, and its
> constituency [. .] The beefcake industry was in tandem with the
> companion cheesecake industry. (183)

Waugh recounts that beefcake pictures, featuring muscular men in the briefest attire, were nearly

as popular as cheesecake pictures, the corresponding depictions of females, with heterosexual

male audiences. Perhaps surprisingly for contemporary readers,

> The musclemen emerged alongside their female analogues —
> actresses, models, fan dancers and burlesque queens — and were
> depicted in equally brief costume [. . .] Male bodies [. . .] were
> marketed in exactly the same way to the same male gaze in every
> medium from mail-order photography and postcards to vaudeville.
> There is some record of a female following for such figures as
> [Eugen] Sandow, but the audience for both beefcake and
> cheesecake was overwhelmingly male (184)

Similarly, the audience for contemporary sports is overwhelmingly male Although female critics

and commentators might express concern about the sexualization of women's sports, such as

tennis, and athletes, such as Martina Hingis and Anna Kournikova, the same happens to male

athletes and on a larger scale because of the greater exposure afforded the core men's sports For

example, two different television shows, *Coach* and *Mad About You*, featured storylines in which

professional athletes, Troy Aikman and Mark McGwire, respectively, were lured into bed with the

wife of the male lead The episode with Troy Aikman, especially, highlights the sexualization of

the player, but not necessarily his feminization or the homoerotic aspects of the gaze Although

Coach is a fairly ordinary situation comedy, it does share some affinities with sports films since it

is based on the adventures of a college football coach, Hayden Frye. When the coach and his

spouse decide to have children, Hayden brings in Troy Aikman to be the father because the latter

is the perfect quarterback. The perfect quarterback is the perfect man. He is an object of desire,

but the desire is to be (like) him, not to be with him.

"That's why girls don't play": Melodrama for Men

Since it is a site of masculine performance, sport has long been a focus of feminist

discussion. Connell provides an example of a typical critique which echoes some of Modleski's

concerns about any activity that involves only men.

> The institutional organization of sports embeds definite social
> relations: competition and hierarchy among men, exclusion or
> domination of woman. These social relations of gender are both
> realized and symbolized in the bodily performances. Thus men's
> greater sporting prowess has become a theme of backlash against
> feminism. It serves as symbolic proof of men's superiority and right
> to rule. (54)

Sandra Curry Jansen and Don Sabo observe. "The value and standards of performance within

[North American contact] sports are not only androcentric, they also embody instrumentalism, aggression, and the zero-sum concepts of competition that dominate corporate capitalism" (6) However, Susan Faludi asks, "How would men's problems be perceived, though, if we were to consider men as the subjects of their world, not just its authors? What if we put aside for a time the assumption of male dominance, put away our feminist rap sheet of men's crimes and misdemeanors [. . .] and just looked at what men have experienced in the past generation?" (15) In her research, Faludi finds that change had not occurred in men, but to men. She notes that "A categorical shift had occurred and it threatened bedrock concepts of [North] American manhood. A social pact between the nation's men and its institutions was collapsing, most prominently but not exclusively with the institutions of work" (43). In an age in which corporations are constantly downsizing and out-sourcing in order to increase profits, men can no longer look to these institutions for paternal acceptance and masculine nurturing. The response is mere acquiescence, or cynicism, or ultra-conservative reactionary politics.

Men's silent acquiescence does not receive as much critical attention as the more noticeable negative affects listed above. Although silence has been a subject of feminist critique for some time, most notably in Betty Freidan's The Feminine Mystique, Faludi finds herself shocked at men's silence in the face of the betrayals she documents (40). However, psychoanalyst Guy Corneau observes that silence has long been a part of every man's existence and it stems from the tenuous relationship between men and their various "fathers" In this regard, he writes, "All men live more or less in a hereditary silence that denies every teenage boy's need for recognition — or confirmation — from his father. It is almost as though our fathers are subject to a rule of silence that decrees that fathers who speak are a threat to male solidarity" (10) Corneau

also notes that "in spite of their seemingly independent nature, many men are looking for their

fathers — and many of them are in need of help" (2). Consequently, the "lack of attention from

the father results in the son's inability to identify with his father as a means of establishing his own

masculine identity" (Corneau 13). Corneau lists the growth of the numbers of two-income

families, single-parent families, and increased work hours as other causes of men seeking father

figures to teach them how to be men.

Sport is positioned perfectly to serve as a socializer for young men. Yet the cinematic

version departs from the "real" version in several important ways. One of the most noticeable

differences is the character of the (star) players and the associations between teammates.

Communication and sport sociologist Richard Gruneau notes that "the media favour a highly

visible, star-studded, personality driven form of sport because they've discovered that this sport

form best organizes and exploits their audiences" (qtd. in Burstyn 136). Burstyn recounts that

"Nike executive Howard White told a gathering of sports marketers: 'When I scout and draft a

Nike basketball team [. .] I'm looking for attitude and style [. . .] A player we draft has to

represent something. We consider elements of style. Does he excite anyone? If he can't move

people and offer a certain attitude, then he just won't do much for us as an endorser" (Burstyn

147). The emphasis, then, is on the individual rather than the team. Very often, media outlets refer

to team sports as contests between the stars of the respective teams. For example, the Lakers-

Celtics rivalry during the 1980s and early 1990s was usually reduced to Magic Johnson *vs* Larry

Bird.

Additionally, stars frequently earn more money for endorsing products than they do for

winning. Formula 1 driver Michael Schumacher, the highest paid athlete in the world, receives a

base salary of approximately $25 million from Ferrari, but with endorsements, conservative

estimates suggest an income of over $100 million This was never more apparent than at the 1992

Olympic Games when Michael Jordan draped himself in the American flag, not out of patriotism

but out of greed. The flag was positioned so that it covered the logo of Reebok, a competitor of

Jordan's own sponsor, Nike. Moreover, stars such as Jordan and Tiger Woods, who is also

sponsored by Nike, appear dispassionate about anything other than self-promotion Woods,

especially, has drawn criticism for refusing to comment on the racism and sexism of Augusta

National Golf Course and for refusing to play for his country in the Davis Cup unless he receives

sizeable compensation One of the tensions in *Major League* stems from Dorn's refusal to make

difficult plays because an injury might end his career and jeopardize his ability to earn extra money

from commercials. This tension facilitates a humorous scene later in the movie when all of the

players participate in a commercial and Dorn delivers his lines more "stiffly" than the rest *Any*

Given Sunday and *The Replacements* feature similarly prepossessed stars. In contrast, the players

in *Slapshot* refuse to participate in promotional events. Generally, the focus on endorsements is

portrayed as detracting from the team and its unity by concentrating on individuals.

The sports film, with its emphasis on familial relationships, in all of its manifestations, has

one major element in common with that most feminine of genres, the soap opera.[13] The

distinguishing feature, Christine Gledhill explains, is that

> Women's genres such as women's fiction and soap opera draw on a
> tradition of domestic realism in which a set of highly articulate
> discursive forms — talk, the confessional, heart-to-heart, gossip —
> work through psychic and social contradictions which melodrama
> must externalize through expressive action Far from representing
> an "excess" of emotion which displaces action, talk in soap opera *is*
> its action, while action in masculine genres more often than not

represents unexpressed and often unexpressible male emotion,
which needs a melodramatic climax to break out. ("Soap" 380)

In a subsequent study of melodramatic forms, Gledhill gathers that "Melodrama has frequently

been identified as a woman's genre. However, this is arguably a retrospective categorisation,

following the role of gender in the delegitimisation of melodrama by realism and tragedy" (Home

33). The latter categories traditionally constitute the masculine genres. However, in her study of

soap opera, Gledhill recognizes that "genre production is equally about differentiation —

managing product differentiation to maximize and appeal to different audiences, and to keep tabs

on changing audiences" ("Soap" 355). Furthermore, within this process of differentiation,

according to Gledhill, gender can be one of the key signifiers: "any given genre film produces its

meanings from a shifting pattern of visual, thematic and ideological differences and that gender is

a key signifying difference in this orchestration" ("Soap" 357). In the sports film, the locker room

provides the setting for the discursive action of the film. That the locker room is both a sanctuary

and a symbolic womb for men is often reinforced with a female presence inside its confines, as

occurs in *Major League*, *Any Given Sunday*, and *Sunset Park*, among others. The sense is that

women intrude on a male space and do not understand the relationships that develop inside that

space. This is surprising given that "in the twentieth century, melodramatic forms, such as the so-

called 'women's picture' or 'weepies' which Hollywood produced in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s,

and the emotionally intense TV drama series and serials, such as soap opera, have become

identified as feminine *genres*" ("Soap" 350).[14] What becomes clear in sports films is that being a

star is consistently presented as secondary to the connections — to use a word that men fear,

relationships — that develop among the team members.

While they are in the locker room, the men are usually in various stages of dressing or undressing for battle. Indeed, *Any Given Sunday* crosses the line of full-frontal male nudity in its depictions of the locker room. In this film, the female owner frequents the locker room, while the players are changing.[15] For some years it has been a common practice for female reporters to enter men's locker rooms, but never the other way around.[16] The rationale apparently is that women do not look. However, in the movies the females do look. In *Any Given Sunday*, the owner, Christina Pagniacci, walks over to her star quarterback, Willie Beamen, and looks him up and down. When Beamen asks her to have dinner with him, she replies that she does not date players. She leaves, but not without looking again. The effect is to say that no matter how much money you might make or how potent you are, you will never break the class barrier.[17] Indeed, via their contracts, players are the largest assets a team has. They are investments — proverbial pieces of meat — and not human beings. Nowhere is this more visible than in the behaviour of the team doctor, Harvey Mandrake, in *Any Given Sunday*. The doctor tells one seriously injured player to stop whining because the TV broadcast has gone to a commercial. At the end of the film, Pagniacci "converts" and realizes how important the game, the players, and the coaches are, as opposed to the profits. She even makes overtures to Beamen. However, this possibility is repulsed by both the coach and the quarterback of Pagniacci's team leaving, together, to join an expansion franchise. This ending parallels the departure of Dunlop and Braden for a new team at the end of *Slapshot*.

The importance of the locker room to sports films, and the melodramatic elements therein, provides another opportunity to reconsider Laura Mulvey's oft-cited position in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Mulvey attempts to clarify her original premise in the following chapter.

She explains:

> In "Visual Pleasure" my argument took as its axis a desire to
> identify a pleasure that was specific to cinema, that is the eroticism
> and cultural conventions surrounding the look. Now, on the
> contrary, I would rather emphasize the way that popular cinema
> inherited traditions of story-telling that are common to other forms
> of folk and mass culture, with attendant fascinations other than
> those of the look. (32)

Mulvey's position in "Afterthoughts" is meant to further support rather than redress what is

lacking in "Visual Pleasure." Not only does she state that she still stands by the earlier argument,

that the cinematic apparatus replicates and reproduces the patriarchal apparatus, but she also

structures her analysis of melodrama to bolster it. Mulvey considers melodrama because it is a

woman's form, with women at the centre of the action, and women (only) identifying with the

heroine. Moreover, Mulvey purports to be interested in the narrative of the film. However, her

consideration of the narrative function provides the same answer as her consideration of the

viewing function. For example, she claims that conventions of the Western genre require a

"marriage" to occur and that this "ritual is, of course, sex-specific, and the main rationale for any

female presence in this strand of the genre. This neat *narrative* function restates the propensity for

'woman' to signify the 'the erotic' already familiar from *visual* representation (as, for instance,

argued in 'Visual Pleasure')" (35). In other words, the narrative merely reiterates what the visual

depicts, and the visual always depicts the female as the object. The narrative aspects of the story

therefore are virtually insignificant in the final analysis.

Just as her "Visual Pleasure" essay does not consider males as objects of the gaze, neither

"Afterthoughts," nor the next chapter, "Notes on Sirk," considers a male version of melodrama.

Perhaps surprisingly, however, Mulvey does point to the type of masculine role I am describing,

though obviously without being conscious of it. As stated earlier, she considers melodrama to be woman-centred. Therefore,

> introducing a woman as central to a story shifts its meanings, producing another kind of narrative discourse. [. . .] Woman is no longer the signifier of sexuality (function "marriage") [. . .] Now the female presence as centre allows the story to be actually, *overtly* about sexuality: it becomes a melodrama. It is as though the narrational lens had zoomed in and opened up the neat function "marriage" ("and they lived happily . . .") to ask "what next?" and to focus on the figure of the princess, waiting for her one moment of importance, to ask "what does *she* want?" Here we find the generic terrain for melodrama, in its woman-oriented strand. (35)

In this passage, Mulvey's own discourse is extraordinary. She refers to the narrative function, not as being *like* a camera's lens, but rather *as* a camera's lens. Her metaphor is implicit rather than explicit. Narrative does not support or restate the visual; it is the visual. In other words, the narrative and the visual are the same being in two species; that is to say, the patriarchal organization of perception was created by men to benefit men.

For Mulvey, melodrama and the gaze are inextricably linked. On that point, at the most fundamental of levels, there is agreement between her analysis and my current consideration of sports films. Yet there is tension within Mulvey's own argument — tension she does not acknowledge — regarding this connection. Since she is tied to her original statement, there is no flexibility within the argument for her to consider other points of view within the diegesis. The movies I cite in this essay are all male-centred melodramas which is not possible, let alone given any thought, within Mulvey's framework. Moreover, as in *Any Given Sunday*, the male is often the object of any number of gazes, including a desirous and consuming female gaze. In her chapter on Sirk's melodrama, Mulvey again considers melodrama. She begins her analysis with a

brief definition: "Roughly, there are two dramatic points of departure for melodrama. One is

coloured by a female protagonist's point of view which provides a focus for identification. The

other examines tensions in the family, and between the sexes and generations" (40). The tensions

in the family that Mulvey cites are central to the sports film but the protagonist is unquestionably

male. In Sirk's film, Ron Kirby is the gardener employed by Cary, a wealthy widow. The plot is

something of a masculinized version of the Cinderella story. Nevertheless, the class difference

stands out, as in the sports films mentioned. In focusing on the female, Mulvey misses what she is

actually saying about Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* in a lengthy but important passage:

> In the opening scene of *All That Heaven Allows*, Cary (Jane
> Wyman) looks at Ron (Rock Hudson) with the first inklings of
> desire. The emotion is carried through into the second scene
> through the presence of the autumn leaves he has given her, so that
> we, the spectators, share with Cary his secret importance [prior to]
> what is to prove a barren evening at the Country Club. The children
> comment on Cary's red dress, interpreting it, as we do, as a sign of
> newly awakened interest in life and love but mistaking its object as
> the impotent and decrepit Harvey [. . .] The camera does not allow
> the spectator to make the same mistake, establishing in no uncertain
> terms the formal detachment with which Cary sees Harvey, in
> contrast to the way in which in the previous scene Ron had been
> subtly extracted from the background and placed in close face-to-
> face with Cary. (41-2)

Mulvey describes the plot and the camera as focusing the gaze on a man: the "object" of Cary's

desire. Moreover, she does not suggest that this man is not feminized, nor is the female

masculinized. In addition to his being contrasted with the "impotent and decrepit" Harvey, Ron is

associated with nature, which further emphasizes his potent masculinity. Clearly, Harvey is the

one who is "feminized." Cary's red dress is a sign of her sexualized femininity. Without admitting

that she is doing so, Mulvey describes a situation which is very much analogous to the ones put

forward in this chapter: the gaze can function in several ways and there can be melodrama for men.

Unfortunately, Mulvey only concerns herself with imagined female spectators, in part because as I noted earlier, she sees narrative and camera as the same thing. The Cinderella story (in reverse) is not considered to have any power for viewers of either sex despite being an essential element of the film Mulvey analyses. She does not even recognize it as such. It is well worth noting that the Cinderella story is frequently (over)used in relation to sports teams and figures. A classic parodic example occurs in the golf send-up, *Caddy Shack*, when Carl, the greens keeper, narrates his after-hours final eighteen holes at Augusta for the Masters title. With flowers serving as golf balls, he recites his biography: "Cinderella story, kid out of nowhere . . . former greens keeper." Every year during the NCAA basketball tournament one or more teams is marketed as the "Cinderella story" because it is one to which nearly everyone — man, woman, child — can relate. During the 2002 World Series, Fox Sports featured a glass slipper in most of the title shots. Both sports and sports film are placed within the realm of fairy tale.[18] It is a way of drawing viewers who might not otherwise identify with the sport. At some level, the Cinderella story forms the kernel of nearly every sports film: the team is in the midst of an incredible losing streak, faces incredibly hard times ahead, then someone new arrives or something miraculous happens (or both), which sets them on a winning streak. Such is the importance of the "come-from-behind," or "rags to riches," narrative that the biographies of real athletes tend to adopt the form, as in the various versions of Babe Ruth's life. Prior to his conviction for rape, Mike Tyson's life was similarly presented. The figure of the domineering female owner can stand for the wicked stepmother, but more often the enemy is the absence of a unified team or focus.

"With a little help from my friends": Masculine Nurturing

While locker rooms and other male domains are often criticized as sites of the exclusion of

females, this is not the central focus in the sports film genre. Instead, sports films tend to portray

them as environments of caring and sharing. Locker rooms become domestic settings —

analogous to kitchens and living rooms — in which the familial relationships of the melodrama

can occur. Susan Faludi found a similar environment at the Citadel while conducting research at

the American military college. Instead of finding what she expected, a breeding ground for

misogyny and a controlling, patriarchal form of masculinity, Faludi discovered something

decidedly different. Acknowledging her initial bias, she admits that feminist sociologists

considering

> rites of passage at places like the Citadel or in all-male fraternities,
> have typically cast them as attempts at a womanless "rebirth," and
> often have criticized them for their apparent misogyny. The idea
> that men can't be men until they are reborn via a man-made canal
> [. . .] is understandably repellant, and not just to feminist
> sensibilities. But what if that is not the primary purpose of these
> rituals? What if the young men are attempting not so much to
> eliminate women as to find a way to experience a maternal
> femininity, too, without bringing down upon themselves the boot of
> social opprobrium. (130-1)

At the time of Faludi's visits to the Citadel, the school was in the midst of one of its greatest

struggles. Shannon Faulkner was attempting to be the first female cadet at the institute and was

willing to go to the Supreme Court to do so. Media attention focused on the college's refusal to

adapt to the changing social situations of the late twentieth century. Faludi went to the academy

to confirm her belief that the cadets and the administration were looking to exclude women out of

fear of feminine influences. Instead, Faludi found that the men of the Citadel are looking for a

place where "they could be mothered and, just as important, they could mother. They were

seeking a way to express maternal femininity in masculine terms. [. . .] a place where they could

receive and give care without fear of being shamed, a place where tending to one another's needs

produced not ridicule but pride, a place where such intimacies were a mark of manhood, not its

annulment" (130). Faludi documents that the intimacies were greatest during domestic activities

such as cleaning and dressing. The latter task, including tucking the shirt into the pants, cannot be

accomplished without the assistance of a fellow cadet due to the complicated design of the

uniform, its tight fit, and the stringent requirements of the dress code. Rather than a place to

eliminate the "feminine" aspects, she describes the Citadel as a place for men to experience them.

The atmosphere of a locker room produces similar relations among men. Football and

hockey players, for example, often need the assistance of teammates to don their protective

equipment. Any man who played team sports in his youth will have memories of the entire

experience, including the locker room and the relationships forged within its walls. This aspect of

sports, missing from the star-oriented TV broadcasts of live sporting events, is emphasized in the

cinematic versions in order to capitalize on the viewers' familiarity and enhance the identification

processes. People who played sports — in "little league" or in high school — relate to the "behind

the scenes" action rather than stars. Stars may be fantastic to watch in live-action, but impossible

to relate to as human beings.[19] Time and again, we see that no man can succeed without the help

of his teammates. The previously mentioned Billy Chapel needs his catcher, Gus, whom he calls

"the ugliest wife in the [American] League," and several great fielding plays to help him to pitch a

perfect game. Although they were not pitching perfect games, this pattern occurred earlier for the

pitchers in *Major League* and *Bull Durham*. Importantly, in the former movie, Dorn, the

Cleveland Indians' third-baseman, transforms from a selfish player who refuses to make difficult plays in order to avoid injuries, despite the damage to his team, into a player who sacrifices his body for his pitcher and his team. This occurs even though the pitcher had a sexual encounter with Dorn's wife (although, at the time of the encounter, the pitcher was unaware of the fact that the woman was the spouse of a teammate). In fact, this type of spiritual rebirth derives from an older motif than the Cinderella story mentioned earlier: the tale of St. Paul, who was "born again."[20] Movies featuring other sports have their own take on the same formula. For example, freshman running back Darnell Jefferson, in *The Program*, needs three crucial blocks to allow him to break free for the long kick return that sets up the championship-winning touchdown. The key block on Jefferson's game-tying touchdown was thrown by the senior whom Jefferson supplants, both as the starting half-back and as the object of a beautiful girl's affections. Moreover, Darnell's new-found focus on his academic performance also wins the approval of the girl's father who happens to be an alumnus of the school and its football team. In both cases the younger player wins the game and gets the girl, with the tacit approval of the older player and/or father-figure. While it might be argued that this suggests a hierarchy of masculinities in which those possessing lesser abilities give way to and make sacrifices for those with greater skills, it also sets up a line of succession in which masculinity is reproduced. Once the players emerge as men and as leaders, their success is inevitable.

The process presented above can also happen in reverse. That is, the team recognizes that it needs a leader who then accepts that role. *The Replacements*, released in 2000, takes this form. Shane Falco is chosen by coach Jimmy McGinty to be the leader of a rag-tag group of castoffs The Washington Sentinels are a fictionalized professional football team that requires a completely

new team to be put together in the middle of the season due to a strike by the regular players. In order to "break" the strike, all of the teams in the league seek "replacement" players. The real players are portrayed as *prima donnas*: spoiled and self-centred. One complains that $5 million does not go very far when one considers how much money is needed to pay agents, managers, accountants, bodyguards, personal trainers, and other dependents. A teammate simply adds: "Do you know how much insurance costs for a Ferrari, mutha?" In their place, coach McGinty assembles a group of "wannabes," or in the case Shane Falco, a "never was," in the words of Eddie Martel, the Sentinels' star quarterback. The other replacement players accept Falco as their leader, despite his reputation for "choking" under pressure. This is the reason that Falco was not originally a professional player. Falco possesses the physical attributes of a winning quarterback, but not, allegedly, the complementary intangible qualities. Like his players, coach McGinty is being given a second chance. Earlier in his career, he failed in his relationship with the star quarterback in Dallas. In the economy of professional sports, coaches are cheaper and easier to replace than star quarterbacks, no matter who is right. Coaches have lower salaries than players and fans do not attend games to watch coaches. The bond between Falco and McGinty is immediate and occurs due to two basic reasons: the quarterback has no pretensions and the coach has faith in the player. The distinctive quality the coach seeks in a player is "heart." This is an intangible quality, presumably found only in men (who play team sports), as reflected in one of the coach's favourite sayings: "That's why girls don't play the game." When Martel returns to the team, turning his back on his original teammates by crossing the picket line, he finds that his star-status is not sufficient for the replacements to follow him. The players would rather lose with Falco than win with Martel because the replacement quarterback cares about them.

Admittedly, unselfish play typically occurs in team sports, but the highly stylized cinematic versions definitely emphasizes the melodramatic elements. In fact, as has been shown, such scenes are predictable features of any sports film. Nevertheless, melodramatic scenes produce another apparent paradox, for as Gledhill asserts, the term "melodramatic" is often applied to a genre to "describe its emphasis on the heightened drama of family relationships and personal feelings, as opposed to the focus on public action in 'male' genres. But melodrama's long and complicated history demonstrates perfectly the shifting intersections between realism and gender in struggles for cultural definition and control" ("Soap" 350). As melodrama, the scenes described are paradoxical in that they constitute "public actions" — performances on the playing field — that depend on the "family relationships and personal feelings" — the domestic matters, if you will — of the players involved in order for the action to occur. The scenes depict, then, the difficult balance between the public and the private as well as the individual and the collective personae of masculinities. Although the sports film is nominally a "male" genre, it has much in common with the "feminine" genres, even with respect to the action involved.

As previously mentioned, *Slapshot* serves as a prototype for the current form of the sports film. One of the central tensions of the movie is that the ownership of the Chiefs is a mystery for most of the movie until Reg Dunlop, the aging player-coach, visits the owner's home. He discovers that the owner is a woman who would rather fold the team and take the resultant loss, than operate the franchise because it does not make enough profit.[21] Dunlop, played by Paul Newman, protests but is rebuked that he does not know enough about finance. He then tells the owner that she does not know enough about people, questions the way she is raising her son, and asks her what will happen to the players on the team if the team is folded. She responds

apathetically, since it is, after all, a business transaction that is being discussed. This is a rather

stunning reversal, but is totally in keeping with the generic form involved. Relationships are

stereotypically exclusively feminine domains, whereas business practices involving a lack of

emotion are stereotypically male. Carol Gilligan's influential work, In a Different Voice,

concentrates on demonstrating that very point. Her thesis is that women are more concerned with

"the activities through which relationships are woven and connection sustained, [that is,] the

world of intimacy" (43). Gilligan provides further insight into what she characterizes as an

essentially feminine mode of reasoning. As opposed to men, "women experience a world

comprised of relationships rather than of people standing alone, a world that coheres through

connection rather than through systems of rules" (29). While sports are essentially systems of

rules, sports films clearly emphasize relationships, especially those among men. Moreover, the

relationships are nurturing in nature.

Gilligan's research is influenced heavily by Nancy Chodorow's The Reproduction of

Mothering. In this work, Chodorow serves up a harsh condemnation of the masculine mode of

reasoning: "Men, moreover, do not define themselves in relationship and have come to suppress

relational capacities and repress relational needs. This prepares them to participate in the affect-

denying world of alienated work, but not to fulfill women's needs for intimacy and primary

relationships" (207). This is in contrast to the feminine mode she describes and which Gilligan

furthers:

> girls emerge from [childhood] with a basis for empathy built into
> their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not. [. . .] Girls
> emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's need or
> feelings as one's own (or of thinking that one is so experiencing
> another's needs and feelings). [. . .] From very early on, then, girls

come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as
more continuous with and related to their external object-world,
and as differently oriented to their inner object world as well.
(Mothering 117).

Chodorow explains the type of deep empathy and identification, the kind Reg Dunlop and other

male figures in sports film express, as something inherently feminine. Behind the seeming paradox

of the nurturing male is the threat to male solidarity posed by both the female intrusion and

fiscally-based management strategies. These are combined, perhaps conflated, in the bottom-line

oriented female owner. Masculine nurturing, in contrast, becomes one of the generic expectations

viewers bring to a sports movie and part of the pleasures they derive from the film. Rather than

being a particularly new feature, masculine nurturing has been and is a commonplace in sports

films. What is new is recognizing that it exists. While it might appear that masculine nurturing

requires the cover of a proof of manhood through often violent physical competition, this is not

necessarily the case. Rather, the emphasis given to nurturing suggests that in terms of sports

films' representations of masculinities, relationships are at least as important as competition and

are often more important.

Steve Neale's observation that the manipulation of generic features can be a source of

transgression confirms the significance of this reversal of roles, typical of sports films. However,

generic verisimilitude often goes unnoticed. This oversight occurs in part because of the emphasis

on realism and because there is a tendency that, "at least in the case of Hollywood, generic

regimes of verisimilitude are almost as 'public,' as widely known, as 'public opinion' itself. It is

not simply in films or in genres that the boundaries between the cultural and the generic are

blurred: the two regimes merge also in public discourse, generic knowledge becoming a form of

cultural knowledge, a component of 'public opinion'" ("Questions" 48). Thus, by distorting the boundaries between the two regimes — that is, by emphasizing the unselfish play that occurs within competition as well as the masculine nurturing — sports films provide the opportunity for masculine nurturing to become part of "public opinion." Indeed, Neale would suggest that this is part of the pleasure of viewing these films: "it is often the generically verisimilitudinous ingredients of a film [. . .] that constitute its pleasure, and that thus attract audiences to the film in the first place [and they] tend to be 'public,' known, at least to some extent, in advance" ("Questions" 48). Masculine nurturing, then, is part of the set of expectations viewers bring to a sports movie and part of the pleasures they derive from the film. Rather than being a particularly new feature, masculine nurturing has been and is a commonplace in sports films. What is new is recognizing that it exists.

The Final Horn: Conclusions

Three recent films stand out for being slightly different with regard to the father-son relationship and the nurturing involved. First, *Sunset Park* features Phylis Siroka, a small Jewish woman with no basketball experience, who becomes the coach of a basketball team made up entirely of urban African-American boys. While there are potential "father" figures for the boys, none of them materializes. For example, one of the players, Spaceman, contemplates killing his science teacher because the latter constantly bullies the boy. Siroka stands up to the teacher and informs him that science is Spaceman's favourite subject, a fact previously unknown to the teacher because he had never talked with the student. Although the boys have a successful season, there is no reconciliation with any of the father-figures. Indeed, they learn about being men from a woman. In *Varsity Blues*, all of the boys in West Canaan, Texas, have two fathers: one is

biological and one is the football coach. However, the biological fathers replay their competition with each other through their sons or attempt to relive their youths through the boys. The story centres on Jon Moxon, the backup forced into the starting role when Lance, the star quarterback, blows out his knee. When Moxon receives news of his acceptance to Brown University on an academic scholarship, his father, the former backup to Lance's father, says "That's great, but I need to talk to you about [the game against] Gilroy," because Coach Kilmer had asked him to do so. It is worth adding that when Lance was hurt, his father yelled at him, "Don't do this to me, boy!" Yet, the boys revolt against both their coach and their fathers in the locker room during half-time of the crucial game. Coach Kilmer wants a player to take an injection so that he can play, despite the risk of further injury. However, this is what happened to Lance and led to his demise. Moxon leads the revolt, and Lance becomes the coach during the second half of the big game. Although they violate the "sanctity" of the locker room — in previous movies, the space where nurturing between men can be done safely — the boys keep the dispute in the domestic realm of the locker room. They win, but Moxon's pep talk is more telling: "We have the rest of our lives to be mediocre." The emphasis is still on the bonds the players have but with a definite break from their fathers and their fathers' operating methods.

Finally, *He Got Game*, from which I pinched the first part of the title of this chapter, is another recent film that ends without a father-son reconciliation, despite the presence of dozens of would-be fathers. Jesus Shuttlesworth is a highly-regarded high school basketball player who has yet to decide on a college. Several college coaches attempt to woo him. His high school coach, who had served as a father-figure of sorts during the absence of Jesus' father, offers him $10,000 to choose the "right" school. Uncle Bubba, too, wants a piece of the action because he assumes

Jesus is going to be paid to play college basketball and that Jesus will become a professional

player, as well. And then there is Jesus' biological father: he was imprisoned for killing Jesus'

mother during a domestic dispute arising from the father's excessive pushing of the son to be a

great basketball player. The warden of the prison wants Jesus to go to Big State and offers Jake

Shuttlesworth his freedom if he can convince his son to sign a letter of intent. Jesus chooses Big

State, but not before beating his father in a game of one-on-one — both a strutting, in-your-face

version of "I'm a man now" and simultaneously the end of the only remaining thing, basketball,

they have in common — followed by dad's subsequent return to prison, with the parting words,

"You've only got yourself, son." The film emphasizes not connections but standing alone. Indeed,

the most sage advice given to Jesus comes from a white gangster named Big Time, who informs

the young star about the trappings and pitfalls that come with fame. Disturbingly, this movie

connects all of the dangers with women, and more specifically, white women. What these recent

sports films do suggest is that young men, and especially young black men, will have to reach

manhood without any guidance from their fathers.

Central to the genre, in all of its iterations, is the figure of the "prodigal father," to borrow

Susan Faludi's term, who deserts a (figurative) son, realizes the mistake, and returns seeking

redemption. He is always nearing the end of his coaching career. For example, Gene Hackman

plays this role twice: first as the coach who lost his job for hitting a player, in *Hoosiers*, and later

as the coach who could not get along with his quarterback, in *The Replacements*. If he is not

looking for redemption, he is definitely looking to prove himself: for example, Craig T. Nelson as

Coach Nickerson, in *All the Right Moves*, whose yearning for a college position echoes his

players' dreams, and John Voight as Coach Kilmer, in *Varsity Blues*, who wants a twenty-third

title, and the maintenance of the *status quo*. In both movies, the coach is in his last year as a high

school football coach. In all cases, the coach needs to prove that his style is both successful and

justifiable. In other words, the coach's playbook is the Law of the Father — "Thou shalt not

desire what was my desire" — by another name (Lapsley & Westlake 73). That is to say, in the

Oedipal scenario the son seeks to replace the father who in turn "lays down the law" to resist such

an advance. Indeed, Coach Nickerson tells star defensive back, Stefan Djordjevic, the cliché, "It's

my way or the highway," when the player refuses to follow instructions. Complicating the

development of the father-son relationship is the fact that the coach and player come from

different backgrounds. This emphasizes the "generation gap" that already exists. This gap is

crucial to the narrative and the genre. Jeffords cites its importance in action-adventure movies of

the 1980s. She observes that

> Because the relationship between a father and a son automatically
> invokes time, these films all take the spans of time as their subjects
> [. . .] Consequently, one of the keys to the success of these films is
> not only their resolution of father/son relationships but their
> appropriation of time. In each case a "happy" ending depends on
> the ability of the hero to overcome the limitations of time, to
> rewrite history, to restructure the future, or to rescue the father
> from the burdens of time itself. (Hard Bodies 88)

It is in this regard that the sports film has an in-built focus on time. Sports of all sorts

automatically invoke time. They are broken down into careers, seasons, games, rounds, and parts

of games. The typical sports film needs one entire season for its span. Moreover, the promise of

"next year" also is invoked to ensure continuity, if only by inspiring a sequel.

It is also with respect to time that the latter three films cited stand out when compared to

other members of the genre. None of these films has a particularly happy ending and none of them

provides a resolution to the Oedipal scenario. When Jake Shuttlesworth fails to recruit his son —

too little, too late — he goes back to jail. The son refuses to rescue him; Jesus does not save.

Coach Kilmer never coaches again, and Moxon goes to Brown on the academic scholarship. The

boys at Sunset Park lose the championship game and while they have next year, they have a

female coach and no father figures. Even *The Replacements* is noteworthy for reducing the season

to four games, or one-quarter length. Although the ending is happy and the father-son continuity

is achieved, there is no promise of next year. Jeffords stresses that the "link between the

father/son narratives and the control of time is not merely coincidental but necessary. For if stories

of American decline and loss are to be rewritten, and the emblems of previous times are to be

retrieved, then history must come under the control of the present. In other words, the father and

all he represents cannot be brought back unless the son controls time" (Hard Bodies 89). The sons

ultimately control time in the final three films cited, but the fathers are not brought back as

Jeffords suggests is necessary. The prodigal father does not receive his usual redemption. The

strongest example is Coach Kilmer who is replaced in the middle of a game. As well, Jake could

have had an early release from his "time." By distorting the generic form, these films indicate how

dominant the traditional form has been and still is. Effectively, they represent "negative" versions

of the genre. Transgressing the generic verisimilitude of the form emphasizes the different or

absent resolution to the father-son relationship, as opposed to the resolution Jeffords cites as

being necessary to the continuation of the American way of life. More properly, the sons now

control time, but without their fathers.

In Jeffords' defense, it must be admitted that she assumes that fatherhood and patriarchy

are synonymous and automatically reproduced. Likewise, Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan

make the same assumption. This is part of the reason Chodorow, especially, focuses solely on

mothering. Interestingly, she shuns the biological basis for mothering in several visceral

comments: "we find no direct research on the hormonal basis of nurturance, as opposed to

lactation, in humans," (Mothering 29) as well as "It does not seem, if we exclude wet-nursing,

that any biological evidence will be forthcoming to support the assumption that women must be

'substitute mothers' rather than men" (Mothering 30). Given her later comments regarding men's

inability to be nurturing parents, there is a seeming contradiction in Chodorow's position.

However, she neatly resolves the issue: "That women have the extensive and nearly exclusive

mothering role they have is a product of a social and cultural translation of their childbearing and

lactation capacities. It is not guaranteed or entailed by these capacities themselves" (Mothering

30). By concluding that there is no genotypic basis for women's "mothering," Chodorow leaves

open the possibility that males can be nurturing. However, she doubts that it could ever be

otherwise. The current situation means that "men come to grow away from their families and to

participate in the public sphere" (Mothering 38). This contributes to "men's lack of emotional

availability" (Mothering 208). Mothering is reproduced in women but not in men "because

women are themselves mothered by women [and] they grow up with the relational capacities and

needs, and psychological definition of self-in-relationship, which commits them to mothering.

Men, because they are mothered by women, do not" (Mothering 209). Regardless of what she

says, the distinction Chodorow makes is still on the basis of the Y-chromosome, as opposed to

lactation. That is to say, by virtue of the extra chromosome, men benefit from the "patriarchal

order" she describes and therefore they do not have any nurturing responsibilities. This is just as

well, because in Chodorow's formulation men grow up distant and absent and therefore cannot

nurture anyway.

What becomes clear in considering the seemingly "male" genre of the sports film is that it involves men, in an all-male setting (which is much feared and resented by feminists, as Faludi points out) and yet they are nurturing each other. Moreover, the "mothering" occurs in spite of all of the stereotypically male-heroic activities taking place around them. Indeed it occurs often simultaneously along with hitting, conquering, competing, masculine displays, and the use of women as items of exchange in the economy in the masculine hierarchy. In the last regard, the economy is not as simple as might first appear. For example, in *The Program*, the female character, Autumn, dictates the terms of the economy to Darnell: academics must come first, not athletics. Perhaps the best example comes from *Bull Durham*. Annie Savoy initially chooses Nuke over Crash. The choice sets up not a love triangle but an Oedipal triangle, for Annie is significantly older and more experienced than Nuke. Her last name, derived from the French verb, *savoir*. meaning "to know" alludes to this fact. Likewise, Crash is older and wiser than Nuke. He was acquired by the Durham Bulls precisely to mentor the young pitcher. However, the "mothering" and "fathering" roles are reversed. Although Annie commits figurative incest with Nuke, she concentrates on teaching him to pitch. Conversely, Crash teaches Nuke a myriad of things: how to get along with teammates, especially his catcher, how to deal with interviews, how to handle winning as well as losing streaks, and, as if to emphasize the mothering aspect of the relationship, how to dress himself on the road and how to keep his shower sandals clean.

Admittedly, Chodorow and Gilligan wrote their versions of subjectivities some time ago and they must be considered very much as works of their time, as should Laura Mulvey's argument regarding the gaze However, Mulvey, Gilligan, and Chodorow still have a large

amount of influence on criticisms produced to this day, in part because they have not altered their

original arguments to make them more inclusive. As will be discussed in succeeding chapters,

Mulvey's position, especially, has been adopted and adapted by successive (generations of) critics

and scholars for a wide variety of media forms. Clearly, Mulvey *et al* could not have foreseen the

"New Men" I consider in the previous chapter, but that does not excuse them or their adherents

for ignoring the old men of sports and sports films. Given the situation that "In the United States,

for example, one in five children lives in a fatherless home. In fact, it is estimated that one of every

four children lives in a single-parent family and that 89 percent of these families are headed by

women" (Corneau 11). These figures were also growing at a steady rate throughout North

America: "In Canada, according to the 1986 census almost one child in seven lives in a fatherless

family. One of every five families has only one parent, and of these single-parent families, 79

percent are headed by single women" (Corneau 12).[22] What these statistics cannot tell us are the

numbers of fathers whose presence in the home is actually significant. What they do tell us is that

the reproduction of fathering is not necessarily as automatic as had been assumed when

Chodorow, Mulvey, *et al* were writing. They never considered what Sean Nixon recognizes:

> like all identities, masculinities are [. . .] invented categories. They
> are the product of the cultural meanings attached to certain
> attributes, capacities, dispositions and forms of conduct at given
> historical moments. [. . .] Cultural languages or systems of
> representation, then, are not a reflection of a pre-given masculinity
> fixed outside of representation. Rather, they actively construct the
> cultural meanings we give to masculinities. (301)

Mulvey, for instance, assigns multiple categories to femininity but consciously only assigns one to

masculinity. Chodorow, unlike Gilligan, suggests that male nurturing is possible, although

Modleski fears it — a fear reiterated by Faludi, in 1999. The reason for Modleski's concern brings

my analysis full-circle because of the inherent assumption that masculinity and patriarchy are synonymous, and that masculine inclusion means feminine exclusion.

This chapter cannot possibly examine every sports film within the space provided, nor does it need to do so. As mentioned in Northrop Frye asserts that genres speak through individual works rather than each work conveying meaning on its own.[23] Although Frye refers almost exclusively to literary works, the principle is equally applicable to considerations of film and the portrayals of gender found therein. The advantage of such an approach, as Gledhill suggests in her study of soap operas, is realized if one attempts "not to take the gendering of *genres* as fixed, but to explore what each genre contributes to changing definitions of the masculine and feminine within and around popular fictions in the 1990s" ("Soap" 350). Moreover, it is "within the working of the genre system that economic and production mechanism, particular textual forms, and audiences or readers interconnect and struggles for hegemony takes place" ("Soap" 351). Therefore, by showing how, and how frequently, the basic formula of the sports film is repeated, it becomes clear that finding and being a father is a paramount concern for contemporary males. In other words, the generic verisimilitude is more important than cultural verisimilitude. The latter, reproductions of real games, is predictable and occurs within the scope of generic verisimilitude.

The final three movies make a significant statement in their play with the conventions of the genre. One of the repeated patterns of the entire genre is that the boys seek surrogate fathers. Corneau's experience with his own patients leads him to conclude that "A boy whose father has left home will tend either to idealize the father or to seek an ideal father-substitute. Often he will be so blinded by his desire that he will be unable to assess accurately the father figures he has

chosen, and this will lead to yet another betrayal by the substitute father" (19). However, while the boys in *Varsity Blues*, *He Got Game*, and *Sunset Park* search for fathers, they ultimately refuse to opt in to the usual process of succession. Betrayal by the father occurs as a rule in the genre and usually it is resolved. This, too, is no longer the case, as the last three movies demonstrate. The sons refuse to reunite with their fathers and opt out of the "patriarchy" or the "Fatherhood," as Burstyn calls it. Rather than being met with fear and condemnation, this development should be welcomed by feminism(s) and recognized for its significance. While the genre does involve the traditional proof of manhood through physical competition, it becomes clear that the mutual nurturing Corneau describes is equally important. Such a relationship is completely ignored by a view such as the one Mulvey, *et al* relate, and suggests that not only is nurturing possible for men, but it is an integral part of manhood.

Chapter 3

"'If you want to be the man, you've got to beat the man'":

(Pro)Wrasslin' with Masculinity

Some may raise the question of the nature of this type of wrestling, arguing that it is rather entertainment than sport. [. . .] In the first place, that it may be *entertainment* does not exclude the possibility that it is also sport. Not many in the business of broadcasting would argue that, at the end of the day, they do not wish all of their programming to entertain that portion of the audience at which it is directed. [. . .] Nor is it an argument against wrestling being a sport that some part of the match has been scripted. After all, from the *audience's* point of view, it appears to be a contest. They do not know the outcome.

Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, "Decision 99/00-0607"

Introduction

The previous chapters considered cultural representations of masculinity that reflect masculine diminishment. The responses to the perceived decline largely have been benign; silence and masculine nurturing are relatively harmless. As in previous chapters, gaze and genre theories provide the impetus for this chapter, but in considering professional wrestling, I examine violent resistance to encroachments on masculinity. Like sports films, professional wrestling derives from the action movies of the 1980s. Wrestling writers adapt them to contemporary social themes in order to attract viewership among the male demographics. The focal point remains the father-son relationship, but the balance of power lies overwhelmingly with the father. Additionally, wrestling entails the viewing of sculpted males bodies. Although they are meant to appear powerful, these are hardly hegemonic males; the plots and the athleticism guarantee that the men are beaten and battered. Once again, critiques of the gaze prove inadequate for a full analysis because the focus of the gaze, like the status of the in-ring character, is never stable. Especially in terms of its plots, professional wrestling was transformed radically in the mid-to-late 1990s. Many critics, including

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the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, condemn wrestling for exploiting women, for obscuring reality and for portraying violence, yet this obscures the importance of the plots to the success of the formula. Curiously, part of wrestling's appeal results from critical denunciations which reinforce — even duplicate — the underlying narrative, which depicts the powerful corporate leader as the principal enemy of the hero. The pleasures of wrestling, then, compensate for the perceived diminishment of and threats to traditional forms of masculinity in North American culture.

At the height of their competition, WWE and WCW typically placed four of the top five programs in the Nielson ratings for basic cable networks (Canoe).[1] Even a change in the network that hosts WWE's top-rated show, *Monday Night Raw / Raw is War*, had little effect on its ratings. In September 2000, the program moved from USA Network to The National Network (TNN) in a deal worth a reported $28 million for each of the contract's four years. The latter broadcaster had only recently changed its name from The Nashville Network, and modified its format — originally, its schedule was based on hunting and fishing shows, country music videos, and re-runs of older TV shows such as *The Dukes of Hazard* and *Hee-Haw* and was aimed, as the name suggests, at a specific, regional audience — to a more broadly based content mix aimed at a more diverse audience. The plan, according to Brian Hughes, Senior Vice-President of TNN Sports and Outdoors, is to "position some programming that fits within the 18-to-49-(year-old) demographic" (qtd. in Marvez, 30 Sept. 2000). In spite of the move into unfamiliar territory, WWE fans followed *Raw* to TNN. In its first week it drew a "5.5 rating, which translates into an average of 7.14 million people in 4.28 million households" in North America (qtd. in Marvez, 30 Sept. 2000) When Hughes mentions the demographic the network is trying to reach, the unstated

portion of the focus is the word "male," for males in this demographic comprise the vast majority

of professional wrestling's viewership

Former wrestler turned advertising consultant, Arn Anderson, reports that approximately

63% of professional wrestling's adult viewers are male and 70% are between the ages of eighteen

and forty-four. Half of the 69% of the viewers who are employed work in "blue collar" jobs

(Anderson). This statistic also indicates the youth of the viewership since 22% of them are

between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, ages at which many still live with parents or

custodial guardians. WWE stars have made guest appearances on recent *Emmy Awards* shows,

Saturday Night Live, and *Third Rock From the Sun*. Two feature length films, *Ready to Rumble*

and *Beyond the Mat*, were released in the year 2000 and feature stars from WCW, WWE, and the

smaller independent promotions When WWE and Martha Stewart both held their Initial Public

Offerings (IPO) on the same day, at the New York Stock Exchange, Ms. Stewart eagerly posed

for pictures with the federation's "superstars," confirming that, even for someone whose franchise

is built on discriminating taste, wrestling is a "good thing" (see Appendix B, Fig. 1).[2] The usually

staid *Arts and Entertainment* (*A&E*) network has devoted an entire week of its popular

Biography program to professional wrestlers and several segments on its investigative and current

affairs show, *Behind Closed Doors*, to professional wrestling. Similarly, The Learning Channel

(TLC) has presented *The Unreal History of Professional Wrestling*, a two-hour documentary, to

its viewers several times each year during wrestling's current run of popularity. Thus, the

mainstream position of professional wrestling as "sports entertainment" has been cemented It is

surprising, then, that there have been few academic analyses (as opposed to critical

condemnations) of professional wrestling since Roland Barthes' famous essay, "The World of

Wrestling," in 1972.

Men in their Underwear: Wrestling Plots

While the basic formula of both professional wrestling and action films has been widely

condemned for its violence and its obscuring of reality, the films and telecasts reflect the culture

that produces and consumes them. Recently, professional wrestling has expanded its scope by

placing a greater emphasis on plot development than on muscle development. In a rare television

interview, on TSN's *Off the Record*, WWE owner Vince McMahon explains that without its

storylines professional wrestling would be "just two men, in their underwear, fighting." Through

the 1990s WCW and WWE produced two two-hour shows each week and one pay-per-view each

month. Even after the merger, the content fills six hours each week, plus a monthly pay-per-view.

Wrestling reaches audiences through cable television, the Internet, and a host of video games. So

important are the stories that even WWE video games contain a storyline feature which allows

players to create their own ongoing plot. The writers often draw on contemporary issues in order

to keep viewers interested and to provide enough content to fill the slots. The post-war era saw a

number of "German" wrestlers, most notably the von Erich family. Similarly, the 1970s and 1980s

saw an increase in "Soviet" and "Iranian" wrestlers. However, the threats posed by the enemies of

the Cold War and World War II are less pronounced in the immediate experience of

contemporary culture. Therefore, a formula more complex than a simple good-vs.-evil dichotomy

has developed. In his examination of the development of film technology, "Machines of the

Visible," Jean-Louis Comolli maintains that alterations in the conventions and practices of film

makers do not simply arise from technological developments but rather that the creativity of the

producers allows them to take advantage of technology and adapt it to suit their ideas. Comolli

connects the cultural history of the audience with the history of film The result is that the

spectator is encouraged to draw analogies between what is being viewed and what is real. In his

introduction, Comolli writes:

> If the social machine manufactures representations, it also
> manufactures *itself* from representations — the latter operative at
> once as means, matter and condition of sociality. Thus the historical
> variation of cinematic techniques, their appearance-disappearance,
> their phases of convergence, their periods of dominance and decline
> seem to me to depend not on a rational-linear order of
> technological perfectibility nor an autonomous instance of scientific
> "progress", but much rather on the offsettings, adjustments,
> arrangements carried out by a social configuration in order to
> represent itself, that is, at once to grasp itself, identify itself and
> itself produce itself in its representation. (121)

For Comolli, this occurs because "The cinema is born immediately as a social machine, and thus

not from the sole invention of its equipment but rather from the experimental supposition and

verification, from the anticipation and confirmation of its *social profitability*, economic,

ideological and symbolic One could just as well propose that it is the spectators who invent

cinema" (122). In this regard, Comolli takes as his theoretical cue the following statement from

Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet:

> Never is an arrangement-combination technological, indeed it is
> always the contrary. The tools always presuppose a machine, and
> the machine is always social before it is technical. There is always a
> social machine which selects or assigns the technical elements used.
> A tool, an instrument, remains marginal or little used for as long as
> the social machine or the collective arrangement-combination
> capable of taking it in its phylum does not exist. (126-7)

That is to say, were it not for social or political purposes, the technology, in this case film and

television, would be of little use. Indeed, its use is dependent upon those aims.

In his study of action movies, especially Sylvester Stallone's *Rambo* series, William

Warner proposes that "in the seventies and early eighties the rise of the hero film offered audiences a pleasurable way to work upon an insistent historical problem — the perceived decline of American power both in relation to other nations [following Vietnam and the oil crisis], as well as a recent, fondly remembered past" (672). Warner's view is echoed by Susan Jeffords, both in The Remasculinization of America and in Hard Bodies, as well as Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner in Camera *Politica*. However, professional wrestling, westerns, and action movies such as the *Rambo* and *Missing in Action* series are often dismissed by critics because they lack "authenticity": the movies for their lack of historicity and wrestling for its "fake" action. This type of dismissal obscures and ignores their wide appeal, especially in the case of professional wrestling, and overlooks the fact that any theatric production has a predetermined outcome. The majority of fans know the action — billed as "sports entertainment" performed by "sports entertainers" — is staged. As well, the current variety of professional wrestling places as much emphasis on plot as it does on spectacular action. The key difference is that the decline is domestic — inside the borders of both the United States and the home — in terms of shifting employment and economic patterns. The enemies are corporations such as Enron, Merck, WorldCom, Adelphia, Kmart, and Arthur Andersen; companies known for corruption and whose officers have been indicted for illegal activities. Often, the indictments follow rounds of downsizing amid record profits and executive salaries.

In "Looking at the Male," Paul Willemen suggests that male heroes in western movies perform in two distinct but inter-related ways: first as spectacle and second as a physically beaten body. Paul Smith, in "Eastwood Bound" adds a third and final stage occurs when the hero triumphs Eventually, action films supplanted westerns, but as William Warner points out in

"Spectacular Action: Rambo and the Popular Pleasures of Pain," the genres' appeal

> depends upon subjecting hero and audience to a certain masochistic
> scenario — the pleasure of intensely felt pain, and crippling
> incapacity, as it is written into the action, and onto the body of the
> hero. Secondly, each [production] supports the natural virtue of the
> hero through a display of technology's magic. Finally, each
> [production] wins the audience an anti-therapeutic relief from
> confining subjectivity by releasing it into a vertiginous cinematic
> experience of spectacular action. (673)

Professional wrestling depends on just such a structure. Indeed, such a reality is reflected in

wrestler Ric Flair's motto, which forms the first part of the title of this chapter. Each match puts

the wrestlers in the position of both spectacle and beaten body. The match is highly structured and

ritualized. Each wrestler's entrance is announced and accompanied by music. Convention dictates

that there are momentum shifts, however brief, during the match. The outcome necessitates

spectacular action. For example, moves such as slams, jumps, landings, and chairs over the head

involve actual physical exertion and actual physical contact even if the move is scripted. One

move, known as "blading," requires that the wrestlers cut themselves with a razor blade. The

implement is usually concealed in the tape around their wrists, and the cut is made on the

forehead. Thus, the blood, sweat, and tears are often real. Moreover, the action almost always

produces a victor. While there are several possible results for a match — pinfall as in amateur

wrestling, submission, disqualification, or time limit draw — there is always a winner in the minds

of the fans.

Before considering the psychological processes involved in the sadistic and masochistic

frameworks mentioned above, it is important to examine the narrative structure of contemporary

professional wrestling and its context. Such an analysis is problematized by the notion that a male

body must be "feminized" in order to be objectified. This view follows from Laura Mulvey's critique of the male gaze, in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," and is held by scholars such as Steven Neale, in "Masculinity as Spectacle." However, as with the male bodies discussed in the previous chapters, traditional arguments about the gaze cannot account fully for the production and viewing of professional wrestling. First, it derives, at least in part, from the conventionalized objectification of the male body found in most professional sports. Second, the structure of matches requires wrestlers to oscillate frequently between passive and aggressive postures. Further complicating the issue for the predominantly male audience are the facts that wrestling programs function more like serials than complete cinematic productions, which interferes with the third, triumphant, stage mentioned by Smith — hence the cliché of wrestling as "soap opera for men" — and the recent change in the role of women in the industry. In this latter regard, characters portrayed by female body builders and fitness models, often with "masculinized" physiques, have become more involved in the matches and on occasion "compete" with the men.[3] While this chapter relies on analytical models used in previous chapters, it will provide a serious challenge to the concept of the male gaze as an *a priori* as well as the stability of gender.

The shift in the focus of plots in professional wrestling changed dramatically when former WWE mainstays, Diesel and Razor Ramon, left to join WCW. They appeared under their own names, Kevin Nash and Scott Hall, respectively, and called themselves "The Outsiders." The fact that they used their own names was significant since this rarely ever occurs in the world of professional wrestling. Wrestlers usually adopt a ring name and a persona to go with it. In the case of Nash and Hall, WWE actually owns the trademarks, "Diesel" and "Razor Ramon." The Outsiders were so-named because they had been in a (real life) contract dispute with WWE's

owner, Vince McMahon. In the storyline, they began to appear, without invitation, at WCW

events although the latter's officials denied having signed them to contracts — hence the name

"Outsiders." Eventually, they were joined by several other prominent wrestlers — including Hulk

Hogan — to form "The New World Order," or NWO, for short. The purpose of NWO was to

destroy the existing structure of WCW and take over the corporation.[4] They were among the

most sadistic rule-breakers in the history of wrestling. They rarely, if ever, engaged in matches,

but rather would interrupt matches involving other wrestlers and "punk" everyone, regardless of

affiliation.[5] More frequently, they would force one combatant (or set of combatants) to leave the

ring while they singled-out an individual to assault. The format, and the NWO, were so successful

that WWE reintroduced the unit and its storyline following the takeover of WCW.

The New Enemy: My Boss

When they were joined by WCW's then president and current owner, Eric Bischoff, the

implications of the NWO's effect on the narrative structure became clear: the "fix was in" because

the boss sold out his employees. As this example shows and as I will explain further, professional

wrestling now follows the basic three-part narrative formula introduced by the action films of the

eighties and has updated it to reflect contemporary tastes. Writing about the movies on which

wrestling plots are based in "Spectacular Action: Rambo and the Popular Pleasures of Pain,"

William Warner explains that the convention is that of

> a series of films which took up an old theme of American film and
> culture — the individual's struggle against an unjust system — and
> gave that scenario a distinct new turn. The protagonist did not
> challenge the system by teaming up with an ambiguous woman to
> solve a crime (as in *film noir*), or organizing the good ranchers
> against the Boss who owns the whole town (as in some Westerns).
> (675)

The contemporary character is almost always a loner. While he does take on the boss who also owns the whole corporation, and the boss's henchman, the hero does so with neither female companions nor male allies A further shift away from westerns and *film noire* is the increased violence in action movies and professional wrestling. In addition, Warner notes a more important alteration of the more recent films as opposed to the earlier offerings, one that reflects changes in social and technological configurations. He observes:

> Now the System — sometimes a state, sometimes a corporation —
> is given extraordinary new powers of surveillance and control of the
> individual. The protagonist, almost entirely cut off from others,
> endures the most insidious forms of manipulation and pain, reaches
> into the primordial levels of self, and emerges as a hero with
> powers sufficient to fight the System to the point of its catastrophe.
> (675)

According to Warner, the 1980s variation on this theme manifested itself in movies such as the *Rambo, Missing in Action* and *Iron Eagle* series. It is generally understood that these films hope to redress the powerlessness caused by the perceived national failure of the Vietnam War. Indeed, according to Warner, "this is the crux of the [films'] explicit discursive project: not only to reclaim the American vet [. . .] but further, to discover that what Rambo is and represents (pride, strength, will) is precisely that which is most indispensable for America today" (674). While the Vietnam veterans finally have been acknowledged, the current generation of men is faced with another perceived failure.

As mentioned throughout Susan Faludi details the contemporary situation of (North) American men. Stated briefly her premise is that instead of stemming from a lost war, the current sense of powerlessness and failure North American men feel stems from the fact that in the contemporary context, many men feel they have lost "a useful role in public life, a way of earning

a decent living, [and] respectful treatment in the culture" (Faludi 40). In addition, Faludi finds an

effect of this situation is that a number of men turn to "the fantasy realm [of a] clear-cut

controllable world of action movies and video combat, televised athletic tournaments and pay-per-

view ultimate-fighting bouts" (32). The people who write the scripts for the professional wrestling

organizations are cognizant of this fact and incorporate it into the stories. The story lines are such

an important part of the current professional wrestling formats that Vince McMahon, of WWE,

hired several script writers away from Conan O'Brien and MTV (Leland 51). Moreover, when the

WCW began to lose ground to WWE in the ratings, Eric Bischoff was reassigned. In his place,

Turner Broadcasting poached Vince Russo and Ed Ferrara who had been the head writers for

WWE. Following WWE's takeover of WCW, Russo and Bischoff were both hired by Vince

McMahon to reinvigorate the company. Whereas the old stories pitted a character like Sergeant

Slaughter, a gruff-voiced United States Marine Corps drill sergeant (played by Robert Remus, an

actual former Marine), in feuds with all of the stereotyped enemies of the United States — from

Baron von Rashke, a Nazi, to Nikolai Volkoff, a Soviet, to The Iron Sheik, an Iranian who later

"became" an Iraqi during the Persian Gulf War — Remus himself now doubts "whether his All-

American babyface character could have achieved stardom in this generation" (qtd. in Marvez, 27

May 2000). Unlike the post-war or Cold War eras, but like the Vietnam War, there is no obvious

enemy of the state.

Indeed, the American "war on terrorism" has had no impact on wrestling's storylines.

While Sadam Hussein fit the bill as a villain who (supposedly) sent "Colonel Mustafa" and

"General Adnan" to defeat America (and its wrestlers) in 1991, he receives no mention today.

There was a brief memorial which included the sounding of the ring bell following the attacks of

11 Sept. 2001 (as there was following the in-ring death of Owen Hart), but neither Osama Bin

Laden nor his cohorts rates a wrestling character. Furthermore, no one is winning the current

"war" that Faludi documents. For wrestling, this is reflected in the fact that today's "All-American

babyface" — the good-guy — played by a former Olympic Gold Medalist in freestyle wrestling

and multiple WWE Champion, Kurt Angle, is hated by the fans; he is a "heel." The irony is that

Angle was a "real" wrestler who combined athleticism and hard work to achieve his Olympic

dream — another popular plot — but upon his entry into WWE, Angle was given an immediate

"push," or promotional emphasis, before "proving" himself against the competition. Thus, fans

believe he has not "earned" his position at the top. Angle has parlayed his status into being the

most-hated heel in WWE, "whose arrogance overshadows his patriotism" (Marvez, 27 May

2000). Simply stated, the proverbial "boy next door" is seen as an arrogant phony and braggart

who is reviled by all. Angle has been allied with a group known as "Right to Censor" and together

they attempted to rid WWE of its foul language and sexual content. Currently, Angle heads

"Team Angle," which features two more former amateur wrestlers. The members of Team Angle

sport red, white and blue singlets, wave the American flag and wear their medals to the ring.

Needless to say, Angle constantly tries to curry favour with his boss, Vince McMahon.

Resistance is Futile: The New World Order

In a <u>Newsweek</u> article about wrestling's surge in popularity, Jean Paul Levesque, better

known to wrestling fans as WWE wrestler Hunter Hearst Helmsley, or The Game, explains that

the reason for the dramatic change in focus outlined above is that "in the post-cold-war era, 'there

is no horror now. To the average person, the real-life enemy now is their boss'" (qtd. in Leland

54). Susan Faludi finds the same perspective among the men she interviews. According to Faludi

> The handful of men plucked arbitrarily from the anonymous crowd
> and elevated onto the new pedestal of mass media and
> entertainment glamour [are] unreachable. That [isn't] because they
> [are] necessarily arrogant or narcissistic, though some [will] surely
> become so; they simply [exist] in a realm from which all lines to
> their brothers [i.e., other men] have been cut. [The others become]
> unseen backing for the corporation's real star: its brand name. (33)

Thus, the corporation's only allegiance is to its brand name not physical prowess, that is, the ability to enact masculinity is not necessarily the measure of the man. Kurt Angle exemplifies this situation. He does not deserve his "star" status.

Rather than taking care of its employees, the corporation only takes care of itself. McMahon has famously double-crossed several wrestlers and promoters in real life, most notably Bret Hart and Vern Gagne. Robert Connell finds the corporate setting to be an important site of masculine formations:

> The corporate activity behind media celebrities and the
> commercialization of sex brings us to [another] arena of hegemonic
> masculinity politics, the management of patriarchal organizations.
> Institutions do not maintain themselves; someone has to practise
> power for power effects to occur. [But] the fact that power
> relations must be practised allows for divergence in *how* they are
> practised. (215)

Connell is suggesting that there are different modes of hegemonic masculinity and different methods of deploying them as opposed to a uniform patriarchal configuration. Despite criticism to the contrary, this occurs because "There is no Patriarch Headquarters, with flags and limousines, where all the strategies are worked out. It is common for different groups of men, each pursuing a project of hegemonic masculinity, to come into conflict with each other" (Connell 215).

Relationships and personal ties are no longer important in an era in which there is no greater common purpose, or even a greater common enemy. Competing forms of hegemonic masculinity

— here, economic and physical — come in contact with each other. In professional wrestling plots this competition results in arbitrary deployments of power and enacted rage.

At any given time, several angles in both federations will be based on a scenario involving a wrestler (or group of wrestlers) as the victim(s) of the evil corporation and its "boss." Whereas Eric Bischoff and Vince McMahon previously appeared on camera only as announcers — in fact, for many years McMahon's ownership of WWE was not publicized at all — they are now central characters in the elaborate plots. In its NWO incarnation this narrative format meant that the older, hardworking, loyal, traditionalist wrestlers — those who relied on their performance in the ring and the classic good vs. evil construction — were going to be replaced following a hostile takeover in a plot mimicking the current corporate trend. The message was clear: get with the New World Order or be beaten up and "downsized." As if the hundreds of methods of beating on a human anatomy were not enough, the NWO would spray-paint their logo — graffiti *qua* branding in the corporate as well as physical sense, since this is how the logo appears on the T-shirts they sell — on the defeated body of their victim. Finally, since the entire proceedings are always videotaped and photographed, "the System" has extraordinary powers of surveillance built into it. For example, one of the most familiar scenes in contemporary professional wrestling is a supposedly candid scene featuring a wrestler "back-stage," watching the in-ring proceedings on a monitor. Usually the action is not to his liking so he smashes the monitor, but not the camera that is filming him. This is an act that seemingly symbolizes resistance in terms of using the features of the system against itself by watching without being seen and then smashing the equipment that makes this possible. Such an act is typical of the action movie genre. For example, in *Running Man*, Arnold Schwarzenegger's character destroys the "Cadre" satellite TV network. Similarly, in

Rambo, the title character machine-guns the computerized reconnaissance systems used to guide,

or control, him on his mission. Warner concludes that "by destroying, or interrupting, the

operation of the system, the audience is left [. . .] with a freeze frame image of Rambo as a

nuclear subject, a self etched against a landscape where no supporting social network seems

necessary" (676). He is alone against the system and self-sufficiency is his best method of

resistance. In professional wrestling it seems that no supporting social network exists and all that

exists is subjection. Smashing the surveillance equipment is an ironically futile act since a camera

is still present, watching the wrestler as he watches. Moreover, destroying the monitor does little

to stop the action that so upset him. That is to say, he only thinks he has control, when the

corporation has complete control.

While the NWO's treatment of the older cadre of WCW wrestlers is exaggerated and

(physically) violent, it echoes the treatment the same generation of workers — the spectators —

are receiving currently from the large corporations that employ them. Downsizing, outsourcing,

and forced early retirement do not cause bodily harm, but they do create violent disruptions in

people's lives on a large scale. Faludi details some of the larger examples:

> The deindustrialization and "restructuring" of the last couple of
> decades [has] scythed through vast swaths of industrial America,
> shuttering steel and auto plants across the Midwest, decimating the
> defense industry, and eliminating large number of workers in
> corporate behemoths: 60,000 at Chrysler, 74,000 at General
> Motors, 175,000 at IBM, 125,000 at AT&T. Though going
> "postal" [is] an extreme reaction, downsizing [is] a violent
> dislocation, often violently received. Yet those prototypical
> workingmen [are] taking their bitter disappointment with
> remarkable gentility. (60-1)

Daimler-Chrysler plans to cut 28,000 jobs world-wide and Nortel Networks has eliminated

50,000 of its 90,000 positions in a two-year period. These cuts affect workers at all levels of

seniority. John Cloud, in an article in *Time* magazine, summarizes the new reality: "The retirement

party will all but disappear. So will retirement" (54). Two important factors contribute to the

disappearance of the traditional retirement: first, long tenures with a single corporation, ending

with a pension plan, are not common; second, "nearly 70% of [North Americans] expect to work

after age 65" (Cloud 54). Cloud continues:

> Remember when the gold watch was a metaphor for retirement
> from a corporate culture that cared for its workers during those
> years between weddings and Winnebagos? A company took you in
> after college and for 40 years gave you Christmas bonuses and
> ignored your martini breath after lunch. In exchange, at 65 you left
> with a Rolex or a gold-plated Timex, depending on pay scale. (54)

Not only is this no longer the case, Cloud explains that by the year 2001, "the average middle-

aged worker will spend less than eight years at the same company" (54). The prevailing sense that

retirement no longer exists and that success is completely arbitrary is reflected in Fig. 2 (see

Appendix B). Americans believe that lotteries, with odds approaching one-in-fourteen million

(based on the 6/49 format) give them a better hope for the future than pension or other investment

funds. Longer life-expectancies are increasing the number of people who work after age sixty-

five, but there is also a growing sense that pensions are insufficient providers. Moreover, Cloud

contends that since more work will be done at home via the Internet, "weekends, or whatever is

left of them" will vanish (54). While this type of arrangement, which allows people to work out of

their homes and to choose how long they wish to work, might seem to be to the workers'

advantage, it ultimately will result in more work and a more oppressive system. Essentially,

workers are available to work all of the time. Legislators are moving to enforce what had been

mere business practices.[6]

Monitoring and surveillance actually will be able to increase through the use of passive means. According to an American Management Association study, shown in Fig. 3 (see Appendix B), "About 74% of companies do some form of electronic monitoring of employees" (USA Today). With the growth of "virtual corporations," in which the employees are permanently connected via the Internet, such surveillance will be available at all times. Even with the currently available technology, companies can monitor server traffic to ensure that workers are connected and to watch what they are doing while connected. In addition, they have "firewalls" for their servers which prohibit the reception or transmission of "inappropriate" materials and catalogue attempts to do so. Stated simply, the ability of corporations to monitor and control their employees has been extended to the homes of the workers. In this regard, Cloud asks, "Which is more stifling, the paternalistic company with its gold watch as a reward for lifetime service, or the new paradigm: all work, all the time, all your life?" (54). Given this type of unsettled environment, it is not surprising that many employees act out their frustrations (see Fig. 4, Appendix B). Professional wrestling is poised to capitalize on this situation by virtue of its basic structure: the co-workers are necessarily rude and belligerent; the boss is completely unreasonable and occasionally gives his workers ultimatums of "win your next match or lose your job;" each wrestler is hated by a significant proportion of clients, or fans, who chant epithets, spit, and throw objects at the wrestlers. Where the average worker is reduced to tears, traditionally a sign of unmasculine weakness, the professional wrestler is supposed to seek revenge by damaging either the competition, the equipment, or the boss.

Eventually, professional wrestling's top box-office draw, most recognizable and most

marketable performer, and perennial fan-favourite, the Incredible Hulk Hogan, a.k.a the Hulkster,

became Hollywood Hulk Hogan when he joined the NWO, and eventually dropped "Hulk"

altogether. This was a major coup for the NWO and a major departure for Hogan since he had

preached a gospel of "say your prayers and take your vitamins" to all the "little Hulkamaniacs" for

well over ten years. Hogan's entrance music, "Real American," with lyrics proclaiming that he

"fights for the rights of everyone" was replaced by Jimi Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile (slight

reprise)." This clearly indicates that the "American" way of life is no longer a priority in the "new

world order." Hollywood and Bischoff became the leaders of the NWO, with the former's new

moniker and transformed behaviour symbolizing his allegiance to the corporatized world or what

Faludi calls "a culture of ornament" in which "manhood is defined by appearance, by youth and

attractiveness, by money and aggression, by posture and swagger and 'props,' by the curled lip

and flexed biceps, by the glamour of the cover boy and by the market-bartered 'individuality' that

sets one astronaut or athlete or gangster above another" (40). The colourful ring attire many of

the NWO members traditionally wore was replaced by a uniform of black pants and a black shirt

with the NWO logo on it. Thus, in the NWO, individuality ceases to exist, and their motto,

"NWO for life," is a constant reminder of that fact.[7] This is a simplified — black and white, if you

will — version of the current world order, but the basis of the storyline clearly resonates with

audiences and accounts for a great deal of wrestling's popularity.

"Stylin' and Profilin'": Ric Flair

The foremost example of the cruel corporation vs. the solitary male storyline involves Ric

Flair and Eric Bischoff as the principle players in a mixture of art and life that would make

Adorno and Horkheimer cringe. Flair is one of the greatest performers in the history of the

industry and has held the World Championship fourteen times during his twenty-five year career.

However, even Ric Flair can fall victim to the NWO and the new corporate reality. This should

not have come as a surprise given that the convention involves what Warner describes as:

> a version of the fable of self and system which dichotomizes
> fictional space into two positions. The self, often associated with
> nature and the erotic, becomes the locus for the expression of every
> positive human value, most especially "freedom." Opposite the self
> is the System, which in its colorless, mechanical operations, is
> anathematized as a faceless monster using its insidious powers to
> bend all human effort to its own service. (676)

In stark contrast to the NWO's austere black-and-white uniform and amateurish logo, the

flamboyant Flair is known for his outlandish robes, one of which "has 7,200 rhinestones and

weighs 45 pounds," countless colourful sayings, and his entrance music: *Also Sprach Zarathustra*

(AP). He deliberately associates with nature since his nickname throughout his entire career has

been "The Nature Boy."[8] He is so-named because he seems so natural in the ring; that is,

wrestling's complex movements come easily, or naturally, to him. Flair's association with the

erotic is ensured by more than his platinum blonde hair, perennial tan, and brief wrestling attire.

He has always portrayed — even at fifty — a playboy (see Fig. 5, Appendix B). In his words,

Flair is a "stylin' and profilin,' limousine-riding, Learjet-flying, wheeling-dealing, kiss-stealing,

love-making, heart-breaking son-of-a-gun." Of course, sexual freedom is one of the ultimate

expressions of freedom.

The story line began with a "real-life" dispute between the wrestler and WCW. Flair's

contract with WCW allowed him flexibility in terms of his performance schedule. Thus, Flair

decided to forego a WCW event in order to go the AAU national amateur wrestling — that is,

real wrestling — championships at the Pontiac Silverdome so that he could watch his nine-year-

old son, Reid, compete in the tournament. Nothing could be more "natural" than wanting to watch one's son. Apparently, Eric Bischoff did not agree because in a "suit filed by World Championship Wrestling [the company] claims Flair's failure to show up at a series of bouts this year played havoc with 'story lines' planned out for the performances" (AP). The lawsuit was settled eventually and Flair came back to WCW, but not before his entire family was drawn into the action when the script was changed to include the elements of saga that occurred outside the ring. When Ric Flair had a heart attack — à well-guarded part of the script — Eric Bischoff appeared to have a change of heart and called Ric's wife Beth, along with sons Reid and nineteen-year-old David, to the ring so that he could say he was sorry.[9] In a classic heel move, Bischoff said that he was sorry that Ric Flair is such an old, broken-down man who can no longer provide for his family, rudely kissed Beth Flair, and then had an NWO thug hold young Reid so that Bischoff could focus on beating David.[10] A few weeks later, on the night of Flair's triumphant return to WCW following his (actual) reinstatement, Eric Bischoff crashed the proceedings to tell Flair to get out of the arena because he was fired. Flair responded, "You can't fire me, I'm already fired" and condemned Bischoff's "abuse of power" (Gardner 2). When Bischoff entered the ring, young Reid, with his AAU medal hanging around his neck, tackled the president. Ultimately, Bischoff's hubris led him to challenge Flair to a winner-takes-all match with the prize being the presidency of WCW (see Fig. 6, Appendix B). Naturally, Flair won the match. However triumph is not complete until the wrestler is champion of the world. In the weeks leading up to the title match between Hollywood Hogan and Ric Flair, Bischoff and the other NWO members made Flair's life miserable. Nevertheless, Flair won the title from Hogan. Also naturally, at the moment when Flair was both president and champion he turned heel by abusing his power and refusing

title matches. Thus, the continuity of the narrative is never in danger.

"Austin 3:16 Says . . . ": Beating the Boss[11]

While the WCW's plots involving Ric Flair and the NWO presented this new approach to

sports entertainment, WWE's owner Vince McMahon has seemingly perfected the ruthless boss

vs. employee format. The longest running such feud involves the McMahon and Stone Cold Steve

Austin and is detailed in the video, *Austin vs. McMahon: The Whole True Story (AvM)*. It is

interesting to note that the video has the feel both of a work and of an actual documentary. The

narrator, Jim Forbes, has a familiar voice since he also narrates many of the VH1 *Behind the*

Music documentaries. The feud between Austin and McMahon, now more than four years old, is

regarded as "The greatest feud in sports entertainment history" *(AvM)*.[12] Forbes summarizes the

phenomenon that is the McMahon-Austin storyline: "WWE fans have embraced a new attitude in

the past two years, leading to explosive growth in our industry. And, the happiness these fans feel

is in large part due to hatred; hatred between two men: Vince McMahon, the owner of WWE, and

Stone Cold Steve Austin, his most popular and rebellious employee. [. . .] Their conflict changed

the face of sports entertainment" *(AvM)*. Former wrestler and current WWE booker Terry Taylor

explains the heart of the angle: "You've got a guy like Stone Cold, who says, 'To hell with the

boss,' and makes the boss the target — which has never been done" *(AvM)*. With great

seriousness, WWE announcer Jim Ross simply puts it, "Stone Cold will never be employee of the

month" *(AvM)*. In the characterizations of Vince McMahon and Steve Austin, WWE writers

encapsulate current corporate trends and their impact on employer-employee relations and the

resultant impact on masculinities.

In keeping with the archetype of the hero, Stone Cold Steve Austin is a white heterosexual

male. As mentioned earlier, Warner states that the protagonist in this form is "almost entirely cut off from others." Austin is no different and this is reflected in his nicknames and character. Like Ric Flair, Austin's *nom de guerre*, "Stone Cold" more than implies his association with nature; in this case at its harshest and most heartless. He is not like "stone cold" — he is stone cold. In addition, WWE announcer, Jim Ross, also gave Austin the nickname, "The West-Texas Rattlesnake," or simply, "The Rattlesnake." Such a nickname enhances Austin's connection to nature and signifies several aspects of both the man and the form of masculinity he represents, all of which are connected to popular American myths. The rattlesnake is a species peculiar to North America, but is especially associated with the southwest, which is in turn associated with the rugged masculinity of the frontiersman and the cowboy. Their rattle indicates that they wish to be left alone; they are not known to be aggressive but will defend themselves with deadly force, if necessary. For this reason, a rattlesnake along with the motto, "Don't tread on me," was once suggested as a possible American flag. Of course, Texas is known as the "Lone Star State" due to the solitary star on the flag of the one-time independent republic. Its independence was gained in a purportedly rebellious war with Mexico which featured the legendary battle of the Alamo. As the story goes, Texas stood alone against tyranny then and Stone Cold Steve Austin does so now.

Austin further removes himself through his own philosophy of interpersonal relations: "D.T.A.: Don't trust anybody." He frequently repeats this line and it has appeared on T-shirts. On the rare occasions when Austin has accepted the help of a partner, it has been forced upon him by circumstances beyond his control and then only begrudgingly. It should be noted that as of the time of writing, Austin has rarely been involved with one of WWE's several female performers in anything other than conflict. He has no romantic life. While certainly indicative of Austin's

independence, his approach also reveals his self-destructive, or masochistic, streak, of which more will be said later. For Stone Cold Steve Austin, both relenting to McMahon's demands and accepting help from a potential partner mean giving up some of his freedom. In dichotomizing the self and the system, the producers of action movies create what Ryan and Kellner find to be the genre's "essential ideological gesture, [by which] no middle ground is allowed [. . .] anything that departs from the ideal of pure individual freedom (corporations, but also socialism) is by implication lumped under domination" (256). Warner surmises that "Such a fiction no doubt has deep roots in American populist paranoia about global conspiracy" (676). In Austin's case, a partner precludes his total independence. Thus, Austin's solitary style has a double masochistic effect: it incites the wrath of his vindictive boss and eliminates any possibility for help. Austin will ultimately have to suffer alone.

In the hero films, "the exchanges of self and system are given the insistently Oedipal configuration of a struggle between overbearing fathers and a defiant son" (Warner 676). In the action genre, however, the father possesses added authority because his "authority is linked to the state" (Warner 676). It is worth recalling that Warner also suggests that corporations can take the place of the state in the genre. In this format, plot suspense "pivots upon a personal drama, meant to allegorize the struggle of every modern person who would remember their freedom: a contest between the system's agenda for the self and the self's attempt to manipulate the system to his own ends" (Warner 676). On several occasions in both the Ric Flair and Steve Austin angles, the wrestler in question attempted just such a manipulation. During an episode of *Monday Nitro* in Minneapolis, his hometown, Ric Flair enlisted the aid of the city's mayor and local sports heroes John Randle, of the Vikings, and Kirby Puckett, of the Twins, in having Eric Bischoff removed

from the arena. Similarly, in Chattanooga, TN, Steve Austin turned the tables on Vince McMahon and had the boss "arrested" by local police after McMahon admitted to having assaulted Austin the previous week. In both cases, the victory was only temporary. Like Susan Jeffords, William Warner demonstrates how action movies attempt to redress the Vietnam War, but he adds that victory is not sufficient for the hero: "Within the films, two ideas are developed about loss in Vietnam. Both emphasize the cruel sadistic sources of this pain and loss: 'we were unfairly beaten [. . .] and experienced loss'; 'others were responsible for that loss, and they should now be punished'" (Warner 677). The current version of the form operates around the same two ideas. Rather than the state, the source of the pain is now the corporation and its chief executive. Instead of loss on the battleground of Vietnam, the loss is now at home, in the battlefield of the workplace. This is not an entirely new viewpoint, especially when one considers that many magnates of the early twentieth century — Henry Ford, William Randolph Hearst, John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie — were widely reviled for their treatment of workers. To an extent, World War II and the Cold War overshadowed worker-boss enmity. Certainly, the current version is not (yet) marked by the violence enacted by corporate leaders, especially Ford and Carnegie, against workers. The fact that the site of the dispute is now on North American soil means that the enemy is within — a traitor, as it were — rather than from without makes the scenario more sinister. This framework contains a third idea "which is never allowed to reach consciousness in the Rambo films, but nonetheless motivates and informs the narrative diegesis: 'I am responsible for the losses, and I should be beaten'" (Warner 677). The result is that "Rambo's unconscious guilt for failing in Vietnam is deflected away from consciousness, but it motivates that defiant and risky behavior which repeatedly throws Rambo into the position to receive

punishment for failing" (Warner 677). As mentioned above, both Flair and Austin attempt to use the system to their advantage. However, their efforts invariably fail. Since the boss — either Bischoff or McMahon — is allied with the system (and is the system), he will always have greater access to power. Each small victory for Flair and Austin results in massive retribution by the corporation. Thus, in a palpable way, Flair and Austin are the sources of their own pain through their defiant behaviour toward their bosses. By continuing to be involved in the feud they ultimately are submitting to pain.

One of the most dramatic and revealing series of episodes in the Austin-McMahon feud took place on WWE's weekly *Monday Night Raw / Raw is War* broadcast during the fall of 1998. During the September pay-per-view, McMahon conspired with the Undertaker and Kane, the Undertaker's "younger brother," to beat Austin and retrieve the WWE Championship Belt.[13] Following the match, in typical McMahon style, he reminded the Undertaker and Kane that they might both be "over seven feet tall and weigh over 300lbs," but he was still the boss and they owed their current success to him. Notably, the real life Vince McMahon is not reluctant to remind his superstars of this fact. A much publicized example occurred following the aforementioned Hall and Nash's departure to WCW. Two of the remaining WWE superstars briefly appeared as "Razor Ramon" and "Diesel" to remind everyone that any wrestler could be replaced and that they were just bodies occupying characters he created. Moreover, with all of his power, McMahon could reverse the fortunes at any time and this became an expected feature of many storylines. For example, as soon as the "brothers" turned their backs on McMahon following Austin's removal from the ring, he mouthed the words, "Fuck you!" and flipped his middle fingers at the pair. Unfortunately for McMahon, the Undertaker saw the gesture and with

Kane retaliated by punking McMahon and "breaking" his leg by crushing it between the metal ring steps. The pummeling forced McMahon into hospital where he was assaulted by Austin, who was disguised as a doctor. The routine began as slapstick comedy, with Austin hitting McMahon over the head with a bedpan and zapping him with a pair of defibrillator paddles. However, the scene ended in a more disturbing fashion. Austin grabbed McMahon, the latter clad only in his underwear and a hospital gown, and bent him over the bed. Austin positioned himself behind McMahon and lifted WWE owner's gown, saying "I've always known you were full of shit, Vince, so let's find out how full of shit you really are" (*Raw*). Austin then grabs an enema tube, and appears to slam it violently into McMahon, while shouting, "This is going to hurt you a lot more than it's going to hurt me, I can tell you that" (*Raw*). The scene fades to black as the tube disappears, McMahon screams, and Austin ends up belly-to-back with McMahon.

The bedpan is reminiscent of the beer shower Austin gave McMahon in Chattanooga and serves to level the playing field. The effect is to say "You might be the most powerful man in sports-entertainment, but you still have to piss and shit like the rest of us," and at this moment, McMahon is so enfeebled — that is, less than a complete man — that he is confined to a bed and needs a bedpan to relieve himself. McMahon also looks silly and clumsy in his underwear and hospital gown because his frailty is exposed. He may as well be naked, because he has been stripped of his power, or at the very least, it is useless to him in the hospital; you cannot buy unbreakable bones. Moreover, in this context, McMahon's power does not stem from any intrinsic ability he might have. He has not earned it. In other words, he is not "man enough" in a tangible, physical way, to hold power, but Stone Cold Steve Austin is. The defibrillator paddles are also symbolic of McMahon's reduced state because an actual jolt to a functioning heart from

these paddles could cause serious harm to a person. The effect is to say that McMahon, and by extension, all corporate leaders, do not have a heart in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. He is only interested in the "bottom line."

Finally, the insertion of the enema tube into McMahon serves a greater function than to ensure that the boss is, in the words of Stone Cold Steve Austin, no longer full of shit. Given that the tube is forced into McMahon, the scene evokes an anal rape. This point is reinforced by the final positioning of the pair when the scene ends. Both men are at an angle to the camera, facing the bottom-right of the screen. The probe disappears into McMahon and Austin's belly slams into the WWE owner's backside. Whether or not Austin's body or a phallic object is penetrating McMahon's is of no significance since the effect is the same. It is still Stone Cold who controls the "phallus" and who uses it. Again, the intent is to make McMahon appear as something less than a man. As Connell writes, "Anal sexuality is a focus of disgust, and receptive anal sex is mark of feminization" (219). Austin is physically doing to McMahon what the boss figuratively does in business. To put it bluntly, he is "fucking him up the ass." It is worth recalling that the second part of the narrative triad adapted from Willemen at the beginning of the chapter is sadistic pleasure. Neither the boss nor the wrestler is ever fixed in one of the two positions. Indeed, the very genre depends on an oscillation not between good and bad, but between masochism and sadism. More will be said of this later. Whenever one of the players triumphs, the third and final part of the formula, it is temporary and fleeting. However, the difference is that Austin is able physically to assume the role of the sadistic abuser while McMahon must use manipulation and deception, practices typically projected onto femininity, to achieve a similar result. That is to say, wrestling narratives portray corporate power as illegitimate power since it is obtained through means that

are not essentially masculine.

"May I have another": Figurative Fathers and the Gaze

Since Eric Bischoff and Vince McMahon are male heads of patriarchal organizations, they can be considered as the figurative fathers of their respective federations. That is to say, when Austin attacks McMahon with the enema tube, for instance, he is figuratively fucking his "father" up the ass in a violent revision of the Oedipal configuration. Such a formation is typical of the action genre. As Warner observes, "pain becomes the occasion for pleasure through an encounter with figures of 'the father' — but not the mother. In each film that father is bifurcated into 'good' and 'bad' fathers, so each becomes emblematic of public aspects of America" (677). The major difference in the context of sports-entertainment is that the "good" father has disappeared. In fact, as held by Vince McMahon or Eric Bischoff, the position traditionally occupied by the good father, that of the provider and head of the household, has become the domain of the bad father, the "entirely cynical bureaucrat [and] duplicitous organization man" (Warner 678). Rather than a complete break with the formula, McMahon and Bischoff represent a progression of the type. In the *Rambo* films, "there is enough evidence of the complicity between these rival [good and bad] fathers to suggest that they are in fact two sides of one father" (678). In the case of McMahon and Bischoff, the bad father's side of the bifurcated personality has completely taken over control of the situation, so much so that they are not merely complicitous, but rather they are united. This reveals two important aspects regarding contemporary masculinities: first, that the bad fathers currently control the order of things; second, that the good fathers can become bad fathers at any given moment. This attitude reflects perhaps not a crisis so much as an instability and also a lack of trust in institutions and leaders.

This is hardly an original observation considering the prevailing critical view that

postmodernity is marked by a lack of faith in institutions and so-called "grand narratives" and a

resultant tribalization of society. However, one must also consider that patriarchies have

reproduced themselves seemingly without interruption during this same period. Compared to

Vietnam-era mistrust in institutions, the current form exhibits two major differences: first, as

mentioned earlier the system has greater powers of surveillance; second, there is no widespread

statement or belief that the system is wrong. Rather, the Cold War seemingly vindicated the profit

maximizing tendencies of capitalism. Regardless, through persistently placing themselves in

conflict with the boss, Austin, Flair, and other wrestlers embroiled in similar conflicts play the role

of masochists. Of such men, Kaja Silverman writes:

> [The male masochist] acts out in an insistent and exaggerated way
> the basic conditions of cultural subjectivity, conditions that are
> normally disavowed; he loudly proclaims that his meaning comes to
> him from the Other, prostrates himself before the gaze even as he
> solicits it, exhibits his castration for all to see, and revels in the
> sacrificial basis of the social contract. The male masochist magnifies
> the losses and division upon which cultural identity is based,
> refusing to be sutured or recompensed. In short, he radiates a
> negativity inimical to the social order. (206)

Wrestling is both insistent and exaggerated: it is on television every night of the week, its basis is

in-your-face aggression and the characters are "superstars." One of Flair's favourite methods of

challenging someone to a match is a form of prostration: he strips to his boxers and handcuffs

himself to the ring. Such heroes, the so-called main-eventers, then, act out in a fashion which is an

exaggerated and insistent form of the conditions of cultural subjectivity — in this case the boss vs.

the employee scenario. This doubling serves to reinforce the message regarding the oppression

people face in contemporary North America. It is essential, as Warner points out, that the hero

"prevail in the chase (which guarantees the hero's freedom), the hunt (where hunter becomes the

hunted), and in those duels with a demonized other (which certifies the hero's greater virtue)"

(680). Of course, Warner is referring to the cinematic form which necessarily has a tidy two-hour

resolution to the problem at hand. Unfortunately, in wrestling as in life, there is always tomorrow:

another day at the office or another match in the "squared circle."

Although the competition is between a father and a son in an Oedipal paradigm, a female

presence is not an integral part of the equation in wrestling storylines. Although Ric Flair is a

playboy-type he is never tied to any particular woman. Indeed, during the feud with the NWO his

wife appeared rarely. Rather than a support network she became another source of vulnerability.

If Bischoff and his cohorts wished to hurt Flair they could attack his family. Therefore, he

removed himself from them. The denial of the female or feminine occurs, says Warner, because

the

> division of the *Rambo* films between polarities of self and system,
> son and father depends on a suppression of the woman. This
> marginalizing of the woman is more than a question of topic
> (stories of war or male physical prowess) or film genre (the action-
> adventure films' address to a male audience). As we have seen, the
> film constructs itself through a set of reversible exchanges between
> sadistic and masochistic positions, where both positions are coded
> as male. In this homoerotic bonding between Rambo and his
> opponents there is strong identification across lines of race and
> nation. [. . .] What is "missing in (this) action," or at least severely
> displaced, is the woman, the mother, the sister. The woman's
> position is suppressed because it is not the site of guilt, anger, or
> masochistic pleasure. But precisely because she is *not* the locus of
> these ambivalent feelings, it is she who must be recruited to offer
> indispensable support to the narrative of the male hero. (680)

Interestingly, Stone Cold Steve Austin is married to Debra McMichael in real life. Ms. McMichael

has been one of the most popular female performers in WWE for several years, mainly because

she has both a surgically enhanced figure and a willingness to expose it for the fans. Additionally,

it has been a common practice to pair a prominent wrestler with a female "valet" since the 1950s,

when Gorgeous George was the first to do so. Nevertheless, WWE has never connected the pair

in its plots and the marriage has never been acknowledged by the federation, except one abortive

storyline in which the two usually were arguing. Flair and Austin are placed in a situation similar

to that which Warner ascribes to Rambo, such that "any special entanglement with another,

especially a woman, would imperil his isolation, and complicate rather than motivate a subject

position able to orchestrate the spectacular action of the film's finale" (681). Similarly, when

Linda McMahon, the wife of Vince McMahon and real-life Chief Operating Officer of WWE,

becomes involved in the narrative, it is not in support of her husband. In fact, she often plays the

role of Austin's meddling mother by interfering with Vince's ministrations, not out of any love for

Austin. Rather, Linda's intrusion is due to an unconscious (or at least unstated) jealousy for the

attention Austin receives in her stead. Currently, she is "convalescing" in a sanitarium due to

depression brought on by Vince's frequent absences due to his ongoing feud.

The masochistic-sadistic oscillations and the (absent) place of the feminine in the narrative

core of professional wrestling provides insight into an important and related issue: Laura

Mulvey's previously mentioned work on spectatorship. In order to reconcile the instances in

which male bodies were the ones being objectified, subsequent critics decided that such a

deployment requires the feminization of the body. However, among other things, Mulvey's

position does not account for two important positions. In "The Difficulty of Difference," D.N.

Rodowick enumerates the gap:

> Mulvey discusses the male star as an object of the look but denies

him the function of an erotic object. Because Mulvey conceives the
look to be essentially active in its aims, identification with the male
protagonist is only considered from a point of view which
associates it with a sense of omnipotence, of assuming control of
the narrative. She makes no differentiation between identification
and object choice in which sexual aims may be directed towards the
male figure, nor does she consider the signification of authority in
the male figure from the point of view of an economy of
masochism. (8)

Steve Neale derives some of the notion that the male body must be feminized in order to be

objectified from Paul Willemen's brief analysis of Anthony Mann's westerns. With regard to the

objectification of the male body, Willemen writes that "The viewer's experience is predicated on

the pleasure of seeing the male 'exist' in or through cityscapes, landscapes, or, more abstractly,

history. And on the unquiet pleasure of seeing the male mutilated and restored through violent

brutality" ("Looking" 16). Neale then tries to combine Willemen's position with Laura Mulvey's

highly influential argument in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Rather than challenge or

modify Mulvey's main maxims, Neale's aim "is less to challenge fundamentally the theses she puts

forward, than to open a space within the framework of her arguments and remarks for a

consideration of the representation of masculinity as it can be said to relate to the basic

characteristics and conventions of the cinematic institution" ("Masculinity" 4). His premise is that

the audience and the film structure must feminize any male body in order for it to be objectified.

This type of process is required because he assumes with Mulvey that the ritualized configuration

of cinema is built around the gaze and the gaze is controlled by men and exists for the pleasure of

men.

Neale reaches this conclusion because he adheres rigidly to Mulvey's thesis which insists

that the female body is always objectified and is the only one that can be objectified in cinematic

presentations. In this regard, she writes:

> As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he
> projects his look on to that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that
> the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides
> with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying
> sense of omnipotence. A male movie star's glamorous
> characteristics are thus not those of the erotic object of his gaze,
> but those of the more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal
> ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the
> mirror. (12)

However, in spite of Mulvey's assertion that film is structured around the fetishistic and

voyeuristic gaze of male viewers at female bodies, male bodies can be and are often objectified in

visual media. Neale, himself, recognizes several forms in which this can occur within Mulvey's

framework:

> if we take some of the terms used in her description — "making
> something happen," "forcing a change in another person," "a battle
> of will and strength," "victory and defeat," — they can immediately
> be applied to "male" genres, to films concerned largely or solely
> with the depiction of relations between men [. . .] in which there is
> a struggle between a hero and a male villain, War films, westerns
> and gangster movies, for instance, are all marked by "action," by
> "making something happen." Battles, fights and duels of all kinds
> are concerned with struggles of "will and strength," "victory and
> defeat," between individual men and/or groups of men.
> ("Masculinity" 12)

Thus, in order to reconcile the problem of how to handle the occasions when males can be and are

objectified within the absolute envelope of Mulvey's critique, Neale develops a formula through

which the male body undergoes a transformation into the feminine.

This is unfortunate because the display of the sculpted male body is one that is increasing

in frequency and which is underrepresented in critical studies of film and television. Indeed, as

Paul Smith remarks,

There exists a whole cultural production around the exhibition of
the male body, in the media — not just in film, but in television,
sports advertising, and so on — and this objectification has even
been evident throughout the history of Hollywood itself, while
evidently having been intensified in recent years. Scarcely any of
this plethora of images depend upon the feminization of the male;
rather the media and film deploy rather specific representational
strategies to eroticize the male body. (158)

Perhaps surprisingly, Steve Neale hits at these strategies but dismisses them. In his research,

Neale finds that "More direct displays of the male body can be found, though they tend either to

be fairly brief or else to occupy the screen during credit sequences and the like (in which case the

display is mediated by another textual function)" ("Masculinity" 14). Mulvey and Neale do not see

anything else because they emphasize an eroticism based on pleasure, not on pain. Smith points

out that "another of Neale's assumptions — that looking at the male body is something of a taboo

in our cultures — is also contradicted by the kinds of strategies that action/western movies

typically make available to themselves" (159). As illustrated above, a similar situation exists for

professional wrestling.

It is fairly obvious that the previous statement, which forms the basis of Mulvey's oft-cited

argument, is not sufficient for an analysis of professional wrestling. The main focus of any gaze

during a match is the collection of men in the ring. Depending on the circumstances and the type

of match involved, they might number from one to thirty.[15] Moreover, since any protagonist is

involved in physical combat, there is a definite limit to the amount of control he can exert over

anything. While there is an ultimate victor, the matches are structured such that there are few, if

any, squashes.[16] When there are squashes, they are perpetrated by the most hated heels in the

federation. Additionally, any protagonist is already a potential antagonist within the ring, which

again problematizes the notion that power is "project[ed] on to that of his like" since there is

always someone winning and always someone losing. Mulvey's argument would then require a

rapid shifting of allegiances from one wrestler (or group of wrestlers) to another as the tide of the

proceedings shifts from one side to the other. Yet, this is not at all how the matches are structured

nor how the fans watch them. Even on the rare occasions when two babyfaces or two heels

square-off against each other, the fans choose sides. This means that the fans are also in an always

already position to take the side of the losing, beaten, less powerful wrestler. The position Mulvey

and Neale dictate would also require a commensurate shift in identifications, from masochistic to

sadistic, as the action oscillates.

As mentioned earlier, the sadistic-masochistic framework appeared in westerns prior to

being adapted to action movies. When examining the situation of the "spaghetti westerns," Paul

Smith also finds Neale's premise to be lacking. Neale's contention, says Smith,

> that in order for the male body to be thus objectified it has to be
> "feminised," is open to question, not least because it relies upon a
> sweeping generalization (increasingly often doubted in film studies)
> about the conventions of the apparatus of cinema — namely, upon
> the argument that they are oriented primarily and perhaps
> exclusively to the male spectator and his process of identification.
> Neale's argument is in a sense self-fulfilling, or at least circular. If it
> is first assumed that the apparatus is male, geared to a male
> heterosexual gaze, then any instance of objectification will have to
> involve the "feminisation" of the object. However, instances of the
> erotic display of the male body are rife in contemporary film and
> media production, and can be shown to be geared to either male or
> female spectators (or both) in different contexts and in ways that do
> not conform to the conventional treatment of the female body.
> (157-8)

Another argument against Neale is that he defines the gaze as "essentially" male and the object as

"essentially" female. If feminization of the male body does occur, then it is only half of the

equation, for it only accounts for the masochistic portion of the production. The male masochist, explains Kaja Silverman, "leaves his social identity completely behind – actually abandons his 'self' – and passes over into the 'enemy terrain' of femininity" (190). However, Silverman also adds that there are several types of masochism. In the passage just cited, Silverman refers to "feminine masochism," which "is a specifically *male* pathology" (189). Feminine masochism describes "that form of the Oedipus complex which is positive for the female subject, but negative for the male – the form, that is, which turns upon desire for the father and identification with the mother" (Silverman 191). This accounts for Neale's assumption that males must be feminized and also for the seeming absence of the feminine in the Ric Flair and Steve Austin sagas They are, in part, fulfilling this function. However, it is not as important a function as previously assumed; others predominate. Silverman outlines two other types of masochism, moral masochism and its subset, Christian masochism, which more aptly describe professional wrestlers. Moral masochists have a "hyperdeveloped conscience" which occurs "through the internalization of the father as Law, gaze, voice-on-high. This element of the super-ego has no necessary relation to any historical figure, but its gender is irreducibly masculine, at least within the present social order" (Silverman 190, 194). Silverman suggests that the "only mechanism by which the son can overcome his desire for the father is to transform object libido into narcissistic libido, and in so doing to attempt to *become* the (symbolic) father" (194). Flair and Austin, for example, want to be the boss. On many occasions they have wrestled matches with control of the company as the prize instead of the championship. This tendency also leads to self-destructive behaviour. As Silverman notes, "You may not be like this (like your father) – that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative" (193) Not surprisingly, when Flair and Austin hold power

they wield it just as brutally as their bosses. As well, the structure of the plot guarantees that there will be a rematch and the balance of power will always shift at the next pay-per-view. Thus, the professional wrestler "oscillates endlessly between the mutually exclusive commands of the (male) ego-ideal and the super-ego, wanting both to love the father and to be the father, but prevented from doing either" (Silverman 195). The solitary hero is placed in just such a position. But, in professional wrestling, he must occupy both places in the binary formation: that of the masochist and that of the sadist.

While the symbolic function of masochism is self-castration, this does not entirely account for the behaviour of the professional wrestler. Both Ric Flair and Steve Austin have symbolically castrated themselves. As mentioned previously Flair challenges opponents by entering the ring, stripping to his boxers, and handcuffing himself to the top rope. This usually results in several wrestlers taking the opportunity to squash him. Austin often states that he can beat Vince McMahon, among others, with one arm tied behind his back. He even submitted to a match that included the stipulation. Like Flair, he was beaten by the boss and a gang of assistants. While this type of self-castration is typical of what is called "feminine masochism," the behaviour is not consistent with the type, especially since wrestlers fight back. Silverman explains that "exhibitionism or 'demonstrativeness,' revolutionary fervor, and 'suspense' [. . .] clearly pertain to that model of moral masochism which Freud associates with the ego/super-ego dynamic, but other parts point toward a rather different paradigm" (196). The "ego/super-ego dynamic" Silverman cites falls into the category of Christian masochism — literally, martyrdom — and, perhaps surprisingly, applies to wrestlers. For Christian masochism, "an external audience is a structural necessity, although it may be either earthly or heavenly. Second, the body is centrally on

display, whether it is being consumed by ants or roasting over a fire" (Silverman 197). Silverman

also finds that "exhibitionism or 'demonstrativeness' [is] an indispensable feature not only of

moral or social masochism, but of all masochism" (197). With their dramatic entrances, catch-

phrases, and gestures such as Austin's frequent beer guzzling and middle finger-flipping and

Flair's quintessential "Whoooooooooooo!" both wrestlers are demonstrative; their status demands

it. Flair, especially, is an exhibitionist. Whereas Austin comes to the ring attired in plain black

briefs and matching boots, Flair enters with his robe on, opens the robe and extends his arms

while clutching the lapels. He then turns so all can see both sides of him and he slides the robe

down his back as if he were a stripper. Nevertheless, his function in the ring is still to beat his

opponent and make him submit: he is subject and he subjects. He submits but he fights back. He

exhibits himself but he demands that you look. In the last regard, another of Flair's mottos,

"Whether you like or you don't like, sit up and look at it, 'cause it's the best thing going today!"

attests to the fact.

Standards and Practices: The (Actual) Effects of Criticism

According to William Warner, *Rambo*, and other films within the genre, seem to construct

"a subject position — one which is Western, white, and male — which hails spectators to an ethos

for being in the world [that] values isolated self-assertion, competitive zeal, chauvinist

Americanism, and the use of force" (675). Although the hero in professional wrestling is a

Western male, he is not necessarily white in the currently popular formula. Before the several title

reigns of The Rock, also known as Dwayne Johnson, only a handful of "heavyweight champions"

in the major federations have not been white.[17] Interestingly, when Steve Williams, who plays

Steve Austin, suffered a serious neck injury and was sidelined for nearly a year, The Rock was

piaced, with great success, into a new storyline employing the same boss vs. employee formula.

As someone of mixed African-American and Hawaiian ancestry, The Rock defies the black-white

racial binary traditionally associated with the solitary hero narrative. Thus, he is an interesting

transitional figure in the character type, of whom more shall be said later. What is telling in

Warner's analysis is the popular reaction to the criticisms of the *Rambo* films, which decried the

films' overt "Reaganism"; that is, their endorsement of Ronald Reagan's policies. He explains that

> by reading Rambo as a filmic expression of Reaganism, an approach
> used repeatedly by film critics and cultural and political
> commentators [. . .] the film hero and the president become each
> other's latent cultural truth. This reading uses the popularity of
> Reaganism to gloss, explain, and (for many commentators) discredit
> the popularity of Rambo. In a complementary fashion, Rambo
> becomes the dream-fantasy in film, the "truth" of Reaganism, now
> blatantly exposed as in various ways mendacious. (675)

Critiques of *Rambo* and of professional wrestling very successfully point out the social ills the

forms glorify, especially violence and sexism. However, as Warner recognizes, critiques of *Rambo*

and Reagan had a "paradoxical effect within the political culture of the 1980s: [they] helped

Rambo become a generally recognized cultural icon. [C]ritical condemnation of Rambo, almost as

much as the film itself [. . .] allows Rambo to emerge as a cultural icon in the mid-1980s. Thus,

Rambo as a cultural icon includes the idealized filmic projection, and its scathing critique,

condensed in one image" (675). That is to say, the people who watched Rambo then and the

people who watch wrestling now, consume the productions in spite of *and* because of the critical

reaction to them. Criticism, especially from sources perceived as elitist or self-righteous, makes

wrestling more attractive. Fans perceive dismissals of wrestling as dismissals of themselves. In

effect, critics who "slam" wrestling add to the list of the oppositions (as perceived by the fans)

which led to the popularity of wrestling in the first place. Moreover, even for those who refuse to become consumers of the shows, in Warner's terms, professional wrestling, with its "icon[s] of the masculine, the primitive, and the heroic, becomes the site of a (bad) truth about American culture" (675). Rather than enlightening viewers, critics become class enemies and unwitting contributors to wrestling's ongoing cultural prominence.

Much of the criticism of professional wrestling is (admittedly) superficial and based on what is "wrong" with it: authenticity, violence, and subject matter. Conversely, little attention has been paid to wrestling as a text; that is how it functions, how it is consumed, and why it remains popular in the face of overwhelming condemnation. As Michael Jenkinson, of the _Edmonton Sun_ recognizes, "the debate isn't really about the validity of wrestling [. . .] but a broader one about who defines acceptable forms of culture. [. . .] It's really a debate over who sets the canon — the elites or the populists. And pro wrestling is one of the quintessential expressions of mass populism" (16 Aug. 1999 2). Two recent events — one involving each of the major federations — highlight the paradoxical effect of criticisms based on limited knowledge and elitist notions.[18] The first centres around the controversial doll of a WWE "superstar" played by Allan Sarven. According to Scott Haskins, "The doll in question is WWE character Al Snow, complete with a tiny severed female head in one hand. He's holding it by the hair. Lovely" (9 Nov. 1999 2). Following a number of protests, the doll was pulled from the shelves of stores, most notably by Walmart and by Toys-R-Us, across North America. Eventually, WWE recalled all of the dolls and absorbed a considerable loss.[19] This was done to appease critics like Sabrena Parton, of Kennesaw State University, who claims that the doll — and the character — "promote the brutalization of women" (qtd. in Jenkinson, 8 Nov. 1999 1). The _Edmonton Journal_ ran an editorial suggesting

that when WWE "produced and sold a doll whose gimmick was to carry around the severed head

of a woman, they showed their true colours. [The doll] is a horrifying toy with a violent message"

(qtd. in Jenkinson, 8 Nov. 1999). Furthermore, Calgary psychologist Lori Egger claimed that the

Al Snow character is a "television image [that] draws a link between sexuality and violence and

implies it's normal male behaviour" (qtd. in Jenkinson, 8 Nov. 1999 2). If any of these critics, or

their children, actually had watched WWE, especially Egger, they would have noticed that the

character is meant to be as far from "normal" as possible.

Al Snow is portrayed as a lunatic who has escaped from an asylum. He walks around with

the severed head of a *mannequin* named Head. The mannequin part, with oft-changing hair styles,

bizarre makeup, and the words "help me" written as they would appear in a mirror, is actually

strangely androgynous. It is never referred to as he or she, but only as Head, which furthers the

notion that Snow is crazy. Within the story lines, he — and everyone who watches — knows it is

a mannequin, yet he still believes the mannequin talks to him. Truth be told, the Al Snow doll,

along with Head, is among the least violent of the toys WWE sells. Al Snow is a member of the

"J.O.B. Squad," which refers to the wrestling slang, "to job," which means that one is paid to

lose.[20] Snow is a lovable loser. This is not to suggest that the character is entirely wholesome, but

to point out that the lack of depth of the analysis and the knee-jerk reaction of the intelligentsia

produces a reaction opposite to that intended among the "unwashed" wrestling fan souls that are

supposedly in need of saving. The critics appear to wrestling fans as nothing more than elitists

trying to squash them.[21] In the words of Michael Jenkinson, the critics are seen by wrestling fans

as "humourless, politically correct busybod[ies]" (8 Nov. 1999 2). The critics of the entertainment

become the enemies of the fans; upsetting the critics is definitely part of the enjoyment for the

fans.

A second incident, involving WCW characters Lenny Lane and Lodi, was caused by the

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation which claimed that since Lenny and Lodi were

portrayed as effeminate heels, or bad-guys, they would be the brunt of homophobic taunts and

their opponents would be encouraged to perform what is, in effect, gay-bashing. However, if they

had watched the shows, they would have learned that while Lenny and Lodi hugged each other

often, they are brothers according to the story line. Moreover, since the Cold War era has ended,

it is not so much a character's identity that makes him or her a heel, but his or her ability to cheat,

to whine, and especially to taunt the fans. If anything, the reaction of GLAAD serves to reinforce

the situation that led Neale to conclude that the spectatorial look in mainstream film and television

is implicitly male:

> it is one of the fundamental reasons why the erotic elements
> involved in the relations between the spectator and the male image
> have constantly to be repressed and disavowed. Were this not the
> case, mainstream cinema would have openly to come to terms with
> the male homosexuality it so assiduously seeks either to denigrate
> or deny. As it is, male homosexuality is constantly present as an
> undercurrent, as a potentially troubling aspect of many films and
> genres, but one that is dealt with obliquely, symptomatically, and
> that has to be repressed. (15)

Not only has this changed since Neale's article was published, in the case of wrestling, the

prohibition comes not from the fans or the producers, but from those who are convinced that

wrestling would not treat the matter with the "proper" sensitivity. It is worth noting that WWE

had an openly gay character, Adorable Adrian Adonis, in the 1980s, and had planned to have two

up-and-coming characters, Too Sexy Brian Christopher and Too Hot Scott Taylor, joined in a gay

wedding. As with Lenny and Lodi, the latter storyline was squashed due to protests, not from

homophobic fans, but from gay rights advocacy groups when details were leaked. Furthermore, one of the highest-ranking WWE officials, Pat Paterson, is gay and reference is often made, albeit obliquely, to this fact. In contrast, the "legitimate" broadcasters have made only slight attempts to add gay characters. For example, while NBC's show, *Will and Grace*, features two gay characters, the overwhelming majority of the action, as indicated in the very title of the show, depicts male-female heterosexual couplings rather than depicting relations — even the most quotidian — between gay men.

In order to highlight the perceived high vs. low culture clash when Lenny and Lodi, the latter renamed Idol and subsequently Rave, returned to action, they were billed as "Standards and Practices" and they represented the "Powers that Be" who run the company.[22] They came to the ring along with a conservatively-attired accountant named Miss Hancock, who noted all supposed infractions of the rules. More recently, Vince McMahon has exploited negative perceptions of wrestling in two other storylines: first, another gay wedding story; second, a "hot lesbian action," or "HLA" match. In both cases, protesters were active at wrestling matches. In fact, the protesters were led by members of the storyline, including McMahon's daughter, Stephanie, who posed as a prototypical "feminazi," in the words of the wrestling commentators. Stephanie, according to the plot, is trying to wrest control of the company from her father and used the protests as a tool to this end. Actual protesters were completely duped by the plots and their own involvement in them. In other words, the negative critiques of wrestling are nothing more than the proverbial "preaching to the converted." Once again, academics and cultural police appear to be talking only to themselves. They only inflame the wrestling fans to resent the critics and the "establishment," or their perception of the powers that would be.

In his consideration of the male as the object of the gaze in Mann's films, Paul Willemen surmises that the "fundamentally homosexual voyeurism (almost always repressed) is not without its problems: the look at the male produces just as much anxiety as the look at the female" ("Looking" 16). This is not necessarily the case — at least it is not the only thing going on during a professional wrestling match — because, if we are to believe Faludi's argument regarding the situation of masculinity in contemporary North American society, then one of the foremost reasons for consuming an entertainment genre like wrestling is as an attempt to compensate for a loss of hegemonic masculinity through a hyper-masculinized event such as professional sports, sports entertainment or pornography. As well, professional wrestling follows the narrative conventions of westerns and action films, both of which are allegories in which hegemonic masculinity is challenged, restored, reclaimed, and maintained. Yet, through characters such as the Rock and through displays of sculpted male bodies, professional wrestling challenges dominant ideologies while simultaneously reinforcing them. John Fiske concludes that professional wrestling is "a parody of sport: it exaggerates certain elements of sport so that it can question both them and the values that they normally bear" (86). Part of the appeal, then, is the willingness to challenge any ideology that is perceived as being opposed to the fans and the willingness to adopt any ideology that is perceived as challenging the norm.

We know from reading Judith Butler that homosexuality (even repressed) is one of the opposites to hegemonic masculinity; one of the things hegemonic masculinity is forced to "repudiate" (25). Therefore, the viewing and consumption processes involved in the viewing of professional wrestling cannot be reduced to the tidy formula Neale introduces, based as it is on the equally reductive analyses of Mulvey and Willemen. In Neale's view, the thesis behind

Willemen's comments

> seems to be that in a heterosexual and patriarchal society, the male
> body cannot be marked explicitly as the erotic object of another
> male look: that look must be motivated in some other way, its
> erotic component repressed. The mutilation and sadism so often
> involved in Mann's films are marks both of the repression involved
> and of a means by which the male body may be disqualified, so to
> speak as an object of erotic contemplation and desire.
> ("Masculinity" 8)

Thus, the male body is disqualified as the object of the gaze. It must be changed, physically and

psychically, in order to be gazed upon by other males in order to meet the criteria of Mulvey's

"second avenue, fetishistic scopophilia, [which] builds up the physical beauty of the object,

transforming it into something satisfying in itself" ("Masculinity" 14). Neale surmises that this

means men are feminized in order to become objects of the gaze, for "'Physical beauty' is

interpreted solely in terms of the female body" and, in this increasingly circular argument, only

beautiful objects are objects of the gaze ("Masculinity" 13). Interestingly, Fiske notes a male look

at other males as deriving from an "inquiry into the limits of human performance" (88). Although

this look could be categorized as voyeuristic, there is an implied comparative element in it. Such

an aspect is beyond Neale's grasp.[23] Females are not included in his formula since it presupposes a

patriarchal order in which women are not only prohibited from controlling the gaze, the possibility

is never considered. As well, feminization actually has at least four different meanings or forms in

Neale's argument: sexually, in terms of being receptive to (or during) sex; aesthetically, in terms

of bodily beauty; behaviorally, in terms of passivity; authoritatively, in terms of access to power

and the tendency to be dominated. Rather than enumerate each aspect, he conflates or

interchanges them.

Tapping out: Conclusions

The current popularity of wrestling can be tied to an increase in men's involvement in

bodybuilding. Sport sociologist Philip White suggests that this "preoccupation with muscularity is

[. . .] best explained as a response to contemporary male feelings of uncertainty and

powerlessness. Men individually and men in general are experiencing a crisis of masculinity and

are drawn to areas of social life where they feel comfortable and safe" (116).[24] While it may be

argued that men are still the privileged gender, White notes that

> with the growth of large and impersonal bureaucracies, whether
> public or private, there has been a transfer of power away from
> individual males [. . .] Power has shifted into the public domain,
> leaving many men feeling privately powerless — small cogs in large
> machines. Consequently, because men feel increasingly confused
> and insecure about what "real men" are like in a time of shifting
> expectations, they are also impelled to seek out ways of bolstering
> and validating their masculine identities. ("Muscles" 116)

Among the other reasons White provides for the crisis in masculinity is the case that due to

advances in technology and a shift away from a production-based economy, "men are increasingly

doing work where physical strength is not needed and where women are steadily breaking barriers

to occupational mobility and success" ("Muscles" 117). White suggests that in conjunction, "these

factors represent threats to traditional masculinity and have made symbolic representations of the

male body as strong, virile and powerful more prevalent in popular culture. A man may have to

increasingly compete with a female colleague on an equal basis in the competitive world of work,

but he can still display his muscles in a compensatory display of masculine power" ("Muscles"

117). Connell notes that the military-industrial trends of the twentieth century have led to a "split

in hegemonic masculinity. Practice organized around dominance [is] increasingly incompatible

with practice organized around expertise or technical knowledge" (193). This split often results in competition between and/or among different versions of hegemonic masculinity because management is "divided from professions, and relations between the two [become] a chronic problem in corporations and in the state" (Connell 193-4). Connell concludes that eventually a polarity has "developed within hegemonic masculinity between [physical] dominance and technical expertise. In this case, however, neither version has succeeded in displacing the other" (194). This is played out in the wrestling ring and in the workplace.[25] Simply put, it is the opposition between those who "know" — the bosses — and those who "do" — the workers.

However, another current trend in professional wrestling makes it another site of the growing power and presence of females in areas that traditionally have been the strongholds of men. Moreover, the introduction of women as wrestlers further emphasizes the sense of powerlessness that men feel, especially when the women (are scripted to) win. A related effect of the threats to masculinity and the increased emphasis on the importance of "looking" like a man is a focus on the "male" hormone, testosterone. Although both males and females produce testosterone, Richard Lecayo explains its significance in terms of masculinity: "Testosterone, after all, can boost muscle mass and sexual drive. (It can also cause liver damage and accelerate prostate cancer [. . .]). That makes it central to two of this culture's rising preoccupations: perfecting the male body and sustaining the male libido, even when the rest of the male has gone into retirement" (46). This is indicative of the desire to sustain male virility in the face of constant reminders of impotence: an insecure job, most often with no tangible, physical output, the fact that a woman could do the job equally well, a diminished sense, knowledge, or understanding of what it means to be a man. Reduced to its simplest terms, masculinity relies on phenotypic

differences and an emphasis on visual and reductive binaries. In Lecayo's words, "If you happen

to be a man, the very idea [of looking "buff"] is bound to appeal to your inner hood ornament, to

that image of yourself as all wind-sheared edges and sunlit chrome" (46). Interestingly, Lecayo

conflates or blurs the myth of masculinity with the ultimate American status symbol — the

automobile — and its tackiest attributes.[26] Excess, ostentation, and style are clear-cut victors over

substance. The automobile has long been associated with masculinity and in North American

culture often serves as a phallic symbol. However, there's an obvious paradox in Lecayo's

statement. For a man to imagine himself as "wind-sheared edges and sunlit chrome" is to imagine

himself as a beauty, and as something feminine. In popular culture, cars are referred to as being

feminine. For example, Ronnie and the Daytonas' classic car-song, "Little GTO," implores

listeners to "Listen to her tachin' up now / Listen to her whine." Similarly, the Beach Boys tell us

"She's real fine, my 409" and "She's my little deuce coupe." However, this poses another

paradox. It seems to go along nicely with Philip White's arguments regarding what he calls

"megamasculine omnipotence," but it might be seen to contradict the arguments that have been

put forth against Laura Mulvey's critique of the gaze and Steven Neale's interpretation of that

critique ("Muscles" 116). That is to say, it seems to argue that the male body is feminized in order

to become the object of the gaze. It could be argued, using Mulvey's proposition of the viewer

looking into a mirror when he shares the gaze of the male protagonist, that each man is a mirror

for other men. In other words, when a man looks at another man he views himself in relation to,

and in comparison with, the other man.

Unfortunately, this further complicates the situation, for the argument again returns to the

notion of feminization. since this mechanism is perceived as being particularly feminine. For

example, it is often stated that magazines, movies, and television provide unrealistic images for young girls because they view themselves in comparison with the models and actresses and find themselves lacking. Lecayo's metaphor, then, fuses these notions and implies a mode of being masculine and feminine at the same time. However, there is correspondence with the earlier arguments I made regarding the oscillations of the gaze and the sadistic-masochistic dyad This situation is best exemplified by former WWE star, Chyna Joanie Laurer, who played the part of Chyna, is physically as large as, and as strong as, most of the men in WWE. In fact, the number who are larger and stronger is comparable with the number who are not. She has held the Intercontinental Championship belt, which signifies the top-ranked contender for the federation's World Championship. Following her departure from WWE, Laurer has appeared on *Fear Factor*, a TV gameshow that requires participants to perform a variety of stunts, and in a (real) celebrity boxing match. In both instances she competed against men and fared well. While Laurer has undergone several surgeries to enhance her feminine attributes (although several were necessarily to correct a serious underbite with which she was born), she has maintained all of the muscle and all of the wrestling ability. It is arguable that Chyna's enhanced beauty might be for the gaze, but her mat skills are not and do not evoke sexual pleasure. Thus, she poses a significant threat to masculinity because she can be a sexually desirable woman and at the same time, can assert her power over *anyone*.[27] Certainly, a woman that powerful could choose whether or not she wants to be the object of the gaze.

More importantly, there is also the possibility for a male-to-female cross-gender identification among the identification processes involved in the consumption of a visual medium like a televised wrestling match This phenomenon is described in greater detail in the next

chapter. Simply stated, Chyna can be (and has been) placed in the same type of situation as Austin and Flair the result is a similar viewing process. In these regards, professional wrestling is not a fantasy-world in the same manner as professional sports, or even as the Ultimate Fighting Championships, because these can be and most often are purely masculine domains that depend on actual fighting, actual violence. Professional wrestling is a fictional and its audience knows it is a fiction, as far as the outcomes of the matches are concerned. It is not fantasy, but meta-fantasy. At the same time, it provides a response — vicarious resistance, if you will — to the seeming inevitability of masculine diminishment. The response is hardly silent acquiescence but it is not has harmful as previously assumed. Professional wrestling is not necessarily the nostalgic look back to a lost era that some (or most) westerns are, nor is it altogether the reclamation project William Warner outlines in his analysis of eighties action films. Nor is it necessarily of the type Connell describes: "The imagery of masculine heroism is not *culturally* irrelevant. [. . .] Part of the struggle for hegemony in the gender order is the use of culture for such disciplinary purposes: setting standards, claiming popular assent and discrediting those who fall short. The production of exemplary masculinities is thus integral to the politics of hegemonic masculinity" (214). Instead, given the poignancy of the plots and the increasingly threatening female presence — not as a companion, but as competitor — professional wrestling might yet be a small symptom of change, the acknowledgment of a possible new order and the increasing impossibility of an old one. Masculine privilege is no longer a certainty because masculinity is tenuous rather than dominant. Simply put, men can be replaced.

Chapter 4

Two Guns, a Girl and a PlayStation™:

Cross-Gender Identification in Action-Adventure Video Games

Videogames are perfect training for life in fin de siècle America, where daily existence demands the ability to parse sixteen kinds of information being fired at you simultaneously from telephones, televisions, voice messaging systems, postal delivery, office e-mail, and the Internet. International news is updated every thirty minutes, and the workplace has one foot in cyberspace. And you have to process all of this at once. You have to recognize patterns in this whirl of data, and you have to do it fast. Those to the joystick born have a built-in advantage. Neo-Luddite polemics to the contrary, kids weaned on videogames are not attention-deficient, morally stunted, illiterate little zombies who massacre people en masse after playing too much Mortal Kombat. They're simply acclimated to a world [. . .] swimming in animated icons, special effects, and computer simulations.

J.C. Herz, Joystick Nation (2-3)

Introduction

Earlier chapters in my dissertation have examined a range of masculine representations and

identities which are portrayed in the contemporary North American media through different

signifying practices: the father-son relationships produced in professional wrestling and sports

films, the spectatorial gaze when turned on men, and how exclusions of men from certain roles in

criticisms of popular media circumscribes potential points of coalition between profeminist

activism and masculinity studies. As cultural constructions, these depictions address men in the

practices of everyday life, in terms of the sense of self as a masculine subject, and in resultant

fantasies. All relate to the process of being certain kinds of men. These chapters stress that social

practices and their representations contain meanings and values which contribute to the

constructions and conceptions of masculinities. This chapter continues with the themes developed

earlier, but considers a different approach. The prospect of cross-gender identification, that is,

males identifying with females, was mentioned briefly in the previous chapter with regard to

Chyna and other members of the current generation of female professional wrestlers who are

capable of and often are competing with their male counterparts. Such a proposition is novel, or

at least underdeveloped, especially given the psychological definition of identification. The sense

of identification intended in this chapter comes from Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis,

who describe identification as a "psychological process in which a subject assimilates an aspect, a

property, a characteristic of another and transforms himself [or herself] totally or partially on the

basis of this model" (184). Indeed, psychoanalytic literature considers such an identification to be

atypical if not abnormal. Yet, males are increasingly exposed to powerful females in their

everyday lives — in the home and in the workplace. Video games offer players experience

navigating through a media-saturated and multi-tasked environment, as J.C. Herz outlines in the

epigraph, and this includes identifying with powerful females. In order to treat the topic of cross-

gender identification in detail, I examine several virtual reality video games which feature female

protagonists, especially the prototypical *Tomb Raider* series.[1]

Admittedly, video games may appear at first glance to be a more fantastic and (therefore)

culturally less relevant site of popular culture, let alone masculinity, than even the circus-like

atmosphere of professional wrestling. However, as Elizabeth and Geoffrey Loftus observe,

> video games probably have more power than other previous
> instruments of socialization (for example, TV) to affect
> socialization, because of the highly interactive nature of the
> computers that underlies the games. Computers and computer
> games can literally replace other people in many respects. Indeed
> we find some striking differences between socialization in the video
> arcades and socialization in more traditional settings. (89)

Furthermore, Fabian Blache and Lauren Fielder point out that "The trend toward making game

characters seem like 'real' people is increasingly prevalent with each year that passes. Games are now seen, by those who play them, as viable entertainment in lieu of activities like going to movies, so it stands to reason that games are being made less superficial in scope with each installment or generation that passes" (1). More and more video games also have interactivity as a built-in feature, which alters the experience from one of passive viewing to active participation. This point is raised frequently by critics of the violence contained in many video games. The combination, it is assumed, leads (young) game players to become violent themselves. Not surprisingly, the topic has become the focus of most analyses of video games. In this regard, Elizabeth and Geoffrey Loftus remark that "What are not usually considered are the indirect benefits that video games can and do yield. These can be unexpected and enormously powerful" (8). The argument that players of video games assume the violent personalities of their on-screen counterparts assumes an identification with those characters, but this is as far as the critiques go. The need exists, therefore, to consider the nature of these identifications and what occurs when the player and the playable character are of different genders.[2]

Analysis of media such as video games requires a comprehensive approach. Geoffrey Rockwell suggests that computer games are "the most popular form of fiction consumed through the computer, if by fiction, one understands artifacts intended to delight rather than inform. [Additionally,] consumption of computer games far surpasses that of electronic texts or the refined works of hypertext fictions" (1). According to the science news program, *@Discovery.ca*, video game sales totaled $9.3 billion in 2001, compared to $8.1 billion for movies in the same year. Rockwell expresses surprise that the academic community has largely ignored video games as a site of study, other than to point out the "adolescent audience intended by most computer

games, [and] the violent and sexist character of many games" (1). Henry Jenkins, of MIT, offers

further reasons for the lack of serious attention paid to video games: "I don't think there's any

question that video games became a media scapegoat in the post-Columbine era. I think that there

[is] an enormous anxiety within the culture about digital media in general. Computers were not a

central part of the lives of the current generation of parents when they were growing up, but they

are a central part of the lives of their children" (qtd. in Russo 57).[3] As evidence of this

technophobia, Tom Russo cites a Washington Post survey conducted after the Columbine

shootings which asked the public what they thought was a significant cause of the shooting: "The

top answer was the Internet (82%), while the availability of guns was cited by less than 60% of

respondents" (57). An often unacknowledged reason for academic prejudice against video games

is, as Rockwell observes, "the general failure of traditional disciplines to deal with games of any

sort as a form of human expression worthy of study" (1). In his own research, Rockwell attempts

to develop a theoretical model for the study of video games. This model takes it cue from

Marshall McLuhan, who writes:

> Games are popular art, collective, social *reactions* to the main drive
> or action of any culture. Games, like institutions, are extensions of
> the animal organism. Both games and technologies are counter-
> irritants or ways of adjusting to the stress of the specialized actions
> that occur in any social group. As extensions of the popular
> response to the workaday stress, games become faithful models of a
> culture. They incorporate both the action and the reaction of whole
> populations in a single dynamic image. (208)

Although computer games were not in mass circulation at the time McLuhan was writing, they

take his analogy to its obvious limit: if games are extensions of our social body in the way

mechanical technologies are extensions of our physical bodies, then video games are capable of

fulfilling both parts of the analogy. Video games are simultaneously technological extensions and social extensions; action and reaction in one image. Therefore, they demand a comprehensive analytical approach.

Ultimately, Rockwell contends that computer games constitute a meta-genre which incorporates other genres of fiction and performance. Further, if one substitutes interaction for dialogue, then Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novel may be applied to video games. Such a meta-genre is unified by what Bakhtin calls the "chronotope," or the "spatio-temporal experience created by the author" (Rockwell 8). Since computer games use an interface — the joystick, controller pad, steering wheel, mouse, or keyboard — based on real-time experience within a virtual world, Rockwell's adaptation of Bakhtin's theory of the novel seemingly applies. The development of Greek narratives, Bakhtin claims, resulted in a "new and large multi-genred genre, one which included in itself various types of dialogues, lyrical songs, letters, speeches, descriptions of countries and cities, short stories, and so forth. It was an encyclopedia of genres" (Dialogic Imagination 65). As Rockwell suggests, Bakhtin's point is that the novel is not necessarily a genre in and of itself, but is instead a combination of a number of genres in a "dialogized artistic whole" (8). This makes the task of the critic extremely complex, for "The basic tasks for a stylistics in the novel are, therefore: the study of specific images of languages and styles; the organization of these images; their typology (for they are extremely diverse); the combination of images of languages within the novelistic whole; the transfers and switchings of languages and voices; their dialogical interrelationships" (Dialogic Imagination 50). This is not to say that any critique of video games should consider all of the possible "aesthetic, performative, and architectural theories" (Rockwell 9). This would represent a regression into a myriad of

generic considerations. To prevent such regress, Rockwell suggests that Bakhtin's notion of the

chronotope should be the ultimate guide. In Bakhtin's words,

> We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, "timespace") to the
> intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are
> artistically expressed in literature. [. . .] we are borrowing it for
> literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely).
> What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of
> space and time [. . .] We understand the chronotope as a formally
> constitutive category of literature. (Late Essays 84)

Rockwell notes that a system of categorization based on the relationship between time and space

has developed unwittingly among video game reviewers (and authors of walks-through).[4] He

explains that "a typology that has emerged among game reviewers is the pace of the game (its

sense of time) and the types of settings. Briefly, action games are fast paced and take place in

stressful environments while in adventure games one is in a labyrinth with plenty of time to solve

puzzles" (10). Based on his reading of Bakhtin, Rockwell formulates a fourfold approach for the

criticism of video games. In this model the critic should consider:

> 1. The types of media and fiction integrated into the multimedia
> game and the ways they are integrated into an artistic or
> entertaining whole.
> 2. The types of characters that interact in the game with special
> attention to the character the player is allowed to develop.
> 3. The types of interactions that can be performed in the game with
> special attention to the interactive possibilities for the player and the
> ways the player interacts with other characters.
> 4. The chronotope or spatio-temporal setting that provides the
> unity to the game. This is more than the physical setting of the
> game, it includes the experience of time and pace in which the game
> unfolds. (10)

Clearly, then, the combination of fast-paced action and puzzle solving makes action-adventure

games, such as *Tomb Raider, Syphon Filter,* and *Perfect Dark,* hybrids. More will be said

regarding the latter two games as this section progresses. They represent not so much a separate genre as a meta-genre, of the type Bakhtin and Rockwell describe. As was mentioned in the second chapter with regard to sports films, an important part of the success of such a formula rests in its intertextuality, its incorporation of familiar plots, themes, characterizations, and symbols that have been borrowed from other genres or maintained throughout the genre. In this respect, it is worth recalling the concept of "generic verisimilitude" discussed in Chapter 2, which describes one text's relationship to other members of its class.

Video games have progressed rapidly in terms of their sophistication and graphics. Entire movies are now produced using computer graphics alone. Moreover, they are now widely available in a variety of forms, from arcade machines to games on watches and keychains. This chapter examines the development of video games, from their beginning as mere dots on a screen, to the current generation of virtual reality games, with special attention given to the action-adventure genre to which *Tomb Raider* belongs. The importance of perspective — the camera angle, as it were — for identification must also be taken into account, especially when the portrayal is meant to mimic cinematography. The latter feature provides an excellent entry point from which to analyze identification in video games on the basis of film theory, specifically those relating to spectatorship. Given the interactive nature of the games, theories of spectatorship, and especially the gaze, have inherent limitations, most notably with respect to relations of power. In terms of the on-screen action, critiques of the gaze always assume an active male-passive female binary. Further, the viewer is assumed to be just a viewer and nothing else. Finally, according to critiques of the gaze, both males and females occupy a heterosexual male viewpoint when watching female figures. Many contemporary video games feature female protagonists and camera

angles which call into question the commonplace critiques of the gaze. A more complete account

of the identifications which occur during the gaming experience includes the impact of

interactivity on the processes involved. This forms the final aspect of the analysis of the ways in

which the representations of video games create an environment which fosters cross-gender

identifications.

The *Tomb Raider* series of video games is one of the most successful ever, with more than

sixteen million copies having been sold world-wide (Bauman 52). Although *Tomb Raider*'s

formula — shoot your way through several puzzle-filled levels set in buildings or compounds —

comes from earlier games such as *Castle Wolfenstein* (1983) and *Doom* (1993), there is one

significant difference: the female protagonist, Lara Croft. As Gary Eng Walk recognizes, "Lara

Croft is a bona fide legend, an indelible tattoo on the biceps of '90s pop culture. There are Lara

T-Shirts. Watches. Posters. A coffee table book. A movie deal" (100). Walk does not mention

that there is almost as much negative attention devoted to Lara Croft. Academic criticism of

Tomb Raider focuses mainly on the protagonist's chest, waist, and hip measurements, and what

Justine Cassell and Henry Jenkins, in From Barbie to Mortal Kombat, call the games' "overt

pandering to adolescent male interests in 'tits and ass'" (32) (Please see Fig. 1 and 2, Appendix

C). Such a statement discounts players' new-found ability to identify with the protagonists

because of advances in "virtual reality" technology. For example, in a 1999 commercial, two

gamers argue over which one gets to play the role of Ken Griffey Jr. in a game of *Major League*

Baseball Featuring Ken Griffey Jr., on the Nintendo 64 platform (Please see Fig. 3, Appendix C).

They exchange cries of "No! I'm Ken Griffey Jr." to indicate that the level of "virtual reality" in

the game enhances the role-playing effect, such that the players ignore the real Ken Griffey Jr

when he knocks on their door. To simulate baseball in as detailed a fashion as possible, the game

includes the possibility of trades, injuries, fatigue, and play based on statistical models of actual

baseball players. Those playing the video game can act as owner, manager, and player. The virtual

reality of the games improves with each successive generation of consoles and graphics

processors.[5]

While sports games try to recreate the atmosphere of a stadium or of television broadcasts

of games, role-playing and action-adventure games attempt to duplicate cinematography through

animation. For *Tomb Raider*, the virtual reality created by the cinematic animation of the game

produces an environment for male-to-female cross-gender identification, a topic that has received

little critical attention. One of the few examinations of the possibilities of cross-gender

identification appears in Carol Clover's "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film." Clover

considers the possibility of such an identification between the largely male audience and the

female character who ultimately defeats the monster(s) or "bad guy(s)" in the slasher films of the

1980s, a stereotypical figure she refers to as the "final girl" (216). Since she was not aware of

other settings and productions that achieved a similar effect, or of analyses that consider cross-

gender identification, Clover calls for more research into this phenomenon. Little has been done to

heed Clover's request, which was made in 1987. Twelve years later, in Bad Girls and Sick Boys,

Linda Kauffman merely echoes Clover's sentiments: "Since Laura Mulvey's groundbreaking work

on spectatorship, the male gaze has become a critical commonplace, but Clover suggests the need

for further research about *men's* identification with *women*" (132). Cassell and Jenkins actually

connect *Tomb Raider* with Clover's analysis but proceed no further.[6] They acknowledge that

"Arguments explaining male gamers' close trans-gender identification with Lara Crofts (sic)

closely parallel Carol Clover's discussion of the 'final girl' convention in 1980s slasher films," but they attribute the success of "'Tomb Raiders' (sic) [. . .] to the exaggeration of Lara Crofts' (sic) feminine characteristics" (30-1) Unfortunately, this outright dismissal of the existence of cross-gender identification during game play, and as an underlying factor in the success of the game, is as close to an analysis of the phenomenon as they get. Like many critics, Cassell and Jenkins are far more interested in critiquing what they perceive to be examples of patriarchal hegemony than in actually analyzing the text. Said another way, while it is acknowledged in several places that such a relationship exists or might exist, no recent work has been done in this area. Thus, I examine the cross-gender identification between the (male) audience and the female protagonist, Lara Croft. The reverse phenomenon, females identifying with male protagonists, has been explored, for example, by Constance Penley, in <u>Technoculture</u> and elsewhere, but my study is (currently) unique. This chapter draws on previous works for its theoretical basis while providing a challenge to the conception of the "male gaze" as well as the stability of gender as a construct.

From Dots to Bodies: The Development of Action-Adventure Video Games:

Although they do represent a significant shift and advancement in computer games, the *Tomb Raider* games incorporate features found in many of their predecessors, in many different genres In order to properly situate and analyze the *Tomb Raider* phenomenon, we must consider the development of computer games. Computer games can trace their existence back through board games, pin ball machines, and gambling devices. *Space War*, written by Steve Russell of MIT, in 1962, is recognized generally as the first computer game. It was a simple game and consisted of two players moving spaceships side-to-side on the screen in an effort to hit each other with torpedoes (Chance). Unlike most of today's games, *Space War* was distributed freely

Nolan Bushnell's *Pong*, produced in 1972 as an arcade game, led to the formation of Atari and became the first home video game (Chance) *Space War*, *Pong*, and the games which succeeded them were graphically based and had little to no narrative structure. In contrast, a number of text-based adventure games appeared in the 1970s. The first of these, *Adventure*, was based on the *Dungeons and Dragons* role-playing board game. Other adventure games were similar to the board game, *Clue*, and involved solving mysteries or finding treasure. Eventually, Avalon Hill and Strategic Simulations developed text-based computer versions of their complex, dice-based strategy games. Like *Space War*, *Adventure* was not produced for commercial profit. The first of the *Zork* games, written in 1981 for the Apple II computer, holds the distinction of being the first commercially successful adventure-type game. This game was also among the first to have sequels.

The action-adventure genre combines the graphical features of arcade-style games with the scenarios of role-playing or adventure games. Among the first of these were *Castle Wolfenstein* and *Beyond Castle Wolfenstein*, written by Silas Warner for Muse Software, in 1983 and 1984, respectively.[7] Since these games were also among the first to be written for the Commodore 64 platform, their two-dimensional graphics were rudimentary, at best. Indeed, the mazes more closely resemble a *Pac Man* screen than real corridors. However, they are notable for combining the role-playing features of a text-based adventure with the graphics of contemporaneous arcade-style "shoot'em ups" and consciously introduce gamer-character identification into gaming scenarios. Id Software, the maker of the final version of the series, explains the games' basic scenario:

It's World War II, and B.J. Blazkowicz — the Allies' bad boy of

> espionage — is a terminal action seeker built for abuse with an
> attitude to match. (That's you.) There's just one small problem:
> you've been captured by Nazis, tortured and imprisoned beneath
> the intricate maze of Castle Wolfenstein where you await an
> inhumane execution. Now, you must do anything and everything to
> escape from the belly of the Nazi dungeon. Or die trying.

This description actually refers to *Wolfenstein 3-D*, which was a significantly more sophisticated

remake of *Castle Wolfenstein* that featured 3-D graphics. Although Id Software suggests that

"you" are B.J. Blazkowicz, the game reverts to a first-person animation style because the 3-D

graphics engines could not yet support the multiple views necessary for a third-person

perspective. The only parts of the main character that are visible to players are the arms and hands

needed to fire at the nasty Nazis. If we follow Carol Clover's lead and first consider "the equation

point of view = identification," then *Wolfenstein 3-D* is an important game in terms of its

influence on games to follow — the three-dimensional graphics were among the first to approach

a level of animation needed to achieve a "cinematic style" of presentation — but not in terms of

its mass appeal (208). It sold over 250,000 copies and millions played the shareware version, but

these numbers are minuscule when compared to the success of the *Tomb Raider* series.

Id Software's next release in the action genre was *Doom*, in 1993, and it is the best-selling

action game to date. Functionally, there is little difference between *Doom* and *Wolfenstein 3-D*.

As noted on the Id Software website, the difference is that

> In *Doom*, you play a Marine who has to escape from a military base
> on Mars that has been overrun by demons and various others
> nasties from hell. With an assortment of weapons at your disposal,
> you must venture into the maze of corridors and rooms, trying to
> find a way out, whilst all the time fighting the hellspawn that seek
> to destroy you. But things get worse! In order to succeed you have
> to follow the monsters into hell itself, there to fight even more
> vicious creatures and, eventually, to track down and destroy the

evil mastermind behind the invasion. Can you do it? Do you have
the guts?? Grab that shotgun, check your ammo and get to it!

While it has been tremendously successful and its graphics are a great improvement over previous

games, *Doom* is still saddled with its first-person perspective. The next generation of graphics

hardware and the resultant generation of video games would alter this perspective.

Resident Evil, released in March of 1996, six months before *Tomb Raider*, is yet another

intermediate stage, this time between *Doom* and *Tomb Raider*. Two important features were

introduced with *Resident Evil*: third-person perspective and an optional female protagonist, Jill

Valentine (Please see Fig. 4, Appendix C). At the time of its release, *Resident* Evil was

> lauded as the best 3D adventure game ever. Impressively rendered
> backgrounds, unprecedented cinematic quality in graphics and
> sound, and the rare ability to prove very real tension and genuine
> scares far outweighed the game's flaws. Borrowing stock horror-
> movie elements [. . .] and featuring a story that changed depending
> on how the game was played, the game quickly became a favorite
> of players. (ZDNet)

Tomb Raider represents another and more important paradigm shift in that it was "the first hit

action game to use a real-time 3D engine with a third-person perspective" (Rouse 9).[6] Richard

Rouse, a programmer for game company, Paranoid Productions, explains the difference between

Tomb Raider and *Doom*:

> The Space Marine in *Doom* is a barely-defined character, a blank-
> slate onto which players can project whatever kind of personality
> they want. For *Tomb Raider*, the developers took related
> technology but changed the game's design completely by making
> the player see [his or her] surrogate in the game world, witnessing
> the character's deft footwork as she dodged around corners and
> jumped over pits. Here the central character is Lara Croft, who has
> a very specific style to her appearance and actions. Though she
> doesn't talk much in the *Tomb Raider* games, Lara is infinitely
> more defined than the Space Marine from *Doom*. (9)

One of the other important differences between *Tomb Raider* and *Doom* is that the camera position necessarily must change. In a first-person game, the camera is always in the right position, in what film critics call the "I-camera," for the first-person, singular-pronoun position. In a third-person game, the camera has to move in order to provide the best angle from which to view the action while always remaining within the game world. The "over-the-shoulder" vantage point seems to be the most popular, but it is not always the best angle or the easiest to animate.[9]

While *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider* both use a third-person viewpoint, the later game has a graphical advantage over its earlier counterpart. Blache and Fielder observe that "[*Tomb Raider*] was compared, very early, to Capcom's *Resident Evil* in design and implementation but was noted more for its freedom of movement and on-the-fly renderings of 3D environments – in lieu of prerendered 2D (7). This means that *Tomb Raider's* virtual world consists of a series of points from which the 3D graphics are produced, or rendered, as the player moves through the space. In contrast, *Resident Evil* relies on an older system in which 2D renderings are constantly loaded and then rendered into 3D. The result is slower play and "choppy" animations caused by pauses for loading and rendering and the player's ability to move is limited to two dimensions. In the *Tomb Raider* games, the predominant perspective is the "over-the-shoulder" view because the program and the Sony PlayStation™ console are capable of running at speeds sufficient to allow synchronous loading and rendering. Moreover, views from behind Lara Croft comprise the majority of the game play and the "camera angle" is automatically adjusted to maintain this position, affording the player an excellent view of the game world and the protagonist. In fact, this feature of the game serves to minimize the available views and therefore the effect of Lara's much maligned physique (Please see Fig. 5-8, Appendix C). In any case, the largest single

difference is the increased visibility of the protagonist achieved through the improved graphics engine: Lara Croft becomes a real(istic) character and the presentation is meant to mimic cinematography.

In addition to the shift of perspective, the game play in *Tomb Raider* has several important changes compared to previous games. In this regard, the most important change is the auto-aiming feature in *Tomb Raider*. While this point might seem counter-intuitive, it does move *Tomb Raider* away from the realm of the pure action "shoot'em up" and into the adventure genre. Richard Rouse explains the difference: "In *Doom* much of the challenge is hitting your demonic adversaries, and the player's ability to determine exactly what [he or she is] shooting at is key to this style of game play. When the player is no longer seeing through the eyes of [his or her] game world character, aiming becomes much more difficult and counterintuitive, and a change to a style of game play in which aiming is not so central becomes necessary" (9-10). *Resident Evil*, in spite of its third-person perspective, has greater affinities with action "shooters" like *Doom*. Its categorization in a different genre, "survival horror," which it is said to have initiated, reflects the distinction (ZDNet). Instead of extra-terrestrial mutants, players of *Resident Evil* (and the characters they control) must eliminate zombies and other monsters borrowed from horror movies. In other words, games like *Doom* and *Resident Evil* provide a more

> pure action experience, with puzzle solving taking a backseat to
> fast-action, trigger-finger exercise. *Tomb Raider*, on the other hand,
> is much more of an action adventure, with the player needing to
> figure out puzzles, and divine means of attaining difficult to reach
> positions. Though *Tomb Raider* has its fast action moments, these
> are separated by long puzzle-solving passages. However, the switch
> from pure action to action adventure was not done merely because
> the developers felt like it; the removed view of a third-person game
> lends itself more to navigating the player's surrogate through the

world instead of aiming and shooting its inhabitants. (Rouse 9)

It is not until *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*, the fourth game in the series, that the player has

the option of aiming Lara's guns. In the third-person perspective, it is incredibly difficult to do so.

The nature of the game-play reinforces the cinematic style of presentation by changing the nature

of what game developers call "player immersion," or the way in which the player is drawn into the

game world. Again Rouse adds insight:

> By being able to view their surrogate performing the actions they
> command, players intuitively realize that the character doing all
> those cool moves is very much not them. In a first-person game, the
> player sees their actions (sic) carried out by the movement of the
> camera through the world as viewed by their (sic) character. Thus
> the player is more drawn into the game and might — for brief
> moments in time — even think they (sic) actually are in the game
> world. (10)

As previously stated, in a first-person game, like *Doom*, the player sees through the eyes of the

character and it is therefore much easier to become immersed in the game. A similar technique is

used in more benevolent games, for instance in *Flight Simulator*, in order to give the player the

sense that he or she is really at the controls of an airplane.

In a first-person game, the player, for all intents and purposes, is the character; in a third-

person game, the distance between player and character removes this possibility. As with TV and

movies, the player is invited to identify with the character rather than become the character. It is

worth recalling Id Software's statements about *Wolfenstein 3-D* and *Doom*: "you" are "B.J.

Blazkowicz" or the "Space Marine." As Toby Gard, one of the original designers of *Tomb Raider*

suggests,

> Generally speaking, if it's third-person, then you're watching and
> controlling a character external to yourself. This allows us to give

> that character more personality of their (sic) own, and the player,
> suitably distanced, doesn't find it disconcerting when the character
> does things of its own accord. In a first-person game you can't do
> that because you're meant to be taking on that role, and as a player
> you expect to put all the personality of that character in yourself.
> (qtd. in Rouse 10)

Indeed, the player is not only "suitably distanced" from the character in a game that uses a third-person perspective, the player is also at a greater distance from the game world. Although the player still guides the protagonist around through the various levels of the game, the view-point for the game is analogous to that of film or television. Interestingly, in the latest installment, *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*, the designers included first-person perspectives when Lara performs certain functions, such as looking through binoculars or the scope of a cross-bow. However, she is such a well-established character — due to previous games, the attention she receives, and the primarily third-person perspective in the rest of the game(s) — that it will be difficult for players to believe that they are Lara Croft occasionally. They do not share her personality or her gender but instead share her point-of-view. While their distance is still maintained in the newest edition, the immersion of the players is greater, which results in an increased identification with the protagonist.

"Bigger Action, Better Outfits": Film Theory and Video Games[10]

The influence of film on the animation in computer games should not be under-estimated. Jordan Mechner admits that in designing the game, *The Last Express*, he tried to mimic the filming techniques used in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (Rouse 11). *Tomb Raider*'s creators similarly intended to animate the game as if it were being filmed. Thus, it is entirely logical to apply methods and theories adapted from criticisms of film and spectatorship to analyze a game

like *Tomb Raider* and a character like Lara Croft. As discussed throughout earlier chapters, the most influential of the critical approaches for the consideration of gender in film is Laura Mulvey's critique of what has come to be known as the "male gaze." According to Mulvey, there are two contradictory aspects of looking in conventional cinema, fetishistic scopophilia and narcissistic identification.[11] In "Visual Pleasure," Mulvey considers only male-centred forms; that is, forms in which males are active and females are passive.[12] The split between active and passive roles reduces female characters to two roles. They are either erotic objects for the characters on the screen or they are erotic objects for the spectators. Although he wants to analyze *Tomb Raider* and its central character, Lara Croft, in terms of the gaze, Steve Spittle, of the University of Central England, admits that the game "offers a much more ambivalent experience" for which the gaze is unable to account. Spittle explains that

> The ambivalence in *Tomb Raider* lies in the unusual tension
> between its basis in the male gaze and its simultaneous
> identification with an active female protagonist. That my female
> students felt empowered by, and attracted to, *Tomb Raider*
> suggests it does mark a shift in conceptions of subjectivity and
> identity. However, this shift is not total and still appears to be
> rooted in existing gender definitions. (9)

Lara Croft is not just the only female, she is the only protagonist in every version of *Tomb Raider*. Moreover, Lara never occupies a passive role.

Since her primary role within the narrative structure of the game is to kill the bad guys and monsters, Lara Croft fits the basic profile of a character traditionally found, as Clover indicates, in horror films: "the image of the distressed female most likely to linger in the memory [. . .] the one who did not die: the survivor, or Final Girl. She is the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the receding horror and of her own peril; who is

chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again" ("Slasher" 200). In addition, the Final Girl is "presented from the outset as the main character. The practiced viewer distinguishes her from her friends minutes into the film. She is the girl scout, the bookworm, the mechanic. Unlike [other girls] she is not sexually active" ("Slasher" 204). This aspect of Lara's life is documented in the "official biography" Core Design released in 1999: "An adventurous soul, Lara found the idea of being sent away from home an exciting prospect. [. . .] Preferring her own company to that of others, Lara would often take off at dawn, returning only at nightfall for supper" (Walk 103). In fact, as was reported on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's program, *Undercurrents*, the makers and creators of Lara Croft and *Tomb Raider* were approached by advertisers for a feminine hygiene product. Lara's handlers refused to allow her image to appear in the ads partly for fear that it would alienate her largely male following, but partly out of fear that it would alter the invulnerable image of their star. As well, Lara conducts all of her archaeological expeditions alone, except for the first two levels of the fourth installment, *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation* (2000). Initially, she is accompanied during the training level by Prof. von Croy, of whom more will be said, and in the second level she has an Egyptian guide who eventually runs away, screaming. Neither of these is a suitable partner, in any sense, for Lara. While she is partly a sexual object, she remains an unattainable object.

Moreover, in the most recent release in the *Tomb Raider* series, Lara's non-sexual image is furthered by the opening sequence in which she is depicted at the age of sixteen. She appears along with her mentor, Prof. Werner von Croy, who also serves to reinforce the non-sexual, "look don't touch," nature of the relationship between Lara and her audience by assuming a protective, fatherly, role in the initial sequences. In contrast, Spittle (and others) would like to apply

Mulvey's methods to *Tomb Raider*, because it meets her minimum criteria: the presentation

begins with the woman as the object of the combined gaze of the male spectator and male

protagonist alike and "By means of identification with [the protagonist], through participation in

his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too" (21). This analysis is based on the premise

of a male spectator who identifies with a male protagonist simply and wholly because they are

both male. According to such a model, the spectator, then, should not be able to "possess" a

female protagonist nor should "he" identify with the female figure. Yet it is precisely the female

protagonist with whom the player of *Tomb Raider* is meant to identify and in whose power he (or

she) participates.

Part of the problem with Mulvey's formulation arises because she attributes all of the

power in a given scene to the male protagonist and the male spectators on the basis of gender.

She does not consider power to be a separate category of analysis because she sees it as being

part of and determined by gender. Sean Nixon neatly summarizes what is lacking in Mulvey's

critique:

> Historical and social factors which determine identity are — in the
> end — reduced to the calculus of psychosexual structures. In
> addition, the emphasis on psychosexual structures produces a
> reductive account of identity conceived fundamentally in terms of
> sexual difference. In other words, psychoanalysis privileges
> acquisition of gender and sexual identity as the bedrock of identity.
> Other determinants upon identity (such as class) are effectively
> sidelined. (321)

Since gender is the "bedrock of identity," it is permanently fixed. Since gender is fixed, the

positions of men and women are fixed. Consequently, Mulvey states that in psychoanalytic terms,

> the female figure poses a deeper problem. She also connotes
> something that the look continually circles around but disavows:

her lack of a penis, implying a threat of castration and hence,
unpleasure. Ultimately, the meaning of woman is sexual difference,
the visually ascertainable absence of the penis, the material evidence
on which is based the castration complex essential for the
organisation of entrance to the symbolic order and the law of the
father. Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and
enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always
threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified. (21)

However, Lara Croft's overtly feminine appearance immediately problematizes this type of

analysis when coupled with her dexterity in performing tasks that are stereotypically male as well

as her insertion into a narrative formula that has been historically male. She is never a passive

object, but is instead portrayed as an active (and violent) agent. The camera does follow her

around, but it is in response to her movements. The player directs those movements, but always in

negotiation with the limits defined by the artificial intelligence that constitute the character of Lara

Croft as built into the game.

Mulvey maintains that in film the male protagonist is the on-screen surrogate of the (male)

viewer. This is made possible, she says "through the processes set in motion by structuring the

film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify" (20). However, such

a position, based as it is on the study of only Hitchcock and von Sternberg, is reductive. John Ellis

offers a more nuanced approach to identification, involving two different tendencies:

First, there is that of dreaming and fantasy that involves the multiple
and contradictory tendencies within the construction of the
individual. Second, there is the experience of narcissistic
identification with the image of a human figure perceived as other.
Both these processes are invoked in the conditions of entertainment
cinema. The spectator does not therefore "identify" with the hero or
heroine: an identification that would, if put in its conventional
sense, involve socially constructed males identifying with male
heroes, and socially constructed females identifying with women
heroines (43)

In the previous chapter, I questioned Mulvey's concept on the basis of shifting perspectives and shifting camera foci. Heroes are not always in control nor are they always male. The same can be said of the spectator. Ellis elaborates:

> The situation is more complex than this, as identification involves both the recognition of self in the image on the screen, a narcissistic identification, and the identification of self with the various positions that are involved in the fictional narration: those of hero and heroine, villain, bit-part player, active and passive character. Identification is therefore multiple and fractured, a sense of seeing the constituent parts of the spectator's own psyche paraded before her or him. (43)

In many genres, such as westerns and professional wrestling, the hero oscillates from beater to beaten. Based on Mulvey's premise this shift would require multiple changes in allegiance, so that the viewer always aligns with the victor. This would require rapid changes in identification; changes too rapid to be feasible. Additionally, the male as the focus of the gaze, with a female controlling the gaze, commonly occurs in sports films, which typically feature female coaches or owners, as I demonstrated in Chapter 2. Similarly, as I showed in Chapter 1, advertisements for clothes or cosmetics for men are intended for male and female audiences alike. When involved in a video game, the player can spend hours viewing not just the female's body, but also her perspective, and we know that the constituent parts of socially constructed males include those that are feminine.

If she is asked to perform a task she is incapable of completing or which is not possible at that point in the game, Lara Croft responds with an emphatic "No!" In the terms of the game, Lara has ultimate say and therefore ultimate control over what happens. True, the programmers created some of her limits (other limitations are technological), but for the practical purposes of

playing the game, the on-screen figure (and her capabilities) dictate the realm of possible movements and possible events. Lara Croft is not a figure Mulvey could have imagined in the introduction to her famous essay:

> To summarise briefly: the function of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is twofold: she firstly symbolises the castration threat by her real lack of a penis and secondly thereby raises her child into the symbolic. [. . .] Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning. (14-15)

Unquestionably, Lara Croft lacks a penis, but does not automatically represent the threat of castration. Instead, because of the structure of the game, Lara represents the obviation of castration, for you cannot castrate that which cannot be castrated or is already castrated. The fact that Lara is not sexually active means that she will not (be able to) raise a child into the patriarchal order, even if the player of the game is a male. She will not, as Mulvey maintains, "[turn] her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis" (14). Furthermore, she does not lack a phallus. In the game, the phallus — properly speaking it is not a penis in the first place — or Law of the Father, is represented by Lara's gun(s) and, more frequently, Lara's ability to solve the required riddles. The latter form, especially, signifies not servitude, but rather a mastery over the Symbolic Order. Although she performs many tasks collaboratively with the player, Lara can always say "No!"[13]

As the game progresses, Lara acquires larger and more powerful guns as well as more valuable treasures and magical items. Ultimately, Lara uses the phallic objects to destroy the bad guys and monsters. These actions will constitute the "castration, literal or symbolic, of the killer at

[the Final Girl's] hands" ("Slasher" 208). Thus, Lara Croft's presence not only removes the threat of castration, it instead relocates the threat by projecting it onto its real source: the bad guys In Clover's terms, the importance of this act is that "At the moment that the Final Girl becomes her own savior, she becomes a hero; and the moment that she becomes a hero is the moment that the male viewer gives up the last pretense of male identification" ("Slasher" 218-19). Clover means this both in terms of identifying strictly with on-screen males and in terms of not considering the Final Girl as a sexual object. The viewer identifies with more with heroes than with sexual objects. Lara Croft's life is in danger from the moment the game begins — if she fails in her mission, the world will end. Therefore, movement through the various levels of the games is predicated on Lara having already been a saviour and/or being a saviour again. Given the type of scenario the games involve — that the player spends most of the game staring at Lara Croft's back, and/or solving puzzles — the male spectator's gaze ends when he opens the box and begins playing the game. In fact, when the game is paused, the screen darkens and blurs as a reminder that the action has been suspended. As soon as the first puzzle is solved, or the first enemy shot, male identification ceases to occur because the hero, the possessor of the phallus, is not male.

It is curious that Clover recognizes that the first significant mention of the concept of male-to-female cross-gender identification comes from Susan Barrowclough's review of the National Film Board of Canada's documentary, *Not a Love Story*. This NFB production purports to demonstrate the threat to society, and especially to women, posed by pornography. A corollary goal of the documentary is a thorough and damning critique of patriarchy. Barrowclough suggests that

contrary to the assumption that the male uses pornography to

> confirm and celebrate his gender's sexual activity and dominance, is
> the possibility of his pleasure in identifying with a "feminine"
> [perspective.] [. . .] Whose part does he take when, as often occurs
> in such representations, the woman is the [. . .] active, dominant or
> aggressive partner? Does the passive role offer fantasy relief from
> the strains of phallic performance? (35)

Given the earlier analysis of *Tomb Raider*, the word "pornography" could be replaced seamlessly

by the words "video games" in the scenario Barrowclough describes. If she can recognize the

potential for such an identification in pornography, of all media, then the prospect of males'

identification with Lara Croft should not be dismissed out-of-hand. Criticizing the games on the

mere basis of the protagonist's phenotypic qualities assumes too much, explores too little, and

obscures the complex relationships created by the games' environment. Indeed, I must ask, along

with Barrowclough, "What are the connections between representations of sexuality and sexual

activity, between fantasy and enactment [because the] ways meanings are produced and consumed

— and their relation to other aspects of sexed and sexual behaviour — demand an analysis which

cannot be conducted within a moral parable of the lost sheep reclaimed from the Big Bad Wolf,"

or in this case, *Wolfenstein, Doom,* or *Tomb Raider* (36).

"When a Killer Body Isn't Enough": The Impact of Narrative on Gender[14]

Previous sections of this chapter deal with video games in terms of genre, perspective (or

point-of-view), and theories of viewership. This leaves two important areas unexplored: narrative

and interactivity. These topics are related to each other and to the topics treated earlier. Without a

plot, the action-adventure or action-horror video games would not be terribly different from early

action games such as *Space Invaders, Missile Command,* and *Asteroids.* As insignificant as it is,

even these early action games have a modest premise: blast the objects before they hit the earth or

your vehicle. The importance of narrative, indeed its very existence, in video games is often

overlooked by critics and scholars. Carol Clover notes that the role of the Final Girl has changed

significantly as the horror film genre has progressed. The protagonist's position has shifted from

passive to active defense. That is to say, she no longer flees the monster or bad guy until she is

saved by a man, *à la* Little Red Riding Hood. A video game equivalent of the fairy tale heroine is

Pauline, the princess in *Donkey Kong*, who must be rescued from the gorilla by Mario (later of

Super Mario and *Mario Bros.* fame). As the movie formula has developed, successive heroines

have defended themselves with force and ultimately have killed the assailants by themselves. For

example, in the *Alien* series, Ripley kills the mother of the parasitic aliens and successfully defends

the space station.[15] A further progression can be seen in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and in *Tomb

Raider*. Like Buffy, Lara Croft's role is one of pure offense. Other analogues include the title

character in *Xena, Warrior Princess*, WWF superstar Chyna, and the cast of *Cleopatra 2525*.

Though they acknowledge the shift that has occurred, Cassell and Jenkins express reservations

regarding the new roles of female protagonists:

> The success with women of self-defense classes and of female-
> centered action films, such as *Thelma and Louise* or *Aliens*, shows
> that violent imagery is compatible with not only feminine taste but
> feminist politics. Female action protagonists, such as television's
> Xena and the comic-book heroine, Tank Girl, have attracted strong
> female followings, including lesbians, who celebrate their refusal to
> conform to traditional gender roles and their ability to hold their
> own against male opponents. Much of what gets read as female
> empowerment within popular culture represents feminist
> appropriation of violent images for their own ends. (29)

Part of the skepticism Cassell and Jenkins express results from the focus of their critique. They

only consider the political impact of powerful female protagonists from an essentialist viewpoint

that is based on the visual aspects of the texts they cite. Rather than analyzing games, their

ultimate goal is to find methods of encouraging more females to use computers. Thus, they do not

examine the impact of female protagonists on the narrative structure, nor do they consider the

identifications that arise from the insertion of female characters into roles traditionally occupied by

male heroes.

Simply put, there is more to a character than her phenotype. The character should also be

investigated within the context of the narrative conventions of the genre. In this regard, Lara

Croft is a natural successor to the Final Girl lineage. In fact, Lara Croft is part of a much longer

line than just that of the Final Girl, for, properly speaking, *Tomb Raider* follows the narrative

conventions of the romance. According to the archetypal taxonomies of Northrop Frye,

> The essential element of plot in romance is adventure, which means
> that romance is naturally a sequential and processional form [. . .]
> At its most naive it is an endless form in which a central character
> who never develops or ages goes through one adventure after
> another [. . .] We see this form in comic strips, where the central
> characters persist for years in a state of refrigerated deathlessness.
> (Anatomy 186)

With the exception of *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation's* opening sequence, Lara Croft does

not age at all. Other popular games follow the same formula. In spite of there being a nearly two-

year gap between installments in the *Syphon Filter* series, the second game's story begins as the

first game ends. The plot mechanism for the third *Syphon Filter* game is the characters' testimony

at a Senate hearing. As a result the game contains episodes that take place before, during, and

after the previous two games. In the wake of the 11 Sept. 2002 terrorist attacks on the U.S., the

game's scenarios — terrorists attacking Washington, DC, with a virus; raids in Afghanistan —

were considered realistic enough to upset the public which caused the game's release date to be

moved from 23 Sept. to 23 Dec. 2002. Ian Fleming's super spy, James Bond, appears in a video game recreation of the movie *Golden Eye*. *Perfect Dark* derives from the *Golden Eye* video game and — to follow the trend popularized by Lara Croft — introduces a female spy named Joanna Dark. James Bond is perhaps the most faithful follower of the formula Frye finds in romance. The movie version of the hero has been played by five actors who span forty years, all without aging. One can assume that Mr. Bond's colleague, Joanna Dark, will enjoy a similar career. That is to say, the female protagonists in contemporary video games have been inserted into heroic roles hitherto occupied by males where they have become a fixture.

Although seemingly lost on Cassell and Jenkins, the plot is an important part of the game for players and designers alike. For example, in the fourth *Tomb Raider*, "The entire game takes place in Egypt. [This] allows us to focus a lot more on the game, the game play, and most of all, the story" explains Adrian Smith, Core's director of operations (qtd. in Walk 102). Sharon Sherman draws on another archetypal theorist, Joseph Campbell, and his concept of the "monomyth" to illustrate the intertextual allusions that structure the plots of video games. In The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Campbell summarizes the pattern: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (30). In Sherman's view, the journey described by Campbell is "so significant that popular culture creators from Disney to George Lucas to Steven Spielberg to Nintendo game producers recreate the themes most important to them from their own remembered childhood pasts and, at the same time, create an intertextual framework instantly recognized and reinforced by children on a global scale never dreamt of by historic-geographic

researchers" (246). The notion of intertextuality takes on greater significance with regard to cross-gender identification when thematic elements and characterizations are added to the analysis. Frye's model of fiction also includes the quest narrative. He writes that "The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero" (Anatomy 187). The final *Tomb Raider* game, for instance, follows this structure closely: the game begins with a training level constructed around a flashback to the time when Lara was a sixteen-year-old, then the crucial struggle requires that Lara return the spirit of an evil Egyptian god to its resting place, and, curiously, both the gamer and Lara are exalted when the game is finished. A special animated sequence, in which Lara is honoured with treasures, plays each time she successfully saves the world. Other games treat their heroes similarly. However, the gamer is drawn into the narrative as well. For many games, the only way to view certain scenes is to complete the game. In *Syphon Filter II* and *III* players are able to access, or "unlock," new areas and missions, view movies, and see the credits of the game. Players who successfully complete the game often achieve notoriety in internet chat rooms. The newer, network-based games have become so popular that there are regional competitions — so-called *Fragapalooza* — among teams of gamers with substantial monetary prizes and sponsorships awaiting winners.

Since Lara Croft is, in a literary sense, the hero in a romance, it is fitting that she maintain the conventionalized attributes required of such a character. Consulting Frye again, we learn the following about the hero of romance:

> If superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, the hero

> is the typical hero of *romance*, whose actions are marvellous but
> who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance
> moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly
> suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us,
> are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals,
> terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power
> violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have
> been established. (Anatomy 33)

Clearly, it never occurred to Frye that there could arise a female hero in a romance. However, the

conventions of the genre, or mode, as Frye calls it, still apply. Lara Croft is superior in degree to

other women and men. Her cunning, as supplied by the gamer, and her physical prowess —

incredible endurance, strength enough to climb ropes and swing hand-over-hand, *etc.* — set her

apart. She is a hybrid figure combining technology and the gamer's skill. For Frye, the hero stands

out because "The success of the hero derives from a current of energy which is partly from him

and partly outside him. It depends partly on the merit of his courage, partly on certain things given

him: unusual strength, noble blood, or a destiny prophesied by an oracle" (Scripture 67). Lara

meets all of these criteria, which serves to solidify her position as a hero in a romance. For

example, in Lara's "official biography" we learn that as

> The daughter of Lord Henshingley Croft, Lara was brought up in
> the secure world of aristocracy — wanting for nothing she was
> surrounded by servants, social events and high society. Having
> attended Wimbledon High School for Girls from the age of eleven
> years, Lara's parents decided that since she was sixteen, she should
> broaden her education by studying for her A levels at one of
> England's most prominent boarding schools. (qtd. in Walk 103)

By making Lara of noble birth, Croft's creators present her as being like us, but somehow above

us; someone whom we should admire and aspire to be.

This is in keeping with the traditions of romance, for as Frye concludes, "The social

affinities of the romance, with its grave idealizing of heroism and purity, are with the aristocracy"

(Anatomy 306). In his subsequent study, The Secular Scripture, Frye elaborates on the concept:

> One very obvious feature of romance is its pervasive social
> snobbery. Naive romance confines itself largely to royal families;
> sentimental romance gives us patterns of aristocratic courage and
> courtesy, and much of it adopts a "blood will tell" convention, the
> association of moral virtue and social rank implied in the word
> "noble." A hero may appear to be of low social origin, but if he is a
> real hero he is likely to be revealed at the end of the story as
> belonging to the gentry. [. . .] Detective stories often feature an
> elegant upperclass amateur who is ever so much smarter than the
> merely professional police. (161)[17]

As much as Corrosive Software's Kate Roberts might lament, "Would Tomb Raider have sold as

many copies if Lara had been wearing a nice warm sweater and sweatpants," the convention

would never allow her to be anything but fantastic in every way (qtd. in Cassell and Jenkins 30).

In Frye's words,

> The essential difference [in] romance lies in the conception of
> characterization. The romancer does not attempt to create "real
> people" so much as stylized figures which expand into
> psychological archetypes. [. . .] The romancer deals with
> individuality, with characters *in vacuo* idealized by revery, and,
> however conservative [the romancer] may be, something nihilistic
> and untamable is likely to keep breaking out. (Anatomy 304-5)

Within the confines of a video game which clearly participates in the genre of romance, a

character like Lara Croft is necessarily lacking in personality and overflowing in physicality.

Lara undeniably has an exaggerated chest measurement and an incredibly narrow waist,

but so does Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Commando*, *Running Man*, and all of his other movies.

Sylvester Stallone's character, Rambo, is a similarly portrayed action hero. Since she was

originally writing in 1993, the most advanced games to which Sherman could refer were the

Mario Bros. series for the Nintendo 64. Nevertheless, Sherman recognizes the importance of the

narrative formula on intertextuality and identification: "Video game players share their identities

as Mario characters; they are, at once, acting as heroes in a plot, yet also as individuals, with their

self-identities shifting within the social situation" (251). The familiarity of the narrative formula,

she contends, increases the players' identifications with their on-screen surrogates. When asked

how the character, Lara Croft, came about, Core Design Operation Director Adrian Smith,

responds:

> It's strange when people ask this question because really what came
> about was a game called *Tomb Raider*. It just so happened that it
> featured a female character [. . .] And what actually happened was
> that, when we were designing the game of *Tomb Raider*, we put
> down a load of different sets of attributes, different things that we
> wanted of a main character, and all these things turned into Lara.
> (44)

In response to the next logical question, "Why a female character instead of a male?" Smith

replies "A number of reasons. We literally wrote down a big list of things that we wanted the

character to do — we wanted to be coy, we wanted to be agile. When we wrote this long list

down it didn't really point towards a male character [. . .] All the attributes we put down pointed

us towards a female character. We didn't want to end up with an Arnold Schwarzenegger type"

(44). Perhaps the attributes of the character are "female," but she has been thrust into a narrative

structure that is dominated by male heroes. In the same interview, Smith goes some way toward

recognizing the paradox of Lara's situation. He says simply: "Lara is a female version of Indiana

Jones and Indiana Jones, at the end of the day, is an adventurer, just like Lara" (45). Thus the

success of the game depends on players' familiarity with the genre to which it belongs and the

conventions of that genre

Whereas Sharon Sherman sees the identifications produced from video games as being related to their intertextual affinities with quest narratives, Marsha Kinder asserts that they are part of a much larger system. Typical of other critiques, Kinder describes identifications produced by video games prior to the incorporation of three-dimensional virtual reality animations. Thus, she foresees neither female protagonists nor cross-gender identifications arising from the intertexts she observes. Nevertheless, her approach points to this eventuality. According to Kinder,

> home video games cultivate a dual form of spectatorship, which
> positions young spectators to combine passive and interactive
> modes of response as they identify with sliding signifiers that move
> fluidly across different modes of image production and other
> cultural boundaries but without challenging the rigid differentiation
> between genders on which patriarchal order is based. (30)

By "sliding signifiers," Kinder means the variety of shapes and forms — e.g., mutant turtles, purple dinosaurs, and *Transformers* — that cartoon (and video game) characters take, and the meanings they carry. Clearly, gender is not among them because for Kinder, gender is an impermeable boundary. Yet she describes the situation of people identifying not just with real animals, but with cartoon animals on the Saturday morning shows. She claims that

> by identifying with such anthropomorphized creatures, spectators
> are able to acknowledge their own slipperiness as signifiers — as
> both animal and human — while still affirming their own uniqueness
> as the animal who possesses the functional difference of
> subjectivity. [. . .] For us adults in our congealed subject positions,
> such identification helps us regain some of that lost foetal flexibility
> which is so central to [many toys and cartoon characters.] Instead
> of evoking a single individual or species, all of these creatures
> evoke a system (of evolution, reproduction, biological
> development, acculturation, or transmedial intertextuality).
> Identification with these creatures serves as an entrance into these
> layer systems. (42)

Amazingly, Kinder admits that humans can identify with creatures not just outside of their own species but who exist only in fiction. Nevertheless, she does not allow for within-species identification across genders. Men can identify with the ogre in DreamWorks' movie, *Shrek*, but not with women! The most important of the layer systems for Kinder is the "Oedipalization of Home Video Games" (48). She notes that "The Oedipal dimension of video games helps account for choices within its system of intertextuality. There is a heavy reliance on action genres (the epic, romance quest, and western) in which male heroes have traditionally grown into manhood and replaced father figures" (49). At the time of Kinder's writing, 1992, in most video games, "females are still figured as objects of the male quest"(49). With regard to the various *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* productions, Kinder finds "a network of intertextuality that cuts across several modes of image production, that appeals to diverse generations, classes and ethnic subcultures"(52). At the heart of this intertext is the Oedipal struggle to replace the father. *Tomb Raider* is similarly positioned. There are action figures, a movie starring Oscar winner Angelina Jolie, posters, websites, *etc.*, devoted to Lara Croft and Tomb Raider. Yet, as we discover in *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*, the story is based on the Oedipal dynamic.

Among the popular successors and competitors to *Tomb Raider* is 989 Studios' *Syphon Filter*. Whereas *Tomb Raider* can be compared to a video game version of the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* series, *Syphon Filter* is more reminiscent of a Tom Clancy work. The plot revolves around Gabriel Logan and Lian Xing, who are operatives for an ultra-secret bureau of the U.S. government, known only as "The Agency." The first installment of the series begins with Gabe, in Washington, D.C., on a mission to defuse a series of bombs, including one that contains the deadly Syphon Filter virus, which have been planted by terrorists who are attacking the city.

Eventually, Gabe must track down the terrorist leaders, in Washington, and in Kazhakstan, and take the virus away from them. Gabe is assisted by Lian Xing, a former agent of the People's Republic of China. In the first game, the player never gets to see Lian other than during the full motion videos, or FMVs.[18] Interestingly, in this capacity, Lian fulfills the role of the female — difference, but in a non-sexual manner — that William Warner develops with respect to action films, as discussed in the previous chapter.

The beginning of the second offering in the series overlaps the end of the first. There is an ICBM launch in Kazhakstan and a resultant nuclear blast. Gabe and Lian have been betrayed. Their boss actually works for Pharcom, the makers of the "Syphon Filter" virus, and Lian is captured and infected so that she can be used for experiments. In the second game, the player must "be" Lian Xing in order to complete certain portions of the mission. There is no choice in the matter. While there is a need to protect her due to the illness, you must always protect the player, whether it is Gabe or Lian. As in *Tomb Raider*, the animation is third-person with certain exceptions being first-person, such as occurs when she and the gamer are peeking around corners, looking through binoculars, aiming specific weapons and sneaking into corners (Please see Fig. 9, Appendix C). The most significant of these is the last, sneaking into corners. This move allows the player to hide as enemies walk past. It begins with an over-the-shoulder camera angle, changes to a reverse shot as the player moves into the corner and smoothly switches to an I-camera view so that the player occasionally shares the character's view. Interestingly, this is the same shot on which Mulvey focuses, with the important exception that in her analysis the viewer (always) shares the view of a male protagonist.

The plot borrows from the stock action movie plot: a lone agent is double-crossed by his

superiors who intend to use the virus to take over the world now that the Cold War has ended and there is no one to stop them.[19] This treacherous plot is central to the game and the number of cut-scenes, in which the player loses control and views an FMV, emphasize the primacy of the plot, and more specifically, narrative. Moreover, it is recognizable — whether consciously or unconsciously, such is the nature of intertexts — as being based on the basic plot of action movies.[20] Whereas Rambo has a "good father," Gabe is alone. His only contact to the outside world is Lian Xing, and later another female operative, Theresa Lipan, and that is only as a voice in his earpiece. As in *Rambo*, there is no sexual contact. It should be noted that a more than professional relationship is inferred and is suggested by other characters in the second game: when Gabe reaches a safe house where a serum is being made to cure Lian, Theresa tells Gabe that she knows he cares for Lian; at the end of the game, Chance, a turncoat agent, tells Gabe that his problem is that he "let his partner get under his skin." Yet in *Syphon Filter II*, Lian and Gabe are only together during some of the FMVs and only for a short time. For example, at the completion of one segment, Lian, in a helicopter, plucks Gabe off of a moving train only to drop him by parachute at another site, only five kilometres away. Similarly, *Syphon Filter III* tells players how Gabe met Lian and Theresa, who is added to the list of playable characters, but they are only together at the moment of contact. The major difference between current games, such as *Syphon Filter* and *Tomb Raider*, and their predecessors is the absence of the figure of a good father. For example, in *Castle Wolfenstein*, B.J. Blazkowicz is an American soldier in World War II, and he is therefore fighting on behalf of the good father against his evil counterparts. Similarly, *Doom's* space marine is defending an outpost, on behalf of the good father, against invading intruders. In *Tomb Raider*, Lara's father is dead and she has been placed in the custody of Dr. Werner von

Croy, who serves as a father-figure for the young explorer. Indeed, he is a mentor of sorts for her. Eventually, we learn that von Croy is evil. Rather than there being two father figures, there is only the bad father. It is not even a case of the two fathers being complicitous. For example, in *Syphon Filter*, Logan's successive superiors at "The Agency," Benton, Markinson, and Stevens, all turn out to be bad fathers. Indeed, they are not working for an "other side," so much as they are working for themselves. This is the greatest betrayal of all — that they have abandoned their "children." Similarly, von Croy trains Lara to be an expert tomb raider — that is, to replace her figurative father — but he does so only to take advantage of her physical prowess and her cunning. Dr. von Croy is old and unable to perform many of the tasks required to obtain the lost treasures. He also does not need to be able to do so because he can have Lara do the work for him. Then he can eliminate Lara and take all of the credit and resultant glory for himself.

Until now, this section has been concerned primarily with illustrating the intertextual framework within which video games with female protagonists operate. This framework, borrowed from fictive forms traditionally based on male protagonists, enhances the cross-gender identifications by surrounding male players with an otherwise entirely familiar medium. However, this argument opens itself to the notion that the female is merely masculinized and that this subverts the effects or possibility of cross-gender identification. There is an aspect of the Final Girl that indicates that she is not as masculinized as previously supposed. Clover explains that the Final Girl is "boyish, in a word. Just as the killer is not fully masculine, she is not fully feminine — not, in any case, feminine in the ways of [other females]. Her smartness, gravity, competence in mechanical and other practical matters, and sexual reluctance set her apart from the other girls and ally her, ironically, with the very boys she fears or rejects, not to speak of the killer himself"

("Slasher" 204). As mentioned above and earlier in the chapter, the Final Girl is not sexually active. Similarly, the heroines of the games studied in this chapter are not romantically or sexually involved. What Clover does not consider in her analysis is that the typical heroine of romance is an eternal virgin. Frye wryly observes that "It looks as though there were some structural principle in this type of story which makes it natural to postpone the first sexual act of the heroine, at least, until after the birth mystery in the plot has been solved" (Scripture 72-3). In his exhaustive studies, Frye notes that most romances end after the lovers are united, but before the first sexual act. An excellent contemporary analogue is Princess Leia of *Star Wars*. The birth mystery is not solved until the end of the last movie of the series and the series ends before a sexual union. Moreover, the princess is cunning, adept with a laser pistol, and of noble birth. Similarly, Lara Croft's origins are not revealed until the *Last Revelation*. Lara and Princess Leia remind us of another of Frye's axioms: "we notice that one recurring theme in romance is the theme of incest, very often father and daughter [and] what it shows us is that some conventions of storytelling are more obsessive than others" (Scripture 44). Leia is involved in two such themes: one with her father, Darth Vader, and the other with her brother, Luke Skywalker. The familial ties are not revealed until late in the series. In *Tomb Raider*, the theme of symbolic incest is suggested once the player becomes aware that von Croy is using Lara to achieve his aims and the professor chastises her for being a girl. Nevertheless, it is clear as the game progresses that he derives pleasure from her suffering.

Players of the video games cited are not merely rescuing the princess, nor are they identifying with a merely masculine female. The student of romance knows that "virginity is female honor, the symbol of the heroine's sturdy middle-class independence [thus] the heroine's

life is lived on two social levels" (Scripture 76). The second part of the passage, again from Frye,

relates to the tendency of the heroine to marry only on her own terms, especially if an elevation in

social standing is involved. Lara Croft and Lian Xing both work alone. Similarly, Joanna Dark's

name is meant to emphasize this point (Please see Fig. 10, Appendix C). Obviously, her name is

derived from Jeanne d'Arc, or Joan of Arc, the virgin warrior and heroine of the Hundred Years'

War. Joan saved herself for her figurative marriage with Christ; no man is good enough. *Perfect*

Dark gets its name from Joanna's rank in the spy service: she is "perfect," the highest rating in the

service. Players of the games cited are positioned to identify with the protagonists described,

including the duty to guard their sexuality. The last function is not as the "white knight" who

saves the princess, such as Daring Dirk of *Dragon's Lair* or Mario of *Donkey Kong*, in the 1980s.

In these games the princess is locked in a tower and does nothing. In current games, the "white

knight" is gone. He is superfluous. This brings us to one of Frye's more enigmatic points· "the

social reasons for the emphasis on virginity, however obvious, are still not enough for

understanding the structure of romance" (Scripture 73). Rather than the author expressing social

resistance, Frye asserts, "it is the romantic convention [the author] is using that expresses the

resistance [because] an element of social protest is inherent in romance" (Scripture 77). It is as the

simultaneous hero and heroine of romance that Lara Croft, Lian Xing, Joanna Dark, *et al* make

their most powerful statements. The intertexts with masculine elements necessarily evoke

identifications. However, contrary to the notion that they are merely male heroes in drag, the

female protagonists maintain perhaps the most significant features of the heroines of romance.

This makes their gender one of the sliding signifiers of the game and has a commensurate effect

on the identifications of the players.

"Machine Gun Totin' Mamas": Video Game Heroines

The heroines of video games have changed substantially from their earliest virtual fore-mothers such as Ms. Pac-Man and Princess Pauline (of *Donkey Kong* fame). In terms of the animations possible, female heroines have kept pace with their male counterparts, but in terms of characterizations the female protagonists have developed at a greater rate. Admittedly, the first female video game characters were little more than "eye candy" for a male audience. Brenda Laurel, a designer for Purple Moon, a maker of video games aimed at girls, observes that this reflects the reality that "The computer-game industry was invented by men, young men in computer labs back in the early seventies, late sixties. And the business very quickly became solidified around that group of people. So the packaging, the themes, the play patterns, the retail environment, the arcade environment were all male spaces" (qtd. in McQueen 2). John Romero, also a game designer, concurs: "Men design games for themselves because they understand what they know is fun. They don't understand what women find fun" (qtd. in McQueen 2). Many in the video game industry believe that women who play games are more interested in achieving goals than in competing. Charlotte Panter, news editor for Computer Gaming World, concludes that women "like to figure out that they've solved a problem or they've done something" (qtd. in McQueen 2). Substantial bodies of literature and research have been devoted to the issue of creating computer programs, including games and online environments that will attract more female participants. For example, Cassell and Jenkins' collection, From Barbie to Mortal Kombat, is an outgrowth of a conference dedicated to this topic. When males are the subjects of a study, the focus is usually on the violence in the video games they play and the influence of these games on boys' socialization. Conversely, the games designed for girls emphasize "relationships over

competition, story over action" (McQueen 2). Cassell and Jenkins admit that such an approach

assumes that

> underlying the position that there are fundamental differences
> between what boys and girls want from computer games is a
> discourse that posits essential differences in girls' and boys' cultural
> tastes, interests and competencies [but] the ability to determine
> what girls want may seem necessary at a time when we are trying to
> open up a space for girls to participate within this medium at all.
> (25)

This position has a great deal in common with the findings and conclusions of Nancy Chodorow

and Carol Gilligan. They suggest that there exists a feminine mode of reasoning which is based on

the primacy of relationships and caring. Based on her research into psychological theory and

human development, Gilligan notes that "when the observer is a woman, the perspective may be

of a different sort. Different judgements [. . .] imply different ideas about human development,

different ways of imagining the human condition, different notions of what is of value in life"(5-6).

However, this is as much a stereotype as the buxom blonde who is rescued by the dashing hero.

In an article about Purple Moon, Dianne Lynch explains that the company "designs its

products in response to research about the ways boys and girls play with computers. Boys

compete, control, and react; girls collaborate, communicate, and anticipate. Boys crave action and

speed; girls value aesthetics and imagery" (3). No matter how enlightened they may appear to be,

these are still essentialist assumptions based on a binary opposition between male and female.

Lynch's words betray her bias.[21] To paraphrase Lynch: boys like it rough; girls like it soft. In

analyses such as those of Cassell, Jenkins, and Lynch there is no middle ground. Yet, there do

exist hybrid games which feature all of the attributes listed above. Video games in the action-

adventure category, especially, contain all of the specifications of games that are said to be

masculine as well as those that are said to be feminine. For example, *Tomb Raider*, involves competition, control, and reactions. On occasion, tasks must be completed within a given time. The player controls most of Lara Croft's movements. Reactions are required when enemies or obstacles appear suddenly. Nevertheless, the story is central to the game and gives it additional meaning. Lara must solve dozens of puzzles involving collaboration, communication, and anticipation — both with on-screen characters and the player. Moreover, aesthetics and imagery improve with each new generation of games and hardware. Plots, too, become more sophisticated as designers are able to add more detail to the games. The *Syphon Filter* series relies heavily on collaboration and communication. The character in the field — either Lian Xing or Gabe Logan — is in almost constant two-way communication with an agent at the home base. The most difficult levels are those in which the character is deprived of this link, which reinforces the importance of the team. Additionally, several scenarios involve interacting with other characters and rescuing captured allies, both male and female. In these instances, the player must follow another character's lead in order to complete the mission. Jill Valentine of *Resident Evil* is but one member of a team that is trying to eliminate the zombies and other creatures of the living dead. *Perfect Dark* includes an option that allows players to play through the missions with a "simulant buddy." The simulant can be either computer-controlled or controlled by a friend on a split-screen. In addition to having all of the features experts such as Lynch and Cassell list as being common to games designed for both males and females, all of the games mentioned also employ a female protagonist with whom the player identifies. To paraphrase Carol Clover, what game designers, like film makers, "seem to know better than critics is that gender is less a wall than a permeable membrane" ("Slasher" 208). Hybrid games necessarily produce hybrid identifications.

The principal objection to the thesis that male game players identify with female protagonists, then, is one which dismisses the validity of video games from the outset. Such a view discounts players' identifications altogether on the basis that characters in a video game are not "real" people or even real characters because they are animated, or virtual. The simplest response to an objection on this account is to ask how real a character such as Tom Jones or Jane Eyre can be since they are not even animated. However, the strongest statement on behalf of players' identifications with video game characters come from the loudest group of protesters against the entire industry. Advocacy groups such as Children Now take games seriously enough to have broken down the portrayal of female characters into categories based on the amount of flesh exposed. They found that of the top ten games for the PlayStation, Dreamcast, and Nintendo 64, 54% contained female characters. Of the female characters, for example, 31% had exposed thighs (GameGal). The group is concerned that "The unhealthy messages that both girls and boys absorb from these new media impact the way they think" (GameGal). They do not indicate whether or not the games they studied include *Mia Hamm Soccer* or one of the basketball games; *i.e.*, games in which even the real players wear shorts — for freedom of movement — and have exposed thighs. Regardless, their point is that the games are real enough to influence players' thinking about gender. What Children Now fails to see are any positive effects of the video games.[22] David Lashmet takes the position one step further when he contends that Lara Croft is a "virtual body manipulated" (1) and that "male power and agency [are assured]" in the game (11). Lashmet's title, "Power and Agency in the Virtual Landscape: *Tomb Raider* and the Othered Woman," speaks of his willingness to consider Lara Croft as a "real" female. Indeed, he seems to consider her to be more than real since she can be manipulated, which means that players can

"compel her to walk, to run, to stop, to moan, to kill, and yet they abandon her, sacrifice her, or silence her agency at will" (10). The last part of the quotation refers to players' ability to end the game should they choose or need to leave. Lashmet concludes that "the beautiful girl can't escape the player forever. Game over: women lose; play again?" (12). In fact, players usually mark, or save, their progress so they can return to a particular spot and continue from it.

One last group of nay-sayers who believe video games provide a real influence is led by David Grossman, a former Lieutenant Colonel and Professor of Psychology in the United States Army. Grossman's main assertion is that "video games such as *Doom* and *Quake* help break down the natural inhibitions we have against killing" (Quittner 32). Grossman does allow that not everyone will become a killer after playing video games, "Just as not everybody who smokes gets cancer. But they will all get sickened" (qtd. in Quittner 32). What has not been considered, until now, is that there might be more benevolent forms of identification than those posited by Grossman, Lashmet, *et al.* If, as they suggest — without citing a single verifiable example — video games can induce people to overcome an innate aversion to killing other human beings, surely the barriers preventing cross-gender identifications can also be surmounted.[23] After all, gender categories are presumed to be constructed socially rather than being biologically based and fall into the same realm of ethics and morals.

Given the widespread appeal of video games, there must be reasons for this mass appeal other than sexually provocative female protagonists and other identifications than those that produce mass murderers. Otherwise, they would not have reached a position such that in the United States, in 1999, "the electronic games industry was the second-most popular form of home entertainment after TV. According to one survey, 9 out of 10 U.S. households with children have

rented or owned a video or computer game" (Quittner 30). When the gender of players is

surveyed, the numbers show the vast majority are male: "Industry analysts estimate that no more

than 30 per cent of all video game players are female. When you start counting 'serious' game

players, the numbers are even lower: Only 5 per cent of the readers of Game Pro magazine are

female. And only 8 per cent of the players who return product registration cards to Electronic

Arts, a leading game maker, are female" (DeBare). The economic statistics are even more

overwhelmingly skewed towards male users: "In 1999, video and PC games sales in the United

States totaled $6.1 billion, according to the Interactive Digital Software Association, an industry

group. This year [2000], the estimated percentage of female games console users was 30%. Last

year children spent an average of one and a half hours a day using computers or video games,

reports Kaiser Family Foundation research" (GameGal). The total value of software aimed at

girls, which includes other titles in addition to games, is $85 million (qtd. in Lynch). This figure

equals 1/72 of the entire video games market. The data is presented as it is because researchers

tend to study why girls do not play as opposed to why boys do. Boys, it is assumed, play because

they are male and the designers are male; the games are violent and men are violent. Yet more

than half of the top games feature female protagonists. As we have seen, female protagonists do

not conform to the rules of the gaze, as set out by Laura Mulvey. Rather, they are analogous to

the Final Girl of horror films. Carol Clover's model is especially apt with respect to Jill Valentine,

of *Resident Evil*, and Regina, of *Dino Crisis*, because these two games are, properly speaking,

from the action-horror category, which is indisputably based on the horror film genre. Other

games with female protagonists, such as *Tomb Raider* and *Perfect Dark*, follow more closely the

narrative pattern of the romance. The major innovation is that the hero is female, rather than male.

The character is, admittedly, fictive, but no more so than a character in a written work. Clover would agree: "The slasher is hardly the first genre in the literary and visual arts to invite identifications with the female; one cannot help wondering more generally whether the historical maintenance of images of women in fear and pain does not have more to do with male vicarism than is commonly acknowledged" (Chainsaws 62). This is especially true when the female protagonist otherwise matches the traditional Oedipal model found in other, more conventional, narrative forms. The female protagonist, then, provides a buffer against castration anxiety.

Mission Completed: Conclusions

Interactivity does play a part in the game's progression. However, whether the game is linear, *i.e.*, moving from one task to the next in succession, or non-linear, *i.e.*, allowing for various tasks to be completed at any time, the overall plot is still the exclusive domain of the author. The player is confined to operating within the limits and towards the goal laid out by the creator. Nevertheless, the interactivity of video games enhances the identifications between players and characters. In 1983, when Loftus and Loftus were writing, the most popular arcade games, such as *Pac-Man*, *Asteroids*, and *Defender*, were two-dimensional and had rudimentary graphics. The most popular computer games were text-only adventure games. However, their vision of the future of video games was prophetic. Based on their understanding of the attraction of video games and the possibilities of improved animation, Loftus and Loftus envisioned a game they called "Ground-level *Pac-Man*" which combined the features of adventure games with the action of arcade games. They invited us to

> Imagine a game in which you were *in* the Pac-Man maze, instead of looking down at it. You would be swept down the corridors [. . .] evading the monsters [. . .] From your point-of-view many things

> would have changed relative to the normal Pac-Man situation.
> Lacking the bird's-eye view of the maze usually enjoyed by Pac-
> Man players, you wouldn't know where the monsters were [. . .]
> Moreover, you would forget pretty quickly where *you* were in the
> maze. [. . .] Finally, *you* rather than your little surrogate face would
> be the one in danger of being obliterated at any moment. (82)

Even though a game like *Tomb Raider* was nearly a dozen years away, Loftus and Loftus were

certain that their vision would become a reality. Even more interesting is the fact that they used

the second-person rather than the third-person pronoun to refer to the character in the game.

Indeed, the italics in the passage above emphasize their point that the player would feel as if he or

she were actually the character in the game. Of this phenomenon they write

> When people play a video game they often feel as if they are
> interacting with another person. One person we talked to in
> Houston's Space Port Arcade told us that "this game is my friend
> because he never ignores me." If you listen to people playing video
> games, you will occasionally hear them talking out loud. The things
> they say tell you something about the remarkable, humanlike
> qualities they ascribe to the game. (86)

Rather than mention a character such as Pac-Man, they omitted the feature to further emphasize

the possible virtual reality in future games. Instead of a character in a maze, it appeared as though

the player him or herself is in the maze. Loftus and Loftus also foreshadow the cinematic aspects

of future video games by considering *Tron*, a movie about a video game designer who is trapped

inside a game, as the prototype.

The ideal video game outlined by Loftus and Loftus in 1983 contains all of the salient

features of *Tomb Raider*, which was released in 1996, when the technology was finally capable of

supporting this type of game. The only important aspect of the game that they did not foresee was

the addition of a female protagonist. They noted among their research subjects that the "Turtle"

icon, with which the language, Logo, is visually implemented, provided an identificatory process for users: "The Turtle is like a person in many ways. It is in a particular position and can face different directions. It's something with which the child can identify" (120). Loftus and Loftus cite social scientist G.H. Mead, who prophesied this power long ago when he said: "It is possible for inanimate objects, no less than for human organisms, to form parts of the generalized other for any given human individual, in so far as he [or she] responds to such objects socially or in a social manner" (qtd. in Loftus and Loftus 89). By "generalized other," the pair assert that Mead was referring to the social group as a whole to which a person belongs. Obviously, Mead believed that inanimate objects might belong to this "social group" (89). We should recall that "in psychoanalytic parlance 'objects' are people, aspects of people, or symbols of people" (Mothering 42). A virtual person, like Lara Croft, meets these criteria even by the standards of critics such as David Grossman who would have video games banned. McMaster University's Andrew Mactavish asserts that "participating in the technology is part of the pleasure" for video game players. Advances in technology were exactly what made Lara Croft possible in the first place. By playing the game, the player is participating in that technology. Identifying with the protagonist is the logical outcome of that participation.

As sociologist Robert Connell has shown, grown men who have accepted the dominant, or hegemonic, form of masculinity are capable of identifying with women given the right circumstances. Several of Connell's research subjects initially embraced hegemonic masculinity but eventually discarded this positioning in favour of one that rightly is called "profeminist." Rather than being fixed, "It appears, then, that an Oedipal separation of boy from mother can be renegotiated, and to some degree reversed, in later practice. This [is] not shallow change"

(Connell 124). Indeed, one of Connell's respondents went from an adolescent "solidarity with his mother to solidarity, even identification, with other women. The shape of [the man's] life-history strongly suggests that the reconfiguration of family relationships in his adolescence was the emotional basis of his dissident gender politics in early adulthood" (124-5). The common thread among Connell's accounts is emotional and often physical — that is, complete absence — distance from the father. This distance often results in an inability to identify with the father and other male role models. The boys more readily identify with females. The usual suspects, fathers who cannot express themselves emotionally and who do not have anything of value to teach their sons, are only part of the situation. As Connell indicates, the social, political, and economic milieu have an impact on the development of masculinities: "the gender order itself is contradictory, and practical experience can undermine patriarchal conventions. Five of the six [respondents in this category] described a close encounter with a woman's strength in the course of their personal formation" (125). More important is that "when they met feminism later, feminist images of women's strength could resonate with something in their own experience" (Connell 125). The key here, and it bears repeating, is that these men started with what might be called hegemonic masculinity, but their experiences opened them or prepared them for a change if and when they encountered feminism, even as adults. Among the qualities such men possess, the most notable is experience dealing with powerful women. Video games with female protagonists offer an environment in which males can negotiate just such a relationship.

Chapter 5

"Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid":

Discourses of Sexual Abuse and Alternative Masculinities

We are all potential Dominicis, not as murderers but as accused, deprived of language, or worse, rigged out in that of our accusers, humiliated and condemned by it. To rob a man of his language in the very name of language: this is the first step in all legal murders.

Roland Barthes, "Dominici, or the Triumph of Literature"

The minute they see me, fear me
I'm the epitome — a public enemy
Used, abused without clues
I refused to blow a fuse
They even had it on the news
Don't believe the hype.

Charles Ridenhour, Hank Shocklee, and Eric Sadler, "Don't Believe the Hype"

And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send *him* away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:
And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

Lev. 16: 21-22

Introduction

In the short article from which the first epigraph is taken, Barthes examines the case of a

farmer who was on trial, as Barthes puts it, for his lack of language as much as for his crime.

Barthes' words serve as a poignant reminder of what can happen to any of us should we be denied

language or have our language supplanted by that of an accuser. Such a condition exists for males

who have been sexually abused. Currently, there is not a discourse — medical, psychological,

political, literary, or otherwise — that encompasses the experience of this group of people. While

there is no discourse *for* males who have been sexually abused, there are several variations of (a) discourse *about* them. For example, current news stories based on boys abused by Catholic clergy in the United States focus on the alleged cover-up by the church and on the church's policies on celibacy and homosexuality. Sheldon Kennedy, a recently retired professional hockey player, is probably the best-known victim in North America, yet the primary topic of discussion — even in interviews with Kennedy — is his abuser and former junior coach, Graham James. This tendency has become more pronounced now that James has resumed coaching and scouting young boys in Spain. Cases of female teachers having sex with their students have made notorious celebrities out of the women such as Mary Joe Letourneau and Amy Gehring. The latter teacher has been offered several thousand dollars by British tabloids to tell of her relationships with students while she was a teacher in England.

The stories that are told have little to do with the individual in question — call him a "victim," a "survivor," *etc.* — and everything to do with the rest of us; that is, they serve to dissociate us from those who have been abused. These dissociative discourses most resemble the discourse of death, the elegy: they seek to explain a subject unfathomable for those who have not experienced it; they speak in terms of the loss and the grief of those close to the victim; they seek to console those who were not lost.[1] The resultant state is one that echoes the words of rapper Chuck D in the second epigraph. The instant a man reveals that he has suffered sexual abuse he becomes a public enemy. The myths and stereotypes surrounding the sexual abuse of males force men who have been victimized to conceal their situation by maintaining their silence lest they be branded by society not for something they have done, but for something that was done to them. In each instance the victim is trapped between competing discourses and has no language of his own.

In many ways, such men become contemporary versions of scapegoats; a narrative that is imposed on them. However, the silence, and the accompanying lack of "visibility," offers the possibility for an alternative masculinity which recognizes the bodily sense of masculinity and which — because it is unseen — has a potentially powerful ability to infiltrate and subvert hegemonic masculinity than other protest masculinities.

This chapter was especially difficult to write not so much because of the subject matter — the stories we tell and do not tell about males who have been sexually abused — but because of the apparent contradictions inherent in the subject matter. This is my most hopeful chapter, yet it treats the bleakest material. I take the premise that the men in this position do not have a language, or discourse, with which to tell their stories — in fact, they may be better off without one — but there are plenty of stories *about* these men. Although it may not be apparent initially, this chapter relates to the previous ones in several key ways. As in all chapters, but especially the first chapters, there is a concern for the male body and its subjection to a (panoptic) gaze although this may not be intuitively obvious. The reproduction of masculinities and the idea that certain narratives are imposed on men — themes raised in the second chapter — also loom here. Certainly, the problem of the beaten male body comes into question in this chapter, as it does in the third. Also arising in the third chapter and of primary focus in the fourth is the idea of alternative, even feminist-aligned, masculinities. Although everything is supposed to "come to a head" in the final chapter, it also suggests the complexity involved in finding a mode of critical analysis for the topic.

The concept of male victimization gets little critical attention. When it does, the result is often in the form of a diatribe against feminism. This was the pattern Susan Faludi expected when

she began work on <u>Stiffed</u>. Thus, she was surprised when she encountered male victims. Her

experience left her unprepared to account for these men and their reactions:

> Like many women, I was drawn to feminism out of a desire to
> challenge the silence of my sex. It has come to seem to me that,
> under all the rantings of men seeking to drown out the female
> voice, theirs is as resounding a silence. Why haven't men responded
> to the series of betrayals in their own lives — to the failures of their
> fathers to make good on their promises — with something coequal
> to feminism? (40)

As has been discussed in previous chapters, some of Faludi's insights arise thanks to her own

critical bias: she only sees feminism as having positive attributes and effects. This is why the

silence she finds beneath the rantings she perceives puzzles her so. The largest difference occurs

because feminism — as Faludi sees it — has a clear cut enemy: "patriarchy" or "patriarchal"

power structures. She cites Vietnam as perhaps the biggest of the betrayals American men face, in

part because there was no clear enemy. In the case of men, there is no clear enemy except,

perhaps the apparent enmity with feminism, but it was feminism that declared this enmity years

ago. This is not to blame feminism, but to question its frequent oppositionality with masculinities,

and its implication that since (all) men benefit because of patriarchal domination they are therefore

guilty of colluding with (the) patriarchy.

Male victimization requires a more nuanced description of the state of affairs, not to

criticize feminism, but because the existing binary opposition is inherently reductive. Although she

works largely within such a framework, Faludi recognizes the need for further investigation:

> To understand why men are so reluctant to break with the codes of
> manhood sanctioned in their childhood, perhaps we need to
> understand how strong the social constraints on them are. It's not
> just women who are bombarded by cultural messages about
> appropriate gender behavior. [. . .] The level of mockery, suspicion,

and animosity directed at men who step out of line is profound, and
men respond profoundly — with acquiescence. (41)

Faludi does not, however, locate the sources or reasons for the mockery, suspicion, and animosity

that she finds. In terms of the effects on and reactions of "betrayed" men, she focuses on several

American and/or feminist favourites: Vietnam veterans, gay men, pornographic actors, the

Promise Keepers and drag queens. (In other words, those directly opposed to either feminism or

patriarchy.) There is no safe middle ground for the men who would occupy it.[2] Obviously, though,

there is a "no man's land" between the entrenched and competing discourses, yet no one has

mapped this interstitial space.

"It wasn't me": Regimes of Truth

This chapter examines the "social constraints" and "cultural messages" surrounding the

issue of males who have been sexually abused. Said another way, I consider the stories we tell as

well as the ones we do not and the reasons this is the case. In <u>Erotic Innocence: The Culture of</u>

<u>Child Molesting</u>, James Kincaid places his emphasis on the ways in which our culture eroticizes

children and then denies that it does so by shifting the blame onto the children. Although he does

not specifically consider male children, Kincaid provides a useful framework for considering tales

of abuse. Rather than a series of individual stories about "victims" or "survivors," Kincaid finds

the same kernel story being repeated. These stories, he says,

> are structured as much by deep cultural needs as by raw experience,
> that we draw our plots largely from a cultural storehouse made
> available to all of us in pretty much the same form. I am not talking
> about Jungian archetypes; I mean that our preoccupations and the
> stories that give them power are not necessarily individualized, and,
> more important, that the relentless individualizing we engage in
> draws our attention away from cultural analysis. A cultural analysis
> is [. . .] a means of getting closer to knowing the ways our heritage

may be driving us into corners. (242)

In other words, the tendency to stress the uniqueness of each particular case tends to obscure the sameness that persists. Moreover, it prevents an analysis on these same grounds. By focusing on the conventions I then run the risk of ignoring the individual.

This line of critique is leveled frequently at Northrop Frye and his disciples, and not without good reason. Nevertheless, what Frye says in his own defense applies here: "When we come to [the] mythical core of a common, even hackneyed situation, we come back to the problem [. . .] of having to distinguish what the individual story is saying from what the convention the story belongs to is saying through the story" (Scripture 86). Frye's focus, like that of his New Critical predecessors, is on what the textual form tells us and little else. Kincaid asserts that this is simply not enough:

> We like to think that there are innumerable sides to any story. Not to this one. It has an outside, where those of us who tell it can stand, and an inside, occupied by those about whom it is told, the actors caught in the story. Those inside are enmeshed in a script with nothing but bad parts, a contest-story in which everyone loses, the accused and the accusers. There are two main roles, monster and victim (30)

In fact these roles tend to become interchangeable. The monster already has been a victim in the prevailing myths — how else would he have learned this behaviour — and therefore the victim is on his way to becoming an abuser. There are also several variations therein – the coach, the priest, the teacher – but whether the account is fictional, documentary or "docu-drama," the message remains unchanged. One of Kincaid's more interesting approaches is to deny that child sexual abuse actually exists, an approach for which I have neither the courage nor the academic pedigree. The reason he does so is to concentrate instead on the narrative and on the involvement of those

outside the monster-victim binary. He contends that "we are all implicated in a contemporary

discourse on children, sexuality, and assault so mighty that it comes close to defining our moment.

[. . .] We are not roped to paranoid conceptions of Power or to historical determinism; we need

only tell different stories. We can do that" (6). Although he does not explicitly state it, Kincaid's

use of the terms of "discourse" and "Power" refer to the concepts Michel Foucault develops

throughout his body of work. The importance of these concepts lies in the ability to go beyond

what the convention tells us to see what the convention does not tell us, or hides from us.

According to Michel Foucault, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything

but because it comes from everywhere" (History 93). This statement suggests that all groups,

whether they are the dominant or the dominated, are constantly engaged in the deployment of

power.[3] As Stuart Hall reminds us, we "tend to think of power as always radiating in a single

direction — from top to bottom — and coming from a specific source — the sovereign, the state,

the ruling class and so on. For Foucault, however, power does not 'function in the form of a

chain' — it circulates. It is never monopolized by one centre" ("Representation" 49). Foucault

believes that the operation of power is mediated by the relationship between discourse and

subjectivity. In the words of Catherine Belsey, discourse can be defined as "a domain of language-

use, a particular way of talking (and writing and thinking). A discourse involves certain shared

assumptions which appear in the formulations that characterise it" (5). For Foucault, power and

knowledge are joined together in discourse. He maintains that

> we must conceive [of] discourse as a series of discontinuous
> segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To
> be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided
> between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the
> dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of

> discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies.
> (History 100)

Thus, Shelagh Young finds oppressive power even within feminism. This paradoxical relationship

exists, she contends, partly because of the "arrogance that led white, Western feminists to image

that they could speak for *all* women" (186). Yet, even those excluded by white, Western feminists

still do not speak for the men for whom I am trying to create a space. It is for this reason that I

speak of competing discourses. Discourses about them are not excluded; rather, they are excluded

from discourse.

An important refinement of discourse analysis, as opposed to Frye's archetypal approach,

is its attention to the era under investigation. While the story of the scapegoat is one of the oldest

we tell, stories of the sexual abuse of males are a development of roughly the last twenty-five

years. Stuart Hall clarifies Foucault's sense of discourse in terms of its historical scope. He

explains that Foucault meant

> a group of statements which provide a language for talking about
> — a way of representing the knowledge about — a particular topic
> at a particular historical moment. [. . .] Discourse is about the
> production of knowledge through language. But [. . .] since all
> social practices entail *meaning*, and meanings shape and influence
> what we do — our conduct — all practices have a discursive
> aspect" ("West" 291).

According to Foucault, what we think we "know" about a particular topic in a particular period

will have an effect on how we regulate and control that topic. This led Foucault to speak "not of

the 'Truth' of knowledge in the absolute sense — a Truth which remained so, whatever the

period, setting, context — but of a discursive formation sustaining a *regime of truth*"

("Representation" 49) The "regime of truth" refers to the types of discourse a society accepts

(and authorizes to function) as true. Hall offers the example of the prevalent myth that single-parenting automatically leads to delinquency. Ultimately, single parents and their children will be punished by society — through suspicion and discrimination — based on this regime of truth, whether it is proven or not. Hall provides two important provisos for analyzing what he calls "discursive formations," or the set of discursive elements referring to a particular object ("Representation" 44). First, it is important "to note that the concept of *discourse* in this usage is not purely a 'linguistic' concept. It is about language *and* practice" ("Representation" 44). Second, Hall admonishes us that "since we can only have a knowledge of things if they have a meaning, it is discourse — not the things-in-themselves — which produces knowledge" ("Representation" 45). In this way, the means through which certain discourses are privileged and reproduced, as well as the reasons this occurs, become the topics of critical analysis.

In addition, the ways in which other discourses are excluded or subordinated can be exposed. Thus, Paul Bové concludes that we can see what the contemporary critical sense of discourse allows us to describe: "the 'self-evident' and 'commonsensical' are what have the privilege of unnoticed power, and this power produces instruments of control" (54). This is not to say that control is an active process of enforcement. Simply put, it is more subtle and insidious than that. In Bové's words,

> This matter of control is rather difficult; it does not mean [. . .]
> control by repression or exclusion. It means, rather, control by the
> power of positive production: that is, a kind of power that
> generates certain kinds of questions, placed within systems that
> legitimate, support, and answer those questions; a kind of power
> that, in the process, includes within its systems all those it produces
> as agents capable of acting within them. (54)

That is to say, dominant discourses dictate the questions by which they are then scrutinized. Thus

"to understand [. . .] 'discourse,' one must try to position it, to see it in its own terms, to describe

its place within a network of other analytic and theoretical concepts which are 'weapons' for

grappling with contemporary society and its history" (Bové 54). This is achieved through the

"commonsensical" or the "self-evident" because these terms constitute the "regimes of truth" at a

given historical moment. As Stuart Hall puts it:

> It is precisely its "spontaneous" quality, its transparency, its
> "naturalness," its refusal to be made to examine the premises on
> which it is founded, its resistance to change or to correction, its
> effect of instant recognition, and the closed circle in which it moves
> which makes common sense, at one and the same time,
> "spontaneous," ideological, and *unconscious*. You cannot learn,
> through common sense, *how things are*: you can only discover
> *where they fit* into the existing scheme of things. In this way, its
> very taken-for-grantedness is what establishes it as a medium in
> which its own premises and presuppositions are being rendered
> *invisible* by its apparent transparency. (qtd. in Hebdige 362-3)

Indeed, there are several "common sensical truths" about males who have been sexually abused;

they will be discussed later in this chapter. The "truths" lead to some of the "common sense"

stories Kincaid describes. Somehow we need to break the cycle of the stories. We also need to

find out why these tales apply to men and why men are different in this regard. I do not entirely

share Kincaid's belief that by "formulating the image of the alluring child as bleached, bourgeois,

and androgynous, these stories mystify material reality and render nearly invisible — certainly

irrelevant — questions we might raise about race, class, and even gender. Such categories are

scrubbed away in the idealized child, laved and snuggled into a Grade-A homogeneity" (20).

There is a significant difference in terms of gender insofar as male children (are supposed to)

become men. The stories we tell about men (who have been sexually abused) are different than

those we tell about children.

"You can't understand because you're a man": Why males are different

Dr. Fred Matthews, of Toronto Youth Services admits, "We refuse to acknowledge males

can be victims because we think of males as perpetrators but it's an everyday event" (qtd. in

Gadd). Taking this view to the extreme, Rus Ervin Funk's "profeminist perspective" on the sexual

abuse of males — including the assault Funk himself endured — is that it is actually part of men's

oppression of women (225). Kim Madden, a colleague of Matthews, in addressing the social

prejudice surrounding this issue laments, "Twenty years ago if a woman was raped, she asked for

it; that *was* mainstream thinking [. . .] but for men it still is the mainstream thinking" (qtd. in

Gadd). However, some recent findings indicate that males are victims *as frequently* as females.

On his website, Jim Hopper of the University of Massachusetts cites several such studies. In one

conducted in Calgary, "Bagley and his colleagues found a prevalence rate of 15.5%, and that

6.9% of their subjects had experienced *multiple* episodes of sexual abuse. Interestingly, this rate

for multiple episodes was *identical* to that found for women in a previous study that employed the

same methodology" (Hopper 9).[4] Moreover, as recently as 1995, the American Medical

Association referred to males who have been sexually abused as "special populations" because

"Research about and treatment [. . .] for males [in this regard] exist but continue to be rare"

(AMA). How can men who have been sexually abused (be expected to) elucidate their

experiences when the medical community barely acknowledges their existence?

The idea of males as the victims of sexual abuse runs into several cultural prohibitions. In

terms of masculinity, two of these are of paramount significance: 1) men having sex with men; 2)

men being overpowered, or victimized. Laura Mulvey's theory of the male-dominated cinematic

gaze, for example, gains much of its force from the simple assumption that men are full of lust for

women and want to dominate them. Mulvey is hardly alone. Based on his reading of Lacan,

Antony Easthope suggests that the father is a (seemingly) necessary player to break up the

mother-child dyad of the traditional Oedipal dynamic. However, he admits that the third term

need not always be a "male symbol": "If a new unisex or ungendered definition of the third term

came into existence it would save men from the impossible burden of trying to perpetuate the

phallic system" (171). This would break up what Easthope calls the "myth of masculinity," which

is based on the assumed universality of heterosexual desire (6). Easthope further clarifies the

situation: "The *Masculine Myth* argues that at present masculinity is defined in the way an

individual deals with his femininity and his desire for other men. [. . .] From the versions of

masculinity examined here it seems that men are really more concerned about other men than

about women at all" (6). Tim Beneke sees homophobia in the very same terms. In his view, "the

fear of being raped by other men is an objective danger implicit in the very existence of gays [. . .]

Arguably (sic) we should distinguish homophobia in straight men that focuses on the fear of being

raped by strong macho gays [. . .] Straight men realize how hostile their own lust for women can

be and fear being on the receiving end of that lust from men" (146). I think this is an

oversimplification in theoretical terms, but in terms that the average (homophobic) male could

understand, it is probably a reasonable generalization. Regarding what he calls the Darwinist,

Freudian approach to gender and sexuality, Jeffrey Weeks explains that "sexuality was essentially

male, with the woman just a hallowed receptacle [. . .] A more respectable view was that sexuality

represented the 'instinct of reproduction' [. . .] But it scarcely explained sexual variations, except

as a failure of heterosexuality" (83). Weeks primarily means homosexuals when he refers to

"variations" in masculinity Indeed, this is the most prevalent topic for considerations of

alternative masculinities. Whether they are defined as having been feminized or homoeroticized —

as "receptacles" in either case — males who have been sexually abused are not simply

heterosexual failures. The dominant culture believes that they have failed at masculinity, entirely.

The biggest reason that such men are masculine failures is that our culture (persistently)

conflates sexual identity and gender. As Weeks relates:

> Sexuality and sexual performance are among the most vital
> ingredients of male heterosexual identity. This message was always
> implicit in the writings of the sexologists who took the aggressive
> male drive as the very model of what sexuality was [. . .]
> [Although] dominant in the sexual texts [. . .] male heterosexuality
> has been little explored as a historical and social phenomenon. The
> odd result is that in our culture male sex and gender identities are,
> and are expected to be, welded together. (190)

This is the common sense approach. Yet how do we account for individuals who have a sexual

identity imposed on them? Robert Connell suggests a more nuanced approach which

acknowledges the variations within the concept of masculinity. Connell stresses that a "focus on

the gender relations among men is necessary to keep the analysis dynamic, to prevent the

acknowledgment of multiple masculinities collapsing into a character typology" (76). Although he

does not specifically focus on abused or victimized men, Connell does allow for significant

variations to account for groups that are less or more advantaged. Connell employs the concept of

hegemonic masculinity rather than the loose term "patriarchy" because

> hegemonic masculinity embodies a 'currently accepted' strategy.
> When conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for
> the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups
> may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony. The
> dominance of *any* group of men may be challenged by women.
> Hegemony, then, is a historically mobile relation. (77)

More important, Connell's approach is neither ahistorical nor universal. That is to say that it

allows for change. Thus, hegemonic masculinity

> is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is,
> rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a
> given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable.
> [. . .] Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of
> gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to
> the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is
> taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the
> subordination of women. (Connell 76-7)

Although he allows that the dominant position is a matter of context, Connell tends to see the

gender order in terms of male and female, with women always in the subordinate role. This means

that he has difficulty accounting for subordinated men. In this regard, Connell admits, "Though

the term is not ideal, I cannot improve on 'marginalization' to refer to the relations between the

masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups. Marginalization is always

relative to the *authorization* of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group. [. . .] The

relation of marginalization and authorization may also exist between subordinated masculinities"

(80-1). This is not to find fault with Connell but to show the lack of critical attention paid to

"marginalized" masculinities. Indeed, the men for whom this term applies are at the very bottom

of the gender hierarchy because they are considered traitors, failures, or both. This is ultimately

why I disagree with Kincaid and instead suggest that males who have been sexually abused do

represent "special populations" rather than a series of individual cases.

"I don't wanna say": Tales we don't tell and others we do

Further complicating the issue is the so-called "masculist" or "Iron John" movement. The

Catch-22 position of men who have been sexually abused is only exacerbated by the ongoing

struggle between feminists and the self-proclaimed "masculists." It has been acknowledged that

within feminism there exists a culture which is referred to as "victim feminism."[5] In The Myth of Male Power, Warren Farrell claims to be trying to correct this opposition. In so doing he reduces the victimization of men to nothing more than a rhetorical ploy to counter the male oppressor-female victim paradigm. Farrell's is a rhetoric of absolution and denial; the goals of all forms of dissociative discourse. In the section supposedly dealing with sexual abuse, Farrell's commentary on the topic amounts to mentioning two statistics taken not from a clinical study, but from a newspaper article. Farrell then devotes the rest of the article to writing a hypothetical speech for former President Clinton. This speech responds to a lecture in which the first President Bush declared that the "war against women must stop" (qtd. in Farrell 219). In his proposed speech, Farrell employs football as the paradigm of the exploitation of males. If Farrell had his way, President Clinton would have proclaimed that

> Football scholarships are mutilation scholarships. [. . .] We feel it is immoral to teach our sons to increase their sex appeal by increasing their risk of concussions. Would we encourage girls to increase their sex appeal by using their bodies — by having sex on the fifty-yard line with boys from another school? Which of us would yell, "First of ten, do it again?" Oh, my [. . .] Our men will become gentler when cheerleaders are shouting, "First and ten, be *gentle* again." (219-20)

The intent of this ridiculous logical *and* rhetorical leap is clear: although he feigns opening a dialogue by suggesting that society would not accept the trivialization of the abuse of females and should not do so for males, Farrell actually wants to preclude the existence of such a dialogue.

By countering the abuse of females with the abuse of males in such a purposely hackneyed analogy — the game of football versus the *crime* of rape — Farrell hopes to deny the voice of women by denying victimization as a topic of discussion. Basically, Farrell's goal is to achieve a

rhetorical "so there" as in "Men can be victims too; so there!" The result is that the victimization

of men will also be denied, thereby enforcing what some would call the "patriarchal" insistence

that men must continue to deny having been sexually assaulted. Another way in which

comparative victimization can be used to downplay its reality is to protest that there is a supposed

"double standard" regarding abused men in our culture as compared to abused women. For

example, the right-wing tabloid newspaper, the Toronto Sun, ran a headline proclaiming "Love

Hurts Just Ask Him!" on its front page when Barrington Wynn, of Pickering, had his testicles

exposed because his spouse dug her long finger nails into his scrotum and ripped it open during a

domestic squabble. The next day, Linda Williamson's op-ed piece decried the double standard

which makes similar jokes about women "politically incorrect." Strangely enough, it appeared

opposite Andy Donato's editorial cartoon on the subject which features dozens of men holding

both hands over their groins as an onlooker observes, "these Pickering guys sure walk funny!"

Williamson expresses outrage not because Bill Carroll of equally conservative CFRB radio tried

to gauge the "double standard" by airing a (phony) story about a woman whose genitals were

ripped. Rather, Williamson was upset that Carroll's ploy received "negative feedback." I guess

Carroll and Williamson are unaware or forgot that Hustler ran pictures — unauthorized and

obtained through dubious means — of a topless, post-mastectomy Jackie Onassis.

James Kincaid classifies responses similar to Carroll's or Williamson's as "backlash"

responses. Backlash is really a variation of dissociative discourse, or cultural denial, which claims

that victims use abuse to excuse their behaviour and that false or excessive complaints are

rampant. Interestingly, Kincaid cites "*the evasion of responsibility*" and "*Feminist fanatics*" as

two typical backlash responses to charges of molestation (265). Radical feminist authors such as

Susan Brownmiller and Andrea Dworkin, quite honestly, complicate the problem with their often

bombastic rhetoric. Their overstatements and oversimplifications provoke backlash responses. For

example, in Pornography: Men Possessing Women Dworkin asserts that

> Men develop a strong loyalty to violence. Men must come to terms
> with violence because it is the prime component of male identity.
> [. . .] The experiencing of sexual aggression is initiatory; the boy
> can cross over, soak up the aggression of the aggressor and use it
> against others. Boys who have had this experience still grow into
> men who defend the sexual privileges of adult men, no matter what
> abuses those privileges entail. These males protect themselves
> against being victimized, and even the memory of victimization, by
> turning into victimizers.[6]

No matter how much Dworkin and her colleagues characterize men as having an inherent

propensity to violence, they complicate the situation only in a small way; they are plot

development, not plot. Ultimately, Kincaid notices that backlashers and anti-backlashers are

reciting the same refrain. As he puts it: "I haven't found many who have chosen to pursue the

possibility that both the traditionalist and the backlash scripts are located within a master script

and are functioning to serve a slightly hidden agenda" (274). The agenda is to manipulate the

problem so that it serves the agenda of either side in their competition with each other. The

discourses are circular, but the centre remains obscured.

As I mentioned in the first chapter, bodily performance is still the primary signifier of

masculinity. However, Robert Connell cautions that performance means that "gender is vulnerable

when the performance cannot be sustained — for instance, as a result of physical disability" (54).

Connell does not examine sexual or other forms of abuse. Instead, he cites severe bodily injuries

as examples of discontinuities in this process. He also refers to a study by Thomas Gershick and

Adam Miller in which they examined the responses of American men who are trying to deal with

just such a situation. Connell summarizes:

> They distinguish three responses. One is to redouble efforts to meet
> the hegemonic standards, overcoming the physical difficulty — for
> instance, finding proof of continued sexual potency by trying to
> exhaust one's partner. Another is to reformulate the definition of
> masculinity, bringing it closer to what is now possible, though still
> pursuing masculine themes such as independence and control. The
> third is to reject hegemonic masculinity as a package — criticizing
> the physical stereotypes, and moving towards a counter-sexist
> politics. (55)

Unfortunately, these are not necessarily avenues available to males who have been sexually

abused. Combining the failure to sustain bodily performance with the tendency to conflate sexual

identity and gender increases the impact of the original abuse. Herein lies one of the greatest

prohibitions on speaking out.

Even well-meaning individuals offer a bleak account that offers no escape. In a supposedly

sympathetic piece Meredith Goad, in an article in the Portland (ME) Press Herald, laments that

boys "who are sexually abused during adolescence can experience long-lasting psychological

damage that leads to a variety of problems in adulthood." Although she cites "experts" – in fact

that becomes part of her title – Goad does not interview anyone who has been abused.

Contradictory accounts appear and show no sign of recognizing that they are so. The Sudbury

Star's Roger Dennie tells of former professional hockey player Sheldon Kennedy embarking on

his skate across Canada, "a voyage of self-discovery, retribution and closure [. . .] triumph over

the demons that haunt and terrorize all victims of childhood sexual abuse." Dennie speaks of

"closure," a Gestalt concept that has lost all meaning through habitual overuse, "while invoking

images of demons" and "haunting." He offers a simple tale with which he and his readers are

familiar. "Retribution," a popular theme in sports broadcasting, is thrown in for good measure. To

create a happy ending where there clearly is not one, Dennie brings up Martin Kruze, the first of

Gordon Stuckless' victims to come forward in "the story of abuse at [Maple Leaf] Gardens

[which] shocked as much as Kennedy's did." The shock was to hockey, not to Kruze and not to

Kennedy. Dennie wants the Toronto Maple Leafs to sign Kennedy because "Martin Kruze would

approve. And so would the other unfortunate Stuckless victims." Martin Kruze is dead. No one

asked for his opinion.

Sadly, it is the norm for others to speak for, or more correctly about, victims of sexual

abuse. Fear of what others will say about the victim has a significant impact on whether or not he

comes forward. William Nack and Don Yaeger write in Sports Illustrated that children are afraid

of their parents' reactions; that they will be violent or embarrassed. One victim they quote says

that he withheld his abuse because "I was embarrassed about it. I'm still embarrassed about it"

(48). A more common fear is taunts of "faggot" from other kids (53). This fear is echoed by Joe

Fleuette III, who was abused by his parish priest: "Believe it or not, [my biggest fear] was turning

gay" (qtd. in Olivo). One of Meredith Goad's experts, Ottawa social worker Jody Brinser, asserts

"if a boy is sexually abused by another male, it brings up the whole issue of 'Does that mean I'm

gay? What does that mean about me that I was not able to fend that person off? Am I

weak?'"(qtd. in Goad). An implied question is "Did I really want it?" As if to reassure us, Brinser

adds, "I think our societal homophobia brings up that issue. There's no evidence to suggest that a

boy being sexually abused by another male makes them gay" (qtd. in Goad). How bad can it be,

then? Brinser makes two interesting grammatical slips. First she changes "man" to "that person"

when speaking of fending off attackers. Second, she replaces "a boy" with "them" rather than

"he." But "them" applies here too, because abusers are not gay, either. Regardless, Brinser cannot

get her agreement straight, for elsewhere she says that sexual abuse is "a horribly sensitive issue

for boys, particularly because boys are taught not to talk about their feelings and to feel

vulnerable" (qtd. in Goad). The parallel structure here is incomplete. She means (I think) that

boys are taught not to feel vulnerable, but she actually says the opposite. This is supposed to be a

suitable explanation for a professional in the field, a professional trained to help.

Brinser's slip is not entirely surprising. Antony Easthope finds that "a main feature of the

masculine myth [is] a social order relying on the endless negotiation of conflict" (22). Therefore,

the masculine ego is "generally imaged as a military fortification" (37). Easthope then compares it

to the Panopticon since both are set up as defences against enemies within and without the

system.[7] Thus, he concludes that "the purpose of the masculine ego [. . .] is to *master* every

threat" (39-40). The masculine fortress is not impenetrable, for as Easthope reminds us, "Nature it

seems, has betrayed the perimeter of the male body. It has opened up there a number of gaps and

orifices, though mercifully fewer than for the female body. What holes remain must be firmly

shut" (52). However, Easthope fails to follow his own premise. Masculinity becomes less about

mastering and more about not being mastered. It would be too easy, though, to suggest that

homophobia accounts for all of the suppression. Robert Connell places homosexuals at the very

bottom of the gender order. This, he says, occurs because homosexuality, "in patriarchal ideology,

is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity [. . .] Hence,

from the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, gayness is easily assimilated to femininity"

(Connell 78). However, in the context and viewpoint of hegemonic masculinity, women are

supposed to be dominated; men are not. While homosexuality is often an initial topic of exclusion,

it is not the only one.

The issue is the perceived need for men to achieve total mastery over mind and body, but there are constant reminders that some things are beyond our control. This fact applies directly to victims, Goad's "experts say, because their bodies may have physiologically responded to the abuse. Sometimes the abuser uses that against them, implying that they wanted or enjoyed the contact." Barbara Rich, a professor of social work at the University of Maine adds "what kids need to understand is that bodies respond naturally. That does not mean that they were willing participants, and it doesn't mean that they enjoyed it" (qtd in Goad). How are kids supposed to understand the fine distinction between bodily and mental response especially since adults still refuse to understand. Kathleen Megan, of the Hartford Courant, puts it simply: "Often children will keep abuse secret because they don't have the language for it." True, but "keeping" a secret is the active suppression, not an inability or shortcoming. It is a conscious choice. In other words, adults are no more able to talk about the issue; whether they are newspaper reporters — people paid to put events and contexts into words — or social workers — children's aid professionals — does not seem to matter.

The made-for-TV drama, The Sheldon Kennedy Story, tries to depict this famous case in just two hours. Therefore, only the important details are included. In the film, the abusive coach, Graham James repeatedly uses the cultural prohibition on homosexuality as a threat to maintain Kennedy's continued silence. The coach taunts, "You're afraid. You're afraid people would think you're gay."[8] Finally, the homophobic locker-room joking ultimately becomes too much for Kennedy to bear and results in his revelation. As Michael Scarce explains,

> the reality of male rape invokes a recognition of self-vulnerability
> and homophobia. All too often these social discomforts are allayed
> with humour that attempts to dismiss or deny the existence of

> sexual violence against men. The result, however, is a further shaming of men who have been raped. Survivors who are already stigmatized and silenced are further humiliated in becoming the punchline to the ever-popular 'don't drop the soap' jokes (118-9).

Telling and enduring such jokes seems to be an inherent part of hegemonic masculinity, or at least the appearance of it. When considering homophobic humour, Connell again focuses on feminization. He writes: "Popular homophobia, so far as I have been able to trace its themes, says nothing about God but is graphic about sex. [. . .] Homophobic humour among straight men still revolves around the limp wrist, the mincing walk, and innuendo about castration" (219). There is more to it than that. "Father Nelson" jokes attack Catholicism and Irish priests more than feminine men.[9] In Bull Durham and Slapshot, which are detailed in the second chapter, "cocksucker" is the ultimate insult. It gets Crash Davis ejected automatically. Tim "Dr. Hook" McCraken tells Chiefs' coach Reg Dunlop "Dunlop, you suck cock." Dunlop responds: "All I can get." In hockey, "cocksucker" is the challenge that you cannot refuse; its utterance guarantees a fight.

In the movie, and likely in "real life," Sheldon Kennedy goes out and drinks excessively, womanizes, and plays hockey, in the NHL no less. All of this should connote his advanced standing in the realm of hegemonic masculinity. However, the film shows that he even rejects his wife at several points in his efforts to pursue his own independence and gain control — the skate across Canada is a classic example. Finally, he rejects everything outright, going so far as to say that he hates his own skin. This moment is dramatized and features Kennedy slicing his skin with a razor blade. It serves a dual purpose in the narrative arrangement of the film. First, his skin has felt both the pain and the pleasure of sex. Indeed, the two are conflated. Second, the skin is that

of his tormenter. He looks in the mirror and sees the body of a professional athlete — an ideal

form of hegemonic masculinity in North American culture. In the economy, his body has been

both his asset and his liability. As a hockey player, his body — and his ability to master it and use

it to advantage — was the ticket first out of an abusive home, and later away from Graham

James.[10] However, his body was also the ticket to James' abuse because his ability to play hockey

brought him, at the age of fourteen, from the family farm, in rural Saskatchewan, to the city of

Swift Current to play Major Junior A hockey under James' coaching.[11] The abuse occurred while

Kennedy was one of James' best players. Unfortunately, there is no set of easy answers, as some

would offer, for the injury is complete: body, mind, and sexuality. The third term binds the first

two together. It solves the paradox of the asset being a liability. It is an inescapable part of being a

man. Regardless of how big and strong we become, all men were boys and therefore were

vulnerable. Yet we do not see the boy. We see the man who could not prevent the abuse.

Forgive me your sins: the Scapegoat

In terms of masculinity, sexual abuse presents at least two significant threats: a permanent

set of injuries and homosexuality. Yet these dangers come primarily from within rather than from

without. For example, Easthope explains that homophobia is the result of projection: "Projection

names the effect by which something that threatens an individual from within can be imagined as a

threat from the outside" (105). Easthope describes homophobia with a psychological term, but the

idea of the scapegoat is nevertheless the same. Something, or someone, has been chosen to bear

the sins of others. Whether explicitly or implicitly, males who have been sexually abused are (held)

to blame for their own victimization. They are never forgiven. Instead of actually dealing with the

situation, we impose a familiar narrative on those involved. The intent, Kincaid feels, is harmless

at first:

> Of course we are all concerned with the way our children are being
> abused. I think, though, that this concern for our children has to do
> battle with the way we tell our concern, the way we give form to
> the popular story of "the child." Our storytelling has become so
> formulaic and so "natural" that it channels far too much of our
> concern into self-gratification. In the case of child molesting and its
> culturally approved narratives, we have stories that allow us a hard-
> core righteous prurience; it's a scapegoating exercise we have come
> to depend on. (7)

I think there are two subsets of dissociative discourse in the scapegoat story: "It couldn't *be* me"

and "It couldn't *happen to* me." The effect is a dissociation which serves to stigmatize the victim.

Kincaid seeks to "rob these stories of at least some of their power by exposing them and their

functions" (7). In so doing, he does not acknowledge that child abuse actually exists; he

acknowledges only that stories of child abuse exist; in their eroticization of children rests his

focus. He asks three simple questions: "What accounts for the popularity of these feverish tales

about the sexuality of children and assaults on it? What is it that so magnetizes us? Why do we tell

the stories we tell and not others?" (8-9). Instead of these questions, Kincaid asserts that within

the discourse of contemporary North American the only questions asked are those that absolve

the rest of us. Yet this should not be a surprise. The questions are not properly aimed because

they are not pointed at the victims. My focus in this chapter is really on the third of Kincaid's

questions, "why do we tell the stories we tell and not others?" More specifically, I am interested

in these stories as they pertain to male victims.

In fact, it is typical to ignore or blame male victims. A pamphlet given to teachers in

Ontario's Peel Region makes no mention of male victims at all. The Sports Illustrated *exposé* on

the subject shares the same mind. The article is entitled "Every Parent's Nightmare" (40). Sports

Illustrated for Kids has no analogous story. The real purpose in the Sports Illustrated article is to assuage parental guilt: "Parents today are so busy, they're allowing coaches to take over the afterschool hours" (43). Parents have less time to give to their children but the children bear the guilt. We are supposed to understand that parents really have no choice but to turn over their children to the care of others. Therefore, it is not their fault if the children are abused by alternative caregivers. Nack and Yaeger report that "Parents see [the molester] as just the male role model their boys need and invite him to Thanksgiving dinner" (46). One of the parents laments, "I feel like I failed as a father" (qtd. in Nack & Yaeger 53). Nack and Yaeger surmise that all "the victims, and their families, can feel their own remorse, sorrow and guilt. And forever will" (53). The remorse and guilt are mainly for the parents, it seems. Nevertheless, the children are to blame. An expert cited in the article explains that the abused child is "not only at a stage of sexual exploration [. . .] but he's often in rebellion against his parents, bent on taking risks" (qtd. in Nack & Yaeger 46). One of the convicted coaches Nack and Yaeger interview offers this opinion of his "peers": "These men have been seducing boys the same way men and women have seduced each other since the dawn of mankind" (qtd. in Nack & Yaeger 46). Admittedly, these are the words of an admitted and convicted pedophile, but Nack and Yaeger describe thoroughly the seduction methods involved. The fact adults "seducing" children is compared with seduction between men and women suggests an inevitability for the boys affected; something about them attracts pedophiles. The reference to assumed (pre)history indicates the common sense of the story. It must be true because it gets repeated so often.

The scapegoat is especially pronounced in two specific situations: tales of clergy abusing children and tales of (female) teachers abusing children. In its report on the current abuse scandal

involving the Catholic Church in America, ABC News attacks the church's stance on

homosexuality and celibacy. Forrest Sawyer alleges that the church's doctrine provides a "safe

haven (sic)" for pedophiles who see the church's structure as a way of trying to impose control on

their desires. Two recent movies offer similar takes on the church and child abuse. In both *Primal*

Fear and *The Boys of St. Vincent*, priests use children to bear their sins. *Primal Fear* depicts a

bishop who directs two boys and a girl in pornographic videos in order to purge his desires. In

fact, he provides a concurrent narration explaining the purgation while children act out the various

sexual sins. To purge his own rage, one of the boys subsequently murders the other children and

the bishop. The majority of the movie depicts the murder trial. Ultimately, the boy is acquitted by

reason of insanity after an angry, violent dissociative episode in the courtroom.[12] However, the

insanity is an act, as the boy later informs his lawyer, that the jurors are quite willing to accept.

Insanity would have been understandable, but the boy really is sick. Whether the insanity is an act

or not, the outcome only confirms that the children are really to blame. The murders were still

committed. The latter film, loosely based on the Mt. Cashel Orphanage case, in Newfoundland,

features a headmaster who abuses children for the same reason: to act out his (forbidden) sexual

impulses.[13] There are really two parts to the TV movie: the abuse and the resultant trial of the

priests. Between the two halves of the story, though not depicted, the accused headmaster, Fr.

Lavin, leaves his religious order, marries, and fathers two boys. During his trial, the former priest

is shown to turn his frustration into lust which he projects onto his wife in a scene that parallels an

earlier scene of abuse. He roughly gropes his wife in the same way he did his "favourite" boy at

the orphanage. He utters the same words and phrases, proclaiming his sins. In his mind the sins do

not include sexually abusing children; he merely loves too strongly. The wife does not seem to

mind strong love at all. Clearly, the Catholic Church is the object under attack by the filmmakers,

but the boys (and Lavin's wife and children) bear the sins.

Several cases in North America involving female teachers speak even more directly to the

issue. Regardless of the location the story is the same.[14] In "Caging Birds of Prey," which reports

on four cases, Sandra Byers says boys may be unwilling to tell "maybe because they feel lucky or

they enjoyed it. But there might be some who are not willing to press charges because the boy

who presses charges might be ostracized" (qtd. in Frank). Elm Street editor Gwen Smith is less

equivocal in defending Heather Ingram, one of the more publicized teachers. Smith claims that the

"young man pursued Ingram." She also challenges her audience to the read the full story "and see

if you don't come to this conclusion: The woman should not be a criminal." They do not have to

read it because Smith conveniently provides the conclusion. This was foreshadowed by the

cover's caption, "Is this a sexual predator?" under a picture of a harmless-looking Ingram. Sarah

Schmidt's article on Ingram is, by her admission, influenced by her experience as a teacher and

having "found it appalling" when boys looked at her sexually (10). This statement is repeated

three times, including once by Smith. Citing a law which prevents them from showing the boy,

Schmidt chooses instead to depict him as a "pot-smoking rebel" and a "monosyllabic" predator

(24, 27). In contrast, Ingram is hard-working and lonely. Sue McGarvie, an Ottawa therapist,

concedes that such teacher-student relationships are inappropriate but "I'd have a lot more

problem if [the gender] was reversed. It's not discrimination, it's just the way it is" (qtd. in

Schmidt 33). Thus, even in cases of a profound betrayal of trust — coach, priest, teacher — the

male victim bears the guilt. This is true in both the fictitious cases and the real ones which provide

the inspiration. Kincaid suggests that we "are instructed by our cultural heritage to crave that

which is forbidden, a crisis we face by not facing it, by writing self-righteous doublespeak that

demands both lavish public spectacle and constant guilt-denying projections onto scapegoats"

(20-1). There must be something peculiar about these children to cause such a reaction in

otherwise trustworthy adults, or so the stories go. This "defect" leads not to another story, but

the next chapter of the story: the so-called "cycle-of-abuse." This part of the story was cited

briefly elsewhere, but it bears further examination.

"Do onto others": the Cycle of Abuse

An episode of the A&E television program, *Investigative Reports*, stands out as a model

of how language is denied to and used against males who have been sexually assaulted. If

anything, *this* is the cycle of abuse. The intent of the documentary-style program in question is to

investigate the massacre of seven students and one teacher at an elementary school in Jonesboro,

Arkansas. At his trial, the older of the two perpetrators, thirteen-year-old Mitchell Johnson

"claimed to have been a victim of sexual abuse, a trait he shared with many others who have

committed violent crimes," according to Bill Kurtis, the host and producer of *Investigative*

Reports. Kurtis' words are followed by those of Dorothy Otnow Lewis, whose qualification for

being a commentator on the show is that she is the author of <u>Guilty by Reason of Insanity</u>. She

adds that "The children that you see, who very young do extraordinarily violent things, have been

seething for years and years. [. . .] They have been [. . .] victimized in different ways, but

particularly extraordinary physical abuse and sexual abuse because [. . .] without question children

who are subjected to this and who keep this a secret are like time bombs in a way." However,

earlier in the program, both Kurtis and Otnow Lewis demonstrate one of the reasons children do

keep past sexual abuse a secret. Kurtis explains, in his polished, professional, authoritative TV

host manner, that whereas the guilty little boy "*claimed*," he was abused, the experts *believe* "that

children sexually abuse other children if they themselves experience the same trauma." This

statement is followed by Otnow Lewis, and her assertion that "It's devastating to a young child to

be repeatedly sexually abused or raped. It [. . .] engenders rage, it engenders helplessness. The

worst thing, I think, that it does is that it tends to predispose the child to doing onto others what

was done to him." Neither Otnow Lewis, the *only* expert the program consults, nor Kurtis

provide any statistical data to back up their claims.

This is surprising given Otnow Lewis' position as Professor of Psychiatry at New York

University's School of Medicine and as Clinical Professor at Yale University's Child Study

Centre. More surprising is that these qualifications are not given by A&E. Certainly her

authorship, when combined with the head-and-shoulders shot of the suited Otnow Lewis

surrounded by volumes of books makes her more than a match for the T-shirt and tennis shoe clad

child convicts. As Antony Easthope points out, "language lets men and women say whatever they

want [. . .] there is no way one gender can control this. But within language there are different

forms of style or discourse and these can be contrasted as masculine or feminine" (79). The

masculine style is marked by pretending not be a style at all by claiming truth and authority. Sadly,

this is typical of news reports on the subject. Peter Jennings, host of ABC's "'Bless Me Father,

For I Have Sinned': The Catholic Church in Crisis," indignantly tells of the Catholic Church's

defenders who claim sexual abuse is "equal among [similar] organizations." He hastens to add

"but there is no way to prove — either way." Jennings' pronouncement and presence obviate the

need for statistics. With regard to the Jonesboro boys, Kurtis cites as evidence of the cycle-of-

abuse a lawsuit that alleges that the boys were "clearly predisposed to violent acts." Nack and

Yaeger admit that there have been "no formal studies to determine how many child molesters

coach youth teams" (43). In contrast Dr. Fred Matthews' research indicates that "about one-third

of abused boys go on to act out violently, with only 7 per cent becoming abusers themselves"

(Gadd). A&E's Kurtis and Otnow Lewis are the only ones heard, and thus theirs are the only

empowered voices and the voices to be believed. Although obviously female, Otnow Lewis' style

is in keeping with the supposed objectivity — *i.e.*, masculine style — of the documentary format,

as well as the research-based academic system she represents, and is intended to contrast with the

boys' behaviour. Mitchell Johnson, is in the process "emasculated;" that is, he becomes less than a

man. He has been victimized sexually, he has spoken of this fact, and he has been shown to be

hysterical. Moreover, the very language that Kurtis and Otnow Lewis use immediately puts males

who have been sexually abused into a further position of victimization by trapping them in the

infamous "Catch-22" situation. The language is clear: if they do not speak out about their abuse,

they are "time bombs."

However, if they do speak out about their abuse they would merely be revealing the fact

-that they are time bombs. Such a revelation would be tantamount to an advance admission of guilt

rather than the plea for help that it ideally should be, for in the mythic paradigm perpetuated by

Kurtis and Otnow Lewis, males who have been sexually abused are or are going to be abusers

themselves. Kincaid, who calls these "myths-on-wheels," outlines the logic therein: "There is a

cycle of abuse going on, almost all present abusers having been abused themselves as children and

now abusing because of that" (82). In spite of evidence to the contrary, the myth is that

molestation is on the increase of its own accord. If each molested child grows up to molest four

others, "and so on," as the old commercial goes, the numbers might reach epidemic proportions.

Indeed, if the Jonesboro boys are the exemplar of this behavioural model, then abused children will be even more horrific abusers. The language emphasizes this belief. Otnow Lewis' earlier cited assertion bears repeating here: "The children that you see, who very young do extraordinarily violent things, have been seething for years and years. [. . .] They have been [. . .] victimized in different ways, but particularly extraordinary physical abuse and sexual abuse because [. . .] without question children who are subjected to this and who keep this a secret are like time bombs in a way." Whereas Kurtis uses the gender-neutral term, "children," Otnow Lewis changes from the gender-neutral "the child" to the gender-specific "him" in the sentence in referring to the phenomenon of abused children becoming abusers themselves. In the first sentence, she makes a similar slip and initially says "children that you see" instead of "who you see" but changes to the pronoun for humans later in the same sentence.[15] Thus, the tenuous position of males who have been sexually abused becomes more salient: they either have no language or what language they have is subordinate, secondary, or inferior to the language of the dominant culture. That Otnow Lewis uses a parallel structure in her sentence, repeating the basic phraseology for emphasis, reflects the (linguistic) double-bind of men in this situation. It is neither ironic nor coincidental that Otnow Lewis' own words put men who have been sexually abused in this position. It is by design and it is this point that she emphasizes. Finally, Otnow Lewis recasts the proverbial *Golden Rule*, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," as "do unto others what was done to you." I mention the fact that Dorothy Otnow Lewis is Jewish only to emphasize the transhistorical and multicultural scope — that is, the universal and eternal nature — of the quintessential Christian teaching. Thus, the intertext, a discursive regime we all understand, raises Otnow Lewis' statement from tautology to undisputed truth as a new *Golden Rule*.

The cycle-of-abuse is overwhelmingly entrenched in our culture. It figures heavily in the treatment actual victims receive. One of the men Jane Gadd interviewed for the Globe and Mail reports that his psychologist blamed him for having been abused because he was a man. Gadd found that others were sent to the John Howard Society, which treats perpetrators. This was done under the premise that "since all men convicted of sexual assault say they were abused, therefore all men who have been assaulted must be perpetrators too" (qtd. in Gadd). The dangerous reverse of the cycle-of-abuse is the "abuse-excuse" story, in which previous abuse absolves the abuser of any responsibility. Predictably, the "abuse-excuse" has its detractors. As mentioned above, the ending of *Primal Fear* hinges on the boy who murdered the abusive priest revealing that he faked his insanity. *South Park*, a viciously satirical animated program based on the adventures of four third-graders, twice pokes its brand of fun at the abuse-excuse.[16] In "World-Wide Recorder Concert," Mr. Garrison, the children's teacher, confronts his father for *not* having abused him. Mr. Garrison wants to use abuse to excuse his sexual orientation confusion.[17] In a later episode, "Wacky Molestation Adventure," the kids (falsely) claim that their parents "molestered (sic)" them. They do this as revenge because the parents refused to let the children attend a "Raging Pussies" concert. In the absence of all adults, the children run wild and the town of South Park then becomes a cross between Lord of the Flies and Clockwork Orange. In *Sleepers*, a movie which claims to be based on a true story, four boys are sent to reform school only to be repeatedly raped by the guards. Eventually, two of the four boys become gangsters. The plot then revolves around their trial for murdering one of the men who abused them, with another of the boys leading the prosecution in order to lose the case.[18] The fourth boy acts as a liaison between the two sides. The docu-drama *Judgement Day: The Ellie Nesler Story* illustrates a mother's attempt

to use the abuse-excuse vicariously. The real Ellie Nesler shot Dan Driver in a courtroom to prevent her son, Brandon, from having to testify. Nellie invited Driver to become a father-figure for her son after his father left, but Driver allegedly molested Brandon. The irony was that the boy did have to testify at his mother's trial. Interestingly, the entire Nesler family is portrayed as being drug-abusing, uneducated, fundamentalist Christians; that is, not like the rest of us. At the end of the movie, as if to confirm our suspicions, the producers flash a message telling viewers that Brandon Nesler has already spent two years in jail. The abuse was never proven in court, but Brandon's later conviction — for what we know not — is proof enough.

"Better off Dead": Breaking the Cycle(?)

Yet the statistics and Otnow Lewis' own research do not bear out either the cycle-of-abuse or the abuse-excuse. In a massive sample of 595 men, Jim Hopper and David Lisak found that 38% of sexually abused males became perpetrators themselves (2). Peter Dimock, a social worker, echoes this finding: "About 35% of perpetrators report being victimized as children. It is not known how many male victims turn into perpetrators, but we are learning that many more men have been sexually abused than previously thought and these men are not necessarily abusers." While the figures cited above indicate that abused men are three times more likely to become abusers than males who have not been victims, it still leaves nearly two-thirds who do not repeat the crime they themselves endured. In a study of death-row inmates, "Boys on Death Row: More Mad Than Bad?" Otnow Lewis found that while these boys had been sexually abused, beatings causing permanent brain damage were a more significant factor in resultant behaviours. Explaining her findings in "New Path for Aggressive Boys," she writes, "Disturbed children are rarely articulate about their psychological pain and have only a small repertoire of behaviors with

which to show hurt" (2). This might be because they are children attempting to deal with adult situations and as stated earlier even the American Medical Association is "rarely articulate" about the sexual abuse of males. Further complicating the situation, as Hopper explains, is the reality that boys are socialized to "'neutralize' the expression of most emotions [Thus] males are found to be less emotionally expressive than females. This 'neutralization' of emotional expression can generate an intense conflict when it interacts with the experience of abuse. [. . .] Thus, at the precise developmental stage when the male child is learning that to be considered appropriately masculine he must suppress all 'nonmasculine' emotional states, he is overwhelmed by emotional states that are culturally defined as nonmasculine" (3). As Judith Butler explains in "Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification," "Heterosexuality is cultivated through prohibitions, where these prohibitions take as one of their objects homosexual attachment, thereby forcing the loss of these attachments" (25). With regard to males who have been sexually abused, this presents another double bind: being victimized is being nonmasculine; homosexual relations are nonmasculine. One adds to this list the cultural prohibition against men speaking about emotional pain.

Regardless of the validity, or lack thereof, of the cycle-of-abuse and abuse-excuse stories, their power is such that the only way out is typically shown to be death. Stevie, the "favourite" target of the headmaster in *The Boys of St. Vincent*, first recruits new victims for the priest, then abuses the boys himself. He graduates to become an alcoholic and drug-addicted drifter. Following this revelation during testimony at the priest's trial, Stevie commits suicide. His family is relieved. The two episodes of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* that feature cases of sexual abuse make the same suggestion. In "Uncivilized," the victim found as the show opens was killed by his attackers; in "Guilt," Matt Cavanaugh attempts suicide rather than testify following

revelations that he was a recruiter. His mother tells the prosecutor that she should have shot Matt. In her opinion he would be better off dead than having to testify. She did not want him to testify in the first place. The original *Law & Order* series features a similar story in "Bad Faith." Billy Marino, a victim-turned-recruiter, kills himself rather than telling police or testifying. Marino did, however, collect enough evidence to convict the priest who abused him. Death is the only thing that breaks whichever cycle is being portrayed. Of this preference, Kincaid remarks, "the cry that child molesting is worse than murder has been heard so often it has become a tired slogan, self-evident and vapid. Certainly it is better to take the child's life than its virtue, we feel, and we needn't waste time saying" (16). Unfortunately, the reading, viewing, and listening public does not share this view. The "real life" stories mirror their fictional and dramatized counterparts.

I cannot imagine what would cause a parent, or anyone else for that matter, to suggest that a child is better off dead. But it happens. *American Justice*, another documentary produced and hosted by Bill Kurtis for A&E includes an episode about pedophiles. One of the mothers cited tells the camera, "My son's ruined for the rest of his life." A parent in Nack and Yaeger's article tells the man who abused her son, "You're worse than a thief. You're worse than a murderer. A thief steals what can be replaced. A murderer kills his victims one time [. . .] and unfortunately history says that a fair portion of your victims are going to start victimizing others as you have done" (qtd. in Nack & Yaeger 43). Even though she was not one of the victims, the declaration was made as a "victim impact statement." No one questions which "history" says this, or where. It is accepted as fact that the child is better off dead because either he will become an abuser or he will endure a lifetime of torment. In this latter regard, Bill Hall speaks for Martin Kruze and for all victims: "The sexual abuse of children goes far beyond physical trauma. Kruze's chaotic post-

assault life was a virtual blizzard of drugs, alcohol and confusion. Like most sexual-assault

victims, he was haunted by an unreasonable, yet undeniable feeling of guilt. Perhaps Kruze

believed if he stopped hiding his story, the pain would go away. Instead his despair intensified."

Despite what Kruze might have believed, we know better. He could not escape. It does not matter

that Hall never mentions a single expert, report, or victim he has consulted. It does not matter that

he appropriates Kruze's voice. What matters is that three days after Gordon Stuckless was

convicted of assaulting him, Kruze jumped to his death from the Bloor St. Viaduct in Toronto.[19]

The message is that revelations, testimony, and even convictions do not produce the

"closure" our society has come to expect. Closure is not really important, either, as long as the

discourse dissociates us so that we can be assured of two things: first, that we could never be

abusers; second, that we could never be abused. The key is that the discourse "makes possible

disciplines and institutions which, in turn, sustain and distribute those discourses. [. . .] Discourses

and their related disciplines and institutions are functions of power: they distribute the effects of

power" (Bové 57-8). For the stories of abuse to have power, they must be constructed so that

they seem unavoidable and have a set of stock characters who are not like us. Bové summarizes

how this happens: "What Foucault means when he says that power acts upon actions is precisely

that it regulates our forming of ourselves" (58). It also impacts the way we form others in

comparison to ourselves. Through the backlash and cycle-of-abuse paradigms, we are "carefully

restricting our analysis so that others (the culture at large, you and me) are not implicated"

(Kincaid 22). Moreover, we convince ourselves that the "rules we are obeying now and the

grammar of our discourse seem natural to us, their naturalness being protected all along by

silence, by the illusion that they aren't rules at all" (Kincaid 26). The sense of breaking the cycle

does not work because first, the victims are in our midst, and second, the actual narrative is never as simple as good vs. evil, beginning and end, or "be abused, grow up, abuse others, repeat." Truly, the discourse, not the abuse, becomes self-sustaining and self-fulfilling.

"And this is about . . . ?" The Audience as Protagonist

Ultimately, these are stories of mourning and loss that have little to do with the victims, actual or fictional. For example, the various episodes of *Law & Order*, as dictated by the show's rigid format, are about the police detectives and the prosecutors. The Sheldon Kennedy and Martin Kruze stories morphed into national concern for the state of hockey in Canada. The corruption of the Catholic Church is the focus of news reports and docu-dramas, not the victims of that corruption. Cases of abusive female teachers turn to the women, often as victims themselves. Elm Street's story is headed by a graphic of a blackboard proclaiming, "I will not sleep with the teacher" (22). Ellie Nesler hijacks her son's tale. Although the movie of the Nesler case portrays Ellie as a narcissistic amphetamine user who appropriates attention, the plot still revolves around her. No matter which version is told, the story is about the rest of us and how we proceed in a world that contains both molesters and the molested. Of course, "we" always excludes the male victim of sexual abuse from the discursive community. James Kincaid, a specialist in Victorian Literature equates the tales of child molestation with the Gothic tales of his chosen era. To a large extent Kincaid's analogy is well-placed. However, there is another popular Victorian form that provides a cover narrative "camouflaging needs so dark and urgent we want neither to face them nor to give them up" (Kincaid 11). In this regard, especially given the pronounced tendency to suggest that victims are better off dead, sexual abuse narratives have significant affinities for another favourite genre of the Victorian era: the elegy.

Elegies, such as Milton's "Lycidas," Shelley's "Adonais," and Tennyson's In Memoriam, are poems of lament or of sober meditation. The subject is a mournful event, usually the death of an acquaintance, regret for the past, or pessimistic fears for the future. The language of these poems is formal and highly stylized. Elegies begin with an initial statement of loss and then progress from this loss to some state of consolation. The first part of the recovery process is apotheosis, in which the lost country, object, or person is transformed into an idealized type or divine object.[20] Apotheosis is followed by anagnorisis, which literally means an un-ignorancing. Anagnorisis is the recognition or discovery of some new order in which the loss can be rationalized. Apotheosis is generally sudden; anagnorisis is a gradual learning method with many false starts and dead ends. Peter Sacks lists several conventions of the elegiac form, including "the use of pastoral contextualization, the myth of the vegetation deity (particularly the sexual elements of such myths, and their relation to the sexuality of the mourner), the use of repetition and refrains, the reiterated questions, the outbreak of vengeful anger or cursing, the procession of mourners, the movement from grief to consolation, and the traditional images of resurrection" (2). With the possible exception of pastoral elements, the stories of childhood sexual abuse tend to follow this format faithfully. The initial loss is always the child's (sudden, premature, and violent) loss of innocence, which causes a state of chaos for those around the child. The cycle of life that resurrection recalls takes the form of the cycle-of-abuse.

As in the elegy, the focus of child abuse stories quickly shifts from the victim to those left behind, even if the victim lives. Their struggle to find a satisfactory resolution takes precedence. As well, the so-called "cycle-of-abuse" and "abuse-excuse" formulas represent recursion of the events (leading up to) or of the loss They allow those not actually involved to become involved in

— to be a part of and apart from — the actual situation. Sacks explains that elegists "accept their

loss and can retain their identities by what we may call a healthy work of mourning, a work that,

as Freud points out, requires a withdrawal of affection from the lost object and a subsequent

reattachment of affection to some substitute for that object" (6). What is common to elegiac

forms is the sense of the inadequacy of language to describe the situation. Near the beginning of

In Memoriam, Tennyson's speaker expresses such a sentiment:

> I sometimes hold it half a sin
>   To put in words the grief I feel:
>   For words, like Nature, half reveal
> And half conceal the Soul within
>
> But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
>   A use in measured language lies;
>   The sad mechanic exercise,
> Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.
>
> In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
>   Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
>   But that large grief which these enfold
> Is given in outline and no more.
> (V, 1-12)

The subject of the verses is the unnameable, the unfathomable. Poetry is really of no use in finding

a resolution, at least for Tennyson's speaker. Nevertheless, he must find a way. The poet went so

far as to create a new type of verse to emphasize the theme that the prior models no longer

worked for him. Moreover, In Memoriam runs nearly 3000 lines beyond those cited above. The

process is not easy, and Tennyson is not the one who died.

It is understandable for adults and especially parents to feel a sense of grief and even loss

if a child is molested. There is an amount of truth to the belief that there is a loss of innocence,

naïveté, and childhood. Yet none of these is the adults' loss. There is a difference between being

upset and appropriating the child's suffering. The turn to elegiac modes of expression, then, is also understandable. Among the most important reasons for mourning — death and molestation — is the need to make sense of the justice that allows death and molestation to occur. This is most evident in cultures dominated by Christian beliefs. The Christian god is supposed to be a loving god. Jesus is supposed to have a great love for children. How can God and/or Jesus let this happen? At least in the case of death the mourners have the reassurance that the lost loved one has achieved immortality. In the background is the knowledge that someday they will join the dead, the hope that they too will be mourned, and that they too will achieve immortality. None of these consolations is available to those who mourn a molested child, much less the child.

However, the importance of the ritual (of mourning) cannot be overestimated. Every period of experience, Northrop Frye posits, "dawn, sunset, the phases of the moon, seed-time and harvest, the equinoxes and the solstices, birth, initiation, marriage and death, get rituals attached to them. The pull of ritual is toward pure cyclical narrative, which, if there could be such a thing, would be automatic and unconscious repetition" (Anatomy 105). Rituals offer a sense of control over inexplicable phenomena and a sense of doing something, of making a difference. More important, though, are the repetition and unconscious nature of the ritual act. This eliminates the need for introspection while providing a safe, familiar context. There is also built-in ambivalence: "Ritual is not only a recurrent act, but an act expressive of a dialectic of desire and repugnance: desire for fertility or victory, repugnance to drought or to enemies. We have rituals of social integration and we have rituals of expulsion, execution and punishment" (Anatomy 106). For children who have been abused, the effect is twofold. First, their pain is appropriated as the adults seek empathy. Rituals are meant to be shared. Second, the adults can deny any culpability. There is nothing that

could have been done to prevent the abuse.

Admittedly, suggesting that masculinity has a relationship to mourning is not an entirely

original idea. Judith Butler's reworking of the Oedipal paradigm hinges on just such a tenet. She

surmises that heterosexuality is "cultivated by prohibitions, where these prohibitions take as one

of their objects homosexual attachments, thereby forcing the loss of those attachments" (25).

Butler, like Connell, Beneke, and Weeks, considers homosexuality to be the ultimate scapegoat of

hegemonic masculinity. In addition, her reworking of Freud in terms of mourning and melancholy

is not original either. In Sacks' view, the process of resolving the mourner's sexual angst within

an elegiac structure mirrors the Oedipal paradigm. He remarks that "It is becoming clear that

there is a significant similarity between the process of mourning and the oedipal resolution. [. . .]

At the core of each [resolution] is the renunciatory experience of loss and the acceptance, not just

of a substitute, but of the very means and practice of substitution" (8). In Sacks' conception, this

occurs because the "preceding relationship with the deceased (often associated with the mother,

or Nature, or a naïvely regarded Muse) is conventionally disrupted and forced into a triadic

structure including the third term death (frequently associated with the father, or Time, or the

more harshly perceived necessity of linguistic mediation itself)" (8). In the formative structure of

abuse, however, the signifying system that mediates and interrupts the relationship is the sexual

abuse itself, which can only be understood in terms of loss. It is not simply about (the panic of

being associated with) homosexuality, for it is also about the (physical) injury to the body and the

(perceived) injury to the masculine fortress Easthope describes.

"That's just the way it is": Conclusions

Given the current "atmosphere" surrounding men who have been sexually abused, I would

not recommend that a male who had been sexually abused ever tell anyone — perhaps other than

a psychologist or psychiatrist; someone for whom confidentiality applied — what had happened.[21]

Not surprisingly given the stigma attached, Phil Saviano, a victim of a priest, admits, "Nobody

wants to be the first victim to come forward" (qtd. in Olivo). The cost of disclosure can be

unimaginable. Barbara Rich explains that there are several common fears: "There's a part of him

that will be worried about 'What will people think of me now? Will they think their children are

safe with me? Will they think they themselves are safe with me? Will this change how they feel

about my worth as a human being?'" (qtd. in Goad). Two of the men Gadd cites in her article are

"in the midst of divorces in which their former wives have used the knowledge of the men's

childhood abuse to deny access to their own children on the grounds there is a risk the men will

become child abusers themselves." Abuse provides an immediate basis for defining a person's

character. For example, James Kernaghan says of Sheldon Kennedy: "only when he made his

explosive revelations [. . .] did any of his erratic behaviour make any sense." The current

discursive system offers no alternative. Kincaid rightly concludes that "according to this

etiological model, where one came from is equated with what one *is*, and what one *is* is the child

of molestation" (251). He actually applies this reading to cases of recovered memory syndrome

but Kincaid need not have been so specific. I was warned following the submission of the first

chapter that we should no longer call people with eating disorders "anorexic" or "bulimic"

because such labels suggest that the disorder is the sole defining criterion of the individual.

Regardless of the word play involved, "children of abuse" are always "children of abuse."

This is not to say that I would advocate telling people to "just get over it," or "life goes

on," as a means of dealing with abuse. Instead, I would have a more subversive intent: passing

To some extent, passing — for a "normal" type of masculine individual — is a basic requirement

for any male. This is Judith Butler's basic premise: "gender is produced as a ritualized repetition

of conventions, and [. . .] this ritual is socially compelled in part by the force of a compulsory

heterosexuality" (31). Butler sees masculinity in negative terms: it is not femininity and it is not

homosexuality. Again, Butler is not entirely original. Anthropologist David Gilmore finds

masculinity to be equally performative but in different terms. From his study of masculinities

around the world, he concludes that "manliness is a symbolic script, a cultural construct, endlessly

variable and not always necessary" (230). Manhood is something to be achieved. It means passing

in two senses: first, as in successfully completing a series of trials; second, as in having the

superficial appearance of a man. Although not explicitly, Connell remarks on the danger of

passing for gay men: "Hegemonic masculinity [. . .] opposes assimilation. Gay men get murdered

in homophobic attacks regardless of their personal styles" (219). What he means is that some gay

men may exhibit traits normally associated with hegemonic masculinity but their homosexuality

excludes them from full membership. Nevertheless, Robert Connell concludes that "the presence

of a stable alternative to hegemonic masculinity — the irreversible achievement of the last

quarter-century — reconfigures the politics of masculinity as a whole, making gender dissidence a

permanent possibility" (219). Of course, Connell's statement here implies homosexuality is the

(only) alternative to hegemonic masculinity which offers the possibility of resistance. Yet

homosexuality fails to cover the realm of possibilities for males who have been sexually abused.

Connell does include serious or permanent injury as a threat to masculinity, but not as something

that opens up the possibility of resistance. He allows that "a wide range of responses can be made

to the undermining of the bodily sense of masculinity. The one thing none of these men can do is

ignore it" (55). The combination of damage to the bodily sense of masculinity with the prohibition on homosexuality creates a larger problem for abused men. It also creates a potentially very powerful enemy of hegemonic masculinity.

Jeffrey Weeks asserts that straight masculinity is fragile. Therefore, we could say that men who have been abused have been put through and/or passed the nastiest test. He writes: "Masculinity or the male identity is achieved by the constant process of warding off threats to it [. . .] Male violence against women, and the taboo against male homosexuality may both be understood as effects of this fragile sense of identity" (190). Violence is one of the means through which hegemonic masculinity maintains its power. However, if the two world wars are any indication, most of that violence is between heterosexual men. Violence, though is not a guarantor of order: "Violence is part of a system of domination, but is at the same time a measure of its imperfection. A thoroughly legitimate hierarchy would have less need to intimidate. The scale of contemporary violence points to crisis tendencies in the modern gender order" (Connell 84). The importance of "crisis tendencies" is that "in power relations [they] threaten hegemonic masculinity directly" (Connell 90). Connell lists feminists, gay men, young working-class men, and the new class of technical specialists as instigators of crisis tendencies. He does not consider the possibility of men who have been abused even though such men may occupy any category, including hegemonic masculinity. This point bears repeating because it is not just an oversight on Connell's part. None of the critics cited considers the need to defend against being mastered as proof of masculinity. It is always defined in terms of mastering others.

Connell offers several alternate strategies to hegemonic masculinity. Although there is a degree of overlap, none of these alternatives provides a reasonable possibility for male victims of

sexual abuse. In analyzing his research, Connell notes a phenomenon he calls "protest masculinity," which is marked by "something frenzied and showy about it. It is *not* simply the conventional stereotype of masculinity" (110). It is an affected display that emphasizes certain key characteristics. According to Connell, the concept describes

> a pattern of motives arising from the childhood experience of powerlessness, and resulting in an exaggerated claim to the potency that European culture attaches to masculinity. [. . .] The difference is that this is a collective practice and not something inside the person. Very similar patterns appear in the collective practice of working-class, especially ethnic minority, street gangs in the United States. (111)

The idea is that the young men in such groups develop a tense facade to help them claim power where no power exists. Putting on a successful front is central to the dynamic. This stance is peculiar to impoverished groups, says Connell. He does not actually exclude any other groups, but he does not include any other groups that exhibit protest masculinity. In any case, Connell suggests that this version is a dead-end because the men neither reap the patriarchal dividend — their opposition to authority precludes it — nor do they have access to state power. A related trend is the renunciation of masculinity. For Connell, renouncing hegemonic masculinity means

> giving up everyday masculine privileges and styles of interaction [. . .] Renunciation also has important consequences for sexuality and emotional expression. With the core of patriarchy perceived to be sexist attitudes and behaviours towards women, the main contribution a man can make is to hold back from any sexist action or utterance [which] means that men are likely to feel guilty about taking the initiative sexually. (131)

In the last regard, taking the sexual initiative means making a male demand on a woman. For this reason it is rejected. Clearly, then, renunciation involves the assumption of heterosexuality as well as an emphasis on the feminine and feminism. At times these emphases exclude or at least the

diminish dynamics among men and masculinities.

Connell also proposes the idea of "exit politics" but focuses on gays and profeminist men, exclusively. Yet his conclusion is that gender ambiguity, rather than dissatisfaction with the gender order, leads to exit politics. Connell concludes that exit politics does not really work, even for the men who choose this option. He laments: "Since exit politics relates to the overall structure of the gender order, it has no local base. It cannot be understood as the pursuit of the concrete interest of any group of men, since men in general benefit from the subordination of women. So exit politics is hard to articulate and rarely becomes a mass politics" (224). Among other things, Connell's alternatives include choosing passivity, giving up masculinity in favour of subjection to feminism, or creating a caricature of hegemonic masculinity. However, each of these is specific to a particular class of men or fails as a mass politics. In addition, the bodily impact of masculinity — an aspect any victim of sexual abuse cannot ignore — is conveniently omitted in these models.

In fact, the most significant difference between the men Connell documents and victims of sexual abuse is that the former groups develop no politics of the body. Connell remarks that even though "their attempt to reconstruct relationships could easily be seen as acquiring a kind of femininity, no side of their project addressed [. . .] the practices through which masculinity becomes embedded in the body" (134). Quite the contrary:

> the body was treated as a natural object and thought of as ideally harmonious with other parts of nature. The trick of speech [often employed], talking about 'my body' and 'me' as if two separate people were talking over a telephone line, is very significant. The reformed self is not understood as being embodied. At the same time, masculinity is separated out into social conventions, which can be discarded, and natural features of the body, which can not.

> The men were operating with a kind of sex role theory, which
> simply could not carry them very far. (134)

In this case, Connell refers to men who "reform" — that is, who adopt a profeminist stance — despite having reached adulthood and having previously embraced hegemonic masculinity. What of those who have not had to reform? What of those who have neither embraced nor renounced hegemonic masculinity? Not just that, but what of those for whom (the sense of) masculinity is embodied, not by choice — as in reforming and renouncing — but by violence and societal conventions? I agree with Connell that there needs to be a politics of the body. However, I do not see the necessity of basing it on the reformation or renunciation of hegemonic masculinity.

Ultimately, the various alternative masculinities Connell finds cause the men he studies to undertake a "project of reforming the self that was directed at undoing the effects of Oedipal masculinization. It seems likely that this project was supported by emotional currents from pre-Oedipal relationships: centrally, the primal relationship with the mother" (135). Reworkings of the Oedipal dynamic have already been offered, but Connell adds something new: speech. He suggests that if "one follows Julia Kristeva's argument that separation from the mother and the advent of Oedipal castration awareness are connected with a particular phase in language, where subject and object are separated and propositions or judgements arise (the 'thetic' phase), [a] shift in speech would make sense as [a] sign of an attempt to undo Oedipal masculinity" (135). For example, when Sheldon Kennedy slices his chest with a razor, saying "I hate my skin," he's redoing the Oedipal construction of masculinity. That is, he recognizes his body in the mirror in the bathroom not as that of his complete self, but as that of his abuser, and the violence is therefore symbolic. It is the language through which he is attempting to resist and renounce

hegemonic masculinity. He literally hates his skin, his phenotype, for being that of a man.[22] Unfortunately, he cannot change what he is, nor can he change what our culture says he is.

Any change in the discursive regime must come from elsewhere because the problem does not lie with those who have been sexually abused. As has been argued throughout this chapter, the tales of sexually abused males have little to do with them. Acceptance, what the popular media call "closure," as an alternative or complement to passing, must come from external sources if it is to occur at all. A pivotal scene in *The Sheldon Kennedy Story* depicts Kennedy's drive home from the police station after reporting the abuse. Kennedy places himself not in the role of victim but in the role of inquisitor and asks himself the set of unanswerable questions that serve to maintain his silence. Yet he had not been entirely silent. A cycle of self-destruction that included several arrests, drug abuse, alcoholism, and slashing his chest with a razor blade, bear witness to the inability to "suppress all 'nonmasculine' emotional states," and the occlusion of any other means of expression. As Kennedy says during the press scrum after the trial, "Guys don't like talking about this stuff." In addition to the factors outlined previously, Antony Easthope outlines another reason "guys don't like talking about this stuff":

> in the dominant version of masculinity castration is never simply an accomplished fact. Because in patriarchal society masculinity is marked as possession of the phallus and its pervasive symbolic power, castration can never be more than a threat or a possibility. [. . .] a fact which can be defended against by disavowal, pretending it doesn't exist or is not as bad as it seems. The castle of the masculine ego is much more deeply committed to defence through disavowal. From it issues a sense of invulnerability — 'It can't happen to me'. (65)

That is to say, the occurrence of such an event is not acknowledged because it can never happen; its very existence is rendered impossible by the prevailing mythology of the dominant culture. Yet

it should be acknowledged because of its symbolic significance. The "one regularity" David

Gilmore notes in his anthropological study of masculinity is that "manhood is problematic, a

critical threshold that boys must pass through testing, [and this] is found at all levels of

sociocultural development regardless of what other alternative roles are recognized" (11). Surely,

having endured sexual abuse is one of the more rigorous test any man, in any "sociocultural"

position, can face. This is not to advocate Spartan initiation rituals to make better men. Rather,

we cannot define people as simple products of abuse. Moreover, renaming them — victims,

survivors, or in the "post 9/11" lexicon, as "heroes" — is not sufficient. Theory is useless without

praxis and whether we admit it in the Humanities or not, there are still processes that theory has

not named.

In the last twelve years Magic Johnson, Greg Lougainis and others have provided a

socially recognized public ritual for the people who have AIDS or HIV to articulate their

experience. Similarly, the phenomenon surrounding the untimely death of Diana, Princess of

Wales, which was repeated for the "Queen Mum," created a ritualized form of mourning. The

Ellen and *Rosie O'Donnell* shows did the same for coming out of the closet, a topic which causes

many to become squeemish and to disavow loved ones. *Oprah* and *The View* provide forums for

all manner of grief. Oprah Winfrey even decided that her personal therapist, Dr. Phil, deserves his

own show. *Jenny Jones*, *Jerry Springer*, *Ricki Lake*, and the various courtroom shows offer

carnivalesque versions of the same. Whether individuals agree or disagree, empathize or not, these

are socially recognized mechanisms which create an atmosphere of acceptance. Although he

concentrates on homosexuality, Tim Beneke outlines the essential dilemma of men who have

experienced abuse:

> Homophobic anxiety *sometimes* eats away at straight men. It is in
> part the fear that something arduously and painfully achieved,
> masculinity, will be forever lost if one gives in to certain impulses.
> It is in part inexorably tied to shame — the fear of being seen as
> gay by other men. Many straight men so strongly conjoin sexual
> object choice and achieved masculinity that they have great
> difficulty separating them. (147)

The key themes Beneke raises here are impulse control, achieved masculinity, and the concern

about being "seen" by other men. Impulse control is part of the total mastery required to achieve

masculinity. One thing Beneke does not mention is concern about being seen by women, whom

men must attract. However, this is clearly related to the comparative gaze of other men that I

detail in the earlier chapters, especially in terms of competition. In any case, one must pass.

Although most of this paper is written in a frustrated tone, I would like to end on a

hopeful note. One of the final scenes of *The Sheldon Kennedy Story* features a requisite "feel-

good" moment which parallels both Kennedy's initial revelation to police and the press conference

after the trial. Amazingly, the scene depicts an actual event. At the time, Eric Lindros was the

captain of the Philadelphia Flyers and was the captain of Team Canada at the 1998 Olympic

Games. In this case, Lindros symbolizes a, and probably the, dominant Canadian version of the

Law of the Father: the physical embodiment of the ultimate hockey player. Prior to the start of

Kennedy's first game following the trial, Lindros skated over to the Boston Bruins' entrance to

shake Kennedy's hand, in front of the other players, and to praise him for his courage.[23] Though

not so powerful, Lindros' action is nevertheless analogous to a gesture Pee Wee Reese of the

Brooklyn Dodgers made to then-rookie Jackie Robinson, in 1947. Reese, a Kentucky native,

initially had been reluctant to accept his African-American teammate and middle-infield partner.

Robinson had been viewed simply and completely in terms of the colour of his skin. Aside from

his Hall-of-Fame athleticism, Robinson's stoicism was his most powerful weapon. Throughout his

rookie season Robinson had been the target of unbelievable torment but, at the request of

Dodgers' management, he never uttered a word of protest. Phillies manager Ben Chapman, also a

southerner and an unrepentant racist, was especially vicious. During a Phillies-Dodgers game,

Reese, knowing that Robinson would not defend himself, walked over to Robinson, put his arm

around the rookie's shoulders, turned to Chapman and said "This is my guy." For a southern man,

this was tantamount to treason. For a "macho" man to acknowledge a sexually abused man's

worth is tantamount to gender treason. This is not to repeat the cliché that the "white man" must

lead, but that the responsibility lies with the dominant culture to make similar gestures of

acceptance. Compassion and empathy — the essence of the original *Golden Rule* — worked then

and can work now.

Afterward

"Go about your business": Mundane Masculinity

Have a take and don't suck!

Jim Rome[1]

Introduction:

I have not checked to see if anyone has already laid claim to "mundane masculinity,"

which I would call my own. Robert Connell has "hegemonic masculinity," "protest masculinity,"

"renunciatory masculinity" and others. Susan Faludi likes an "instrumental masculinity" but

disdains an "ornamental masculinity." My supervisor, Daniel Coleman, has suggested a "feminist

inflected masculinity." Most feminists assume a consistent "patriarchy," although Susan Bordo

seems to have an affection for "the New Man," even if she did not coin the term. To Andrea

Dworkin, men are potential rapists. For Warren Farrell, men are the disposable sex. I am going to

continue to ignore "new age" concepts and self-flagellators. My own take is that the key lies in

going about one's business when it comes to a core group of (politically contentious) topics:

women, alternate sexual orientations, the culture of celebrity, *etc.* You can definitely forget about

perfect or ideal masculinities. There are men who will never be enlightened and there will be those

who will always be suspicious of men. I have pretty much given up on "profeminist" masculinity.[2]

Basically, I have had enough of theory and would prefer to get on with things.

For the past four years — this is the fifth — I have lived a nontraditional gender role and

so has my spouse. While many around me espoused such theoretical concepts, we have had to live

it. The female has been the primary provider. More than that, she has been teaching Computer

Science — a "masculine" domain if ever there was one — to classes that are usually 90% male. I

have been the dependent in the relationship. I have cooked, cleaned, ironed and sewn on the occasional button. This was not a political statement on our parts.[3] It was a fact of life. We made a choice based on our financial and academic situation. I managed to get into graduate school and she managed to get a job. In fact, thanks to my wife's job, I was able to get a job as a supply teacher; another role reversal. Yet, none of this seems strange to us. Every decision has been made with everyday life, not politics, as the first and perhaps only consideration.

"Get over it!" Jim Rome and the Clones:

Rather than espouse my own sense of what constitutes mundane masculinity any further, I would like to offer an interesting, if singular, example. Jim Rome hosts a popular sports talk show. "The Jungle," as it is called, is broadcast daily from Los Angeles home and is syndicated to nearly 200 radio stations across North America. The format of Rome's show is a combination of his commentaries, or "takes," interviews with sports figures and phone or email takes from the show's listeners. Rome calls his listeners the "clones" because they all want to be like him. Since it is essentially a current-events show the topics of discussion change daily. Sport provides the backdrop but the takes pull material from across the spectrum of contemporary popular cultural. Moreover, as I discussed in the second chapter, sport is an important socializer for males. Thus, the *Jim Rome Show* allows me a daily glimpse into a site in which masculinities are often contested and negotiated.

Rome's edgy pronouncements are not easily placed in any of the traditional categories of masculinity. To put it simply, the takes are usually vicious, humorous and unapologetic. Athletes who beat their wives, take illegal drugs, get arrested, call unnecessary attention to themselves or do other stupid things are the usual targets. Even considering that some takes stem from fans'

resentment — of pay, of privilege, of prowess — there is an unusual quality to the unstated

political stance Rome assumes on his program. He hates whiners and quitters. Therefore soccer   ☺

players and France are frequent targets. However, Rome never tolerates sexist, racist,

homophobic or otherwise discriminatory or prejudicial language. For example, when Willie from

K.C., a regular caller who has achieved "legend" status, commented that the wide receivers on the

University of Southern California football had "more balls slip through their hands than Liberace,"

Rome cut the caller off, or "ran him" (3 Dec. 2002).[5] Whereas he used to be on at least once a

week, Willie has not been on since. Rome commented that Willie's take was "utterly deplorable"

and repeated his prohibition on homophobia on his program: "I will not tolerate that filth." Earlier

in the day, Rome had blasted Hootie Johnson, President of the Augusta National Golf Course, for

the historic course's refusal to allow female members. While acknowledging the private club's

right to exclude people, Rome stated that "compared to our modern idea of diversity," the stance

is morally repugnant. Andy Rooney, of CBS' *Sixty Minutes*, is another target of Rome's vitriol

thanks to his comments regarding female sports reporters.

Rome has always been outspoken in his defence of the (very) few professional athletes

who have come out of the closet. In spite of the backlash that has occurred from fans and other

athletes alike, Rome has supported gay athletes. For example, when former NFL offensive

lineman Esera Tuaolo announced that he is gay, Cris Carter, a former teammate stated, "I wish I

had known, because I had to take a shower with [Tuaolo]" (qtd. in Rome, 1 Nov. 2002). The

response from Rome has always been "There are gay NFL players, deal with it" (1 Nov. 2002).

The New York Giants' Jeremy Shockey also offered the "shower defense" when he was asked

about gay players Rome told him to "Get over it!" and called it an "irrational response and an

unrealistic view of the world" (24 Oct. 2002). Rome has also been extremely supportive of

Sheldon Kennedy and has interviewed Kennedy several times. This is in spite of the fact that the

media in Kennedy's own (hockey obsessed) country continues to focus on Graham James. One of

the more extraordinary takes occurred during the week of the 2003 Super Bowl. Oakland

Raiders' centre, Barrett Robbins disappeared from the team's hotel three days before the game.

Robbins suffers from a bipolar depression and receives medication for it. Unfortunately, Robbins

suffered a setback brought on by alcohol use prior to the big game. His coach and teammates

immediately turned on him. Rome's response: "I would venture to say that mental illness is akin

to a diabetic who doesn't get his insulin shot. The organ in question will malfunction without it.

[. . .] They should've treated him like one of the family instead of kicking him to the curb" (30

Jan. 2003). Rome often appears to be a kind of "tough coach" who offers guidance to the clones.

In spite of the fact that Rome depends on professional athletes, as both his guests and his

source of material, he is relentless and unforgiving in his attacks. As mentioned before, athletes

who abuse their spouses or their privilege, or who call unnecessary attention to themselves are

other frequent subjects of takes. I do not know of anyone who supports wife beaters and those

who flaunt the law thanks to "star status," but celebrities who crave the spotlight are not generally

called to task for their narcissism. Wide receivers Terrell Owens and Peerless Price are often

chided by Rome and the Clones for their selfish outbursts Jeff Kent and Brian Griese receive jibes

because they lied to fans and teammates about injuries they sustained while intoxicated. Tennis

star André Agassi is known as "the Client" because of his seemingly endless product

endorsements. Mediocre basketball player Cedric Ceballos earned the nickname "Chise," which is

short for "Franchise," after Ceballos claimed he was the Los Angeles Lakers' franchise player.

Cincinnati Reds' outfielder Ken Griffey, Jr. became "Rodney Griffey, Jr." — a reference to comedian Rodney Dangerfield — or "Ken Grumpy, Jr." when he claimed that he does not receive enough respect.[6]

All of this is not to say that Jim Rome represents an "ideal" masculinity, for he is a paradoxical figure at times. He stresses physical fitness and lambasts the unfit. One of his most notorious incidents occurred when he called L.A. Rams' quarterback Jim Everett "Chris Everett," after *female* tennis pro Chris Evert — the last names are rough homophones. Everett had a tendency to dance from side to side on the field instead throwing; he resembled a tennis player. Rome has received some criticism for his apparent sexism, as he does for the "ball and chain" moniker for wives, and for the exotic dancers who appear at his tour stops. He has also received criticism for his stance — which is shared by gay athletes Tuaolo, Billy Bean and Dave Kopay — that unless a player is a star, he would not be able to come out of the closet without it becoming a larger issue than the team. They base their assertion on the past experiences of teams that become distracted by extra media attention, especially if it focuses on issues not directly relating to the team itself. The most frequently offered examples are players' pursuit of individual records and statistics. Tuaolo, Bean, Kopay and Rome stress that the team, which is often compared to a family, comes first. Rome repeats this point frequently.

Ultimately, the call for comments, "Have a take, and don't suck!" summarizes the characteristics of mundane masculinity. Although "Have a take" suggests a fearless masculine independence, there is also the sense that being a man is not about mastering so much as not being mastered. The warning, "don't suck!" is a reminder that others are watching (or listening) and that you are being compared to them. At the same time, there is the recognition that the status of

women and gays in our society needs to recognized. Identify with them. Cheer for them.

Accepting this reality — "dealing with it" or "getting over it" in the language of the show — is an

inherent part of being a man. The athletes who have achieved "Legend" status on Jim Rome's

show are those who "go about their business." In other words, let your performance and the

respect of friends and family be the measure of the man. This is not at all a new definition of what

constitutes being a man. Rather, for mundane masculinity, the scope of what that definition entails

has broadened tremendously. What is striking about Rome is the inclusiveness of his politics and

how they are expressed. Religion is one of the few untouched topics but curiously there is an

element of the (rather trite) "serenity prayer" in Rome's typical stance — accept what you cannot

change — but it is stated more forcefully. The unstated portion of "get over it" and "deal with

it" is "in silence if you must." For me this comprises the essence — and I use that term knowingly

— of going about my business and of mundane masculinity. As I have experienced it and as I

understand it, the key is that assimilation works in reverse for mundane masculinity: males adapt

to their culture instead of males forcing others to adapt.

Notes

Introduction:

1. Admittedly, Modleski appears to speak for feminists and women — *i.e.*, roughly 50% of the population — rather than just herself. However, she can no more claim to speak for all women than I can (or want) to speak for all men. Moreover, the "what's in it for me" approach has long been derided as the attitude of "patriarchal" structures.

2. Equating penis with phallus is a common mistake and/or tactic. Lapsley and Westlake summarize the distinction in Lacanian terms: "Possessed by neither men nor women, belonging to the symbolic order and not nature, taking its value like all signifiers from its relation to other signifiers, the phallus signifies the lack indissociable from entry into culture" (97). Not every critic agrees with the non-biological basis of the phallus. Lapsley and Westlake, for example, allow that "Whatever else it means, the phallus also always stands for the penis, a confusion that is symptomatic of the impossibility of conceiving a non-phallic masculinity at this historical moment" (97).

3. Connell attempts to account for these nuances in his hierarchy of masculinities. Those at the top, "hegemonic masculinities," receive larger "patriarchal dividends" than the "complicitous," "subordinated" or "marginalized" masculinities he enumerates. These are discussed and supplemented throughout this work.

4. Farrell has the curious habit of attaching his (admittedly valid) Ph.D. everywhere his name appears. The effect, however, is that he is desperately trying to assert/insert himself as a credible source. The irony of this practice should not be lost on those familiar with the history of masculine privilege within academia. Thus, Farrell proves himself to be anything but the mediator he claims to be given his plea to be taken as an authority.

5. It might also be argued that Faludi's choice of survey groups — wife beaters, Promise Keepers, porn actors, gang members, drag queens — detracts from her work. These groups hardly represent anything approaching the mainstream. Faludi's findings, though, are still an important first step.

6. Part of the task of considering men as the subjects of culture and not just makers, means considering men as objects, as well. Unfortunately Warren Farrell considers this possibility too, referring to men as "unpaid bodyguards" and "the disposable sex" (67).

7. Ornamental culture is really an insidious form of self-promotion, of standing out, of being noticed, of style over substance, of brand-name recognition for and on everything.

8. Slash lit is an outgrowth of fan culture; that is, fans of popular TV series write their own stories based on the original. This particular form derives its name from the "/" placed between the first

initials of the main protagonists in a given story. The notation is a shorthand which also indicates that the characters involved become lovers in the story. As well, the characters are always male and heterosexual in the context of the original show. What baffles critics is that the authors are predominantly working-class heterosexual females who refuse to be categorized in any way as feminists.

Chapter 1:

1. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot defends the poets of the past. His reasons for doing so is that "art never improves, but the material is never quite the same" (432). In other words, art is highly conventionalized and remains so, but the arrangement and content of the conventions will change.

2. As mentioned in the Introduction discussions of portrayals of professional athletes, professional wrestlers and female video game characters comprise the next three chapters. In the latter regard, especially, I disagree with Salisbury's views. In the Chapter 4, I argue that males identify with female characters and that the conventions of the narrative genres to which they belong conflict with the premise that females are inherently sexualized. Moreover, in the intervening chapters, I offer further examples of the male body on display.

3. In fact, Bordo has written on this topic several times, in several places, often with the same material.

4. No source or title is given for this ad.

5. In some ways, Bordo's statement might be seen to give credence to Warren Farrell's assertion that men are unpaid body guards for women. Bordo unintentionally opens up this line of analysis, the ridiculousness of which is dealt with in the Introduction and later in this chapter.

6. Please see p. 31 for this passage.

7. Please see p. 16 for this passage.

8. Additionally curious is the allusion to Eve and not the popular "Lilith myth," for Eve was created from man; her body was not her own. In contrast, Lilith was her own woman and was banished for wanting to be on top of Adam during intercourse. In other words, she wanted to control another of the aspects of the female body, sexuality, that comes under disciplinary control.

9. In the Preface of Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women, Christina Hoff Sommers traces the source of the prevailing myths surrounding the prevalence of anorexia and bulimia (among other things) to a series of misquotations and misappropriations of statistical data. Sommers then explains how the inaccuracies have become accepted truths and assumed knowledge within feminist discourse. For example, Gloria Steinem often claims "150,000

[American] females die of anorexia each year" (qtd. in Sommers 11). When Sommers contacted the American Anorexia and Bulimia Association she discovered that the 150,000 figure refers to an estimated number of sufferers (12). Actual reported deaths are less than 100 per year.

10. In the Humanities, at least, nature is a loaded word and one cannot help but wonder if the pun is perhaps intentional.

11. Interestingly, Connell chooses the word "natural" to describe prevailing attitudes regarding cosmetic surgery, for both women and men, though not to invoke the "nature" vs. "culture" debate that has raged for millennia. However, as will be discussed, body altering practices provide another context for others to continue this debate.

12. I discuss other aspects relating to these phenomena in the third chapter, with regard to the rise of professional wrestling in the 1990s.

13. The article originally appeared in the London Sunday Times.

14. Philip White and James Gillett provide an excellent reading of a similar race/ethnic bias of fitness magazines. Their study, "Reading the Muscular Body: A Critical Decoding of Advertisements in *Flex* Magazine," also finds that fitness magazines tend to position the reader as inferior, but promise to help the reader to enhance his body. White and Gillett conclude that "conservative resistance to social change through bodybuilding is a mechanism of the recuperation of gender differences, positioning women and less muscular men as inferior. Bodybuilding acts as a salve for the contradictions inherent in the crisis of masculinity in contemporary capitalism" (37). It should be noted that Flex had a readership of approximately 140,000 at the time of White and Gillett's study, in 1994 (22). Thus, its advertisements did not have anything approaching a mainstream reach or audience.

15. At the time this chapter was revised, Aug. 2002, Progenis.com was not available. The site had moved to www.progenis.net, but this too has been temporarily shut down.

16. In the language of cosmetic enhancement, those undergoing such treatments are usually called "clients" or "customers" rather than patients. The sense is that a service is being purchased rather than something being inherently wrong with the purchaser. Nevertheless, a doctor, or at least someone in a lab coat, gives the impression that the procedure is safe and the provider is reputable.

17. Morgan alludes to the legendary story of Helen of Troy, who was abducted by Paris because wanted to possess her (beauty). By referring to men as "modern day Parises" Morgan suggests modern men have similarly violent, possessive motives.

18. *A Personal Story* and its competitor, *Skin Deep*, feature "real" people who undergo cosmetic surgery. Occasionally the surgery is a reconstruction rather than an enhancement. In order to

"protect" the privacy of the individuals shown on national TV, they are referred to by first name only.

19 Other popular terms include "revive," "recover," "reactivate," "replenish," and my personal favourites, "reinvigorate" and "rejuvenate."

20. Indeed, the representative of Toronto's Lafontaine Clinic assured me that my nose, like every other nose, would have to be broken and would cost exactly $4,600 to fix. Given the other procedures that I "need" (as opposed to want) to achieve the body I "deserve" the total cost would be roughly $25,000. This includes crowns for my teeth, rhinoplasty, hair removal, and "ab sculpting." The teeth and nose, at least, are misshapen thanks to competitive sports and as such might once have been considered a proof of manhood. Ab-sculpting would be a shortcut back to the body I had before the course work and exams portion of graduate school took their toll. One hour-long procedure followed by two weeks recovery would have replicated the results of a year's worth of two-hour trips to the gym (at least) three times a week followed by a lifetime of more trips

21. Please see pp. 18 and 45.

Chapter Two.

1. The issue of whether or not the gaze feminizes males or is necessarily homoerotic will be pursued again in Chapter 3, with respect to professional wrestling. Briefly put, I argue that since the competitive advantage in any wrestling match shifts frequently it either requires a resultant shift in the spectator's allegiance so that he will always cheer for the wrestler who is not currently "feminized," or the viewing of such an event involves more complex identificatory processes. In "real" sports, the closest analogs are basketball and hockey, which both have frequent changes from defense to attack and a constant stream of scoring chances for both teams.

2. The expansions are: the NHL from twenty-one to thirty teams; the NFL from twenty-eight to thirty-two; the NBA from twenty-three to twenty-nine; MLB from twenty-six to thirty. In the same time period, new stadiums were erected for nearly fifty of these teams. Some arenas are shared facilities, but these are usually for basketball and hockey. The trend in football and baseball is for each team to have its own stadium. Occasionally, the stadiums are even located across the street from each other, as occurs in Toronto, Detroit, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Kansas City. Even greater growth has occurred in professional golf and auto racing.

3. Narratives are often imposed on actual sporting events, presumably to heighten viewer interest. Methods of imposing narrative include sports reporters' frequent references to the themes of "revenge" and "redemption" for earlier losses and miscues. Pregame shows and features contribute not only hype but also narrative to the games. For example, key match-ups and strategies during game coverage are "plotlines." The vaunted "West Coast Offence" used by former San Francisco 49'er and Stanford University football coach, Bill Walsh, is said to be

"scripted " Perhaps the most famous example of such an approach is the team motto of the Montréal Canadiens hockey team: "To you from failing hands we throw the torch. Be yours to hold it high" ("Torch"). These words, taken from John McCrae's World War I poem, "In Flanders Field," appear in both French and English versions on the walls of the team's dressing room. The team's website explains that "Since 1952-53, they have been the words and symbols according to which successive generations of hockey players have patterned their professional lives" ("Torch"). Thus, the players know that they are part of a never-ending story, what they can expect as members of the team, and most important, what is expected of them.

4. Not long before James' traffic incident, Minnesota Vikings' player Randy Moss pushed a female traffic officer out of his way with his SUV because she was trying to write him a ticket. The previous season, Allen Iverson of the Philadelphia 76'ers broke into his estranged wife's apartment to confront her (allegedly) about child visitation. Allen hit the woman, who was in the shower, across the face with his handgun and chased her — while she was dripping and naked — into the street and chased her with his SUV. Iverson's mother, like James' mother, then made headlines by claiming her son is persecuted by jealous people. Both Iverson and Moss received *nothing* in the way of punishment. Other car chases involving athletes include Albert Belle chasing trick-or-treaters with his SUV, the infamous O.J. Simpson chase, and Jose Canseco and his then spouse playing bumper cars at over 100 mph in their matching Ferraris following an argument. Athletes' brushes with the law, especially for drug possesion, are too numerous to list, as are their sexual exploits.

5. As will be developed in the following chapter, professional wrestling, a specialized subset of cinematic sports, also owes a debt to action movies.

6. Biographical sports films include *Fear Strikes Out*, *The Babe Ruth Story*, *Pride of the Yankees*, *Knute Rockne All-American, etc.* It is arguable that *Grand Prix* follows a similar format to *Slapshot* and that *LeMans*, *North Dallas 40*, and *The Longest Yard* were earlier offerings, while *The Fish that Saved Pittsburgh* and *Rocky* were roughly contemporaneous. Also roughly contemporaneous is the highly-acclaimed stage-to-screen adaptation of *Bang the Drum Slowly*. The film version could be interpreted as Vietnam representation, but the novel was written before the war in Vietnam and for this reason, I decided not to include it.

7. It is worth noting that the child saving the team formula introduced in the otherwise forgettable *The Fish that Saved Pittsburgh* would be repeated in *The Kid from Leftfield*, *Little Big League*, *Rookie of the Year*, and the recent *Be Like Mike*.

8. The love triangle does not disappear altogether. It is most frequently reconfigured as a variation of an Oedipal theme, as in *Bull Durham*, *Major League*, *Varsity Blues*, *He Got Game*, and, to a lesser extent, *Slapshot*, *The Program*, and *Sunset Park*. A traditional love triangle appears in a brief, if not forced, fashion in *The Replacements*. This topic will receive more attention later in the chapter.

9. At the time of writing, it is not possible to include *For Love and Basketball, Remember the Titans,* and *Girl Fight,* in this chapter since these have only recently been available on video so that they can be studied in depth. However, the first and last of these are extremely noteworthy in that the female presence is central to the sporting aspects of the movies. Continuing a theme introduced by *Bull Durham,* the women in the more recent offerings play basketball and box, respectively.

10. In fact, Sandra Curry Jansen and Donald Sabo compare the presentation of the Persian Gulf War to broadcasts of sporting events: "The press briefing room in the field closely resembled the set used by producers of television sport media for pre- and postgame analyses and interviews with coaches of professional football teams" (3).

11. In chronological order, Kevin Costner's three baseball-related roles are: Crash Davis, in *Bull Durham,* Ray Kinsella, in *Field of Dreams* (which is based on the W.P. Kinsella novel, Shoeless Joe), and finally as Billy Chapel. In addition, he plays a professional golfer in *Tin Cup.*

12. When an earlier version of this paper was presented at a conference, a question was raised regarding Chapel's return of the gaze as the scene continues. It was suggested that this constitutes a "repossessing" of the gaze. However, the climax of the scene occurs when Billy tells Jane, "I need you." The emphasis is not on a controlling or dominating version of masculinity, but instead on a masculinity based on (inter)personal relationships. This was the lesson of the perfect game. More will be said on this point later. Interestingly, one of the subsequent papers on the same panel referred to a scene taken from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* which on first glance appears to be the arrangement the scene from *For the Love of the Game* tries to reverse. A female vampire is in the foreground while Angel, the male lead, is in the background viewing her. However, in yet another variation that calls Mulvey's premise into question, she is the one controlling the gaze. She wants Angel to look at her because she can control him, dominate him, and convert him into a vampire. While her sexuality is foregrounded, the scene is about power and submission, and the roles happen to be reversed.

13. Interestingly, professional wrestling, which bills itself as "sports entertainment," is often referred to as "soap opera for men." This relative of cinematic sports is explored in detail in Chapter Three. Another relative can be found in *Piledriver,* a recent play which combines professional wrestling with elements of the sports film narrative structure in a surprisingly sensitive treatment of gayness in the late 1970s.

14. As a further example, many films of the type Gledhill cites and more recent offerings such as *Steel Magnolias* and *Fried Green Tomatoes* can be seen in Canada on the Women's Television Network's "Chick Flicks" broadcasts. This is contrasted with the "Superstation," WTBS's weekly movie broadcasts, "Movies for Guys Who Love Movies." The latter's movie selection includes sports films such as *Rudy, Hoosiers,* and *Major League.*

15. Following the presentation of a shorter version of this paper, it was suggested to me that

undressed players in the locker room were objects of derision or comic relief due to their appearance or behaviour, as in the case of the fat, grey, and balding manager in *Major League*, who does not run away when the female owner enters. He utters, "I'm too old to care," while the players scurry for cover for fear that they might be seen. It could be argued that the manager dares the gaze Subsequent films such as *Any Given Sunday* feature large, muscular men who are not shy about being seen.   .

16. This practice is not without some controversy and backlash. For example, in the late 1980s several San Francisco Giants were accused of harassing a female reporter whom they accused of staring at them and gossiping about which players were well-endowed. Former Atlanta Braves' outfielder, Dale Murphy, routinely refused to talk to female reporters in the locker room and occasionally ushered them out of the room due to his Mormon beliefs. More recently, several naked Phoenix Cardinals were reported to have surrounded a female reporter who had written negative stories about the team.

17. In North America, several former players, including Magic Johnson, Isaiah Thomas, Michael Jordan, Mario Lemieux, and Wayne Gretzky, have earned enough money to become owners themselves, in whole or in part. Franchises in major league sports generally cost more than $150 million. It remains to be seen whether this trend will curb the growth of player salaries.

18. A related fairy tale is that of Peter Pan since grown men play children's games in perpetuity The so-called "Peter Pan syndrome" in contemporary masculinities receives a great deal of attention in the popular press and is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

19. Who can to relate to a player such as Stephon Marbury of the Phoenix Suns, who told ABC's *Nightline* that he saw nothing strange about buying "1000 pairs of socks" in one shopping trip because he does not want to ever spend time "mating" pairs. In the lexicon of sports, former New York Knick Patrick Ewing's statement defending an NBA players' strike, "Sure we make a lot of money, but we spend a lot of money," has become an axiomatic expression of fan alienation.

20. In fact, professional athletes become born-again Christians often enough to make the topic a cliché among sports fans and sports movies alike. For example, a pitcher who "loses his fastball and finds Jesus" figures in *Major League* but has literally dozens of antecedents in professional baseball

21. The future, especially the ownership, whether male or female, is always in doubt in sports films. In *Major League*, the owner wants to move the team. *Any Given Sunday's* Christina Pagniacci wants a new stadium. The owner of the Tigers in *For Love of the Game* does not know whether to sell to a conglomerate that has no interest in baseball or equally disinterested children. A football strike provides the impetus for *The Replacements*.

22. These figures were originally broadcast on *Le Point, Société de Radio Canada*, 4 Apr 1988, and derived from a Stats Canada report, respectively.

Chapter Three:

1. When I first started writing this chapter, there were two wrestling corporations, the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) and World Championship Wrestling (WCW). Since then, the WWF purchased control of its competitor and was forced to change its name to "World Wrestling Entertainment" (WWE) by the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF). WWE has continued to operate as if the latter change never occurred. Its fans do not seem to have noticed either. The WWE storylines were not altered significantly due to either major corporate change. Instead, WCW wrestlers were added to the WWE stories. Therefore, I use "WWE" throughout the chapter for the sake of consistency.

2. In fact, the WWE rarely, if ever, refers to its in-ring employees as "wrestlers." Rather, they are "sports-entertainers," "talent," and most frequently, "superstars."

3. It is important to note the difference between fitness models and body builders and between fitness models and the traditional "eye candy" of pro-wresting. Fitness models are recent additions to the world of sports-entertainment. Obviously, as the name indicates, they are an offshoot of the fitness industry. They appear on the covers of fitness magazines and in the advertisements therein. While physical beauty is important, the models must also maintain (the appearance of) a high level of physical fitness, as opposed to the waif-like ideal of fashion models. There are also "fitness pageants" (for both males and females) in which athletic prowess — strength, stamina, and flexibility — are highly prized. Competitors in both male and female categories are usually aerobics instructors, former gymnasts, or both.

4. In wrestling jargon, a plot or story line is known as an "angle" (Howes 1).

5. This practice is known as the "run-in" ending, in which non-participants interfere in a match. Usually, the run-in takes the form of a "save," in which a wrestler is rescued from sure defeat or from a beating after a match. However, for the NWO a run-in usually serves neither purpose. Rather, the NWO simply walks into the ring and "punks" or beats on everyone with an array of chair-shots, slams through tables, and other moves. They then leave their victims in the centre of the ring in a display of might-makes-right.

6. The Canadian province of Ontario is among the most aggressive in this regard. The province's Bill 147 increases the length of the work week from forty hours to sixty hours and removes employees' rights to choose overtime and be paid for it. Bill 74 was the first to expand the definition of "essential services" beyond police, fire, and medical workers, by forcing Ontario's teachers to be available at all times to supervise children.

7. Shortly after WCW was taken over by Turner Broadcasting (now part of Time-Warner) Vince McMahon made some early attempts to play the family-owned WWE as the little guy fighting the

massive multi-national conglomerate. These included parodic skits with bumbling characters called "Billionaire Ted," "Huckster," "Nacho Man," and "Scheme Gene." Ironically, McMahon had lured most of his talent, including those he parodied (Hulk Hogan, Macho Man Randy Savage, and Mean Gene Okerlund, respectively), away from other promoters, during the period of WWE's growth. Much of this growth was at the expense of the many small, often family-run, independent and local organizations. In any case, McMahon first employed the "us vs. the corporation" story line to attack Turner, but only for a brief time. Eric Bischoff subsequently elevated the structure, but McMahon may have perfected it with the Stone Cold Steve Austin story lines as will be shown later.

8. In actuality, Flair is not the only, or even the first, wrestler to be known as "The Nature Boy." It is arguable whether he is the most successful or well-known. Prior to Flair, "Nature Boy" Buddy Rogers was the first to be so named and he had a career that was as lengthy and illustrious as Flair's. The latter was dubbed "The Nature Boy" because he reminded many fans and promoters of Rogers.

9. In professional wrestling any deception or sham, such as Ric Flair's heart attack, is known as a "work," and is no different than a TV or movie character suffering a similar ailment in order to heighten suspense and further the plot. While it might be argued that all wrestling is a work, when the story line crosses the boundary into private life, it can be difficult to be sure. The quality of the wrestling, then, is best shown in its ability to incorporate the work seamlessly so as to maintain the audience's suspension of disbelief, just as in any other theatrical production.

10. Bad-guys, rule-breakers, and wrestlers who are otherwise hated by the fans are known as "heels." The fan-favourites are called "baby-faces" or "faces," for short (Howes 1,2).

11. The phrase "Austin 3:16" now adorns millions of posters, T-shirts, stickers and other merchandise. The term became wrestler Steve Austin's signature catch-phrase following a match against Jake "the Snake" Roberts, who is a born-again Christian. Roberts made his religious beliefs part of the story and frequently proclaimed the born-again mantra of "John 3:16." During the Austin-Roberts match many fans held up signs with the Biblical reference; this frequently occurs at "legitimate" sporting events, as well. Following the match, which Austin won, he proclaimed "Austin 3:16 says I just kicked your ass!" Although the outburst was unscripted, or a "shoot" in wrestling terms, it immediately became a fan favourite.

12. Angles involving Stone Cold Steve Austin were suspended after the arrest of Steve Williams, the man who plays Austin, in the summer of 2002, on charges of domestic assault. In addition, Williams entered a substance abuse rehabilitation program to treat addictions to alcohol and to pain-killers which allegedly stem from his several knee, back, and neck injuries. The last of these nearly resulted in permanent paralysis. In a case of reality mimicking a fiction that mimics reality, WWE has no employee benefits program and has a history of quickly dropping performers who have medical and/or legal problems. Internet rumounrs and hints in storylines indicate Austin will return in time for the 2003 *Wrestlemania*, the biggest pay-per-view of the year.

13. Originally, each federation had a single pay-per-view extravaganza in which all of the year's various plots would be (somewhat) resolved. WCW's *Starcade* was the first and was held on America's Thanksgiving Day. It was followed by WWE's *Wrestlemania*, which has traditionally been held in March. WWE added *The Survivor Series* pay-per-view, which forced WCW to move *Starcade* to the end of December. Ultimately, more pay-per-views, each with a different gimmick, were added until the current situation in which both federations have one each month.

14. Fans and commentators refer to McMahon's interference as the "screw-job." It became prominent following Bret Hart's match at *Summerslam* in 1997. The match was Hart's last in WWE because he had signed a three-year contract with WCW. McMahon did not want Hart to leave for WCW while holding the WWE Championship Belt. Without informing Hart or his opponent, McMahon instructed the referee and the time-keeper to signal an end to the match as soon as Hart was placed in a hold. Fans were outraged. Thus, one small script change became a powerful plot device.

15. In terms of the various types of matches, it would be possible to provide a purely literary — typological — reading of professional wrestling matches based on the type of contest involved. As Northrop Frye states, in The Secular Scripture, one of the basic forms of fiction is the cosmology, or world order: heaven, Eden, earth, and hell. Matches range from ladder matches, in which the championship belt is suspended above the ring (from heaven) and the first one to climb a ladder and reach it wins, to the boiler-room match, which takes place in the bowels (hell) of the arena. Between these levels are the ring and the floor — Eden and earth, respectively — and wrestlers expelled from the ring are punished by being subjected to numerous knocks over the head with chairs, garbage cans, and other implements, as well as being thrown into the ring steps or security barriers.

16. The word squash in wrestling terminology is a verb meaning "to win a squash match," where a squash is "a match in which one wrestler completely dominates the other" (Howes 3). While they were once common, squashes are now increasingly rare.

17. Other federations include the now-defunct American Wrestling Association, National Wrestling Alliance, World Class Championship Wrestling, World Championship Wrestling, and WWE's previous incarnations as the World Wrestling Federation and the World-Wide Wrestling Federation. Edward "Bearcat" Wright was the first non-white to win a world title, in 1961. Jerry Briscoe, a Native American, had several runs with the NWA belt. Ron Simmons, whom Vince McMahon renamed Farooq in order to capitalize on the fact that Simmons is an African-American, briefly held the WCW belt in 1994. Finally, Japanese wrestler, Tatsumi Fujinami, had a *two-month* strangle hold on the NWA title in 1991.

18. What is more noteworthy is that the intelligentsia becomes enraged when similar tactics are being employed (still) by would-be censors to have books banned from schools. In a recent example, the public school board in Ontario's Durham Region, outside of Toronto, wanted to ban the *Harry Potter* books because they supposedly espouse witchcraft. Another excellent example is

Rev. Jerry Falwell's assertion that Tinky Winky, the *Teletubby*, is obviously "gay" because he is purple and has an inverted triangle on his head and thus should not be viewed by children.

19. I managed to acquire the offensive dolls in the summer of 2002. They were in a factory outlet store in Monroe, Michigan, and sold for less than one-third of their original price. Even in the doll version, the mannequin's status as just that — a mannequin — is emphasized.

20. Often, the professional losers, or "jobbers," are among the best athletes. They do not become top performers because they may lack size, looks, or microphone skills. Their job, then, is to make the other wrestlers look more impressive by "selling" moves; that is, by making the moves look more spectacular.

21. The word squash was chosen deliberately because of its significance in wrestling. Thus, the intent of the sentence is to show that as far as academic and/or cultural critiques are concerned, professional wrestling is literally squashed. That is to say, that although Vince McMahon and others might voice opposing views in popular forums, no credence is given to anything that is said other than the condemnations within academic circles. When I raised this point — that academics and other critics are preaching to choir, and seem quite self-satisfied about it — at a conference, I was nearly run out of the room. The only influence such critics have is to increase the popularity of wrestling every time they criticize it. The effect is similar to age-old jokes about nuns, priests, and other supposedly righteous people. Wrestling fans delight in offending.

22. While "Standards and Practices" was a short-lived tag team in WCW, WWE appropriated the concept and created a similar group, "Right to Censor." The latter formation appears occasionally and plays the role of conscience within WWE storylines. They decry the objectification of women and promote "family values." Not surprisingly, they are among the most hated heels in the organization.

23. For more discussions of the comparative gaze, please see pp. 26-7 and pp. 76-85.

24. This article was originally published in the Globe and Mail, 25 Nov. 1992.

25. For a related discussion, please see pp. 65-7.

26. Susan Faludi, among others uses the image of the automobile as a metaphor for (a certain kind of) masculinity. For example, please see pp. 15-6.

27. The first issue of *Playboy* in which Laurer appeared sold out faster than the issue in which her backstage — that is, real life — rival, Rena Mero, a.k.a. Sable, appeared. Mero has performed in the ring, but her main role has been that of "eye candy." She possesses none of Laurer's athletic abilities.

Chapter Four:

1. In this chapter the terms "video game" and "computer game" are used interchangeably. Strictly speaking, "computer games" refers to games that are played on a home computer; the term, "video games," refers to games that are played on stand-alone game systems machines such as those connected to a television in the home (like Nintendo or PlayStation), or those played on arcade machines. Video game units for the home are more commonly called "consoles" or "platforms." The terms have become synonymous because consoles have caught up to computers in terms of processing power, most players have both types of machine, and most of the popular games are available in multiple formats. As well, manufacturers are adding capacity, such as hard drives, DVD drives, Internet capabilities and interfaces, so that the video game console can become the primary computing device in the home.

2. I chose the terms "playable character" and "character" simply because that is how video game players and magazines refer to the on-screen figure that is manipulated during play. As video games have advanced the number of characters has increased, as has the number of characters that players can manipulate; additional characters generally require additional programming and additional storage space. Often, the number of playable characters increases as a reward for having successfully completed a specified number of tasks. For example, *Medal of Honor*, a game set in World War II, features Jimmy Paterson as its central character. After several "missions" Patterson meets Manon, a resistance fighter, and the game switches so that the player manipulates her. In researching video games in both print and at conferences, I learned that there is no single accepted term for video game characters among academics. Terms include "avatar," "persona," "character." The literary terms, "protagonist" and "antagonist," also apply and I will use them because I am talking about texts that have literary antecedents.

3. By "post-Columbine," Jenkins means the era after the massacre at Columbine High School, in Littleton, CO, on 20 Apr. 1999. The shooters, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, were by all accounts avid video game players. As a result, many observers hastily concluded that video games were the major contributing factor in the boys' actions. This overlooks many other clues, most notably the date they chose for the attack: the anniversary of both the Waco fiasco and the Oklahoma City bombing.

4. A "walk-through" is a step-by-step guide for the successful completion of a particular video game. Many games require puzzles to be solved or intricate moves to be performed. Since many walks-through are posted online, gamers can consult them frequently and easily. Many gamers compete to see who has the first and the most comprehensive walk-through.

5. Obviously, computer generated graphics represent the largest advance in video games. As an example of the advance in technology, the computer on this dissertation was written uses a Pentium 266mmx processor with 96 Mb of memory and a 4 Mb 3-D graphics adapter. In 1998, when it was purchased, it was a reasonably fast machine with a lot of memory and graphics power and display picture quality images and cartoonish 3-D graphics. I have since upgraded to a

computer with a graphics processor (in addition to the main processor) which uses 128 Mb and can display near-movie quality 3-D graphics in real time. My graphics processor is *only* mid-range.

6. It should be noted that Cassell and Jenkins' book was released in 1998. The author of this paper first proposed an analysis of *Tomb Raider* in terms of "cross-gender" (as Constance Penley calls it) or "transgender" (as Cassell and Jenkins call it) identification in 1997, as part of his original proposal for a doctoral dissertation. This is not to say who was first, but to indicate that the observations were made separately and that unlike Cassell and Jenkins, I wish to proceed with an analysis.

7. Following the phenomenal success of the first *Indiana Jones* movie, a game version of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* was developed for the Atari 2600 console. It was based on the earlier *Pitfall* games, which were closer to games such as *Frogger* and *Donkey Kong*, in which players jump over or go around enemies, as opposed to shooting them, than they were to adventure games. The *Temple of Apshai* trilogy for the Commodore 64 represents an intermediate stage in that they combined text and graphics, with the text attempting to compensate for the shortcomings of the 2D graphics.

8. Given that Lara Croft's physique is the most common target for academic critics, it is ironic that the 3-D software engine used to drive the games' graphics is the most common target of criticism by game players and in magazines aimed at gamers because the engine's limitations dictate the sophistication of the animation of the protagonist and other characters. The reason for this is that the engine used in the *Tomb Raider* games is "best at conveying square-like settings, like Egyptian pyramids [as found in the first and fourth games]" (Bauman 60). The engine predates the first game and is badly outdated. It relies on polygonal shapes to map scenes. Thus, Lara's infamous breasts must be simple polygons rather than complex curves. Although Regina, the female protagonist of *Dino Crisis*, has an hour-glass shape, her proportions are not as exaggerated as Lara's, in part because the designers used a better engine. Lian Xing, the female lead in the *Syphon Filter* games is the product of an even more advanced engine, and is possibly the least exaggerated character in an action-adventure game.

9. It should be noted that it is possible to connect a PlayStation™ to a VCR and record a player's progress through the various levels of *Tomb Raider*. In the roughly two hours of game play that were recorded as part of the process of writing this paper, the predominant perspective was the "over-the-shoulder" view, and views from behind Lara Croft comprised nearly ninety percent of the game play on the first level. This figure will drop slightly for the higher levels and as Lara acquires new items such as binoculars and a scope, which are depicted using a first-person perspective.

10. The first part of this title has been lifted from the back cover of the PlayStation™ version of the second *Tomb Raider* game. Its use is intended ironically, of course, and is meant to point to the position that analyzing Lara Croft and *Tomb Raider* only in terms of the protagonist's

appearance is simply not sufficient for a thorough critique.

11. Please see p. 22 for the citation from Mulvey.

12. In subsequent essays Mulvey considers female-centred cinema. However, her approach and conclusions are generally the same. She assumes that female viewers take on a(n ideal heterosexual) male viewer's persona since viewing is an inherently masculine, or patriarchal, privilege. Please see pp. 110-4 for a discussion of these essays.

13. It is worth noting that the *Medal of Honor* series was not fully analyzed largely because it is a first-person game. In the second game of the series, *Medal of Honor: Underground*, Manon, the female resistance fighter is the lead character and figures in all but two missions. However, her gender is entirely immaterial to the game. The player spends virtually the entire game looking through the cross-hairs of whichever weapon he or she has selected, regardless of the character. Thus, Manon is completely undifferentiated from the male character, Jimmy Patterson.

14. The first part of this title has also been lifted from the back cover of the PlayStation™ version of the original *Tomb Raider* game. As with previous headings, its use is intended ironically, and is meant to reinforce the point that the experience of playing a video game involves more passive viewing.

15. The case of Ripley is an interesting one. As William Warner argues in his study of action films, she provides an interesting counterpart to Rambo. Almost prophetically, he states, "by imitating Rambo with a difference [. . .] it might be possible to modify by displacing what has been everywhere at issue with Rambo, Reaganism, and the fabulous cures for American strength — the somber metaphysics of the phallus" (686-7).

16. It is well worth noting that the three stages Frye outlines are roughly analogous to the stages Willemen and Smith find in Westerns. Please see pp. 135-7 for a discussion of Willemen and Smith.

17. Frye refers to the "blood will tell" convention as the "birth mystery" (Scripture 72). This device typically involves a person of "noble" character who appears to be of "low social origin." Fielding's Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews are quintessential examples. Solving the mystery of the hero's birth (or origin) is an essential part of romance and video games.

18. Full motion videos are animated sequences in which the program takes control of the game away from the player. The FMVs, then, are no different than animated films or TV shows. Within the game they serve several purposes: dramatic relief, physical relief (from having to operate the controller), furthering the plot, especially early in the game, and providing *segues* into the next mission.

19. The plot of the *Resident Evil* games also hinges on a biological weapon that was released in a

city — Raccoon City, in this case. The "G-virus" and "T-virus" of these games causes infected people to become zombies. The gamer, playing the role of members and friends of the Raccoon City Police Department, must defeat the zombies. However, like the *Syphon Filter* games, the leaders of the community, including the Police Chief are behind the viral outbreak.

20. In fact, the *Syphon Filter* games, action movies such as *Running Man*, *First Blood* and many Westerns follow the Robin Hood myth of the "good outlaw" to varying degrees. Gabe Logan, for example, has been labeled a "rogue agent" by The Agency and must uncover its plot to rule the world in order to clear his name.

21. In the sentence cited above Lynch uses a parallel construction to emphasize her point. Following the name of each gender there are three verbs, with an alliteration on the first two, to provide further balance. However, at the risk of appearing to be pedantically counting syllables, I should observe that when read aloud, the iambs of the verbs assigned to males echo the staccato of the video gamer's machine gun and signify his solitary nature. In addition, the verbs describing females not only rhyme, but rhyme on the verb suffix, "ate." Although this suffix has multiple meanings, in the context of the three verbs chosen the sense is that of "to furnish with" ("ate"). The verbs themselves stress the significance of relationships, which is furthered by the rhyme, and the rhyming phoneme further implies connection. Moreover, the second sentence indicates that boys "crave," while girls "value." Taken with the first sentence, the element of thought is not assigned to boys. Rather they are willful and reactionary as opposed to the thoughtful and anticipatory nature of girls.

22. Other shortsighted conclusions of this study are cited on p. 47.

23. The CTV documentary on violence in video games, *First Person Shooter*, cites a U.S. Secret Service investigation into over forty school shootings. In these, "only six shooters played video games and game play was not a factor in these cases." Robin Benger, the narrator and producer of the documentary, asked several experts to name specific cases. No one, not even Col. David Grossman, the most outspoken critic of video game violence, could identify a single case.

Chapter Five:

1. I might have just as easily called the elegy "the genre of grief," for this also fits, although not alliteratively.

2. I purposely chose the word "safe" with regard to a space for males who have been sexually abused because they need to feel safe to elucidate their experiences and unfortunately this does not occur often enough in our present North American culture. I also prefer the phrase "males who have been sexually abused" to terms such as "victim" and "survivor" because these words are vague, overused, and have lost whatever poignancy they might once have had. Moreover, they imply and impose the quest narrative of romance.

3. See pp. 157-67 regarding professional wrestling and the shifts within matches for a very blatant and simple example.

4. A "prevalence rate" is the statistical term for the percentage of survey participants whose responses met the minimum criteria to qualify as "abuse." The definition of what constitutes abuse is a matter of some controversy. According to Hopper, the tendency in studies of males is to use a narrower definition of abuse.

5. The topic is covered extensively in Naomi Wolf's Fire with Fire. Wolf characterizes this paradigm as one in which males are the oppressors and females (and sometimes children) are the victims. Wolf criticizes victim feminism's tendency to reduce gender relations to this tidy formula, which she sees as keeping women in the role of victim by assuming that they always are. It should be noted that a critique of victim feminism is well outside the scope and the intentions of my project for such a critique would be fruitless and would detract from my purpose.

6. This passage originally appeared in the chapter, "Men and Boys," in the second edition of Dworkin's book, Pornography: Men Possessing Women. Much of Dworkin's oeuvre appears online on the Always Causing Legal Unrest (ACLU) website, which is maintained by well-known activist Nikki Craft. The group's name is meant to mock the American Civil Liberties Union, which owns the trademark for the acronym, "ACLU," and which has prevented Dworkin and her colleagues from successfully introducing anti-pornography legislation in the United States. The feminist group hopes to achieve extra "hits" on its website by appropriating the ACLU tag.

7. For another discussion of the Panopticon, please see Chapter One, pp. 76-8.

8. Graham James repeats this version of events to this day. In Spain, where James coaches now, the people believe that his relationship with Kennedy was just an affair that went wrong.

9. I was raised a Catholic and I was an altar boy from the third grade through the eighth. Although we occasionally had our "knuckles rapped," by the priest who supervised us, there have been no allegations about any of our parish priests. Indeed, the nuns were more likely to be physically abusive while the priests inspired tremendous loyalty. However, the jokes and innuendos about "strange" visiting priests did occur. Following presentations of shorter version of this chapter, others have admitted to not knowing any "Father Nelson" jokes. Rather than repeat any here, I would simply point readers to the Internet for any of the numerous sites containing jokes and cartoons.

10. It is interesting to note that Kennedy was separated from his mother — geographically — by the change in his hockey career to move to Major Junior A. In his previous home life, he had a stronger relationship with his mother because she allied with him when his father beat him (and sometimes beat her when she attempted to defend the boy). The separation was forced and untimely, to say the least.

11. This type of movement, at such a young age, is not at all uncommon for Canadian youths involved in minor hockey. For example, Guy Lafleur was only twelve when he left his home in Buckingham to play Major Junior A hockey in Quebec City. Several friends and acquaintances of mine left home between the ages of fourteen and sixteen to play hockey. Usually the boys are billeted with established families in the community. The current rules mandate that players be at least sixteen to play Major Junior A , the top amateur level. However, most of the cities that have an a Major Junior A team also have Midget, Junior B or Tier II Junior A teams, which have younger players. Thus, talented younger boys are encouraged to move to the larger centres to play with better competition and to be scouted. Perhaps the most dramatic move was that of the New York Rangers' Petr Nedved, who was only fifteen when he defected from the former Czechoslovakia during a hockey tournament in British Columbia.

12. A "dissociative episode" is the currently accepted psychological term for a person's shift into one of his or her personalities. The term is derived from "dissociative personality disorder," which has replaced "multiple personality disorder." I have used the term here quite knowingly because of my contention that the narratives told about abused boys are equally dissociative on the part of a public which is unwilling to openly discuss such matters or accept such men as anything but broken or damaged.

13. The release of *The Boys of St. Vincent* was delayed in Canada because it was feared that it might affect the outcome of legal actions against the Christian Brothers, the Catholic order which ran the Mt. Cashel Orphanage and several others across the country in which the abuse occurred. The Christian Brothers now face bankruptcy and may be disbanded because of the damages courts have ordered them to pay to the dozens of victims. As in the current cases in the United States, an attempted cover-up and the church's policies regarding celibacy and homosexuality draw most of the scrutiny.

14. It is worth mentioning that the popular teen-drama, *Dawson's Creek*, featured a story involving a female teacher who slept with a student. *Boston Public* offered a female teacher sleeping with a recent graduate. In an episode of *Ally McBeal*, which has the same production team as *Boston Public*, the title character defends a woman who admits to having sex with a minor. During the woman's cross-examination Ally fantasizes about the plaintiff. Later she has a date with him. Several actual cases inspired the shows. Most prominent among the cases are Mary Joe Letourneau, Laura Glen Sclater, Heather Ingram, and Amy Gehring. The last teacher created a trans-Atlantic stir by allegedly having sex with several boys while she was teaching in the UK. Gehring subsequently fled back to Canada.

15. It is interesting to analyze further Otnow Lewis' statement, "It engenders rage, it engenders helplessness." While "engender" means to "beget" or "procreate," it shares its etymology with that of "gender" ("engender," def. 1). The prefix, "en," means "to put into" ("en," def. 1). The term "gender" generally refers to "maleness" or "femaleness," but Otnow Lewis is speaking only of males. So sexual abuse not only begets "rage" and "helplessness," it puts these emotions specifically into males Moreover, gender is a "subclass within a grammatical class of a language

that is partly arbitrary, but also partly based on distinguishable characteristics (as shape, social rank, manner of existence, or sex) and that determines agreement with and selection of other words or grammatical forms" ("gender," def. 2a). One could argue that Otnow Lewis' statement indicates that males who have been sexually abused belong to a linguistic subclass that has been assigned to them in part arbitrarily, in part based on their sex, and that the cycle-of-abuse myth enforces such an assignment.

16. In its five-year-run, *South Park* perhaps has dealt with molestation more than any other program on television. "Cripple Fight" includes a subplot involving a campy gay boy scout leader who is forced to resign only to be replaced by a macho, heterosexual pedophile. Another episode, "Cartman Joins NAMBLA," features the boy whose mother is a hermaphroditic crack whore joining the North American Man-Boy Love Association, an actual organization, because his friends do not understand him. The FBI wants to entrap NAMBLA's members but mistakenly raids the North American Marlon Brando Look-Alikes' convention. Although *South Park* presents issues not discussed elsewhere, the attacks have so many targets that the satire at times becomes indecipherable. The most important theme throughout the show's history is that parents do not understand their children, often because they are too self-absorbed. Thus each episode is just a different way of telling that story.

17. Mr. Garrison's gender confusion is a recurring theme. He employs a puppet called "Mr. Hat" as a teaching device, but Mr. Hat develops a character which is the externalization of Garrison's gayness.

18. At the end of *Sleepers* the producers include a note that the New York District Attorney's office denies that the trial portrayed ever took place. Their word is good enough, apparently, because they do not mention whether or not they bothered to verify the claims of the author or the Attorney's office.

19. As mentioned earlier, the Kruze case came to be known more for its impact on hockey than on victims. Hall's article is about the Toronto Maple Leafs' move from Maple Leaf Gardens, where Stuckless orchestrated his assaults. It is interesting, if morbid, to note that the Bloor St. Viaduct is Toronto's most frequent site for suicides and is said to be the world's second most frequent, after the Golden Gate Bridge.

20. Apotheosis is literally the "elevation to divine status: DEIFICATION" or "the perfect example; QUINTESSENCE" ("apotheosis").

21. In fact, George Bonanno, a psychology professor, contradicts the popular notion that people need to talk through their grief to reach "closure." In his studies, Bonanno "found that those who focused on their pain, either by talking about it or displaying it in their facial expressions, tended to have more trouble sleeping and maintaining everyday functions. In other words, there may be benefits to the [now] discredited practice of keeping [a] stiff upper lip" (Labi 43).

22. Amazingly, the movie does not like to talk about this stuff either. It instead relies on the audience's previous knowledge of the story, inference, and narrative style to develop the story. Only once, seventy minutes into the two-hour movie, is Kennedy permitted to say "I was raped by my coach."

23. There is a long-standing prohibition on hockey players crossing the centre-line prior to the game, especially during warm-up. Even if it is only to retrieve an errant puck, a player who crosses the red-line generally is assumed to be looking for a fight. Since the officials are not on the ice during warm-up, brawls do occur. One of the ugliest and most infamous such pre-game brawls involved the Montreal Canadiens and Philadelphia Flyers prior to the sixth game of their play-off series, in 1987. While Lindros was not yet a Flyer when that brawl occurred, his team's coaches and management were, and the taboo is well-established.

Afterward:

1. "Have a take and don't suck" is the call for comments on the Jim Rome website. More will be said about Jim Rome later in this section. During Jim Rome's radio program everyone is encouraged to send his or her opinion via phone, fax or email. The only criteria is that your take on any particular issue not "suck"; *i.e.*, that your take is good. It is noteworthy that the encouragement is of the negative variety.

2. In fact, there is (still) a debate about whether or not "profeminist" is a valid term or whether there should be a hyphen between the prefix and the noun to indicate that some separation — that is, difference — always exists. As academics we are supposed to be cognizant of the power of naming and the sliding signifier. I am aware and I do not care. I have tried throughout this work to walk a line between unashamed and apologetic masculinities; I will not gloat and I will not grovel. I would also prefer to let others more qualified than I engage in disputes about hyphens.

3. Although our arrangement is not purposely political, I have to admit that on several occasions we have enjoyed the shock my colleagues — both male and female — get when informed of my spouse's profession. The shock is enhanced given that those currently entering the Humanities are often consciously choosing to avoid technology and have definitely chosen to avoid math and science — areas in which women are still underrepresented.

4. According to his website, Rome is syndicated to over 200, but slightly less than 200 are listed among the affiliates. Approximately 2.5 million listeners are claimed.

5. In baseball slang, "to get run" means "to be ejected from the game." On Rome's show, offensive callers are "run" or "ejected." The show's slang, or "gloss" as it is called, is a mixture of sports sayings, neologisms and nicknames. For example, the "Shaq-put" is a derogatory reference to basketball star Shaquille O'Neal's inability to shoot free throws. It is a combination of "Shaq," O'Neal's nickname, and the track event, the shot put.

6. In the last instance, it is a sports, if not cultural, truism that respect is measured in dollars and cents. Unfortunately, academia is not immune to this trend. Academics have been pushed into this corner by shrinking education budgets and, especially in the Humanities and "Soft Sciences," the need to justify work that seems esoteric to those outside the academy. Thus, insofar as research grants and fellowships are a measure of academic success, respect is measured in dollars and cents.

Appendix A

Figure 1: Picture to which Susan Bordo refers in "Reading the Slender Body" (89).

DRESSING UP: New York designer Kenneth Cole presented this suit and tie look at the recent New York fall fashion shows.
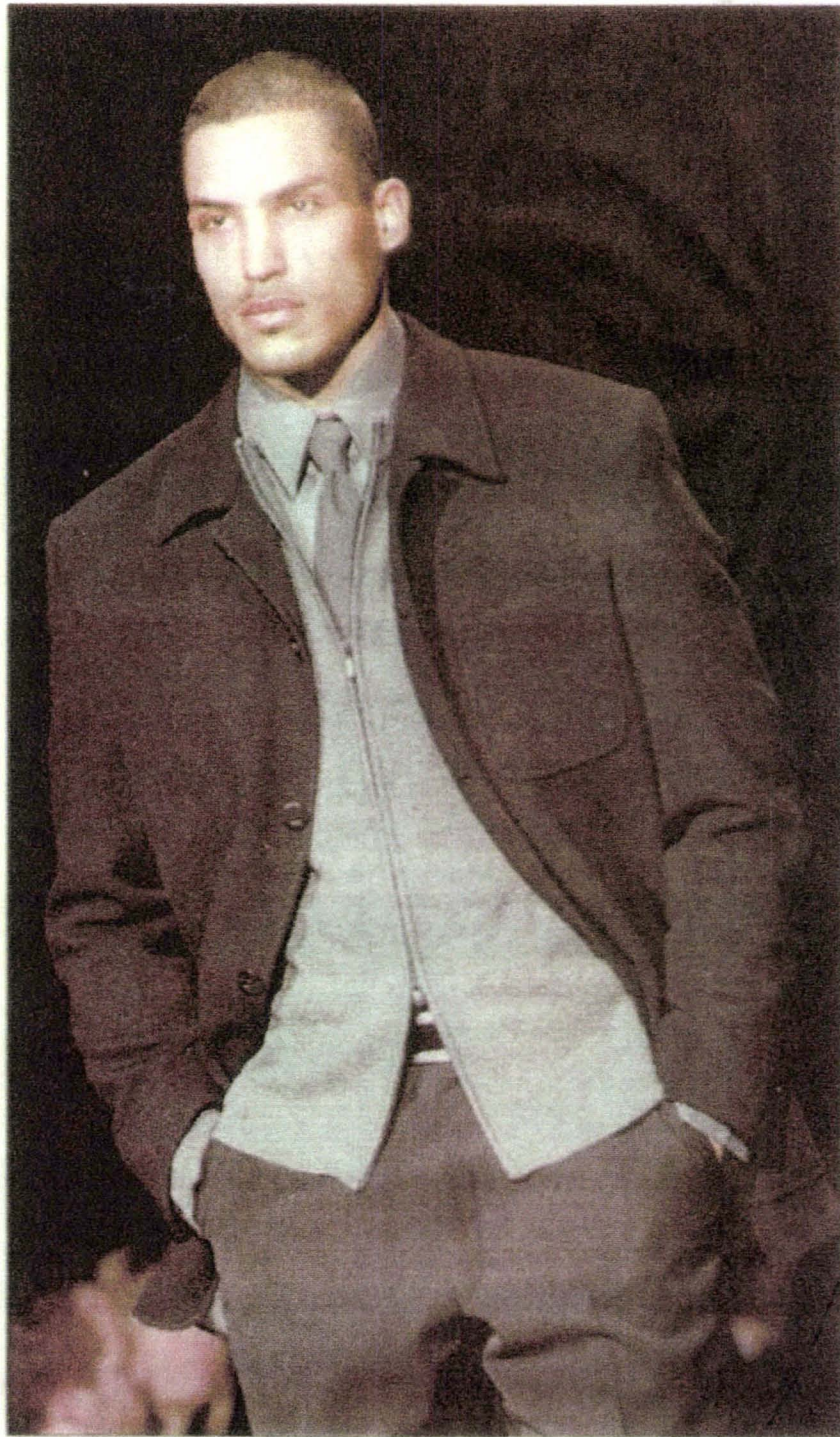
Figure 2: photo by Vince Talotta, *Toronto Star* 10 Feb. 2000, L2

Figure 3: Vince Talotta photo, *Toronto Star*, 10 Feb. 2000, L7
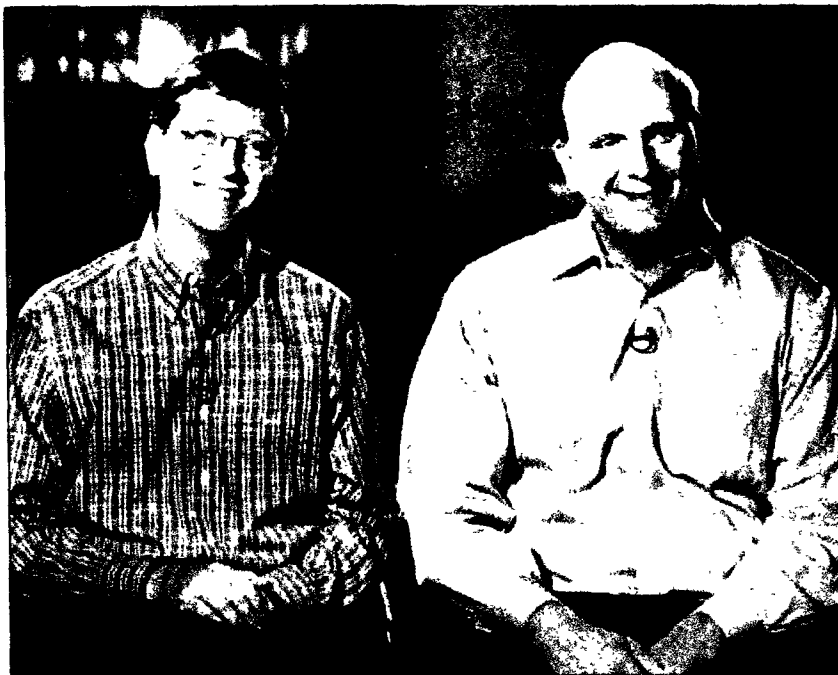
ROLE MODELS: No neckties were seen last July when Bill Gates, left, announced Steve Ballmer, right, would take over as Microsoft president.

Figure 4: Reuters Photo, *Toronto Star* 7 Feb. 2000, D6

WEIGHTY ISSUE: Bodybuilding can be a healthy form of exercise and competition, but in some cases it is an obsession.

Figure 5: *Toronto Star* file photo, 17 Jan. 2000, D7.

Figure 6: *Toronto Sun*, 27 Aug. 2000, "NFL Preview" 7.

Figure 7: *Toronto Star*, Ontario Ed., 23 Feb. 2000, A9.

Figure 8: *Toronto Star*, Ontario Ed., 28 Jan. 2000, G3.

Figure 9: from progenis.com.

Figure 10: From progenis.com

Figure 11: Boris Spremo photo, *Toronto Star* special cover, 1 Sept. 1995.

Figure 12: Hair Club for men photo.

Figure 13: Dick Lock photo, *Toronto Star*, 3 Feb. 2000, H1.

Appendix B

Figure 1: A Good Thing
Martha Stewart with The Rock
(Newsweek photo)

Figure 2: Gambling on retirement
Americans who earn $35,000 or less believe
they are more likely to accumulate a $500,000
nest egg by winning a lottery than by savings
and investment. (USA Today)
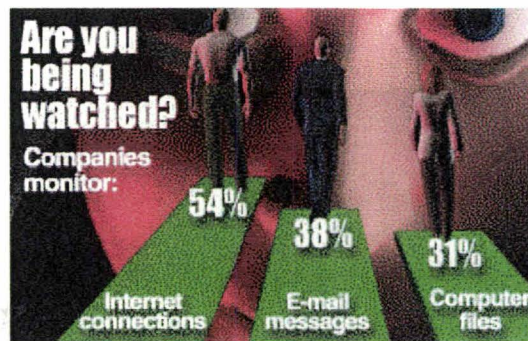
Figure 3: Big Brother
About 74% of companies do some form of
electronic monitoring of employees. (American
Management Association, qtd. in USA Today)
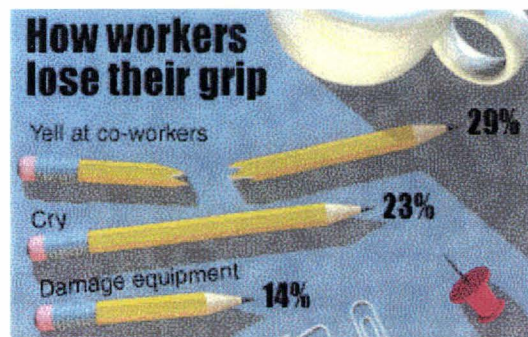
Figure 4: How workers lose their grip
A third of American workers say unreasonable
deadlines and rude co-workers or clients are
major sources of workplace stress. (Opinion
Research Corp., qtd. in USA Today)
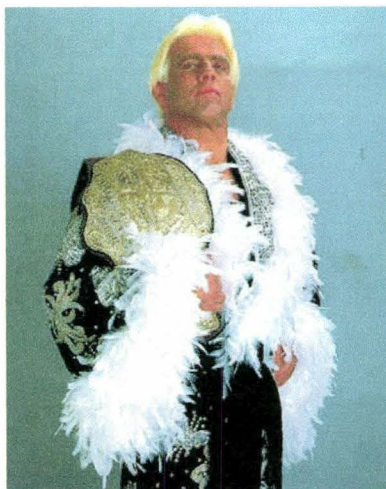
Figure 5: The Nature Boy
Ric Flair, wearing one of his
signature robes, poses with his
belt. (Slam! Wrestling)

Figure 6: Beating the Boss
Ric Flair pounds Eric Bischoff (Pro
Wrestling Illustrated).

**Figure 7: Stone Cold
Steve Austin**

Figure 8: Chyna (a.k.a.
Joannie Laurer)
(PWI)

Appendix C

Figure 1: Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*
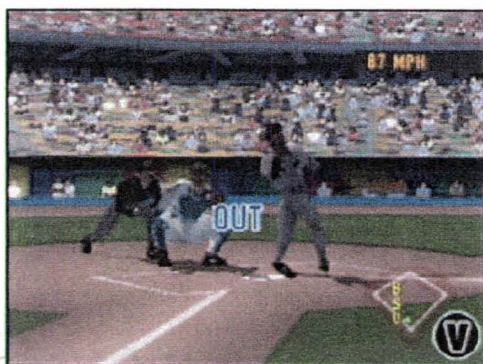

Figure 2: Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*

Figure 4: *Major League Baseball Featuring Ken Griffey Jr.*

Figure 3: Jill Valentine from *Resident Evil*

Figure 5: View of Lara during game play in *Tomb Raider* (PC version).

Figure 6: View of Lara Croft during game play in *Tomb Raider* (PC version).
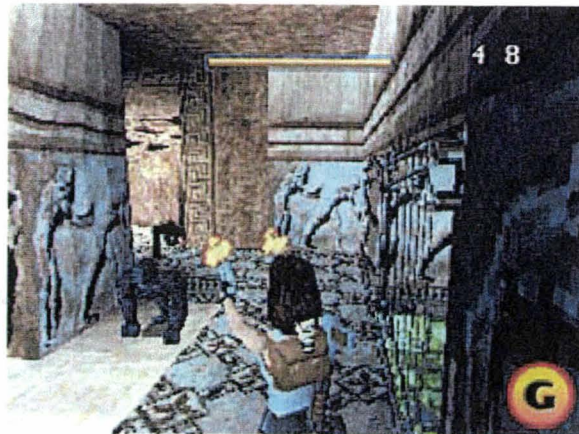
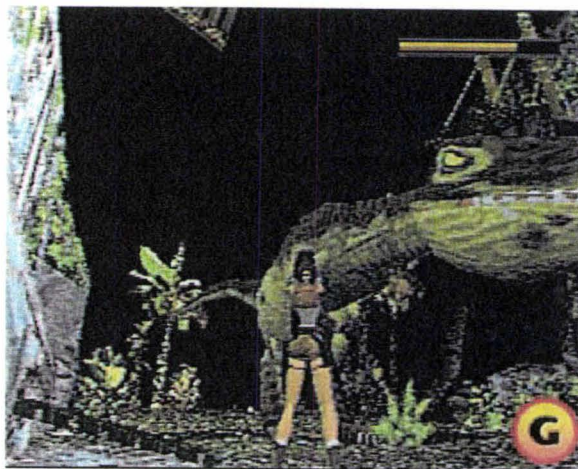**Figure 7**: View of Lara Croft during game play in *Tomb Raider* (PlayStation version).

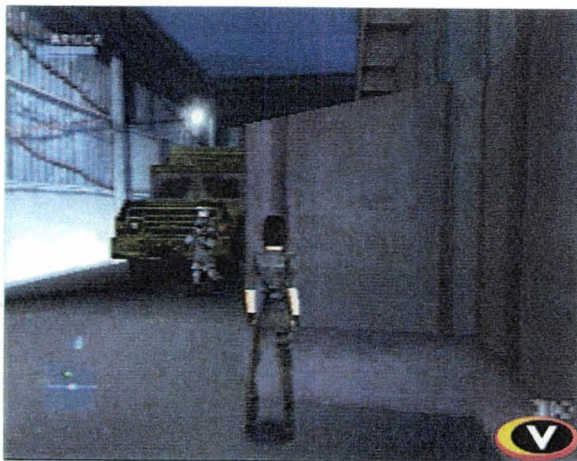**Figure 8**: View of Lara Croft during game play in *Tomb Raider* (PlayStation version).

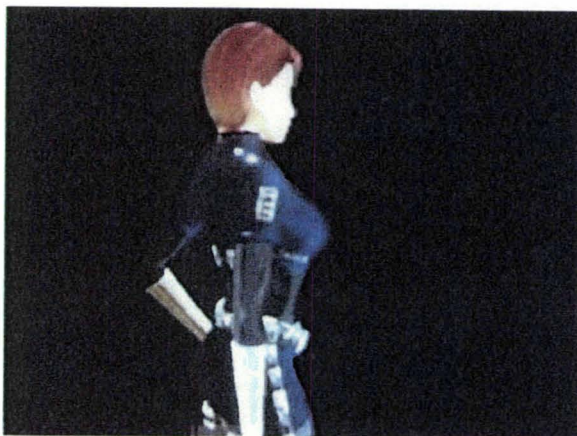**Figure 9**: View of Lian Xing during game play in *Syphon Filter II*.

Figure 10: Joanna Dark from *PDZero*, the sequel to *Perfect Dark*.

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