Chapter 1
A CRISIS IN MASCULINITY

A number of economic, social and cultural changes in the period leading up to the 1980s challenged traditional ideas of masculine identity. Changes in the nature of work and the organisation of the family required a renegotiation of masculinity based on concepts of the breadwinner or family provider, and the father as head of the household. Social movements such as feminism, and gay and racial rights movements undermined the traditional position of the white male in society. The expansion of female gender roles that followed the second wave of feminism insisted on a redefinition of hegemonic male roles. All of these factors combined to destabilise ‘masculinity’ as a cultural category in a way that has been read as a ‘crisis’ in masculinity in the eighties.

Masculinity and work

Hegemonic, or normative, notions of masculinity are constantly constructed and renegotiated within the context of an evolving social structure (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985:89). While institutions such as legal and education systems, and culture carriers such as television and popular entertainment are important sites for this negotiation "the workplace is one of the main sites where masculinity is constructed" (Williams, 1992:58). The linkages between the workplace and masculine identity accompanied a cultural shift to a dependence on one form of work, paid employment. Pahl describes nineteenth century Britain where there existed a high level of self-provisioning and a reliance on multiple earners within the family group. After the Second World War the wage of a single earner was sufficiently high to sustain a whole family, self-provisioning declined, women and children ceased working outside the home, the image of the male breadwinner grew, and the workplace became a male dominated arena (Pahl, 1984). Success in the workplace came to define masculinity itself. "Men were judged as men by the level of living they provided" (Bernard, 1989:227). Their masculinity was validated at work and by work. The concept of ‘the worker’ came to represent one gender, males. Sociological analysis has tended to agree on the centrality of work in the lives of men. Tolson (1977:81) argued that "in our society the main focus of masculinity is the wage". Ford (1985:206) found men initially reluctant to talk about their lives, except for their work and employment. Ingham (1984) also found a dominance of work in the lives of the men studied, and an acceptance of that dominance. Donaldson (1991) found that for working class men their sense of masculinity was 'crucially formed' in the home and
the workplace. As Connell expresses it "Clearly, conditions in the capitalist workplace have a powerful influence on the construction, or at least the expression, of masculinity for the men employed there" (1991:142).

Normative ideas of the masculine, which tie masculine identity to the workforce, persist in the face of wide ranging changes in the nature of paid employment. It is suggested (Carrigan et al, 1985) that very large numbers of men are complicit in sustaining hegemonic forms of masculinity, even when their own experience of masculine identity is far removed from the ideal. While for many men a sense of self is shaped, not in relation to the workplace, but in terms of their relationship to a labour market where they are unable to find employment, their sense of masculinity, in the abstract, is bound to a notion of achievement in paid work.

The seventies were a period of rapid change in the nature of work, as social changes introduced new groups to the workplace (women, ethnic minorities, and the large number of young people known as the baby-boomers); economic changes spawned new industries and sent established ones into decline; and rapid technological change revolutionised traditional competences and devalued age-old skills (Howard, 1985:2). The proportion of families in which men were the 'breadwinner' or sole provider significantly declined, from 42% in 1960 to 15% in 1988 (Wilkie, 1991:111). Social and economic shifts substantially reduced the dominance of men in the workforce. The jobs predominantly held by men were in a declining segment of the economy, while the major employment opportunities from the seventies have been the low wage jobs of the service industries, which are seen as women's jobs. The industrial sector which typically employed males is being replaced with high technology manufacturing positions, with fewer, less well paid, jobs available (Wilkie, 1991:113).

Cockburn's study of compositors in the newspaper industry in London at the end of the seventies uncovers situations and concerns that could be said to be exemplary of the workplace at the time. The compositors, as a group, were skilled, well paid and secure in their employment, within a patriarchal craft culture, until the social, economic and technological upheavals of the seventies. Computerised photocomposition was introduced to replace the 'hot metal' technique of preparing type for letterpress printing. As a result, jobs were lost, men were retrained for positions they saw as less manly, their place on a skilled/unskilled hierarchy became less certain, they were working with/competing against women for the first time. Cockburn summarises, "Computerised composition has hit the compositors' craft a terrible blow, shaking the class and gender relations
that have been developing over hundreds of years, throwing them into a maelstrom of confusion. And they are not alone: throughout society, patterns of work and consumption are being affected" (1983:216).

Despite the confusion and contradictions engendered by technological modernisation in the predominantly male workforce, to the extent that anyone has an interactive and influential relationship with technology, it is men (Cockburn, 1983:231). Science and technology are culturally accepted as the domain of men. Patriarchal masculinity establishes its hegemony through a physical power but also through the power of reason. Connell (1995:165) describes an historical division between forms of masculinity organised around direct domination, and forms organised around technological knowledge, suggesting that the latter have challenged the former for hegemony in advanced capitalist societies. Winter and Robert see "instrumental rationality" and "technocratic consciousness" as the "quintessentially modern masculine style" under late capitalism (1980:271). They argue that patriarchal masculinity is now legitimised by the technical organisation of production, rather than imposed by physical or legal force. The notion of masculinity is shaped to fit the needs of work within a corporate culture: "increasingly one finds masculinity identified with the traits that represent the individual internalisation of the forms of technical reason, for it is technical reason itself that constitutes the major form of repress in contemporary society" (Winter & Robert, 1980:270).

The idea that men are rational while women are emotional is a familiar one in patriarchal ideology, and one that is used as a 'common sense' legitimisation of modern patriarchy. But Connell's male life-history studies show that rationality can be a disturbing ethos for males, as "its institutionalisation in the knowledge-based workplace corrodes authority and sets up tensions within hegemonic masculinity" (1995:181). Technical reason as essential masculine style creates conflicts, along class lines, in undermining a bodily sense of masculinity. By the eighties, the rights and powers of skilled working class men were under threat. The essentially manual work that they performed called for physical strength and endurance, and for 'hands on' skills, a masculinity that was comfortably, visibly, of the body. The technologies of labour and the accompanying growth in a 'credentialism' that arose out of "a higher education system that selects and promotes along class lines" re-defined middle-class men as the 'skilled workers' of the eighties (Connell, 1995:55).
The new technology altered the familiar connection between masculinity and machinery. While the machinery of the industrial age required mastery by physical strength, the technology of the information age required a more sedentary, passive approach – the machine is master, man the helper. Much of the keyboard work associated with the ‘modern’ workplace was originally classified as ‘women’s work’, and although advertising aggressively associates computers with signifiers of hegemonic masculinity, the joint threats of mechanisation and feminisation remained for many men. "With the computer running the operation they don’t need my muscle. And they don’t need my skill with the lathe and the drill presses anymore. Work gets simple enough and they turn it over to the girls" (Pete quoted in Astrachan, 1989:241). So while many men in the eighties were unable to find employment that enhanced their sense of self, their sense of masculine identity was still informed primarily by notions of achievement in paid work.

Masculinity and paternity

In America before the nineteenth century the dominant mode of fatherhood was a patriarchal model. Subsistence farming meant that the father was the chief of production but every member of the family beyond early childhood actively contributed in providing the family’s needs. The father was in and out of the house during the day, and children worked side by side with the father on the farm so the father took primary responsibility for the physical, intellectual, and moral or spiritual growth of his children. Through his control of land the father had control over his sons and the rate at which they gained independence (Rotundo, 1987:65-67). With the growth of populations in the towns after 1800, and the decline in the amount of land available the father’s role changed. A simultaneous emergence of a belief that women were inherently more moral, more spiritual and more nurturant than men, also brought about changes in the dominant mode of fathering. In the towns, the middle class father was less present in the home, and the mother became the core of the family. The father had a diminished paternal role. He was the producer, the breadwinner which reinforced his role as head of the family, he possessed the knowledge of the outside world which he passed on to his sons, but he lived outside the primary emotional currents of the family (Rotundo, 1987:68-71). The ‘modern’ model of fatherhood supported the development of a cultural belief that mothers were more competent at caring for children, and that therefore they should have major responsibility for childcare. An accompanying cultural stereotype of masculinity did not include care giving behaviour as a norm, the expectation being that males would not perform a nurturant role within the family. While research has not lent any strong support to the theory that there are sex based differences in responsiveness to children or competence in nurturing (Russell, 1983:114), the belief was that father’s expertise within the family was primarily as producer, not nurturer.
Industrialisation generated a system of rigid sex stratification, where the female performed unpaid work within the home to allow the male to undertake paid work outside the home. With the evolution of 'housewife' and 'breadwinner' roles parenting came to be seen as innately female, to the extent that other models of parenting seemed abnormal. 'Breadwinners' came to be evaluated primarily in terms of their ability to provide material goods for their families. Success for males came to be measured in terms of job security and occupational achievement, and the accumulation of possessions. Success, under these terms, is more or less incompatible with participant fathering, as it is dependent upon time-consuming, competitive, non-emotional, self-centred practices.

By the 1970s a rising divorce rate, and an increase in single motherhood, pushed a trend towards absent fathers to a level where it had a major influence on the duties and values on which modern fatherhood is based. With a growing percentage of women in the labour force, the father's position as source of worldly knowledge, and his role as sole provider or 'breadwinner' was significantly eroded. The 1980s recession in western countries was accompanied by record levels of unemployment, limiting or threatening the ability of many men to be 'successful' in hegemonic terms. At the same time feminist values insisted on a more participant approach to fathering.

So the eighties saw a crisis in paternity in that the underpinnings of contemporary fatherhood had been undermined by a variety of social and economic forces, which led to widespread role conflicts for fathers. On one hand their traditional role had been eroded, and they were drawn or expected to play a more nurturant role within the family. On the other hand, pressures of external work, their lack of developed nurturing skills, and their perception of domestic duties as essentially effeminate, discouraged a participant role in parenting (Benokraitis, 1985:262-5). The breadwinner role was less often available, and women, and many men, wanted men to take up a more nurturant role within the family, but this new role was in conflict with normative beliefs about fatherhood.

**Masculinity and relationships**

The images of friendship in popular mythology are historically male dominated and expressed in terms of heroism – bravery, loyalty, and mutual respect. Our culture has traditionally viewed male friendship as embodying the ideals of comradeship and brotherhood, as being forged in 'adversity', through 'achieving despite the odds', and in 'enduring hardship' together. When images of ideal friendship are expressed in 'female' terms – intimacy, trust, caring, nurturing – traditional male friendships are essentially excluded. Eighties research suggested that women's friendships with each other were based on shared intimacies, self-revelation, nurturance and emotional support,
while men's friendships were marked by shared activities. Women looked for friends to share their thoughts and feelings, while men sought partners for activities (Aukett, Ritchie & Mill, 1988; Wright, 1982; Rubin, 1985; Sherrod, 1987; Reid & Fine, 1992). Four barriers to intimacy among males existed: competition and its inhibiting effect on self-disclosure; a lack of role models of intimate male relationships in the family and broader society; a fear of appearing vulnerable, or dependent, corresponding to a need to be in control; and homophobia (Lewis, 1978).

Heterosexual masculinity is defined by what it is not—not feminine, not homosexual. Thus to be masculine meant avoiding any behaviours that could be construed as feminine, or gay, and this included emotionally close friendships with other men. "The possible imputation of homosexual interest to any bonds between men ensured that men had constantly to be aware of and assert their difference from both women and homosexuals" (Segal, 1990:139). Owens (1987:230) quotes Foucault as saying that: "The disappearance of friendship as a social institution, and the declaration of homosexuality as a social/political/medical problem, are the same process." It was with the emergence in the nineteenth century of concepts of homosexuality in terms of a social identity and not just a sexual act, that romantic male friendships declined. Homophobia has limited the acceptance of loving male relationships and has led to the denial by men of the important place of intimate male to male relationships in their lives. The higher profile of homosexuality accompanying gay rights movements since the seventies led to an increase in homophobia and a growing pressure on males to appear 'not gay' (Weeks, 1981).

Seiden and Bart (1975:220) suggest that "there is probably an erotic component in most close friendships ... but this appears to be disturbing to many people and is denied or repressed." Lyman (1987) in his study of American college fraternities, argued that there was an erotic basis to the fraternal bond in male groups. This erotic bond was neutralised through overt homophobia, and through the displacement of the erotic towards women through exaggerated sexual talk and practice. But sexual relationships between men and women had also changed post-feminism. The social mores surrounding romance were no longer as clear cut, and women were perceived to be more demanding and more assertive of their social, sexual and financial 'rights'. Changes in legislation regarding discrimination and harassment outlawed masculine practices that had been seen as 'natural' and even acceptable in many areas of society. Sexual relationships with women had become increasingly problematic, but at the same time social relationships with women were being increasingly perceived as desirable.
Cross-sex friendship is a social anomaly, in a culture that permits same-sex friendships but emphasises heterosexual love and sexual relationships. Cross-sex friendship is a relatively recent social phenomenon (Swain, 1992:164) that provided a setting for men to expand the definition of male friendship, and explore areas of emotionality and mutual dependency. Surveys found today that, in the eighties, most men named their wife as their closest friend (Sherrod, 1987), but platonic cross-sex friendships were still problematic because of the need to perceive and define sexual boundaries, and maintain these boundaries in the face of cultural images that assumed sexual interest between intimate males and females.

Studies of teenage sexuality suggested that boys tried to gain intimacy through the sexual act, whereas girls more often looked for intimacy prior to sex, or apart from sex (Nardi, 1992:175). For women the separation of the emotional from the erotic seemed to be more easily made. Nardi’s study of sexual and platonic relations between homosexuals revealed that lesbians frequently maintained friendships with ex-lovers, suggesting that the relationship was first established on a basis of friendship rather than sex. Gay men develop strong emotional relationships with other men, but when it comes to sexual behaviour it seems they conform to traditional masculine gender behaviour, using sex as the way to intimacy (Nardi, 1992:183). Men’s increased desires for friendships based on emotional intimacy conflicted with cultural beliefs surrounding masculinity and sex.

**Masculinity and the body**

The dominance of bourgeois culture in the nineteenth century brought with it a `Christian manliness' that stressed spiritual, cerebral and moral achievements, but by the late Victorian era increasing British imperialist expansion brought with it an increasing stress on physical achievement. The emphasis on sport and physical toughness produced the celebration of "a more spartan, athletic and conformist `muscular manliness' by the close of the century" (Segal, 1990:105-107). A rigid athleticism became the dominant perception of `masculinity'. To be a man was to cultivate physical fitness, muscular strength, and tangible courage.

Empirical evidence of the possible relationships between male body type and men's sense of masculinity, and a man's social behaviour, suggests that any association between physique and behaviour is very weak. But there is evidence that people perceived muscular mesomorphs as more `masculine' than males with other physiques (Montemayor, 1978:48-64). The eighties saw an increase in the concern for body image among men. Even a cursory examination of magazine
displays in a newsagency revealed a growing list of titles dedicated to muscular development, and general magazines that celebrated the young, lean, muscular male body through feature articles, fashion spreads and advertisements. One indicator of men's bodily concern is their degree of satisfaction with their physical appearance, and a late eighties survey of American college men revealed that 95% of them were dissatisfied with some aspect of their bodies (Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein, Striegal-Moore, 1987:38-40). The preferred body type for males was muscular mesomorphic. This physique is characterised by well-developed chest and arm muscles, with wide shoulder line tapering to a narrow waist. Overwhelmingly, people assigned positive personality traits to images of mesomorphic males and mostly negative traits to ectomorphic and endomorphic males. "The embodiment of masculinity, the muscular mesomorph, was seen as more efficacious, experiencing greater mastery and control over the environment, and feeling more invulnerable" (Mishkind et al, 1987:41). The muscular mesomorph was seen as the ideal body shape for a male because it is directly linked to the cultural views of masculinity that prescribe that men be powerful, strong, and active.

Men tend to view their own bodies in terms of these active and functional dimensions, and many men consider muscular development as virtually equivalent to physical potency. Muscularity is the key term in appraising the masculinity of a body because muscularity is a sign of power. The potential for muscularity in men is seen as a biological given, men are 'naturally' more muscular than women. So the 'naturalness' of muscles legitimises male power and domination (Dyer, 1982:205). However most people believe that body size and shape are almost totally under voluntary control (Mishkind et al, 1987:43) so developed muscularity is evidence of achievement. Hard muscles signify as well as strength, hard work, and a willingness to submit to pain. The muscular body is a powerful, active, invincible body – in cultural terms, a masculine body.

Feelings of powerlessness had been engendered by a rapid social change, and an increase in physical power or the perception of physical power, was one way of compensating for, or overcoming, a lack of social power. Activities and domains that were once seen as being exclusively male have been decreasingly so since the seventies. Whereas once masculinity could be assured by virtue of a man's occupation, interests or personality, feminism has legitimised these same occupations, interests and character traits for women. The five traditional archetypes of masculinity – soldier, frontiersman, expert, breadwinner, and lord – became archaic artefacts, though the images remained a part of cultural mythology (Gerzon, 1982). The importance attached to the muscular male body, may have been the result of an attempt to incorporate the only possible
options remaining to achieve a male ideal held since youth. "One of the only remaining ways men can express and preserve traditional male characteristics may be by literally embodying them" (Mishkind et al, 1987:47).

The increasing masculinity of the masculine body was in part due to a general increased preoccupation with a particular physical health. During the 1980s health was increasingly seen, not as a lucky asset, but as something to be worked at. A new politics of health grew as a response to the threat of disease, and the fear of the destruction of the environment. The eighties saw a moral shift from sex to health, as more and more the body became the front line of defence in a deteriorating social and physical environment.

The mid-eighties also saw the entrenchment of gender positions based on essentialized notions of sex. In what has been loosely described as a 'post-feminist backlash' popular culture described a rigid separation of the sexes based on very narrow definitions of sex roles. Various popular culture forms reduced adult masculinity to a hard, overly muscled body (Willis, 1991:29). Just as children's toys divided the genders into the categories of Barbie and He-Man; so too did fashion, advertising, video games and other popular culture forms inscribe gender on essentialised bodies.

Popular magazines asserted that the good-looking man was the one with 'bulging biceps', 'well defined glutes', and 'washboard abs' (Sheehan & Reines, 1992:24). Through the eighties more and more was demanded of male models' physiques, with the optimum chest measurement for a model increasing from size 38 in 1985 to size 42 in 1992. The increasing masculinity of the 'ideal' male body can be traced through the developing masculinity of the cinema's 'heroic' body. Jeff Bridges in Stay Hungry (1976) plays a rich young southerner, dedicated to sporting pursuits, his body, while lean, is not obviously muscular. It is strongly contrasted with the body of Arnold Schwarzenegger who is cast as a Mr Universe contestant. The scene in which the contestants pose and display in the street, stopped in their pursuit of the contest organiser (and the prize money) by the amazed reaction of passers-by to their musculature, clearly demonstrates the perception of the hyper-muscled body as abnormal. Yet in Kindergarten Cop (1990) Schwarzenegger's body is unremarkable (or at least unremarked) in the role of an ordinary undercover policeman, and in Fisher King (1991) Jeff Bridges, in the role of a radio disc jockey, reveals in the bathtub a highly developed, overtly muscled body. The highly muscular, 'built' body had become the norm for the heroic male.
While the late seventies and early eighties saw an increased emphasis on the active, muscular body as a sign of masculinity, the male body at the same time became increasingly an object for display. Through advertising there developed an increasing commodification of the male body (Wernick, 1987). Advertisements for sheets, jeans, home furnishings, and toiletries attracted the consumer with a display of the masculine body. Televised sport invited a female gaze at the eroticised male (Morse, 1983:57). An Australian example is the 1990 campaign to attract female spectators to Rugby League, which featured a Tina Turner soundtrack (What You See Is What You Get) accompanying fragmented images of beautiful male bodies, openly hedonistic, blatantly sexual. "Perhaps males are on their way to becoming as dependent on `image' as females; perhaps the inhibitions which surround the gaze at maleness and the mechanism of disavowal which licences it have diminished in importance." (Morse, 1983:46) In the television program Magnum, p.i. Tom Sellick as image, as spectacle, is exaggerated, the eroticism of his body foregrounded and exploited. "Far from repressing the eroticism of the gaze, the structures of fascination in looking at the male body are utilised" to play off cultural definitions of sexuality (Flitterman, 1985:43). The eighties saw an increasing tendency in film, as elsewhere, to frame the male body as spectacle, as body-to-be-displayed.

The eighties saw the rise of `extreme sports' where men were able to test, and punish, their bodies in competition with mythic versions of masculine heroism. Risking the body voluntarily, subverted powerlessness by inviting the pain and suffering that was increasingly part of lived experience. The taking on of physical punishment was not an altruistic gesture of atonement for social ills, but a pre-emptive acting out of those ills, and the construction of an alibi for actual or vicarious participation. The construction of the masculine body as both suffering and powerful enabled a reading of the masculine as both victim and saviour in a period of social crisis. The everyday victim/hero opened up the possibility of the restoration of patriarchal masculinity by simultaneously absolving it of blame and declaring traditional patriarchal masculinity the way out of social turmoil.

Masculinity and violence

As Connell explained, "In contemporary Western society, hegemonic masculinity is strongly associated with aggressiveness and the capacity for violence" (1989:197). Patriarchal structures of authority, domination and control institutionalised violence in most aspects of social and economic life, and associated violence with success within patriarchy. The social construction of masculinity in the eighties ensured that "a potential for violence becomes encoded in the way [men] are defined as men" (Metcalf & Humphries, 1985:87). Violence had become accepted as a valid means of
solving conflict, affirming "a connection between admired masculinity and violent response to threat" (Connell, 1989:196). This connection was promulgated in popular culture in the eulogising of heroic acts of violence, through "the Western cultural tradition [of] the murderous hero, the supreme specialist in violence" (Connell, 1989:196).

The cultivation of aggression and violence as 'natural' components of masculinity, and a congruent ideology of assertive individualism, provided a model of male heroism in the late seventies and the eighties that echoed conservative, individualist modes of social action during the period. Ryan and Kellner describe the "hero-revival films" of the period, where a physically strong male hero allowed an affirmative vision of a future where an unjust state authority might be replaced by "a more genuine, just, and authentic leadership that only the male individual can provide" (1988:237). Violence was a prominent cultural response to crises in masculine identity arising from transitional change (Rutherford, 1992:173). The eighties saw a surge in the number and popularity of films depicting heroic violence, as male physical power was fetishised in the face of threats to male social power.

**Masculinity in crisis**

Masculinity in European/American terms assumes that the way one behaves is a result of the type of person one is. As Connell describes, the concept of masculinity is based on a notion that "an unmasculine person would behave differently: being peaceable rather than violent, conciliatory rather than dominating, hardly able to kick a football, uninterested in sexual conquest, and so forth" (1995:67). Normative definitions of masculinity offer a pattern for masculine behaviour, in that 'masculine' describes the way that men ought to appear and act. But normative definitions produce conflicts as individuals represent the norm to differing degrees. As Connell says, "Few men actually match the 'blueprint'" (1995:70) and the gap between the masculine norm and the actions of the individual produces conflict. Hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity which is culturally accepted as the norm, and exalted as the behavioural pattern which all men should follow in a legitimation of patriarchy.

What was popularly described as a 'crisis in masculinity', Connell explains as "crisis tendencies ... in the modern gender order" (1995:84). He sees the most visible evidence of crisis tendencies in "power relations", where doubts about the legitimacy of patriarchal power were fuelled by the women's movement and changes in the structure of the family; in "production relations", where patriarchal control of wealth became problematic with the growth of women in the job markets, and
the technologising of the workplace were accompanied by a growing level of unemployment among men; and in "relations of cathexis", where tensions developed around the recognition of gay and lesbian sexuality, women’s claims for sexual pleasure and control of reproduction, and the threat to established social order posed by growing sexual freedoms (Connell, 1995:84-5).

The rapid social changes in the period leading up to the eighties brought about changes in lived masculinities, while notions of normative masculinity changed more slowly. The increasing gap between the necessary actions of men and the blueprint of normative masculinity produced crisis effects. The 'crisis tendencies' disrupted normative masculinity, challenging patriarchal assumptions, but also brought about social attempts to restore its hegemony.
Chapter 2
REPRESENTATION AND MASCULINITY

Part of the struggle for hegemony in the gender order involves the use of popular culture forms such as sports broadcasts, feature films, television drama, formula fiction novels and children’s toys, to establish "exemplary masculinities" (Connell, 1995:214). These displays of normative masculinity are in effect disciplinary practices "setting standards, claiming popular assent and discrediting those that fall short" (Connell, 1995:214). But individuals are complicit in these practices; the display of exemplary masculinities provides specific pleasures in that it supports the individual’s constructed sense of self and confirms their ways of understanding the world.

Representation

How individuals see themselves, and how they are viewed, and treated, by others is shored up by representation. Representation determines how a group is presented in cultural forms, and whether an individual is identified as a member of that group. Representations are presentations. Representation always, and necessarily, entails the use of codes and conventions of presentation within a specific discourse, limiting the possibilities of depiction. Discursive regimes restrict and shape what can be said, or read, about any aspect of life as lived. Discourses, in Foucault’s terms, bring cultural objects into being by naming them, defining them, delimiting their field of operation. These objects of knowledge then become linked to specific practices. Practices realise and set the conditions for discourse, while discourses, reciprocally, feed back utterances which facilitate practices.

Representation has a helical relationship to the ‘reality’ to which it refers and which it affects. What is re-presented in representation is not directly reality, but other representations. We apperceive reality only through representations of reality; through language, images, texts, discourses.

There is no primary real world that can be subjected to representation in various cultural forms. We inhabit a world we have constructed to live within. Our perceptions of ‘reality’ are derived from the discourses that organise our sense of the world, there is no ‘reality’ that exists beyond representation that can be used as a measure to authenticate representation. Reality is embedded in a network of texts. Audiences instinctively process the information that comes to them via these
texts, in an attempt to shape it into a representation of something familiar to them, something that makes sense because it is congruent with existing cultural patterns. "Without effort we can identify in the film something we have identified already in our culture as important. Thus the film reinforces the world we have constructed." (Andrew, 1984:47) The media forms that gratify this attempt, that reinforce our particular world view, we call 'realist'. Realism appears to have an analogous relation to an unconstructed world, but it is a representational convention dependent on rules and habits. Our way of conceptualising the world, of representing it to ourselves appears 'natural', because we have become so accustomed to the representation that the ideology behind the choice of representative modes disappears and we take our conception of the world to be truth (Althusser, 1971). Meanings are produced through the signifying systems that constitute representation. The meanings might appear to be 'obvious' or 'natural' but they are meanings that have been constructed through an identifiable process of signification (Barthes, 1973). Signifiers are not isolated, but are in fact relational, meaning is a process of delimitation and exclusion. A signifier gains meaning from the network of relations that it has with all other signifiers, so that cultural meanings are established through the deployment of a network of signs, operating through a range of discourses. Representation functions within a social and historical context, in a capitalist society the production of meaning is inextricably linked to market place considerations. The relationship between representation and gender is constructed within a context of consumption in a particular time and place (Berger, 1972). Representation is always an act of will, a selection and organisation of signs to produce a significant picture of the world.

Odin refers to "the space of communication" constituted by producer and spectator together (1977:214). This space is highly diverse in that it ranges from the legal system to the computer game. In western societies, however, the space of fictional communication is becoming the dominant space. It is through fictional texts that "truth" and "knowledge" are being produced, and social practices constituted. The "Hollywood" fiction film occupies an important place within popular culture, as sequels, tie-ins and spinoffs circulate and re-circulate its re-presentations. The cinema's 'space of communication' is bound up in an impression of reality, produced in part by the cinematic apparatus, and reinforced by conventions of realist narrative.

Bakhtin (1981) does not refer specifically to cinema, but he describes literature as not so much referring to the real world, as representing its discourses. The notion can be extended to film, which represents the languages, discourses, texts, of the world we inhabit. Rather than a reflection of the real, cinema is a mediated version of an already textualised social world.
Dominant discourses surrounding gender encourage us to accept that the human race is 'naturally' divided into male and female, each gender realistically identifiable by a set of immutable characteristics. Film and other cultural forms don't simply reflect a 'natural' gender difference, they help to constitute that difference. Discourse is grounded in relations of power, as contending groups struggle over sites of meaning ascribing 'truth' to a particular construct. One of the sites of contention in the 1980s was the meaning of "difference". Relations of difference are social constructs belonging to social orders that contain hierarchies of power, defined, named, and delimited by institutional discourses, to produce social practices. "Gender differences are symbolic categories" (Sacco, 1992:25) used to ascribe certain characteristics to men and women. Biological naturalism and strategies of realism are used to validate the cultural categories of masculinity and femininity.

Images of masculinity

From its beginnings, feminism has sought to uncover the constructed messages behind the images of women presented in the media, seeing the way that women are depicted as crucial in shaping the way that women (and men) live. The women's movement was instrumental in opening up the image of the feminine for analysis, in creating the environment in which 'the natural' could be deconstructed. "Without the women's movement a desire to question representation in this way could not be articulated, nor would the public or even the private space to do so exist" (Kuhn, 1985:3). Understandably, feminism focused on uncovering the messages about women's identity, and women's role in society, "masculinity remains the untouched and untouchable ground against which femininity figures as the repressed and/or unspoken" (Holmlund, 1993:214). A focus on the depiction of the feminine, while seemingly exempting the masculine from visual representation, helped to preserve a cultural fiction that masculinity is not socially constructed.

In the introduction to *Male Trouble* Penley and Willis (1993:viii) give a list of events which they feel demonstrate the urgency of examining male subjectivity:

- the Thomas/Hill hearings through which sexual politics gained national attention;
- the Tyson and Kennedy-Smith rape trials which raised serious questions concerning the judicial system's ability to deal with the complexities of race/class/gender;
- the steady erosion of reproductive rights;
- a dramatically deteriorated economy with an accompanying increase in sexual and racial conflict;
- a dismantling of affirmative action programs;
- the Gulf War's construction of national identity as a virile, aggressive masculinity;
the rise of 'gay-bashing' and systemic violence against black men;
and the media prominence of a men's movement "whose appeal is a nostalgic return to a reactionary and retrograde patriarchal masculinity as a defence against a debilitating femininity".

All of these point to the 'crisis tendencies' in structures of gender, and indicate anxieties surrounding the 'normalising' of certain styles of masculinity and the institutionalising of inequalities of patriarchy. Analysing the construction and representation of masculinity is one way of understanding those anxieties. The tensions surrounding sexual politics, divergent sexualities, systems of production and the control of wealth, the legitimacy of power, and the hegemony of patriarchy, may be better understood through a study of the representation of exemplary masculinities. The study of masculinity inevitably leads us back to issues of femininity and sexual orientations and the links between gender and race, class and national identity, to the construction of individual subjectivities.

But, until fairly recently, media studies have not considered masculinity problematic, or at least not sufficiently so to warrant detailed investigation (Penley & Willis, 1988). Most media research on men before this decade has been limited to empirical research from a functionalist sociology viewpoint, looking at the nature and effects of stereotyped male and female representations from within a sex-role framework (Fejes, 1989).

Advertising
The gap in existing research concerns the analysis of the ways in which the media produce and reproduce masculinity as a cultural category. Wernick discusses how the women's movement has helped develop an increased awareness of the role that the media plays in maintaining an entrenched gender hierarchy, but in spite of this, advertising by constantly tapping into our dreams and notions of self, maintains its cultural power. For all the strength of the feminist critique, he maintains that "our understanding of how advertising shapes and transmits gender ideology will remain incomplete so long as the question is pursued solely from the side of - and in terms of - representations of women. To round out the picture it is also important to consider how modern advertising depicts and addresses men" (Wernick, 1987:278).

Research on advertising has been primarily concerned with the portrayal of women. However, Fejes' reading of research in this area attempted to uncover the masculinity subtext. He found that research dealing with advertising revealed a "high degree of stereotyped presentation of gender
roles" (Fejes, 1992:13), although by the end of the eighties the studies suggested some changes. Fejes reports that researchers found "significant declines in portrayal of men's traditional roles, such as husband, father, athlete, and construction worker" (1992:14), though qualitative analyses of beer commercials revealed a stereotypical view of masculinity.

Strate's analyses of beer commercials suggest that the brewing industry clearly relied on stereotypes of macho-masculinity to sell beer to men. The beer advertisements provided such a single, consistent, image of masculinity that they could be seen to constitute "a guide for becoming a man, a rule book for appropriate male behaviour, in short, a manual on masculinity" (Strate, 1992:78). In the advertisements, drinking beer is associated with a variety of occupational and leisure activities, all of which involve meeting and overcoming a challenge of some type. According to the commercials, "work is an integral part of a man's identity" and men "fill their leisure time ... in active pursuits usually conducted in outdoor settings ... and in "hanging out", usually in bars", an unrelenting, one-dimensional representation of masculinity that "is clearly anachronistic, possibly laughable, but without a doubt sobering." (Strate, 1992: 80, 81, 92)

In his survey of the treatment of men in advertisements from the fifties to the eighties Wernick found that, although a patriarchal value system endured, in certain limited respects advertisers were beginning to treat male and female as "formally interchangeable terms". The survey suggests that change has occurred in three arenas: "men's depicted relation to their social milieu, to the world of things, and to sexuality" (Wernick, 1987:280). In the fifties men were invariably portrayed as husbands and fathers, whereas in the eighties the trend has been firmly away from depicting men in family roles. Contemporary display ads rarely mention the family status of individuals that they depict. Often people are shown alone, in close-ups that by removing context permits ambiguity, letting consumers from a range of social contexts place themselves in the position of the subject. In the fifties, masculinity, in the themes and images of advertising, was projected symbolically onto the material world through gender-coded goods and contexts. In the eighties the image of the corporate father-god has been scaled down, the phallic styling of consumer goods has gone out of vogue, and the links between technology and masculinity have been weakened.

In the eighties the displacement of men in advertisements from fixed family roles and the decreasing use of masculinity as an ideologically fixed term have been complemented by a parallel loosening of the links between masculinity and a particular type of aggressive sexuality. The kind of active, outwardly directed version of sexuality that was invariably associated with masculinity
now exists side by side with a passively narcissistic version, as men in advertisements appear increasingly as the one to be admired, marked 'to be looked at'. Increasingly the co-existence of both constructions of masculinity (and, by implication, femininity) create a type of heterogeneity. In many ads aimed at both sexes such male-female interchangeability is deliberately constructed, creating a position that can be occupied by male or female, gay as well as straight (Wernick, 1987:280-293). Wernick identifies an increasing trend in advertising to depict male and female not as binary opposites, but as fluid categories that occupy equivalent places in society. However he is reluctant to read this as significant progress towards human liberation, and instead suspects it as no more than the levelling effect of market forces. Wernick concludes that the values apparent in eighties advertising reflect little more than that males are being targeted for economic development and are under going a process of intensive consumerisation some seventy years after women went through a similar process (Wernick 1987:293-295). In order to tap into the desires of all potential consumers, advertisers are attempting to address the full spectrum of gender interests and orientations that constitute society. The end result is advertisements in which men and women are beginning to look and behave in a similar manner, they do not mirror a society in which men and women are culturally, politically and economically equal.

Television

Studies of the 'new' male roles on television during the 1980s similarly showed the levelling of some gender differences, through the construction of masculinities that have domestic concerns and interpersonal relationships as their focus, for example. But again, the softening of the image of masculinity did not reflect a questioning of real gender inequities. Aronowitz noted the disappearance of direct representations of working-class males from television drama in the mid-seventies as "working class male identity [was] displaced to other upwardly mobile occupations (e.g. police, football players, and other sites where conventional masculine roles are ubiquitous)" (Aronowitz, 1989:141). In The A-Team masculinity was clearly defined as related to power, authority, aggression and technology. Schwichtenberg suggested that this encoding of masculinity allowed the right to align "what it means to be a man" with the notion of "the will of the people" and the "national interest" (Schwichtenberg, 1987:382). He saw this as less a re-affirmation of hegemonic masculinity than a mechanism for deploying working-class antagonisms to secure ruling-class hegemony.

Tankel and Banks responded to popular television critics who heralded the return of the macho hero in the mid-eighties. Their research showed that not only had the "unreconstructed" male never
entirely disappeared from prime time, but also that the contemporary macho man was not as hard-boiled as the critics implied. Television columns in the popular press argued that "viewers were tired of liberated heroes such as Hawkeye and Furillo and longed for the return of the macho leading men" suggesting that "viewers desires for old time heroes constituted an antifeminist backlash" (Tankel & Banks, 1990:286). In response Tankel and Banks pointed out that the new macho hero is presented as the target of humour (Sam Malone in *Cheers*), or as an anachronism, a relic of an older society (Mike Hammer), or exists in relation to a strong female character (*Moonlighting, Remington Steele*) in a situation of constant tension between 'new' and 'old' gender roles. They concluded that none of these new heroes seem likely candidates to lead the "post feminist counter revolution" (Tankel & Banks, 1990:287-289).

In an analysis of *Magnum, p.i.*, Flitterman discusses the way that the program changed as the series developed, partly in response to an unexpectedly large female audience. Magnum began as a generic private eye, but as the show progressed "the hermeneutics of the detective-show format gradually became a kind of alibi, a pretext for the spectacle of masculinity offered by the programme's star" (Flitterman, 1985:450). Magnum is constructed as spectacle, as object of the (erotic) gaze in order to play off various representations of masculinity against one another. Episodes of *Magnum, p.i.* continually manipulate cultural constructions of masculinity through plot lines, formal elements such as framing and lighting, and through the secondary men (each of whom represents only one or two components of an idealised masculinity). Magnum, who is "the sum total and idealised whole" of this masculine image is "the figure around which various reflections on masculine encoding and identity circulate" (Flitterman, 1985:43).

After years of female display designed primarily for the male viewer, television began showcasing the male body. In *Miami Vice* "the emphasis of the show lies mostly on Sonny's image, and this image's implicit eroticism" (King, 1990:283-284). Sonny is 'feminised' by his construction as mannequin, he is defined by the way he looks; and by his position within and among consumer products, he is clearly a consumer; and by his problematic relationship to his work, Sonny is often shown being unable to perform his job. King suggests that Sonny is problematised along the twin axes of capitalism: he is a beautiful consumer image, a position usually reserved for women; and he is in continual conflict with work, that which fundamentally defines him as a man. This questioning of traditionally defined masculinity however is at the level of the image, not the substance, of the male. King concludes "*Miami Vice*'s distinctive TV identity revolves around its redefinition of gender roles, but these reworkings are by no means 'feminist'. Sonny may be
feminised by his position, but his character is by no means feminine, a positive affirmation of traits associated with women. Like his stubble, his almost hyper-masculine characteristics (silence, emotionlessness, violence, etc.) "reassure us that [he] is male and that the tenets of masculinity are not in too much danger" (King, 1990:293).

Another analyst who saw the eighties `soft' male roles on television as something other than evidence of the `softening' of hegemonic masculinity, uses thirty-something to illustrate the process of representation. In looking at the characters and plots in thirty-something Hawke suggested that the 'feminisation' of the male roles was less a breaking down of traditional gender boundaries than a re-articulation of hegemonic masculinity in order to maintain its hegemony in the context of post-industrial capitalism. In the series both men and women worked outside the home, but it was presumed that "women can be more indulgent in their choice of paid work because their identity remains less tied to such work" (Hawke, 1990:237). The men's relationships to each other were fostered by traditionally feminine devices such as emotional self disclosure, but "male friendships are still structured by masculinist codes of capitalist work relations" (Hawke, 1990:23). Fatherhood was represented as a focus of the lives of the male characters – all of the major male characters were parents, whereas half of the major female characters were childless. The series constructed a 'new' caring fatherhood for its characters, primarily by contrasting each of them with his own father. But Hawke questioned "whether the symbolic expression of a new fathering ethos should be interpreted as a gain for feminists who demanded changes in the social organisation of parenting, or an attempt by men to reassert patriarchal authority over women and children" (Hawke, 1990:241).

Many of the studies of the male roles on television through the eighties come to similar conclusions; that some gender differences were levelled, through the construction of 'feminised' men who were more responsive to domestic concerns and interpersonal relationships, but that questions of patriarchal power and capitalist work relations were systematically avoided. The modifications of hegemonic masculinity that were seen on television screens were minor adaptations to contemporary social conditions. "Put simply, hegemonic masculinity changes in order to remain hegemonic; significant social change in the direction of gender equality will require more than the 'new view of manhood' offered by prime-time television" (Hawke, 1990:245).

Popular music
Much of the research into rock music and gender relations has focused on the positioning of female fans, (Lewis, 1987; Kaplan, 1987) taking as a starting point the 'natural' links between rock music and the masculine and analysing the space created by/for female performers and spectators. The analyses of rock music as a signifying practice through which particular discourses of masculinity are constituted, are yet to be completed. Frith looks back at the decade of 'gender bending' in rock, suggesting that Boy George, Marilyn, Annie Lennox and their ilk focused the problem of sexuality on males "Masculinity became a packaging problem" (Frith, 1988:166). At the end of the eighties, rock musicians seem to have belatedly answered the Reaganite call for a return to traditional gender values; even the sexually ambiguous Prince insists in 1991, Let a Woman be a Woman and a Man be a Man, Aerosmith complain that The Dude Looks Like a Lady and Lloyd Cole asserts She’s a Girl and I’m a Man. However other performers such as Guns and Roses addressed questions of contemporary masculinity in their lyrics. Black rappers including Ice T and 2 Live Crew overtly discussed what it meant to be black, working class and male. The Revolting Cocks through their name, and in the lyrics of songs such as Beers, Steers and Queers, challenged hegemonic notions of masculinity. Tom Waits parodied macho notions of masculinity in Goin’ Out West. Frith noted that "popular culture has always meant putting together 'a people' rather than simply reflecting or expressing them" (Frith, 1988:168). An analysis of how rock music contributes to the organisation of adolescent gender would need to take into account not just the semantic content of the lyrics, but also the rhythms and instrumentation of the music, the marketing of star personae, and the construction of subcultural style.

Virtually the entire popular music business is, and has always been, controlled almost exclusively by men. The music business mirrors and re-enforces sex bias in society, expressing gender values in terms of stereotypes. In general, the "images, values and sentiments" (Frith & McRobbie, 1978:5) of popular music are male products. The music presents an image of masculinity constructed by males for consumption by "silly screaming girls" (Steward & Garratt, 1984:142). But the music either in performance or consumption, meets or responds to needs, or desires, providing a way of making some kind of sense of one's own gender role (Pratt, 1990:32-33). This 'making sense' of one's identity is informed by a musical concept of individuality. This 'individual' is distinctly masculine, but he appears (or is made to appear) non-gendered, universal.

As with music, there are a range of popular culture forms in which the representation of masculinity has not been given the same attention as the construction of the feminine, and yet anecdotal evidence suggests a return to a more aggressive, less sensitive masculine image in the
eighties. Children's toys are an example where the last decade saw an escalation in G.I. Joe/Transformer/Ninja Turtle toys that re-affirmed links between maleness and macho-violence.

Popular fiction

Women's popular fiction, the way it depicts the feminine, the processes through which it embodies social values, and how audiences interpret and incorporate those values, has been studied since the sixties. Although some analysts suggest that a "post-feminism" woman has emerged in contemporary romance fiction (Hess & Ferree, 1987:210), today's heroine still represents traditional gender values. Fictional women are increasingly depicted working outside the home, but usually in traditional women's occupations, doing work that is less important than the men in their lives; they are invariably successful in their careers, but rarely as successful as the hero; and romance and marriage still remain the heroine's ultimate goal. "With all the changes, the basic message still given is that men are powerful and women depend on romance for happiness" (Hess & Ferree, 1987:210). From this research, data on the representation of males in romance fiction can be extrapolated, for example masculinity is linked to a successful career, physical strength, silence and limited interest in interpersonal relationships. But a study of male oriented fiction might reveal more.

"Cultural products marketed through the mass media are designed to reflect changing ideologies in order to retain audiences. However, they also continue and maintain social order by reflecting and transmitting traditional beliefs deeply implanted in Western culture" (Cantor, 1987:211). The cultural myths of what constitutes masculinity, and any changes in normative definitions of masculinity, might be illuminated by an analysis of male oriented fiction genres such as thriller or crime stories.

Masculinity in popular culture

In a collection of essays, What a Man's Gotta Do, Easthope (1986) looks at the images of masculinity in the media and analyses the 'myth' of masculinity expressed through them. Saying that the construction of masculinity had previously been more or less invisible, Easthope established that masculinity, far from being "normal and universal" had its own particular identity, an identity shored up by popular culture representations. The masculine myth, depicted in film and television, art and architecture, through games and speech, war and work, provides a script by which men attempt to live their lives, and "insofar as men live the dominant version of masculinity
analysed here, they are themselves trapped in structures that fix and limit masculine identity. They do what they have to do" (Easthope, 1986:7).

Bingham analyses the varied masculinities in the films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson and Clint Eastwood, all actors that have "addressed the consequences of white male privilege before a mass audience, deliberately, passionately, as if unable to keep from doing so" (1994:4). Across the careers of the three, Bingham sees changes in the representation of masculinity, including a moving of "the threat to stability from 'the other' to the white male himself" (1994:2) exemplified by Clint Eastwood's Unforgiven. While recognising a 'gentling' of white masculinity in the nineties as an apparent strategy for maintaining patriarchal power, Bingham's analyses reveal that the "undermining of masculinism and the revelation of 'femininities' that conventional masculinities work to contain" (1994:4) has taken place in cycles through the history of cinema, such subversions intermittently interrupting dominant masculinist mythology. In the cinema of Schwarzenegger and Stallone, Bingham suggests that "Masculinism may be harder to take seriously, but it is also portrayed as harder to challenge" (1994:4).

Tasker's analysis of what she describes as the 'contemporary action genre' also sees the Schwarzenegger-Stallone films as being not a radical break with the past, but a redefining of "existing cinematic and cultural discourses of race, class and sexuality" (1993:5). Sylvester Stallone as Vietnam veteran John Rambo, and the even more imposing body of ex-Mr Universe Arnold Schwarzenegger, became icons of masculinity in the 1980s, and Tasker reads the 'muscular cinema' that they represent as affirming hegemonic gender identities while at the same time mobilising identifications and desires which worked to undermine the stability of those categories.

**Media representations as role models**

The conventional position within socialisation theory describes masculine and feminine identities as being acquired through a learning or socialisation process. Socialisation takes place primarily during childhood as boys and girls learn the appropriate behaviour for their sex. Socialisation theories emphasise the cultural construction of 'gender' as the psychological phenomenon of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', as opposed to the biological construction of 'sex' as the physical reality of 'male' and 'female' (Segal, 1990:66). Gender related behaviour is seen as culturally based, as opposed to the innateness of biological sexual difference.
Most socialisation theories assume the existence of pre-determined roles and values in society which individuals will internalise: through identification with the same sex parent; through role playing within the family and then within a broader social environment; through imitation of stereotypical gender roles from teachers, books or films. Training in gender attributes begins at birth and involves every aspect of a child’s life, from the wearing of pink, to the encouragement of noisy, vigorous play. Positive role modelling is seen as being re-enforced through a system of rewards for appropriate behaviour and social sanctions for deviant behaviour. So in this way women learn to be gentle, caring and emotional, while men learn to be ambitious, rational and competitive (cf Parsons & Bales, 1956; Comer, 1974; Belotti, 1975; Sharpe, 1976). Both boys and girls were seen as smoothly learning the appropriate role, acquiring sex typing through cognitive internalisation of the culture’s sex role norms and stereotypes. Gender stereotypes were seen as overwhelmingly coercive, and individuals were believed to actively seek to develop characteristics consistent with cultural beliefs about their sex.

The mass media were analysed as embodiments of culturally desirable role models. A number of studies examined sex role stereotyping in curriculum materials, children’s books and other media and showed that images of the sexes portrayed in such media had an effect on children’s actual behaviour (Jacklin & Mischel, 1973; McArthur & Eisen, 1976a; McArthur & Eisen, 1976b). Television was seen as presenting larger than life stereotypes for children to copy and therefore as a particularly powerful influence in sex role development. Many studies of the seventies showed that television viewers did pay more attention to characters of their own sex group, and that children who watched more hours of television were more likely to have ‘traditional’ sex role attitudes (Sprafkin & Liebert, 1978; Fruch & McGhee, 1975). The plots and characterisations of television programs stereotyped the activities and personalities of males and females, contributing to development of expectations of what constituted gender roles, and influencing the behaviour of its audience (Tuchman et al, 1978).

Though many of the early studies of gender socialisation centred on the stereotyping of the female role as either sexually glamorous or domestic, increasingly socialisation studies have focused on the hegemonic masculine role (Tolson, 1977; Brod, 1987; Hearn, 1987; Kimmel, 1987) looking primarily at the negative effects of role learning such as the emotional retardation that can accompany the acquisition of ‘toughness’.
Socialisation theory does counter arguments that gender differences are based in 'value-free' biology, residing 'naturally' in hormones, brain function and musculature. It catalogues specific social institutions and socio-psychological processes through which girls and boys learn gendered behaviour, and come to adopt a gendered identity. But socialisation theory does not adequately deal with the acquisition of gender roles, and does not begin to explain how those roles are constructed. In a critical survey of sex-role theory Joseph Pleck summarised that "In spite of several decades of research, the factors promoting or inhibiting the acquisition of sex typing within each sex are still not well understood" (Pleck, 1981:65). Pleck argued for a tightening of sex role analysis, limiting the use of the term to a description of external social expectations, rather than including an internalised sex role identity. However his survey did not come to terms with the essential weaknesses of sex-role methodology.

The limitations of sex-role research are based on its questionable assumptions that a society has a consistent and coherent set of expectations of what constitutes masculinity and femininity, and that individuals are consistently desirous of conforming to those expectations. Social psychologists have challenged both of these assumptions noting that: socialisation theory fails to take into account the variety of masculinities and femininities that exist within different social classes, ethnic groups, or historical periods; there is an ambiguity as to whether masculinity and femininity are merely different roles each with its restrictions, or whether masculinity is an oppressive role and femininity a repressed position; 'socialisation' assumes that individuals passively acquire gender identity; and socialisation theory, while it may provide an explanation of how individuals acquire masculinity or femininity, it does not explain how the notions of what constitutes masculinity or femininity have been developed (Segal, 1990; Walby, 1990).

**Media representations, identity, and subjectivity**

In order to understand the complexity of sexual identity researchers in the seventies increasingly turned to psychoanalysis and the precept that unconscious mental processes are the basis of individual identity. This involved a rejection of the notion that cultural sex roles are consciously learned, and a softening of the boundaries between normal and deviant gender identification.

Freud understood both sexes as sharing, in the first years of life, the same potential desires and gratifications. Boys and girls both had an inherent capacity to form attachments to both sexes, this 'bisexuality' expressing itself through active/masculine and passive/feminine components of sexual drive. This sexual drive was focussed in the child's relationship with the mother, either actively
desiring the mother as a love object, or passively enjoying her exclusive love. This love for and of the mother, however, brings the child into a competitive relationship with the father. The father/son rivalry arouses in the boy a fear of castration by his rival, which is sufficiently strong to induce the boy to renounce his desire for the mother and instead to identify with the father.

Freud was not writing about 'masculinity' per se, but rather about sexual identity, and he saw sexual identity as neither biologically determined nor as an acculturation to a set of stereotypes. For Freud sexual identity was psychologically constructed through a complex process of desire and denial, and was inevitably marked by tension and contradiction (Freud, 1900; 1905; 1924). Freud's writings on sexual identity were marked by inconsistencies, his original position being more biologist and misogynist than his later writings which dealt specifically with women (Freud, 1925; 1931; 1933). Rodowick explains Freud's paradoxical treatment of sexual difference in these terms:

"Whenever Freud has recourse to the distinction between 'masculinity' (Männlichkeit) and 'femininity' (Weiblichkeit), he is caught between two contradictory 'knowledges': on one hand, psychoanalysis' discovery that sexual identity is irreducible to anatomical or physiological definitions; on the other, Freud's belief in the norm of the nineteenth century, Western family where sexuality is defined as reproductive heterosexuality organised around the claims of patriarchal privilege" (Rodowick, 1991:45)

The theories of Freud covered two broad, related areas; the development of human sexuality through a long, tenuous process with uncertain outcomes; and the existence of an unconscious as a dynamic force that plays a predominant part in mental life. These foci enabled their deployment to describe and explain both the construction of gender in contemporary society, and the relationship between the representations of sexuality and the workings of desire. As a result, since the seventies a number of writers working in the area of the sociology of gender have re-read or reinterpreted psychoanalytic theory looking for insights into the cultural machinery of patriarchy. The re-writing of Freud has been in two main areas; the object-relations theorists exemplified by Chodorow (1978), and the post-Lacanians who concentrated on the symbolic such as Mitchell (1974).
Mitchell suggested that the theories of Freud could be used to develop an understanding of ideology and sexuality. Through an analysis of how gender identities are transmitted from one generation to the next in an unconscious form, psychoanalytical theory could explain the psychical basis for the perpetuation of a patriarchal society and the hegemonic notions of gender characteristics. Mitchell explained that the way we live our lives, following the 'laws' of society, is rooted in the unconscious, and that "the particular task of psychoanalysis is to decipher how we acquire our heritage of ideas and laws of human society within the unconscious mind, or, to put it another way, the unconscious mind is the way in which we acquire these laws" (Mitchell, 1974:xvi).

Researchers adopting an object-relations perspective re-instated a degree of social determinism and placed a greater emphasis than Freud on the pre-Oedipal phase. Object relations focuses on the way in which the child interacts with its physical environment by constructing a corresponding mental world of 'objects' and 'part objects' that are psychic internalisations of people, or aspects of people, with whom they come in contact. Winnicott sees the child's psychic life as being, to a large extent, a product of the type of mothering it received. If the mothering if 'good enough' the child will develop a secure identity and a well balanced personality. 'Good enough' mothering psychically merges mother and child to create a continuity of being into which the external world can be introduced (Winnicott, 1965:15-20). Chodorow examines specifically the psychic consequences of the female role of mothering, saying that a social division of labour which decrees that women mother "creates a sexual division of psychic organisation and orientation [and] produces socially gendered women and men" (Chodorow, 1978:209). In essence, Chodorow claims that as a consequence of the structure of family relations a woman is in a unique position to initiate sexual difference through the different ways she relates to children of different biological sex. Chodorow's solution to the problems of masculine denial and devaluation of women is equal parenting (Chodorow, 1978:218).
This idea that male dominance grows from the repression of maternal identification has found favour within anti-sexist men's groups, and it underlies the essays in *The Sexuality of Men* (Metcalf & Humphries, 1985). Discussion of male sexuality in the book is dominated by the way in which the structure of the modern family suppresses boys' ability to form emotional relationships. Sexual difference is seen as the outcome of the child's growing awareness of gender role differences, and the association of these with anatomical differences. "What is important to our understanding of male gender identity is that in order for a boy to develop masculinity he must give up his identification with his mother and identify with his father" (Metcalf & Humphries 1985:20). In other words the child 'recognises' that people with penises behave in certain ways, people without behave differently, and on this realisation boys must give up their identification with the primary care giver in their lives, and model themselves on an (absent) father. This line of thought seems, at least in part, to follow socialisation theory.

For Freud, identification with an object or part-object was an outcome of the psychical processes involved in desire and wish fulfilment, not just a simple process of modelling behaviour on another. However, the major limitations of object-relations theory is that it involves a circular argument that fails to address the cultural construction of masculinity. To argue that female mothering creates an ideology of male dominance is to assume a society in which the feminine is already devalued. It does not illuminate the process whereby masculinity, as a defence against femininity, becomes associated with success and power. Male gender identity is not just about the acquisition of socially appropriate gender behaviour. Masculine subjectivity is more than boys identifying with their mothers when young and then switching to imitate their fathers. It is about sexual desire and its object choice and the sexual fantasies through which such 'wishes' are expressed and fulfilled.

For Freud popular narratives were a primary form under which fantasies and dreams might exist (Freud, 1900). In popular narratives the hero is the focus of a fantasy organised through the
narrative, usually functioning in his invulnerability as an ideal ego. In fiction as in fantasy, the hero can serve as an ego achieving the fulfilment of desire (Freud, 1908). Popular narratives serve as public fantasies reflecting "the unconscious preoccupations of a patriarchal culture expressed in an acceptable way" (Coward, 1984:204). The cinema of the eighties seemed to reflect tensions surrounding the changes in the gender order and the increasing gap between normative masculinity and lived masculinities.

In psychoanalysis identification is seen as a process of internalising idealised images and relations from the social surroundings to form a subjectivity that incorporates a sexual identity. Poststructuralist theory, which seeks to uncover the relationship between social subjects, hegemonic ideologies, and particular texts draws upon psychoanalysis but emphasises that masculinity and femininity are not solely the result of psychic processes, nor the accumulation of identifiable traits, or the adherence to stereotypical roles, but rather mark the effects of particular discursive practices. These discursive practices are the conventional ways of conceiving and representing reality as reality, and serve to produce notions of gender difference.

The theories which have helped produce poststructuralism include the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, Louis Althusser's Marxist theory of ideology, Jacques Lacan's re-reading of Sigmund Freud, the deconstruction based on Jacques Derrida's theory of différences, and Michel Foucault's theories of discourse and power. Poststructuralism therefore describes a range of theoretical positions rather than a unitary methodology, but the different forms of poststructuralism share certain basic assumptions about the relations between language, meaning, and subjectivity.

The usefulness of poststructuralism in gender studies lies in the perception that masculinity (like femininity) cannot be reduced to a fixed internal essence or a set of attributes. Masculinity cannot be pinned down to something inherent in the personality, nor can it be summed up as the adoption
of an assigned role. Masculinity can only be uncovered through the study of the diverse and changing relations between language, meaning and subjectivity. Subjectivity refers to the individual’s sense of self and their way of understanding their relation to the world. Subjectivity is constantly being reconstituted, it is the product of the society and culture in which we live, and is therefore produced historically, changing with shifts in the discourses that construct it. Language is the primary arena where our sense of self, our subjectivity, is constructed. Language does not name an existing social reality, it constitutes reality for us; meaning is produced within language rather than reflected by language. The meanings that an individual places on their life, and on the social relations which structure their day to day life, depends on the range and social power of the discourses to which they have access.

Subjectivity is not innate, but socially produced through a range of discursive practices. The meaning of gender, in so far as it constitutes our sense of self, is both socially produced and variable between different forms of discourse. Discursive fields offer conflicting versions of social reality that provide competing ways of giving meaning to the world. They offer therefore, a range of modes of individual subjectivity - for example the conflicting accounts of the nature of ‘fathering’ provided by the various discourses of the law, the men’s movement and television comedy. Poststructuralism, in particular discourse theory, provides a mechanism for understanding both societal institutions and individual subjectivity. At the level of social institutions discourse is a structuring principle. Social structures and processes are organised through institutions such as the law and the media, each of which is located in and structured by a particular discursive field. At the level of the individual, discourses form the basis for understanding experiences. The various competing discourses, and the individual’s engagement with them provide the basis for the motivations and desires that constitute individual subjectivity.
Althusser (1971) argued that a text 'calls' or 'interpellates' spectators. We become subjects through the different forms of address that are part of social practice. These different forms of address represent the workings of ideology, the individuals' response to textual address is what constitutes individuals as subjects, developed from, and inscribed in, social practice. For Althusser it is the process of interpellation and recognition that ensures the reproduction of capitalism, by extension, of patriarchy also.

While Althusser explains the construction of subjectivity solely in terms of interpellation or textual address, cinematic address alone cannot account for spectator identity or subject position. "It is through ideology that one's subjectivity is at once both addressed and produced, and via the social production of meaning that this process occurs" (Rothfield, 1990:136). Barthes (1975) suggests that the text may be re-written by the reader through an interpretive process, that the text may offer up a range of meanings and therefore of subject positions. The relationship between a text and its viewer allows the construction of a number of possible readings, as different spectators bring a range of experiences to the reading and thus interpret the text differently (cf. Coward, 1982; Kuhn, 1982). Shared meanings are only possible through the use of codes which direct conventionalised ways of reading, making it possible for spectators to take up particular subjectivities. Spectators already have social subjectivities which lead them to accept or reject the interpellation of the text. The 'subject-in-process' has an active relationship with the text. Codes of representation work to ensure that this relationship is collaborative, a subject position is inscribed in the text and the pleasure of the text resides in taking up this subject position.

The reciprocal processes of cinematic production and consumption are embedded in a social context. The subject that the cinema constructs is a social one. The representational practices and forms of address of the cinema come from a cultural exchange system. The film constructs the
conditions under which it will be read, nominating the positions the spectator will occupy, but as a cultural product the film itself incorporates social messages or collective representations.

Cinema (re)presents our collective fantasies at a distance, and in an easily consumable form. Metz (1982) states that the film industry trades on a phantom commodity – the production of pleasure. To produce pleasure in the spectator the cinema modulates between several regimes of desire, maintaining the spectator in a dreamlike state. Kuntzel (1978; 1980) suggests that the objective of the fiction film is to construct a scenography of desire where the spectator can re-experience fantasy in the psychological sense of the term. Bellour argues that the spectator "knows that he is 'at the cinema', yet in the shadow of that knowledge, the film does indeed repeat his own dream, his desire to dream. Similarly by repeating itself the dream becomes metamorphosed to fulfil the fantasy" (1979:71-72).

Metz analysed primary identification in the cinema in terms of Lacan’s description of the mirror phase. The mirror phase marks the stage where the infant perceives, identifies, and merges with the image of itself. The film spectator achieves a sense of unity and control which is analogous to the child in front of the mirror. The power of the look insures a controlling knowledge, and guarantees the subject’s identity. Rose (1986) problematises subjectivity by defining it as the constant failure of identity, and the precariousness of human subjectivity was central to Lacan’s psychoanalytic model. The child’s recognition of self in the mirror is a mis-recognition, providing a fiction of unity and autonomy. The mirror phase marks the inauguration of the Imaginary where "there is only identity and presence ... no sense of separate self since the self is always alienated in the other" (Moi, 1985:99-100). Subjectivity is not effectively constituted until the child takes its place in the language of the Symbolic Order, where the representation of self necessitates the recognition of difference – the other. While the Symbolic Order validates a unified subjectivity, the legacy of the Imaginary is a state of flux stemming from a desire for the other. Cinema provides a
privileged space of imaginary relations, a fantasy where identity is eclipsed by a (mirror)image, an "image as a means to gain visual access to the lost subject" (Pollock, 1988:147).

Dyer suggests that the cinema offers "the image of 'something better' to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don't provide. Alternatives, hopes, wishes – these are the stuff of utopia, the sense that things could be better, that something other than what is can be imagined and maybe realised" (Dyer, 1985:222). The image of a "better" masculinity in the Hollywood cinema of the eighties was a narrow version of normative masculinity. Research points to distinct sources of change in lived masculinity: in relations to social power; in the realm of production; in the economy of labour; in sexuality; in the organisation of domestic structures. Hegemonic masculinity is constructed around traditional authority, emphasising force and aggression, it is performance based, rational, concerned with the public not the domestic. But few men are able to live up to the normative ideal, "their legs are too flabby, ... their glance insufficiently flinty" (Connell, Radican & Martin, 1987:11). In the eighties cinema the broad range of lived masculinities were collapsed into an exemplary masculinity which confirmed the legitimacy of patriarchy.

Illusionistic narrative films embody within the diegesis the numerous fantasies summoned up by their audience. The power of the cinema lies in the position that it occupies between fantasies and lived experiences. Popular cinema asserts a comforting reproduction of 'reality', in a depersonalised, consumable form. But at the same time it mobilises and channels pleasures and desires, reading and writing collective and individual fantasies. The relationship with the cinema is not a simple case of men in the audience identifying with the male heroes on the screen. The fantasies played out in the cinema involve many forms of desire, and consequently are both complex and fluid. Ellis explains that "cinematic identification involves two different tendencies. First there is that of dreaming and fantasy that involve 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” (Ellis, 1982:43). Identification is both the recognition of self, and the projection of a desired self.

Identification is a process of internalising idealised images or relations through an investment in particular discourses. “What makes one take up a [subject] position in a certain discourse rather than another is an ‘investment’ ... something between an emotional commitment and a vested interest, in the relative power (satisfaction, reward, payoff) which that position promises (but does not necessarily fulfil)” (de Lauretis, 1987:16). An investment in the subject position offered by the eighties cinema holds the promise of the recuperation of a dominant, patriarchal masculinity. The masculinity depicted in the Hollywood cinema of the eighties reflects the fantasies of their audiences, not their everyday lives; but they are fantasies in which the audience can recognise an idealised self. Eighties cinematic masculinity was a response to cultural anxieties in that it was ‘something better’ than lived masculinity, that could be identified with, fantasised about, and ‘maybe realised’.
Hollywood and the eighties

While there is usually limited validity in organising cultural history around a principle as artificial as a decade in time, the cultural texts and social histories of the 1980s do have a coherence that allows such an organisational grouping. It was a decade of comparative sociopolitical stability. The conservative politics of Reagan and Thatcher; the legacies of the past including the Vietnam conflict and the detente with Russia; high unemployment levels; the effects of feminism; the confronting visibility of gay lifestyles; the new racism; the cynicism towards government; and the general pursuit of materialism contributed to a consistent pattern reflected in both social life and cultural texts. These characteristics waxed at the end of the 1970s and were beginning to wane by the end of the 1980s. As Palmer says "the eighties really do begin in 1980 with the ascendance of the Reagan administration and continue of a piece throughout the decade" (1993:12). The eighties sociopolitical themes were variously reflected, negotiated or interrogated in the films of the period.

Without denying the continuing significance of different nationalisms within the cinema of the period, or minimising the extent to which these same themes were reflected in films from around the world, "the eighties cinema" was predominantly American cinema. That is, the body of films that most consistently reflect the dominant concerns of the Reagan-Thatcher epoch are mainstream, United States produced, films. A merging and overlapping of cultural differences within the cinema has led to an Americanisation of cinema culture. Stuart Hall, commenting on the globalisation of Hollywood said, "the world dreams itself to be American" (Bird, 1986:45). Films produced in America responded to global desires, reflected global concerns, and provided global
pleasures. The term 'eighties cinema' is used in the way that Britton (1986), Wood (1986), Palmer (1993) and Jeffords (1994) use it, to refer to a body of mainstream American films produced from the late seventies until the end of the eighties, that negotiated global interests and concerns.

The eighties films demonstrated a fairly ambivalent attitude towards the capitalist revival with films like *Trading Places, Down and Out in Beverly Hills, The Secret of my Success, 9 to 5, Big Business, Back to School,* and *Lost in America* showing that success in business required some carefully judged unethical behaviour and a certain degree of down-home wisdom or a measure of street smarts. They also reminisced on a golden past that would rescue the future: through feisty gerontocratic heroes in *Cocoon, On Golden Pond, Tough Guys, 18 Again,* and *The Color of Money*; and through nostalgic narratives in *Radio Days, Hoosiers, Diner, Peggy Sue Got Married, Dirty Dancing, Tin Men* and *Back to the Future.* At the same time the eighties films projected fears of outsiders, nuclear threat, and named or un-named foreign forces in *Red Dawn, Invasion USA, Alamo Bay, Alien Nation, The Hidden, White Nights,* and *Fire Fox.* A certain cynicism about the government and organisational power was expressed in films like *Rambo* and *Uncommon Valor,* and differently in *Tucker* and *Silkwood.* *A Cry in the Dark, The Accused, The Good Mother, In Country,* and *The River* all revealed a pessimism about government bureaucracy in depicting the unequal battle of the individual and the institution. Another undercurrent in the eighties film was a pessimistic view of contemporary society and a dystopian view of the future. *Frantic, D.O.A., Something Wild,* and *Body Slam* depicted individual helplessness in the confrontation with the dark side of society. *The Terminator, Escape from New York, Robocop,* and *The Running Man* saw the future in terms of urban decay. But for all the cynicism and pessimism the films of the eighties were ultimately reassuring, in that they presented social issues or problems as individual issues or problems that could be resolved, individually. The eighties was the era of the movie super-hero, a reassurance that social action was unnecessary. Comedy, action adventure and melodrama provided simple solutions to complex problems, and comic-book narratives provided easy
reassurances. In movies from Beverley Hills Cop and Married to the Mob through Raiders of the Lost Ark and Lethal Weapon to Personal Foul and Roe vs Wade, individual heroism provided the only effective solution to social malaise.

Wood draws a clear line between the cinema of the seventies, characterised by 'incoherent' movies such as Taxi Driver, Looking for Mr Goodbar and Cruising, and the cinema of the eighties, in a period dominated by recuperation, reaction, and reassurance. He suggests that Reaganite films offer, not solutions to social discontents, but the reassurance that there is no need for solutions. In his analysis of the box office hits of the period Wood posits that these films offer:

- Childishness, the possibility of returning to childhood and thereby evading responsibility;
- Special effects, the possibility of the fantastic;
- Imagination/originality, the possibility of 'sophisticated' pleasures;
- Nuclear anxiety, the possibility that nothing can be done therefore nothing need be done;
- Fear of Fascism, the possibility that the individualism of the 'new right' is unrelated to Fascism;
- Restoration of the Father, the possibility of the re-subordination of women, gays and blacks. (Wood, 1986:163-82)

Britton uses the term 'Reaganite entertainment' to refer to a "general movement of reaction and conservative reassurance" (1986:2) in Hollywood cinema evident from the mid-seventies, but predominant in the eighties. His thesis was that the films of the period were based on a utopianism which proposes "an asylum from a harsh and disagreeable public world" while at the same time "positively accounting for" that world (1986:9). The popular films of the period were repetitions, highly ritualised and formulaic in character which, together with their self-celebrating self references, worked to preclude any political response; instead "consummating" pre-existing social tendencies (1986:2). The primary features of the films that he has grouped are identified as:
- a contest between good and evil that is reduced to an undialectical routine with a preordained conclusion;
- an ideology of progress that supports a celebration of technology;
- a militaristic nationalism that both promotes and assuages nuclear anxiety;
- a re-affirmation of patriarchy with "unremitting insistence and stridency" (Britton, 1986:24)

Jeffords saw a chain of correspondences between the public image of Ronald Reagan and the action adventure films "that portrayed many of the same narratives of heroism, success, achievement, toughness, strength, and 'good old Americanness' that made the Reagan Revolution possible" (Jeffords, 1994:15). This was not to suggest that Reagan was somehow responsible for the direction taken by mainstream cinema, or even that he consciously exploited cinematic imagery for political ends. Jeffords argues that both Reagan and Hollywood were able to participate in a conservative shift in attitudes and to capitalise on this new conservatism. Hollywood cinema in the Reagan era was, Jeffords suggests, characterised by:

- Hard bodies, white male bodies that came to stand as the emblem of Reagan's domestic and foreign policies;
- Father and son relationships whose primacy was seen as critical to the operation of American culture;
- Technology, and the threat posed to human values by the 'artificial' and the 'mechanical' (Jeffords, 1994).

Despite obvious differences in analytical approaches to how the films of the eighties mean, and what they mean, Wood, Britton and Jeffords agree that there was a body of films produced from the late seventies to the early nineties that articulated a shift in the nature of mainstream cinema, and a move away from the attitudes and concerns of the seventies. Jeffords has also identified "a
big switch" at the end of the eighties, saying that, there's hardly a mainstream Hollywood film from [1991] with a significant male role that does not in some ways reinforce an image that the hard-fighting, weapon wielding, independent, muscular, and heroic men of the eighties ... have disappeared and are being replaced by the more sensitive, loving, nurturing, protective family men of the nineties." (Jeffords, 1993:197).

The period saw the rise of the blockbuster, "those multi-purpose entertainment machines that breed music videos and soundtrack albums, TV series and videocassettes, video games and park rides, novelizations and comic books" (Schatz, 1993:9-10). In its infinite capacity for reiteration the blockbuster film re-defined textual boundaries. The films became "increasingly visceral, kinetic, and fast-paced, increasing reliant on special effects, increasingly `fantastic'" (Schatz, 1993:23), in short, more experienced than watched. A cinema of spectacle, Polan explains, is entertainment as containment, "a practice by which a society engages in an `aestheticization of politics'" (Polan, 1989:56). The spectacle film "frames a world and banishes into nonexistence everything beyond that frame. The will-to-spectacle is the assertion that a world of foreground is the only world that matters or is the only world that is." (Polan, 1986:61). At the same time the spill-over from cinema to fashion and recreation made it harder to draw a line between the film experience and the rest of everyday life. The increasing spectacle of the Hollywood film was accompanied by a reduction and stylisation of the narrative. Increasing sequalization also contributed to an importance of character over plot, as each `sequel' saw the hero re-enact the drama that gained audience attention last time. As John McClane says in Die Hard II, "Here we go again".

Borrowing from, and references to, other films accelerated a disappearance of classic genres, as eighties westerns demonstrated more elements in common with other eighties films than other westerns. Schickel argues that all genres merged into two meta-categories, comedies and action adventure films, both of which offer "a succession of undifferentiated sensations" (1989:4). The
appearance in academic criticism of sub-genres (e.g. rape revenge movies) was not echoed amongst the movie going (or renting) public, who queued for the next Rocky film or for Harrison Ford's new one. The 'new Hollywood' films since the late seventies incorporate genres, styles and stars of the past and other texts of the present, in a postmodern bricolage, and notions of postmodern culture informed analytic methodology for the popular cinema of the period.

Jameson explains the popularity of the nostalgia film as a "desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past" (1984:66) suggesting that the reliance on quotations from past versions of the narrative, other films, other texts, serves to reawaken a sense of past in the viewer in a period where there is a limited "possibility of experiencing history in some active way" (1984:68). Creed sees the changes occurring in Hollywood cinema in the eighties as "a casualty of the failure of the paternal signifier and the current crisis in master narratives" (1987:65), the result being a cinema of excess that parodies a lost ideal.

While most of the ideological discussions of eighties cinema narratives, and many of the postmodern analyses of the form, do not specifically address questions of gender, the cinema characteristics identified by both can be read in terms of questions of masculine identity. There is some agreement that the Hollywood films of the period demonstrated a nostalgia for a lost (masculine) ideal, reflected in an excessive portrayal of the male body; a fascination with technology; a representation of the feminine as problematic; a prioritising of the father/son bond; and a re-affirmation of the father and the patriarchal system. The disagreement has been over whether this nostalgia was essentially a right-wing endorsement of a threatened social order, or a comedic parody that refused any fixed political meaning. That is, was the style of masculinity depicted in the cinema of the eighties reactionary endorsement of a challenged patriarchy, or a postmodern game with the images of another generation?
Reaganite entertainment

Britton coined the term 'Reaganite entertainment' to describe a period characterised by "reaction and conservative reassurance" in the Hollywood cinema that began in the late seventies and continued until the end of the eighties (Britton, 1986:2). The films of this period functioned as 'pure entertainment'. Promoting escape from everyday life, they lulled audiences into a belief that nothing was required of them but passive enjoyment.

The rise in liberal and radical social movement in American society in the sixties was accompanied by cultural representations that critiqued social institutions, but if demolition and reconstruction was the way of the seventies, then re-affirmation and confirmation was the mode of the eighties. The changes in cultural representation can be exemplified by a comparison of The Graduate, depicting the alienation of the young from the 'American Dream', and Risky Business affirming entrepreneurship as a mode of action for young, white males. The social criticism evident in such films as Up the Down Staircase, Midnight Cowboy, Easy Rider and Medium Cool had been replaced a decade later by a more positive social vision. The films of the eighties were on the whole more affirmative and optimistic. Action adventure stories, conservative family melodramas, men only buddy films, neopatriotic war movies and sports success dramas allude to a resurgence of conservatism in American social and political life. This conservatism was especially marked in the representation of gender roles. Although some films did acknowledge feminism with the portrayal of financially independent women of strong character, for the most part women were under attack in the movies of the eighties for 'destroying the family'.

The existence of the category of 'women's films' acknowledges that cinema is primarily organised around male pleasures, the films designed or promoted to appeal specifically to women are outside the generic norm. But the majority of Hollywood films from the late seventies to the late eighties can be literally described as 'men's films'. The films of the period were essentially "male
narratives of radical individuation through power and violence” (Ryan & Kellner, 1988:149) that were marked by the resurgence of the macho hero, male homosocial situations and plot lines, male-centred romantic melodramas, male to female gender transcendence fantasies, and ‘bad mother’ narratives of women whose independence stigmatised them as homewreckers.

These representations can be read as reactions that are part of a broader cultural backlash against social rights movements, “a backlash that called for a defence of the traditional family, the abolition of abortion, attacks on gay rights, and the curtailment of government support of birth control” (Ryan & Kellner, 1988:137). The movies presented an ‘ideal’ world where middle class white males occupied a position of unchallenged domination, where male-male friendships replaced increasingly troubled intergender relations, and women who could not be subordinated were dispensed with. Jeffords suggests that following a period when “masculinity had gone out of fashion” there was a "general re-masculinization of American culture" (1989:169) evidenced by a renewed interest in strong patriarchal figures as sources of leadership and models for action, figures such as Ronald Reagan, J.R. Ewing, and John Rambo. The ‘excessive’ masculinity of these heroes has a dimension of fantasy.

The New Right movement "mobilized the utopian imagination" (Britton, 1986:9) invoking a cultural nostalgia for a world in which America was great and the family flourished under the leadership of ‘real’ men. Britton suggests that the social function of the cinema’s utopian escapism was to offer a satisfaction that was separate from real life, a world that was recognisably a fantasy and one that it would be unreasonable to hope for and absurd to work towards (1986:4). The allure of the men’s movies of the eighties was the asylum they provided "from a harsh and disagreeable public world" (1986:9).
In explaining the popular appeal of Reaganism, Grossberg suggests that "Feeling something, anything, is better than feeling nothing. Living with some identity, however temporary, is better than living none" (1989:44). Grossberg's analysis explains that Reaganism and the New Right were able to capitalise on the contradiction between the emergent popular aesthetics labelled 'postmodernity', and the identification between Americanism and global youth culture. He suggests that Reagan's promotion of passionate commitment was based on an increasingly shared mistrust of common sense (1989:38). The sites of hegemonic struggle (nationalism, the family, patriarchy, youth, sexuality) were commandeered by the New Right, implementing its appropriation of the mistrust of common sense and the need for affect. This struggle was played out in the Hollywood movies of the period as spectacle replaced narrative and excess masked ideology, in 'pure' entertainment that bypassed the head for the heart.

Postmodern cinema

Notions of postmodern culture have frequently been used to analyse specific cinematic characteristics or trends of the eighties (Jameson reflecting on nostalgia, Creed on gynesis, etc.). However, a general theory of the popular cinema within a postmodern context has been more often assumed than systematically developed. In a media-saturated landscape movies become one more text in an ever expanding number of texts and technologies that is "both a reflection of and a contribution to 'the array' – the perpetual circulation and recirculation of signs that forms the fabric of postmodern cultural life" (Collins, 1993:246).

Video and audio technology, television spinoffs, and the merchandising of games, clothes, and foodstuffs have re-positioned popular films as more experiences than texts, as events to be participated in. Watching a film becomes a sensuous experience as "representation gives way to a violently affective, more-than-immediate, and non-conceptualizable contact" (Shaviro, 1993:259-60). In a cinema of spectacle, the audience's involvement with characters and situations is based
on a visual and aural fascination that is passive and irresistible. Shaviro refers to "the delirious excesses of postmodern vision, the excitement and passivity of spectatorship, the frenzy and fragility of images" (1993:9). The postmodern cinema is an ideology free, sensual event.

Postmodern texts acknowledge that notions of 'meaning' are complicated by the co-presence of multiple representations. Simultaneous contemporary representations co-exist with previous representations that persist through mass media forms. Jameson suggests that the popularity of films that recreate cultural experiences through pastiche, may lie in the fact that they reawaken in the viewer a sense of the past. In films such as *Rumble Fish* and *Body Heat*, Jameson sees a "desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past" (1984:66). Creed suggests that this 'missing past' is essentially mythical, a nostalgic response to a contemporary cultural crisis (1987:54). One area 'in crisis' in the mid-eighties, was hegemonic gender roles, as economic trends and social movements changed the way that men and women lived their lives. Creed saw in the films of the period a "desire to relive an imaginary order - an order where gender identity was secure and appeared to validate the social contract established by the myth of romantic love" (1987:54). But this is not read as an escapist ploy. The nostalgia is positive and participatory. Jameson refers to two different types of nostalgia film (the period recreation and the adventure film), both offer opportunities for 'play', a chance to both romanticise and parody the roles of hero and heroine (Jameson 1984).

The excessive cinema of the eighties, with its intensified scenarios, exaggerated situations, and hyper-real characters, offers another version of an arcade game. As *Young Guns* acts out a western, and Rambo performs the role of a hero, the identification is accompanied by self-parody. Creed comments that "It is refreshing to note the increasing tendency in contemporary texts to play with the notion of manhood. Figures such as Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger ... could only be described as 'performing the masculine' ... They are simulacra of an exaggerated
masculinity, the original completely lost to sight" (Creed, 1987:65). But if the eighties cinema was playing with masculinity, then the game had a slightly hysterical note, as film after film presented a version of masculinity that glorified 'traditional' masculine characteristics and victimised or scapegoated the feminine, with an excess that suggested panic in the face of changing gender roles.

While Wood/Britton/Jeffords and Jameson/Creed describe the cinema of the eighties as a form that reflected, exemplified, or was a response to a social crisis in the late seventies and early eighties, there is little agreement on whether the response was a reactionary re-assertion of patriarchal masculinity, or a self-reflexive parody of a defunct masculine style. Issues in common in both the 'Reaganite' and 'postmodern' accounts of the films are linked to the idea of cinema as fantasy. Fantasy accommodates a look-back to conservative models of gender relations, and a recognition that this look-back is a game that incorporates elements of irony.

**Cinema fantasy**

Both Jameson (1979) and Hall (1981) emphasise that popular culture texts are simultaneously both ideological and utopian, and that popular culture is neither simply a form of social control nor a form of cultural expression, but a contested terrain. Hall states that "if the forms of provided commercial popular culture are not purely manipulative, then it is because, alongside the false appeals, the foreshortenings, the trivialisation and the short circuit there are also elements of recognition and identification, something approaching a recreation of recognisable experiences and attitudes, to which people are responding" (1981:233).

Jameson also suggests that "the works of mass culture cannot be ideological without at one and the same time being implicitly utopian ... they cannot manipulate unless they offer some shred of content as a fantasy bribe to the public about to be so manipulated ... such works cannot manage anxieties about the social order unless they have first revived them and given them some
rudimentary expression" (1979:144). The popularity of Reaganism, and its ability to sustain a New Right movement, giving new meaning to authoritarianism, and reviving a macho model of masculinity, rose from its success in forging a new national ideology, a distinctive `populism'. There was a utopian promise in Reaganism, the `fantasy bribe' of individual empowerment.

Cinema fantasy offers a situation in which the subject can participate, staging and re-staging a scenario through which critical questions about desire, knowledge, power and identity can be posed. Fantasy is the result of an interactive relationship between the film and the spectator. The spectator constructs the fantasy and is at the same time constituted by it through projection and identification, where projection describes a process of imagining that desires, wishes or other aspects of the self are located in an object external to it, and identification is a fusion/confusion of identity with another. But the presence of the subject in the imaginary scene need not involve the subject being a protagonist `in person' as it were, identifying with a particular character, or transferring personal desires to narrative agents. This fluidity, this mobility of identification means that "the subject, although always present in the fantasy, may be so in a desubjectivised form" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1986:26).

Fantasy is never simply wish fulfilment, but a complex articulation of wish and prohibition in the space of desire. Fantasy is a compromise formation in which repressed ideas can find expression, through a negotiation between the wish and the law. Fantasy is "an imaginary scene in which the subject is a protagonist, representing the fulfilment of a wish ... in a manner that is distorted to a greater or lesser extent by defensive processes" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973:314). What is evident in fantasy is not just the wish but the setting out of the wish in a way that always also incorporates the prohibitions, repressions and defences that surround the wish. Fantasy figures in perpetual deferral of wish fulfilment, with the emphasis on desiring, rather than on obtaining the desired object. As Lacan expresses it, "the fantasy is the support of the desire, it is not the object
that is the support of the desire" (1979:185). In Lacan's view desire is the pursuit of an eternally lost object, fantasy makes possible that pursuit.

Cinema fantasy is a cultural form that gives expression to collective as well as individual desires. In Rodowick's words, "As embodied in forms of mass cultural expression, [fantasy] defines and perpetuates the contradictory desires and aspirations of social life" (1991:117). The Hollywood blockbusters of the eighties were popular primarily because they were fantasies, an imaginary expression of everyday desires. In a period where daily life was being made increasingly problematic through rapid social and economic change, filmic realism offered an enticing escape route, no less attractive for the very impossibility of its realism. The Hollywood films of the eighties offered recuperation, reaction and reassurance. In offering a version of masculinity that re-affirmed patriarchy, promised the possibility of the re-subordination of women, gays and blacks, validated a return to childhood as a means of evading responsibility, established the possibility of an all male world, and confirmed the inevitability of the Lombardian ethic, the films of the period acted as a check to experiences of oppression and powerlessness.

The commonsense split between 'fantasy' and 'reality' is problematic in a discussion of cinema. It is more useful to approach the eighties cinema from the Lacanian thesis that it is only in the dream that we come close to the real awakening. When Lacan says that the last support of what we call 'reality' is fantasy, he suggests that it is only in the dream that we approach the framework which determines our mode of activity within reality itself (Lacan, 1979). Rather than reading Rambo as a kind of 'ideology-gram' delivering a single message, the film can be interpreted as a fantasy that provides a framework from within which to contest or negotiate the meanings of everyday life.

Walkerdine writes that the linking of the fantasy space of the film and the reality of the viewer engages "an already existent constitution of pains, of losses and desires for fulfilment and escape,
inhabiting already a set of fantasy spaces inscribing us in the 'everyday life' of practices which produce us all" (1986:171). The fantasy framework of the eighties cinema, from within which viewers negotiated the meanings and practices of social life, was a fantasy of self sufficient, muscular bodied, omnipotent masculinity.
Chapter 4

MASCULINE BODIES

Masculinity and identity

Identity, or social subjectivity, is in part constructed from, and depicted through, the body. Subjectivity is a "structure of accessed identifications" (Hartley, 1983), identifications of self, gender, age-group, family, class, nation, ethnicity, are in part confirmed by and demonstrated through the body. A 'realistic' depiction of masculinity in the cinema is one that fits easily with the spectator's socially constructed sense of the masculine, and that is a masculinity that is essentially linked to a 'male' body.

The essence of masculinity is most frequently attached to the body as a 'natural' indicator of sexual difference. But it is the continued depiction of the body as a gendered body that maintains the sexual difference assumed as natural (Doane, 1981:24). Psychoanalysis assumes an hiatus between the body and the psyche, so that sexuality cannot be reduced to the merely physical. In psychoanalysis identification is a complex process by which subjectivity and sexuality construct themselves through the incorporation of idealised images and relations from the external world. Arguing that the forms and structures of identification are divided along gender lines, and that socially constructed identity is invariably guaranteed by a biologically gendered body, closes the gap between body and psyche and asserts that the body is the arbiter of sexuality, that biology determines subjectivity. But, "sexuality is constructed within social and symbolic relations; it is most unnatural and achieved only after an arduous struggle" (Doane, 1981:26). Masculinity is attached to the body. The body does not confer masculinity. The gendered body is always a product of discourse. "The body is never experienced except as mediated through language and
discourse ... the 'body' is a product of social histories, social relations, and discourses, all of which define it, identify its key features (ignoring others), prescribe and proscribe its behaviour" (Wolff, 1990:133). The body is not solely determined or experienced through biology, and the relationship between biological 'maleness' and social masculinity is, at best, problematic.

The cinematic representation of the body attaches to it meanings and values which have been culturally constructed as masculine or feminine. The cinema depicts, not the body, but an image of the body, a symbolic body, and the cinematic body is a gendered body. The investment of the body with gender, or with sexuality, is "always already social" (Doane, 1981:33), informed by social practice. In association with increasing British imperialist expansion in the late Victorian era, ideals of masculinity were increasingly bound to a strong, athletic and muscular body (Segal, 1990:107). These characteristics have come to be socially defined as 'masculine'. In constructing a gendered body cinema draws upon the spectator's social knowledges of embodied gender, and in so doing contributes to a cultural exaltation of a form of the masculine, which is 'naturally' of the body.

Hollywood cinema has, from its beginnings, represented a particular type of physicality as 'masculine'. An ascetic appearance, a taut masculinity, physical strength, raw power, and stoicism, are the requirements of maleness propagated in film after film (Mellen, 1977). The heroic male in film is an athlete with an athlete's body. Films encourage the notion that physical prowess in competition and combat is a requisite for success and a mark of masculinity. Buster Keaton in College plays a 'brilliant scholar'. Physically awkward, wearing ill-fitting clothes, he is admired only by his mother, all indicators of the boy. The only avenue for proving himself a man is the playing field. Although hopelessly inadequate by the standards that equate physical prowess and manhood, he persists and his doomed efforts are the source of the comedy. When a sympathetic Don makes Keaton cox of the rowing team, he uses his intelligence to compensate for a broken
rudder and his team wins. The sporting victory gives him the physical confidence to pole-vault through a window, defeat his rival, and win his girl. 'Hollywood' movies since have demanded that notions of the heroic must embody an athletic ideal.

While the muscular body has been portrayed as the verification of masculinity, manliness has also been associated with the negation of the body, the willingness to sacrifice the body. From Errol Flynn's *The Adventures of Robin Hood* to Kevin Costner's *Robin Hood* movies have glorified an unflinching masculinity that dared all, facing physical danger and the risk of life. The softness of Flynn's outlaw, his compassion for the cottagers, his tender responsiveness to Maid Marion, is underscored by a swashbuckling physicality that transcends realism. Costner's Robin, over half a century later, similarly wields sword and arrows as the barely disguised phallus, in a celebration of a 'careless' masculinity tied to a dispensable body. Though of course the risk is sanctified by its resolution.

The athletic body is automatically encoded 'to be looked at'. As an object displayed for the fascinated gaze of the spectator, the male athlete experiences a subjectivity usually designated 'feminine'. In Hollywood cinema, the athletic, performing, male body is repeatedly portrayed as an object of desire, as the object of an erotic gaze. This 'look' at the male body is not unproblematic. In sport films the look is subverted, de-eroticised, aesthetised as in *Chariots of Fire*, or the male body is 'disqualified' as an object of desire in films such as *Die Hard*, through physical mutilation.

The eighties hero continues a tradition of representing masculinity through a masculine body, but the eighties masculine body is a distinct rearticulation that responds to the particular social context. The over-developed, over-determined body of the eighties cinema may be in part a 'backlash' in response to feminism and other social changes, rewriting masculinity large, in the muscles of
screen heroes. The excessive "masculinity" of Schwarzenegger and Stallone has also been read as hysterical, a symptom of a masculinity in crisis, in search of an evasive identity in a world of surfaces. The performance of masculinity through a hyper-masculine body can also be seen as a parody, an enactment of masculine styles no longer livable, in an orgy of celebratory mourning. What is evident is that the body of the eighties cinema hero is a site for the enactment of a reinscribed difference, a space in which changing definitions of masculinity can be played out against a confirmation of difference.

Hard bodies

The most traditional approach to sexual identity has been to see gender as relating to biological structure, where sexual identity becomes a matter of bodies, of muscle and bone, of hormones and genes. Such biological theories have been widely criticised (cf Oakley, 1972) with contemporary sociologists seeing embodiment as "anything but a neutral constant in social life" (Frank, 1991:42) recognising a process that first naturalises the capacities of bodies and then legitimated by this naturalisation, denies their social construction.

Sartre echoed Nietzsche in insisting that the body is self and that the self is the body:

"Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, stands a mighty commander, an unknown sage – he is called Self. He lives in your body, he is your body" (Nietzsche, 1969:62)

"The body is what I immediately am ... I am my body. To the extent that I am." (Sartre, 1966:428)

Identity, or sense of self is derived from the sense of the body, but the body has no intrinsic meaning, the body is socially constructed. Populations create their own corporeal meanings, and thus their own bodies, but the bodies they constitute and re-constitute reflect the social body (Synnot, 1992:79). The social body establishes parameters for the way the physical body is
perceived, it delimits and constrains the experience of the physical body, so that the physical experience of the body sustains a particular view of society (Douglas, 1970:93).

The 'masculine' body represents a patriarchal view of society where power is invested in the male. It is easy to see men in Freudian terms as the owners of penises. While the phallus, as signifier, might not be the penis, it is difficult to conceptualise its symbolic function separate from an imaging of the body (Doane, 1981:28). There is a sense in which the owner of the penis is the bearer of power. Despite Lacan's assertions that the phallus does not belong to the male (Lacan, 1977), the phallus "is only translatable into social terms as power" (Craib, 1987:723). In contemporary western society power resides in the body of the male:

"A man's presence is dependent upon the promise of power which he embodies...
A man's presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you." (Berger, 1972:46)

The body has always been an important surface on which the marks of social identity are inscribed. Social status, tribal affiliation, religious beliefs, age occupation and gender can be so conveniently and prominently displayed on the body that it has historically been the principal medium of societal classification (Turner, 1991:5).

The social inscription of bodies is not a passive writing but is necessarily related to the lived experiences of the body. The corporeal sense of masculinity grows through a personal experience of social practice. The male body is a social body that has the meanings of masculinity written upon it, but the writing is an active process, an interplay between the body and social processes. The physical sense of masculinity involves:

"size and shape, habits of posture and movement, particular physical skills and the lack of others, the image of one's own body, the way it is presented to other people and the ways they respond to it, the way it operates at work and in sexual relations." (Connell, 1987:84)
The body is not immutable, it is plastic, to be moulded at whim, selected, inscribed, re-constructed at need and both the social body and the perceptions of the physical body are constantly changing. The recuperation of hegemonic sex roles in the eighties brought with it a more rigidly defined gender separation, represented physically by hysterically thin, extremely young 'female' bodies and 'masculine' bodies that were excessively muscled, indomitably hard (Willis, 1991:24).

The gendered body is also a racial body and a classed body. Representations of masculinity and correspondingly physicality evoke notions of racial and class difference. In films where the physical was equated with the heroic, black characters played major roles, though usually supporting and defining the white hero. Di Piero suggests that the white male protagonists of these films that couple 'black' and 'white' masculinity continually appeal to women and black men "to reveal to them the secrets of their own identities" (1992:126). In Die Hard, Lethal Weapon, Rocky, the narrative plays out the "struggle to remain white". The heroes "struggle to constitute their dissimilarity from the African Americans who surround them, and their identity derives in large part from the difference they perceive between white and black" (Di Piero, 1992:124). White masculinity is a constant negotiation of the difference between it and what it is not, not black, not feminine, and the difference is primarily written on the body.

Bodybuilding has traditionally been a working class sport, excessive musculature associated with the subordinate classes' emphasis on raw, physical power in symbolic compensation for a lack of political or cultural power. A lean finely detailed musculature, expressive of a disciplinary aesthetic, is linked to the middle class ascetic practices of health and fitness (cf Dutton, 1995). Overtly developed muscles are evidence of the labour that has been undertaken in their production. The muscular masculinity of the eighties cinema draws attention to the work involved in 'being a man', describing masculinity as something that is earned, and performed.
The social definition of men as holders of power has been translated into bodies that are inscribed/described as ‘masculine’. The tools of body writing are used to produce male bodies in the image of generative power; phallic, virile, public. Masculinity is expressed through posture and pose, in the feel and look of the body; strong, muscled, hard, independent, task-oriented, invulnerable. ‘Male’ is corporeally encoded as rational, hierarchised, teleological (Gross, 1990; Connell, 1987; O’Neill, 1982). The hard bodies of the eighties cinema emphasised this muscular version of masculinity. The normalising of the phallic body is demonstrated by the changed response to Schwarzenegger’s musculature from the seventies to the eighties. Hercules in New York has Schwarzenegger (under the pseudonym Arnold Strong) following in the tradition of bodybuilders past (e.g., Steve Reeves and Lou Ferrigno) in playing the mythic strongman, his musculature symbolising the super-human. Schwarzenegger’s appearance as a hoodlum’s goon in The Long Goodbye is a blatant caricature, his half-naked body grotesque in its oiled excessiveness. In a scenario that suggests the mind of a child in the magnificent body, he reaches to touch the money, has his fingers slapped, and nurses his hurt hand. However, in the eighties films, the muscular body has become part of a normalised version of masculinity. In Twins the endomorphic Danny DeVito and Arnold Schwarzenegger are twins, but genetic engineering has given all of the desirable genes to one, leaving the other incompetent, less than intelligent, and both short and plump. Twins suggests that all men are potentially built like Arnold Schwarzenegger, a lesser physique is the result of bad luck or bad management. Even for the less excessively muscular actors such as Richard Gere, well defined musculature has become the mark of the male. Gere’s physical fitness is foregrounded in American Gigolo in a scene where he hangs upside down from the parallel bar, and becomes part of his ‘sex symbol’ persona in An Officer and a Gentleman where physical fitness and muscular development is emphasised as necessary masculine characteristics. Mayo/Gere evidences a concern for body, for muscle, for physique, that invites the spectator to read them as the physical-tangible evidence of masculinity.
The eighties representation of the hyper-muscled body as a masculine standard, can be seen as a displacement of male hysteria onto the male body, "masculinity is represented as in excess, over present" (Creed, 1990:144). Actors such as Stallone, Schwarzenegger, van Damme, exhibit the male body as a living phallus, in an hysterical display that illustrates the impossible nature of patriarchal masculinity. The penis is a poor substitute for the mystique of the phallus, the locum tenens is the hard body, hence the excessive, even hysterical quality of the representation of the male body. The hard, powerful body suggests an invincibility, signifying an active strength as well as an ability to resist. While muscle gives expression to phallic power, it also becomes the means to repel or expel anything that might challenge or undermine that power, from the attitudes of others, to personal feelings. "The muscle operates as more than just the outwardly visible symbol of male power, it is also symbolic of inward rigidity and invulnerability" (Webb, 1991:15).

The training montage in Rocky IV parallels the body earned, with the body given. Rocky is to fight the Russian champion Ivan Drago, so he goes to train and acclimatise in a remote house in the mountains. The montages cut between images of the two fighters in training. Drago works out on high-tech machinery, surrounded by state trainers, his performance monitored, controlled, assisted. His training culminates in a close-up shot of his being injected with steroids. Rocky has one trainer and the support of Paulie and Adrian. His training is the skipping, running, weight lifting, and sparring of the classic fight films, interspersed with images of him working – chopping wood, moving rocks, assisting the peasants. Rocky's training has its climax in a symbolic ascent of the mountain, celebrated by camera and soundtrack. Rocky is associated with nature and the natural; Drago with culture and artifice. The juxtaposition of the two bodies suggests an emphasis on the heroic male body as a representation of natural qualities, a signifier of power worked for and earned.
Popular culture includes a long line of male superheroes, such as Superman, Batman, He-Man, whose mythical strength expresses a dominating power, coupled with almost complete invincibility. But many of these superheroes have as their alter-ego, a powerless, inefficient, but caring male. Clark Kent, Bruce Wayne, and Prince Adam represent the weak, inept, emotional, and even nurturing aspects of masculinity that are such an antithesis to the heroic, that the hero’s identity is protected. The ‘feminine’ qualities are portrayed as somehow necessary to the creation and maintenance of the superhero, but as quite separate from the super heroic form (Willis, 1991:29-37). The pairing of the skinny nerd, or the bumbling fat guy, with the muscular hero is a common narrative device in eighties cinema, with a similar effect. The less overtly masculine character both enables the heroic behaviour of his muscular counterpart, and provides a benchmark by which the heroic is measured. In Three Fugitives Nick Nolte provides the muscle, Martin Short plays a caring father/bumbling bank robber, the ectomorphic Short fumbles from one disaster to another, rescued each time by Nolte. Short’s character is even inefficient at the thing that matters most to him, fatherhood. It is Nolte’s character who gets the little girl to speak. In Pure Luck Short’s character is accident prone, Danny Glover provides the heroic muscle. Innerspace pairs Short with Dennis Quaid in a similar scenario. Quaid is reduced to the size of a molecule for a scientific study, only instead of being inserted into a laboratory rabbit, he ends up inside Short. The humour and suspense result from Quaid’s attempts to get Short’s less than efficient body to function effectively. Endomorphic actors are similarly not cast in heroic roles. John Candy in films such as Great Outdoors and Planes, Trains and Automobiles and Uncle Buck is a caricature of obnoxious ineptitude.

The hard body of the eighties cinema is at one level a backlash against challenges to patriarchal power, naturalising male authority by literally embodying it. The ‘masculinity’ in eighties films was a reassurance that patriarchy was secure. The excessive male body was also part of the cinema spectacle of the period, an excess that provided visual fascination. The hyper-masculine body was
a nostalgic revision of comic-book heroes that both romanticised and parodied a version of physical masculinity. The fantastic body was also a projection of social desires that incorporated not only the wish for naturalised power, but the anxieties associated both with the having of authority and its lack. The extreme form of the hard body in the eighties film was the cyborg.

**Robocop – the cyborg body**

*Robocop* is a graphically violent thriller set in a future, post-industrial Detroit. Using a pastiche of elements borrowed from science-fiction, western, and romance genres, director Paul Verhoven articulates a fear of a rationalised, mechanical world where the human body is technologically processed, and emotions are vague memories, identity is only imagery, and subjectivity has disappeared in simulation.

*Robocop* tells the story of a police officer (Alex Murphy) who is hideously wounded by drug underworld figures and left for dead. His body is used to create a robot cop, with an indestructible titanium body, and a mind which has had emotion and memory erased, re-programmed to serve and protect the high technology corporation and its new Detroit. Robocop gradually recovers his memory, identity and will, and in uncovering the link between the corporation and the drug bosses, and in revenging his own 'death', is resurrected as Murphy.

In Robocop's body the masculine gives birth to itself as a technologised body. Murphy's wounding and death is seized as an opportunity for him to be re-born in a new form, his vulnerability converted into invincibility. The re-birthing not only defies death but is an embodiment of the means by which death itself is conquered. Murphy is re-made. From Murphy's vulnerable body is created the essence of masculinity, masculinity distilled of the limitations imposed by feeling and emotion. The conversion from body to machine is total.

Doctor: "We were able to save the left arm."
Morton: "What? I thought we agreed on total body prosthesis? Now lose the arm, OK?"

Peter Weller as Alex Murphy does not have an overtly masculine appearance, his body is not particularly muscular, he is slightly built, with fine bone structure, fair hair and light blue eyes. One of the thugs calls him "pretty boy". Robocop's body is strongly evocative of a crusading knight. "Titanium laminated with kevlar" forms bulging biceps, rippling abdominals, taut 'lats', and powerful quadriceps. Robocop is armoured with muscle, a cross between the robot Maria in Metropolis and Arnold Schwarzenegger in Terminator. Beneath Robocop's helmet Weller/Murphy's smooth, pale chin and pink, cupid's bow lips are visible, disconcertingly feminine in their metal muscle frame. Weller's 'Rheingold' beauty, and the grace of his finely boned body identify him as a mythic warrior. Murphy's death occurs before his actions can mark him as 'heroic', it is Weller's body that names him 'mythic hero' and labels his mutilation tragic. Robocop's body represents a wide range of literal and metaphoric bodies, the masculine body, more broadly the human body, also the corporate body, the social body, and the body politic, the post-modern body, and technobodies.

Foucault has revealed how the body is where the power-bearing definitions of social normality reside, and is therefore the site of punishment for deviations from those norms. Murphy's body takes the punishment for societal collapse in Old Detroit. According to the President of Omni Consumer Products (OCP) Old Detroit has "a cancer of crime", the OCP controlled police force is to eradicate the cancer and "breathe life" into the city/body through the construction of a new metropolis, Delta City. Murphy and his female partner, Lewis, track bank robbery suspects to an abandoned mill. With no back-up available and Lewis unconscious, Murphy is ambushed.

Antonowsky: "Your ass is mine"
Boddicker: "No. Not yet it ain't"

Murphy is felled by a blow to the back of the knees, from Boddicker's rifle stock, and dazed by a second blow across the shoulders. Boddicker runs his rifle sights over Murphy's body, making
Pac-Man sounds as he decides on a target. He shoots off Murphy's right hand at point blank range. The rest of the gang fire at Murphy as he stagger to his feet. The camera focus on Murphy's face, his pain filling the screen as his screams dominate the sound track. He is shot limb by limb, standing silhouetted against the light so that we see the slow disintegration of his body, the scene intercut with close ups of the smoking gun barrels, and long shots of Lewis following the screams to their source. His pain, not his death is the focus of the sequence.

Cox: "Does it hurt? Does it hurt?"

His hurt is not just at the hands of Boddicker and his henchmen however, it is intensified and prolonged by the medical team who attempt to save his life, and then OCP as they recycle his body. At the hospital a series of low angle shots emphasise the spot lights, the invasive equipment, and the interrogating faces. The medical devices – electrical shocks, masks, injections, intravenous tubes – add to his pain, a pain we share through close ups of his white, blood-spattered face, intercut with images of his horror, re-lived. The violent medical intervention does not save Murphy's life, but delivers his body up for corporate manipulation. Murphy's pain is accepted voluntarily; he agrees to the sacrifice of his body.

OCP Executive: "He signed a release form when he joined the force. He's legally dead. We can do what we want."

A crucifixion analogy is easily drawn. Verhoven originally rejected the script, but on subsequent readings saw the Christian themes of death, resurrection, and redemption, and agreed to direct the film (Petley, 1988:37). Robocop is about giving up the body, testing the soul, and being resurrected into a new body, which becomes the salvation of others.

Throughout the film characters act out fantasies of invulnerability through the appropriation of external objects – guns, cars, drugs. Marx saw the constructed world and its objects as extensions of our individual and collective bodies, "property means no more than man's attitude to his natural conditions of production as belonging to him, as the prerequisite of his own existence; his attitude
to them as natural prerequisites of himself, which constitute, as it were, a prolongation of his body." (Marx, 1965:89) In the New Detroit, products enable bodily expansion, the more luxurious, or luxuriant, the greater the reward. Products stand in lieu of personal or emotional rewards.

An emphasis of the social substitution of money for love is the constant interspersion of scenes from a television comedy, in which a balding man is engaged in a number of sexual and pseudo-sexual routines with two barely clad women, to the refrain "I'd buy that for a dollar". The owner of a convenience store is laughing at the show when he is robbed, the shrieks of laughter and squeals of delight continue on the soundtrack as Robocop carries out his first crimebusting mission. "I'd buy that for a dollar" is repeated to end the sequence, as the crook's machine gun fire and Robocop's retaliatory action leave the shelf displays in piles of broken packaging and spilled product. We see various members of Boddicker's gang watching the show. Antonowsky is watching the program on nine screens in a store window while waiting for the final assault on Robocop. A group of people noisily loot stores in the next block, and Antonowsky smashes the window of the store in front of him. He turns up the sound on the monitor and sits back on the kerb to continue watching. Like the constant advertising that permeates the lives of the characters, the sitcom homogenises and subverts desire.

Cars are also used to extend and empower the body. On Murphy's first day at Metro Central Lewis suggests that she should drive until he knows his way around, Murphy replies, "I usually drive when I'm breaking in a new partner," and taking possession of the car, demonstrates his position of power in the partnership. The ex-councillor, holding hostages against a re-count of his votes, lists his demands. When asked what kind of a car he wants, he emphasises that efficiency is not a criterion, "Something with reclining leather seats, that goes really fast, and gets really shitty gas mileage." They offer him the 6000 SUX, a car that is advertised as "an old fashioned
American car' in its excessiveness. Efficient transportation is not the sole aim of car ownership, a car establishes status – so Boddicker blows up the 6000 SUX stolen by one of his gang members, to re-affirm the hierarchy.

Weapons are obvious extensions of the body and are presented as such in Robocop. Interspersed television news reports and advertisements demonstrate the increased technologising of attack and defence. A slogan for a boardgame, `Nukem!' asserts "Get them before they get you", exhorting family members to symbolically destroy each other around the gameboard. Smiling presenters tell us that the Star Wars Defence Program has malfunctioned, a laser setting fire to acres of woodland around Santa Barbara killing 113 people (including two retired presidents), and announce that the South African government will use a three megaton neutron bomb against dissenting blacks, 'if necessary'.

Murphy practises twirling and holstering his gun, in the manner of a Western hero, when his son admires the moves made by a TV cop. He admits to copying the gesture because "Role models can be important to a boy", but confesses "OK, OK, I get a kick out of it." As in the Western the gesture is used symbolically, as an indicator of Murphy/Robocop's mythic and heroic qualities; but in Robocop there is an element of ironic parody in the gesture. The heroic gesture of the spinning gun is so much a part of Murphy that it survives the reprogramming of his memory, and becomes a key to his identity, a link to his humanity and his former life. Murphy/Robocop's ease with his gun, his ability to manipulate it beyond need to satisfy desire, marks him as 'the professional', and is graphically contrasted in the scene where Boddicker's gang arm themselves with anti-tank weapons to destroy Robocop. As they pick up the huge guns they visibly stagger, barely in control.
At the shooting gallery, Robocop's supercop status is demonstrated by his having a bigger gun than
the rest of the force. The shot is framed to isolate hands and firing guns, the camera tracks down
the row of guns to Lewis', pans to Lewis, then cuts to a reverse angle of the row of hands,
Robocop's powerful hand and immense gun emphasised with a zoom in,

Female officer: "Hey it's supercop."
Male officer: "Get that fucking gun."

So heroic power resides not just in having the 'biggest' weapon, but in having the weapon as part
of the body, an extension of personal strength and confidence.

Robocop was not the first law enforcement robot devised by OCP. Dick Jones, second in
command at Omni Consumer Products had developed a fully automated enforcement droid, ED
209. Unfortunately at the first demonstration of his abilities ED 209 fails to recognise that his
instructions have been obeyed, and kills his co-demonstrator, a young company executive. Bob
Morton sees his opportunity to rise in the corporate structure, and presents the company president
with the contingency robot his team has been developing. The differences between ED 209 and
Robocop are corporeally symbolised.

Robocop has the body of an adult male, tall, powerfully muscled, recognisably a man locked inside
a metal body. ED 209 had a 'powerful but dumb' look, with a rounded mechanical body, and a
vestigial face that looked blank, staring, dumb. When Robocop discovers that Jones is in
partnership with Boddicker in a deal to sell drugs to the workers on the Delta City project, he
attempts to arrest him, an action that brings about a pre-programmed shut down of functions.
Jones commands ED 209 to destroy Robocop. The showdown ends with ED unable to negotiate
the stairs, his mammoth feet testing the space below the step in a movement reminiscent of a
toddler. Extending the baby analogy, Verhoven has ED 209 fall down the stairs, and lie kicking
and crying on his back at the base, symbolising both his super human strength, and his childish
ineptitude. In the final moments of the film, when Robocop comes back for Jones, he has re-found his humanity, and his movements are now smoothly coordinated. ED 209 lumbers out from the entry portal and challenges him, "You are parking on private property". Robocop fires at him, and walks into the building. A low angle shot shows ED 209's massive legs in pursuit. The shot widens to reveal that the huge, out-of-control legs are all that remain of ED 209, a body without a brain.

Baudrillard's discussion of simulation provides a conceptual space for the symbolic distance between ED 209 and Robocop. In describing how experience has become increasingly mediated by technology, and therefore by sign systems, he draws the distinction between the automaton and the robot. According to Baudrillard, with the bourgeois revolution of the Renaissance signs became arbitrary, with signifieds free floating referents to a 'real' world. The period marked the beginning of a 'semiological hegemony' a triumph of signs over reality. The automaton belonged to this period, an analogue of humanity, but with a distinction maintained between human and machine, between being and appearance. ED 209 is an automaton, a substitute for the human police, his mechanical nature obvious. The robot belongs to the industrial era, the next stage of simulation. The distinction between being and appearance has broken down, the robot is the equivalent of man, in a world where everything is subjugated to the logic of production, under a hierarchy of exchange value. By extension, Robocop belongs to the next stage of simulation, the era of 'hyperreality' where signs and images engulf objective reality. Robocop is not the analogy of man, or the equivalent of man, but a cyborg, a technological simulation that is superior to man.

Just as differences in gesture, movement and expression demonstrate the different planes on which ED 209 and Robocop operate, so to do the changes in Robocop's body language map his progress from machine to cyborg. His early movements symbolise the disunity of his mind and body; his head and body turn independently, a change of direction signalled by a movement of one or the
other, his movements are jerky,robotocised, he is completely controlled by programmed directives
- "When you are at rest you will sit in a chair".

As Murphy/Robocop gradually recovers memories, and through them self-identity and self-will, he
becomes both less and more efficient. His memories are initially read as a malfunction. They slow
his reactions when he is about to arrest Antonowsky for a gas station robbery, and both Jones and
Morton cited fast reflexes as primary attributes of their creations. But as, with Lewis's help, he
comes to understand the violent flash backs and vague memories, he takes possession of his body,
bringing the metal muscles under the control of a human spirit. Where the initial surfacing of his
humanity was signalled by a measure of vulnerability, the meshing of Murphy and Robocop brings
with it a consolidated power. After his shootout with ED 209, Murphy takes possession of
Robocop's body, repairing the damage to his armour with personalised concern, rather than
programmed precision. By removing his helmet and thereby restoring his face to Robocop's body,
Murphy symbolically regains self determination, but within Robocop's body. Looking in a
makeshift mirror he accepts the loss of his humanity, while simultaneously reaffirming it. The
synthesis of Murphy and Robocop is demonstrated in a new co-ordination between head and body,
during the final warehouse shootout Robocop moves in one direction, his human face turned in
another, watching Boddicker. Boddicker's final words are: "You're no robocop!". Morton had
told Lewis that Robocop has no name, "He's a product". Robocop subverts his programming to
shoot Jones, and in a final scene borrowed-from generations of westerns the OCP President says:
"Nice shootin' son." and "What's your name?" Robocop smiles, "Murphy", he says. Narrative
resolution is an indicator of social values, a 'happy ending' is one that conforms with cultural
mythology in terms of what constitutes heroism, villainy, reward and punishment. The ending of
Robocop affirms a culturally desired masculinity that is physically powerful, to the point of
invulnerability, yet retains emotions and affections. Murphy with his Robocop body is an everyman
hero combining the best of both biology and technology.
Throughout Robocop social power is invested in the male body, not least in the repeated incidents linking the penis and the promise (or threat) of power. When Murphy and Lewis follow the bank robbers into the old mill, they separate. Lewis comes across Cox urinating, he is framed in profile, the stream of urine backlit, cutting across the space.

Lewis: "Freeze."
Cox: "Sure. Mind if I zip this up?"

Lewis's inability to resist the temptation to look at his penis, enables the rest of the narrative. She looks down, Cox hits her, leaving her unconscious, apparently dead. Murphy, without a partner, is ambushed by the gang. Playing with the popular mythology surrounding the size of black man's penis, the film firmly links the owner of the penis and the possessor of power. When a would-be rapist holds his victim before him as a shield, Robocop's bullet castrates him, leaving a neat hole in the woman's skirt. As the attacker lies writhing on the street, his hands ineffectually trying to stem the flow of blood from his groin, Robocop turns to the victim with programmed politeness: "You have had a traumatic experience. I will notify a rape crisis centre." Castration legitimately disempowers.

The success of Morton's Robocop project enables him to scramble further up the corporate ladder, and hands him the key to the executive washroom. A low angle shot shows us Jones' legs, his trousers around his ankles, Morton framed by the lavatory door as he gloats to a colleague about climbing over Jones' back to a Vice-Presidency. "Fuck Jones, he fumbled the ball and I picked it up." "The guy's a pussy." "He's old' we're young, that's life." Robocop uses wide-angle lenses throughout giving a depth of perspective, and a sharp focus from foreground to background. In this scene the technique places equal emphasis on the two characters, highlighting the imminent conflict. Jones is emasculated by his position on the toilet seat, and is described with a colloquialism that usually refers to the female genitals. But the next shot establishes the ephemeral nature of the power balance. A wide shot shows junior executives leaving the washroom with
furtive backward glances, as Jones walks into the shot Morton's colleague wets the front of his trousers in his rush to put his penis away. The schoolboy joke of the first shot, heightens the tensions in the second. Both men can not embody (phallic) power. "It's an old story, the fight for love and glory," Jones tells Morton via video disk. Boddicker has shot both his legs, and left a grenade, pin pulled, on the coffee table. Morton watches Jones on the monitor until the explosion, "It helps if you think of it as a game".

The film is a patterning of disintegrations. Cars, buildings and bodies explode in fountains of colour and noise, implode in quivering, bleeding heaps. The junior executive who helps demonstrate ED 209 is blown away, his crumpled body lies bleeding over the shining model of Delta City, "Send for a medic". Robocop throws the city councillor turned terrorist through the window, the tv cameras follow him all the way to the pavement. Antonowsky crashes into a toxic waste dump, and emerges with his flesh liquefied, melting away from his bones, his body splatters like an overripe melon on the windshield of Boddicker's car. The disintegration and liquefication of the world around him emphasises the hard body of Robocop, an impenetrable body that cloisters the spirit of Murphy, repels threats to the innocent, and vanquishes the profane.

The mythic power invested in the body of Robocop is underscored by the Wagnerian theme music. Poledouris' score places the action on an epic level. Robocop's encounter with Antonowsky at the gas station signals the return of his memory. As Antonowsky yells, "We killed you! We killed you!", the moments of Murphy's destruction are intercut with Robocop's present, his indestructible body silhouetted against the burning fuel lines and exploding gas station. Murphy/Robocop's status as mythic hero is heralded by the grandiloquent music that accompanies him as he strides, invincible yet human, through the flames.
The promise of consumerist technology to replace any or all of our body parts with high-tech improvements, articulates a new interpretation of the body. The body does not signify origins, experience, personality, or status, merely desire. And in the kevlar-titanium body of Robocop we have the mythic hero of our desires.

Morton: "We get the best of both worlds. The fastest reflexes modern technology has to offer, on-board computer assisted memory, and a lifetime of on the street law enforcement programming."

Robocop’s cyborg body is an exaggeration of masculine attributes. The depiction of ultramasculinity is compensatory refuge from anxieties brought about by rapid and widespread social change; the figure of the cyborg offering the ultimate hard body as a defence against feelings of powerlessness. But, at the same time, Robocop’s hyper-masculinity is a pleasurable fraud. The ironic nod to heroes of recent mythology, the spectacle of violence and destruction, the absolute excess of Robocop’s body all mark this version of masculinity as an enjoyable performance, a game. It is a reactionary masculinity that is both a defence against social anxieties, and a pleasurable enactment of an unrealisable fantasy.

Men and machines

Science fiction novels have displayed an ongoing fascination with technology; their narratives a celebration of the potential of high technology progress. The early eighties saw a heightened interest in the benefits of high tech consumer items and scientific developments such as genetic engineering and artificial life support. But these trends were not reflected in the cinema of the eighties. The films of the period that had science fiction elements, generally presented technology as having a negative effect on the quality of human life and on the functioning of society.

The fear of the machine is not limited to eighties cinema. From Metropolis in 1927 film makers have depicted industrialisation as a threat to individualism, but the fear of technology in the eighties is a new fear. It is not the threat that machines created for man’s benefit will make him
superfluous, but that man will become part of the machine, or the machine itself. Howard sees the
eighties workplace as an arena where technology is dangerously out of control with men "becoming
a mere appendage of the machine" (1985:3-4) arguing that "workers are often forced to participate
in a system of power and authority over which they have little influence and control" (1985:109).

Robocop celebrates the moment at which technology escapes or exceeds the control of its corporate
masters. The film presents society as controlled by a corporate capitalism which is increasingly
reconstructing men in the image of the machine, from an advertisement for artificial hearts in the
first moments of the film, to the construction of Robocop himself. But Robocop offers repeated
examples of technology refusing or exceeding the limits placed on it by its corporate masters; for
example, a peace platform malfunctions vaporising several heads of state, and the ED-209 police
robot over enthusiastically demonstrates its powers, wasting an Omni executive.

In The Terminator humans are constantly let down by machines which malfunction or are misused,
or whose use facilitates disaster. In Blade Runner Deckard asks "So how do we know who's
human?" Other films of the period also explore the relationship between high technology corporate
capitalism and individual modes of action. The requirements of large scale corporate capitalism
result in a loss of a sense of self for workers as companies have "remade individuals in the image
and likeness of the machine" (Howard, 1985:95). In the high technology workplace the importance
of the human being is evaluated in terms of his ability to work with the technological system, to the
extent of becoming part of the system. The 'fear of the machine' played out in the cinema of the
eighties was not a fear of the 'otherness' of the machine, but a fear of incorporation by the
machine. The robots of earlier science fiction films "represent the acclaim and fear evoked by
industrial age machines for their ability to function independently of human" but the cyborgs of
eighties science fiction "incorporate rather than exclude humans, and in doing so erase the
distinctions previously assumed to distinguish humanity from technology" (Springer, 1991:306).
In *Metropolis* the nightmare of rampant technology ends with the restoration of order, balance re-established. Labour and capital; feminine and masculine; intellect and strength; reason and emotion; technology and humanity; are restored to their proper equilibrium as the mad scientist and his robot perish. However, the idea of technology being basically good but capable of being abused by evil men has little currency in the eighties cinema. Technology is simply there, part of the workplace, malfunctioning, overwhelming, conglomerating. The threat is always returning to be dealt with anew, each time different, but always the same. "I'll be back" is the figurative ending.

**Collapsing boundaries**

Films of the eighties like *Blade Runner, The Terminator, Hardware, Cyborg, Cherry 2000, Making Mr Right* and *Daryl* reflect a fear of technology, an anxiety about the nature of humanity within a technological environment, and a kind of evolutionary fear that increased technological development may augur our own demise. Hardison suggests that at the root of that fear is a blurred or weakening sense of the human, a loss of distinction, or equating of all things, that is common in the postmodern world (Hardison, 1989:321). As Haraway submits, technology no longer plays a dialectical role as the 'other' of humanity, instead that otherness exists within the human thereby challenging assumptions about the nature of cultural identity, especially gender and racial identities (Haraway, 1991:150-3). Along with the cyberpunk novels of the period, the science fiction films of the eighties were a site where the construction of such identities and the constitution of gendered subjectivities could be explored. Science fiction "is no longer an elsewhere, it is an everywhere" (Baudrillard, 1991:13) present within the dispersed and decentralised social space of the present, the present of a late capitalist information society and a postmodern media environment. In describing the impact that modern technology is having on the human body, Baudrillard says that we live in a state of "pure presence" or "over exposure" (1988:32). With "everything ... immediately transparent, visible, exposed" (1988:21-22) the body becomes just
another commodity, and previously taken-for-granted identity becomes fluid and unknowable. Baudrillard describes the postmodern experience of cultural commodification as a condition of "forced signification" and suggests a problematic insertion of the subject into a reticulation of "information and communication, ... of circuits and networks, of functions and objects" (Baudrillard, 1988:14). He sees the collapse of clear boundaries between humans and machines as part of the same postmodern move towards uncertainty that characterises the collapse of difference between genders. Baudrillard asserts that "science has anticipated this panic-like situation of uncertainty by making a principle of it" (Baudrillard, 1988b:16).

The uncertainty over the boundary between humanity and technology originates in our relationship to the new technological systems, not to traditional machines.

"Am I a man, am I a machine? In the relationship between workers and traditional machines, there is no ambiguity whatsoever. The worker is always estranged from the machine, and is therefore alienated by it. He keeps his precious quality of alienated man to himself. Whilst new technology, new images, interactive screens, do not alienate me at all. With me they form an integrated circuit" (Baudrillard, 1988b:14).

The end of the seventies saw rapid developments in the technologising of the workplace and a concurrent questioning of what it means to be a man in a world in which the ever-encroaching mediations of technology are inescapable. Accompanying technological development was a loss of certainty, a collapse of the once taken-for-granted foundations of society (such as a belief in progress), and a blurring of the fundamental boundaries through which the world was once classified (such as the distinction between men and machines). The films of the eighties explore boundary breakdowns between humans and computers but gender boundaries are treated less flexibly. "Where the basic fact of identity as a human is suspect and subject to transformation into its opposite, the representation of sexual identity carries a potentially heightened significance, because it can be used as a primary marker of difference in a world otherwise beyond our norms" (Bergstrom, 1986:39). The question of sexual difference, increasingly problematic in life, is, in
the movies, "displaced onto the more remarkable difference between the human and the other" (Penley, 1989:197).

The construction of self

A significant body of films during the eighties were concerned with themes of identity, memory, and the development of an appropriate or desirable self, family or society, and the control that an individual had over this development. The time-travel films, including *Time after Time*, *Somewhere in Time*, *The Final Countdown*, *Time Rider*, *The Philadelphia Experiment*, *My Science Project*, and *Flight of the Navigator* are in essence a reassurance that, in the words of *Back to the Future*, "the future is in your hands". While this period saw a proliferation of films in which the ability to travel through time was a major narrative element, "time travel [had] only recently become a frequent cinematic theme, having increased by more than fifty per cent relative to the rise in total science-fiction films during the past decade" (Wachhorst, 1984:340). The new interest in time travel reflects a sense of uneasiness about the present, and an uncertainty about the future, combined with a nostalgia for a romantically remembered past.

Few of the time-travel films of the period have the future as their focus. Those that present a vision of the future do so in terms of a negative extrapolation of the present. The post-apocalyptic world of *The Terminator* is in essence a contemporary inner city area awaiting urban renewal, for example. Most of these films deal with an escape to a romanticised past and an attempt to alter the present, reflecting a conservative belief that social progress has been misdirected, society has 'lost its way', and a reactionary desire to go back to the way things were. In some of these films such as *The Blue Yonder* and *Peggy Sue Got Married* individuals go back into the past to revise their own personal histories. In others, including *Star Trek IV*, groups from the future attempt to rescue the present in order that there may be a future.
In *Back to the Future* Marty McFly is a seventeen year old in 1985 California. His mother eats, drinks and smokes to excess, she dominates his father and seeks to control Marty. His father is a weakling, a loser. When he loses the school rock band competition for being "too loud" a hostile teacher tells him that "No McFly ever amounted to anything in the history of Hill Valley", "History is gonna change", responds Marty. *Back to the Future* is a fantasy of innocent power. As in the child/father reversal films the child is empowered to rescue the father. Marty is portrayed as the innocent victim of circumstances created by society in general and his family in particular. His return to the past enables him to reshape his life and his parents lives for the better. Time-travel allows Marty to be both a child overpowered by his mother and figuratively abandoned by his father, and paradoxically a man who can lead his father into manhood and help his mother discover her sexuality. In the film the patriarchal figure is split into three stock characters: George the powerless; Biff the overly aggressive; and Dr Brown, who provides Marty with the motivation, the knowledge and the magical tools that he needs to undergo his own initiation into manhood and the restoration of George and Biff to their rightful places. In a comedic version of the Oedipal story, Marty returns to 1955, but when he rescues his father from a minor car accident he is injured and wakes up in his (teenaged) mother's bed, and takes his father's place in his mother's affections. Marty then stages another rescue in which the father is to save the mother from the sexual attentions of the son, thereby putting Oedipus to rest. George ends up rescuing Lorraine instead from the molestations of Biff. The resolution the film offers is to transfer George into a strong father by effectively castrating Biff and transferring his potency to George. The child has the power for much of the film, the adults are depicted as physically or sexually intimidating, pathetic, or foolish. The child reconstructs his personal and family history to become the man he wants to be, not a loser but a winner. One of the comedy elements in *Back to the Future* is the way that the town square has changed from 1955 to 1985. The malt shop has become an aerobics gym, the Studebaker dealership now sells Toyotas, the florist has become a pornographic bookstore, and a travel agency has been replaced by a pawn shop, in a comment on the 1980 obsession with the
self rather than the social, the destruction of American industry by Japanese imports, the substitution of sex for romance, and the downturn in the economy.

The future depicted in *Total Recall* similarly provides a forum for dealing with collective issues raised by the transition from a relatively stable, national, mechanical/industrial society to a new and uncertain transnational information technology order. As in *RoboCop* the hero is an amnesiac, and the plot evolves from Quaid's attempt to recover his identity. For Quaid, as for RoboCop and the replicants in *Blade Runner*, the absence of identity is a symbolic castration, a loss of power over their lives that must be regained. Quaid exists in a future constructed of surfaces, surrounded by advertising and television imagery, crowded shopping malls and empty factories, and high-tech toys – an exercise holograph, wall size television, touch controlled nail polish – that recall the world of the present. He stumbles into half known, partly remembered places and people, in a paranoid narrative structure where various versions and levels of reality complicate his search for identity.

Loosely based on Phillip K. Dick's story *We Can Get it for You Wholesale*, *Total Recall's* complicated plot is centred on construction worker Dennis Quaid (played by Arnold Schwarzenegger). Disturbed by inexplicable dreams of Mars, he wants to visit the planet, but his wife refuses to go. He enlists the services of Rekall, Inc., a company that specialises in implanting 'vacation memories' in the minds of people who don't want the inconvenience of an actual vacation. The procedure goes wrong, and Quaid is bundled unconscious, into a taxi. His dreams are the remnants of an erased memory of his life as a top security operative for Cohagen, the capitalist boss of the treminium mine that is Mars; Quaid goes to Mars, but as a 'new man' this time he joins forces with the mutant mine workers. What is packaged memory, and what is real experience are questions that are never definitively answered, as the narrative toys with the possibility that Quaid's experiences are imagined, he is a construction worker experiencing everyman's fantasy of life as a secret agent, or that the revolutionary Quaid is still the agent Quaid,
his revised personality a disguise to allow him to infiltrate the rebel worker's headquarters. Total Recall attempts to suture divergent masculine identities.

Workers found themselves increasingly vulnerable in the 1980s in their relationships with technology and employment as they witnessed the power of large corporations and new technologies to affect all aspects of their lives, few possibilities for them to control or limit the effect (cf Cockburn, 1983). There is an analogy in Total Recall where the workers have been disempowered by the removal of the life supporting technology from their control. However, despite a high level of organised rebellion on the part of the mutant workers, it requires a 'superior' individual to destroy the corporation and restore control of the oxygen producing machinery to the workers. But while the relationship of the workers to their agency bosses and their struggle for control of the technology that control their lives is the major narrative line, the plot focuses on the attempt to reclaim identities from images. And the identity that is being rescued, reconstituted, is a gendered identity, masculine, heterosexual. When Quaid is embarking on his faux Mars holiday, Dr Love barks "Sexual orientation?" and looks across at him with a quizzically raised eyebrow when he answers "Hetero". In his first attempt to resurrect his identity Quaid dons a pale blue turban, "You look beautiful" the agent on the phone tells him. Later Quaid disguises himself as a woman, his huge bulk grotesque in blond curls and a print scarf. These moments suggest not cross-gendered identification, but a masculine identity that cannot be pinned down, or held on to.

The hegemonic masculinity represented in the cinema of the eighties was not so much perceived masculine identity as an hysterical response to an apparent lack of identity. Masculinity was defined, not by characteristics that constructed it as a given, but by oppositions that determined what it was not; not female, not black, not homosexual. White masculinity involved a position of "constant negotiation with, and differentiation from, specific racial and gender identities", a
position that was "resolutely hysterical because it can never coincide with the cultural ideal it is enjoined to become" (Di Piero, 1992:132). Difference construed as a stable identity position necessitated a constant struggle to remain 'masculine' within changing social, cultural and economic frames; the hysterical, because always impossible, struggle to recover an identity from characteristics defined only in relation to the 'other', is negotiated in the films of the eighties.

RoboCop depicts the destruction of Murphy's body, first by Boddiker's gang then by Omni corporation, and the accompanying destruction of his identity. "Let me make it real clear" the Omni executive explains to Murphy's partner "He doesn't have a name. He has a program". The resistance that RoboCop offers to this violence is the reclamation of a sense of individual identity; the annihilation of individual subjectivity being the primary means by which corporate capitalism seeks to control individuals in the workplace. RoboCop's identity persists, not as an essence, but as a series of inconsequential 'habits'; the way he twirls his gun before reholstering it, the way he drives out of the station yard, and the phrase he uses in an arrest, "Dead or alive, you're coming with me." His identity is recovered or reconstituted through images on computer screens and television monitors, in a reminder that identity is always already constituted externally, "the real is not what can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced". (Baudrillard 1983:146). The corporate apparatus and the machinery of imitations and reproductions affirm the reality of personal identity.

In Phillip K. Dick's novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? the androids are not so much not-human as in-human. Although Deckard develops a sympathy for them a number of incidents demonstrate the crucial difference between androids and humans – their inability to feel empathy. Their torture and killing of a spider, their attempts to undermine the empathetic experience of Mercerism, and Rachael's calculated seduction of Deckard, all make it clear in the novel that the androids are to be understood as inhuman. In Blade Runner, the 1982 film based on the novel, the
replicants occasionally demonstrate superhuman physical capabilities, but for the most part the film plays down or blurs the distinction between the human and the replicant. The narrative suggests that technological reproducibility is a condition of the postmodern world. Rather than depicting an essential and organic human element that exists in opposition to the replicants, the narrative breaks down the opposition between the original and the copy. This is not achieved by extending 'humanity' to the androids, but by revealing the distinction to be unviable.

Harrison Ford plays Rick Deckard, an ex-blade runner (law enforcement officer) who reluctantly accepts an assignment to track down a group of androids, or replicants, who have mutinied on a space colony and returned to earth, looking for a way to prolong their restricted life span. Deckard's task is to uncover the replicants and then retire, or terminate, them. But everything in the course of his 'detection' of the androids leads to a recognition of the ephemeral nature of identity. The Tyrell Corporation's genetically engineered products are completely lifelike, down to manufactured memories of non-existent childhoods. When Tyrell is asked how Rachael can not know that she is a replicant, he answers "Commerce" and goes on "More human than human is our motto". The problem for Deckard in uncovering replicants to retire is that he cannot be certain that he himself is not a replicant. To perform his job, a role required by corporate interests, he must have the qualities that define a replicant: intelligence, physical strength, emotionless performance. Disconcerted by his increasing reluctance to be involved in killing replicants he says, "Replicants weren't supposed to have feelings. Neither were blade runners." The Voigt-Kampf Empathy Test uncovered replicants by revealing their lack of emotion. "Have you ever tried that thing on yourself?" Rachael asked Deckard, "ever retired a human by mistake?" Immediately after he explains that replicants have a special attachment to photographs because they need them to reaffirm their 'memories', Deckard is shown deep in contemplation of his own family photographs. Throughout the film there is an erosion of the difference between the man and the replicant. The irony in Batty's question "Aren't you the good man?" is that first Deckard is no longer completely
sure that he is a 'man', and second, being a 'good' man in the corporate world means being a robot.

In the film the replicants are obsessed with becoming human, and overcoming their inbuilt four year life span. Assurance of a future lies in the confirmation of a past, and the past is confirmed through images. The photograph is proof of existence, and proof of existence is a guarantee of personal identity. Three of the characters in the film apparently transcend their designation to discover their 'true' identity. The two 'machines', Rachel and Roy, and the 'man', Deckard. Tyrell, the manufacturer of the replicants, is killed by Roy in an act of classical Oedipal revenge. Tyrell is their symbolic father, he is the focus of their quest for immortality, and at the same time the 'law' governing their lives. His death enables a humanisation of the other characters. Roy spares Deckard in a recognition of the value of life and dies himself in an acceptance of its limits, his time has come. His death allows the flight of Deckard and Rachel into the actual and metaphorical sunset. While the ending can be seen as a transcendence it can also be read as a validation of the status quo. Deckard is rewarded by a capitalist system for the suppression of the workers revolt against the system. And his reward is Rachel, a 'real woman' of the "basic pleasure model" submissive, sexually available. In a society that uses machines to replace, exploit or control men, anger is displaced from the social source of the frustration, onto the machine.

Reproduction, the masculine and the machine

Doane suggests that "anxiety concerning the technological is often allayed by a displacement of this anxiety onto the figure of the woman or the idea of the feminine" (1990:163). During the eighties a number of films reflected a conjunction of the fear of the feminine and a fear of the technological; films such as Cyborg, Hardware, Total Recall, Eve of Destruction, Blade Runner and Alien and its sequel. As developing technologies of reproduction brought into question traditional notions of origins and identity, the links between technology and the feminine became
generalised, moving from the figure of the monstrous female robot to an insistent maternalisation of the technological (Doane 1990:168-170). In Baudrillard's view "Reproduction is diabolical in its very essence; it makes something fundamental vacillate" (1983:153). The technologising of reproduction introduces a 'diabolical' polemic, as to whether mechanical reproduction will serve to regulate and control the maternal, or whether it will, in constructing the maternal, destabilise the paternal. The ensuing vacillation having the "potential to disrupt given symbolic systems that construct the maternal and the paternal as stable positions" (Doane 1990:175).

In Blade Runner the replicants have a father, Tyrell, their lack of a mother is the problematic that sets them apart and necessitates their termination. When the replicant Leon undertakes the Empathy Test at the beginning of the film he is asked about his mother. In trying to determine whether or not Leon is human the examiner asks, "Describe in single words only the good things that come into your mind about - your mother." "My mother?" Leon responds, "Let me tell you about my mother" and shoots the examiner dead. Rachel begins to suspect that she may be a replicant after her Empathy Test, and in trying to prove her humanity to Deckard shows him a photograph saying "Look, it's me with my mother." Deckard replies "Remember when you were six. You and your brother snuck into an empty building through a basement window. You were gonna play doctor. He showed you his. When it got to be your turn you chickened and ran. Remember that? ... Implants. Those aren't your memories." The memory of the mother is specifically linked to the discovery of sexual difference. As Rachel leaves, Deckard looks down at the photograph which becomes animated. The 'loss' of Rachel's previous life is transformed into the beginning of her new life as the woman of Deckard's desires.

Government control and ultramilitary technology render sexual difference irrelevant in Hardware as citizens respond to the presidents call for "a clean break with procreation". In this postapocalyptic world Moses is a desert scavenger, a member of the Corps roaming the irradiated
Outer Zone. His lover, Jill, is a sculptor who remains barricaded within her apartment producing work without apparent purpose. The couple argue over the reasoning behind reproduction, both sides of the argument suggesting that while biological reproduction still has a purpose it functions primarily as a nostalgic reminder of a society that no longer exists. Negative images of the mother permeate the film, from the corpse with an infant child still bound to it, to Alvy's deformity which is the result his mother's irradiation "in the big one", and Jill's creations. When Mo asks why she doesn't exhibit her work, she says "It's nothing. It's not for anyone", futile procreativity for a desolate future. "I've been basing my work on organic forms" she tells Mo "It feels like I'm fighting with the metal and ... the metal's winning. "Mo brings Jill a fragment of metal, a head from one of the 'Mark 13' series of military cyborgs. As they have sex energetically, if rather mechanically, the head glows red in a climactic linking of the sex act and the machine. As Moses sleeps, Jill starts work on a new sculpture incorporating the Mark 13 head painted with a US flag, fixed to the wall beside a bundle of burnt and melted dolls. But the Mark 13 is a "Biomechanical Auto-independent Artificially Intelligent Life Form," the head can self-regenerate and is programmed to do so, and to kill indiscriminately and incessantly in the service of a society in a "constant war state". As with other cyborgs in films of this period, the Mark 13 does not exemplify the difference between man and machine, but rather denies the existence of a boundary. This cyborg is fleshless, but it assimilates voices, ideas, thought programs, from the people it comes in contact with. It reassembles itself, re-constituting its body from various mechanical devices in the apartment. With a techno-autonomy that denies the traditional man-machine dualism it gives birth to itself in a "caricature of that masculinist reproductive dream" (Haraway, 1991:152). The film echoes Haraway's suggestion that the "marked organic body" is conceptually obsolete, replaced by the "body as coded text". Haraway describes the cyborg as "text, machine, body, and metaphor - all theorised and engaged in practice in terms of communications" (1991:211-212). In Hardware reproduction is disassociated from bodies to become the practice of mechanical incorporation and the assimilation of information. If the idea of
the cyborg undermines the distinctions between animal and human; organic and inorganic; and physical and non-physical (Haraway, 1991:153) then Hardware reconfigures these differences so that it is Jill's body that is represented as transgressive, not the Mark 13's. It is the non-reproductive female body that denies biological distinctions. The Mark 13 repeatedly gives birth to itself, reproducing life from death, in its assumption of this role underscoring Jill's decision to only reproduce via her metal sculptures.

Total Recall has a scene which can also be read in terms of anxieties arising from women's changing cultural role, combined with unconscious fears of and wishes for the experience of childbirth, and a cultural fascination with technological intervention in conception and birth. Quaid is led into a room in the rebel worker's headquarters where he is to meet Kuato, their leader. The man who has shown him the room turns away, opening his shirt front. A small hand with four fingers emerges from his stomach as he turns back towards Quaid. A mutant man/child is half embedded in his flesh, not part of him but not separate from him. He is a man, leader of the revolution and the only person who can recover Quaid's lost identity, but physically has the form of an unborn child.

The narrative line of Eve of Destruction also chronicles a crisis of the maternal, in the doubling of Eve. Eve VIII's circuitry is disturbed when she is inadvertently caught in the crossfire of a bank robbery. In her damaged state she acts out Dr Eve Simmons' repressed "teenage fantasies" of violence against men, fantasies that have their origin in her anger at her father's abuse of her mother, and in her fear that she is a "bad mother" to her son. Eve VIII's program of revenge is trivialised and pathologised by the film, and the triviality and pathology inscribed as feminine. The first thing that Eve VIII does when her circuits are disrupted is go shopping. In a new red leather jacket and black mini-skirt she picks up a biker at a bar, and takes him to a motel. She protests his roughness, and penetration is supplanted by excision when she bites off his penis. She opens fire
on his fellow bikers and the police, provoking the observation that she is "horny as well as psychopathic".

A tracking shot through Eve VIII's internal organs reinforces the notion of female sexuality as pathology, revealing a nuclear trigger, a time bomb ticking away in the space of the womb. When she 'remembers' and pursues 'her' son the struggle over the maternal between the two Eves, is framed within a masculinist order. Special Agent McQuade is positioned as the rational father between the cold, inadequate mother and the horny, psychopathic cyborg. McQuade is able finally to locate Eve VIII's "fucking off switch" but she (inexplicably) is turned on again. Dr Eve is shot and wounded by Eve VIII and repeatedly shoots her in return, without success. Finally she plunges the barrel of the gun into Eve VIII's already bloody eye socket in an act of redemptive self penetration. As with a number of other films of the period (for example Fatal Attraction) the final battle is between two women, or two versions of womanhood one sexualised, one not. Female sexuality is the threat that is overcome by the domesticated woman.

On one level, Alien is about work in a corporate capitalist environment, where everyone is compelled to be a 'company man', ultimately expendable in the race for profits, little understanding the work they do, and having no control over it. Alien presents a technologically sophisticated workplace, juxtaposing blinking computerised surfaces with empty coffee cups in a vision of the office of the future. Individual, private, space has been reduced to suspended animation cells, inadequate cocoons from the corporate world. The world of the space ship is under direct control of the Company, enforced through the computer, known as 'Mother'. The tension between the human and the mechanical is represented by impressive but unreliable technology contrasted with the effective, if simple, ingenuity of the crew. The casting of a female character in a role conventionally played by a male, the individualist hero, complicates the workplace parable. The macho-militarist female appears in other films of the eighties, Sarah
Connor in *Terminator 2*, Quaid's wife in *Total Recall*, Megan Turner in *Blue Steel*. Ripley's role evokes white, middle-class male anxieties about feminism as a radical force and its potential to disrupt the traditionally gendered workplace. The resolution of *Alien* is to reinvest Ripley with femininity. While Parker and Lambert are preparing to get off the ship, Ripley risks all their lives searching for the cat, "Here kitty, kitty. Here sweetheart." In the moments before her final encounter with the alien she undresses. Stripped to her bikini pants, she exposes an unarguably feminine form. Having been reconstituted as 'feminine' Ripley is then reaffirmed as belonging to the Company as the film ends with her formally completing the captain's log, "Crew - and cargo - destroyed."

If the anxieties of the corporate workplace is one theme of *Alien*, fear of the feminine is another. In describing the representation of the "monstrous feminine" in *Alien*, Creed says:

"She is there in the text's scenarios of the primal scene of birth and death; she is there in her many guises as the treacherous mother, the oral sadistic mother, the mother as the primordial abyss; and she is there in the chameleon figure of the alien, the monster as fetish-object of and for the mother." (Creed, 1990:128)

Freud argued that every child observes its parents in the act of sexual intercourse, has fantasies about the act, perhaps extrapolated from observations of animals copulating, or fantasies of watching parental intercourse while an unborn baby in the womb (Freud, 1905, 1906, 1933). Anxieties about this primal scene have informed a number of science fiction horror films that rework notions of copulation and procreation, films such as *The Thing* and *Altered States*. As Creed describes, *Alien* presents various representations of the primal scene. The first is the long exploratory sequence through the space ship, tracking down a long corridor to a womb-like chamber where the crew emerge from their sleep-pod eggs in response to the voice of "Mother" the ship's life support system computer. Another is when three of the crew investigate the unknown spaceship, entering the horseshoe shaped craft through a "vaginal" opening at the junction of its two curved legs, and travelling along a convoluted corridor that seems to be at least partly organic.
One scene recalls Freud's reference to an extreme primal scene fantasy where the subject imagines travelling back into the womb to witness itself being conceived. The three explorers find a giant plush chamber containing rows of eggs. Kane is lowered down a shaft into the chamber and approaches the eggs. The monstrous thing inside explosively attaches itself to Kane's helmet, its tail penetrating his mouth in order to lay its seed in his stomach.

"Two members of the group watch the enactment of the primal scene in which Kane is violated in an act of phallic penetration - by the father or phallic mother? Kane ... becomes a 'part' of the primal scene, taking up the place of the mother, the one who is penetrated, the one who bears the offspring of the union. The primal scene is represented as violent, monstrous (the union is between human and alien), and is mediated by the question of incestuous desire" (Creed, 1990:130).

Kane 'gives birth' to the alien, dying in agony as it gnaws its way through his stomach. When Ripley escapes from the mother-ship, her small space capsule is ejected from its underbelly; the body of the 'mother' a hostile environment and birth the only way of avoiding destruction. The 'mother's' body explodes at the moment of birth.

Cyborgasm

Haraway sees the promise of cyborg identity as eliminating "troubling dualisms" within the Western tradition and thereby realising a "utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender". But if the fusion of the human with computer technology opened up the possibility of escape from the gendered body then it was not so represented in the cinema of the eighties.

In scientific forums, discussions on the integration of human consciousness with computers centre on the postulation that bodies will be obsolete, human intelligence stored on computer software complemented by a mechanical frame (Fjermedal, 1986). Hans Moravec suggests the possibility of a "post-biological era" (1989:88) and Lyotard debates how thought will continue after the body (1988-9). The concept of the human-computer has been frequently depicted in popular film "but instead of effacing the human body these texts intensify corporeality in their representation of
cyborgs. A mostly technological system is represented as its opposite: a muscular human body with robotic parts that heighten physicality and sexuality" (Springer, 1991:304). The cyborg cinema of the eighties creates an alternative world that allows a reassertion of physical, male, mastery in the face of a feminising technology. The political potential of the cyborg is denied in a virtual celebration of a primal masculinity.

These films consistently depict cyborgs as hypermasculine. Other popular culture forms have been more flexible in their representations. In the television series Star Trek: The Next Generation, Lieutenant Commander Data is a "cerebral" cyborg, his logical rationalism a contrast to the physicality of Robocop and the Terminator. In describing another television cyborg, Max Headroom, Joyrich explains:

"the television cyborg achieves a kind of grace and overpresence – an egoless absorption of the patterns on the screen. Thus achieving a harmony of being, the paradoxical holism born of boundary confusion, the cyborg seems to embody an image of femininity which has also been described in terms of empathy and closeness, excess and disruption ... the television cyborg is then figured as feminised" (Joyrich, 1989-90:15).

In cyberpunk novels, as Ross describes, technologically enhanced male bodies tend to be "spare, lean, and temporary" subject to frequent alteration by "boosterware, biochip wetware, cyberoptics, bioplastic circuitry, designer drugs, nerve amplifiers, prosthetic limbs and organs, memoryware, neutral interface plugs and the like", fleshed bodies are disparaged as "meat" (Ross, 1991:137).

If the fusion of human and computer in television and the novel can produce an amorphous vacillating male body, in the eighties cinema the fusion is equivalent to an encasing in armour. Instead of representing cyborgs as superior intelligences whose bodies have atrophied for want of a purpose, the cinema gives us Mr Universes, muscular hulks whose superiority lies in their body fortresses and their capacity for violence. The prosthetised body is an intensification of the process whereby cinematic constructions of masculinity involve the sexualising of the male body through
the use of technological props, such as guns or cars. The male body is sexualised, but as Neale (1983) described, a cultural taboo against a homoerotic gaze leads to a displacement of the sexual dynamic onto violence. In the male oriented action cinema the heightened physicality of the superhero culminates not in sexual climax, but in climactic violence.

Springer (1991) suggests that cyborg imagery in the Robocop and Terminator films exemplifies the invincible armoured killing machine theorised by Klaus Theweleit (1987, 1989). The psychological state of the men in the German Freikorps between the world wars indicated an intense misogyny. They seemed to be an extreme product of patriarchy, despising women and their threat of sexual union with its terrifying prospect of blurred ego boundaries and the loss of self. In order to protect themselves from women, fascist males encased themselves in leather and metal body armour. The sexual act threatened dissolution of the ego, with sexual energy being therefore displaced onto violence. The act of killing, especially in a way that destroyed the other’s bodily integrity, functioned to externalise the fear of dissolution of self. Each killing reaffirmed the fascists own physical and psychical coherence. "Heroic acts of killing take the place of the sexual act" (Theweleit, 1989:276) and "the ecstasy of killing substitutes for sexual climax" (1989:279).

Cyborg imagery in the eighties cinema is a technofascist celebration of invulnerability. For the Freikorps, invincibility was an unrealisable fantasy, the fantasy is made real in the cinema’s invincible armoured fighting machine, the Terminator, who ‘absolutely will not stop, ever, until you are dead’. Haraway sees the cyborg as a figure for whom gender is incredibly problematic (1991b:21) and believes that “cyborgs might consider more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment” (1991:180). But in films such as Cyborg, Robocop and The Terminator the body is excessively, physically gendered. The macho-cyborg imagery recovers an ostensibly transcendent masculinity.
The image of the technobody expressed the crisis of masculinity in the eighties. In the cinema the super-physiques of Van Damme, Schwarzenegger and Stallone were a response to the redundancy of muscle in the modern workplace, the feminisation of technology and the general waning of patriarchal power. The cyborg of the cinema inhabited no amorphous body, maintained only through prosthetics and genetics. "The unadorned body/fortress of the Rambo/Schwarzenegger physique expressed the anxieties of the dominant male culture" (Ross, 1991:153), anxieties of a hegemonic masculinity in retreat "against the onslaught of a femininity feared by patriarchy" (Springer, 1991:318). The Terminator, for example, articulated fantasies of invincibility in negotiating fears of a technological future.

The Terminator — man/machine

The Terminator opens in Los Angeles in the year 2029 AD. In the post-holocaust landscape, mechanical tyrannosaurus and pterodactyl scour streets reminiscent of contemporary urban areas primarily inhabited by non-whites. As the giant machines crush human remains to dust an over title reads "The machines rose from the ashes of the nuclear fire. Their war to exterminate mankind had raged for decades, but the final battle would not be fought in the future. It would be fought here, in our present. Tonight ..."

Technology dominates the present also. LA in 1984 is a world of huge garbage skiffs and monstrous road mending machinery, the tech-noir extending to everyday radios, televisions, hairdryers, Walkmans, clocks, phones, cars, answering machines, automated factories and computer tech discos. The Defence Network that `got smart' and saw all people as a threat had its origins here, in machines that could not be relied on, that malfunctioned or used for destructive purposes. The phone directory is responsible for the death of two `innocent' Sarah Connors. Matt and Ginger have the answering machine on and the music loud and miss the police warning calls to Sarah. The bar phone is out of order when she tries to call them, when she finally gets through all
lines are busy, she is put on hold, transferred to wrong departments. Ginger’s Walkman prevents her from hearing the terminator’s entry to the apartment. The answering machine gives Sarah’s location away, and her photo ID reveals her identity. The phone allows the Terminator to impersonate Sarah’s mother and coax her into revealing their hideout. Cars break down and run out of petrol. The contemporary world is characterised by mechanised systems which are relied on but invariably let people down, a foreshadowing of the missile systems which are “plugged into everything, trusted to run it all” who come to see human life as a threat to their “new order of intelligence” and work to annihilate it. Penley sees The Terminator as a resolutely anti-technological film; “the film seems to suggest that if technology can go wrong or be abused, it will be” (1989:98). Goscilo (1987-8) suggests that the theme of the machine in The Terminator is gender inflected – machines fail women.

The women are constrained by, identified by, technology. Ginger is never without her Walkman, even during sex. It distracts her from human interaction but she seems comfortable in her relationship with it. But while Ginger has no life without the Walkman, it keeps going after she has been terminated. Sarah is constantly identified by and through machines, from the beauty appliances she and Ginger use to transform themselves, to the machine she clocks in on at work which identifies her for the audience. The terminator uses the phone to identify all women named Sarah Connor, the phone or answering machine to locate her and the machine readable university card to single out the right Sarah Connor. Reese has a more active relationship with technology; hot wiring cars, modifying weapons, building bombs. The terminator is the hybridisation of human and machine; Schwarzenegger’s body and actions a cluster of signs that are an effective label, man-machine. As Penley describes, the film does not advance a man versus machine dichotomy (1989:98). The terminator is a machine hidden beneath ‘living human tissue’, and the humans are constrained by machines, and while the film shows the machine ‘learning’ and becoming more human, it also shows the extent to which humans are becoming machinelike. The characters are
repeatedly shown caught up in patterns of mechanical or repetitive behaviour. Matt’s seduction speech is repeated verbatim on cue, the detective reaches for a cigarette automatically, oblivious of the one he has alight, the police psychologist can only understand Reese in terms of mental illnesses he has previously witnessed, and Sarah becomes more efficiently mechanical as the narrative progresses. Sarah finally becomes part of an industrial assembly line, working with an hydraulic press to destroy the terminator. She crawls through the labyrinth of the machine, she and the machine cooperating to achieve the cyborg’s end. Sarah is wounded by a piece of exploding metal as the terminator is hit by a pipe bomb, a fragment of the cyborg penetrating her thigh. Without going into the sexual connotations of wounding in the thigh (cf Weston, 1920) part of the machine is literally incorporated in Sarah’s body. The audience repeatedly experiences the point of view of the cyborg, the pleasure of being a machine, through the information processing computer screen that is cyborg vision.

The narrative of The Terminator is built upon a patterning of similarities and differences between Kyle Reese and the cyborg, with Sarah Connor a pivot point between them. In 2029 AD the humans who have survived the nuclear holocaust are engaged in a battle for survival with the former defence system machines. The humans are on the brink of defeating the computer so the machines send a combat model cyborg back in time to terminate the mother of the resistance commander, John Connor. Connor responds by sending a volunteer back through time to protect Sarah Connor and thus preserve the rebellion.

The terminator arrives in the present naked, his body posed, classically sculptured, dramatically unfurling itself to full height, the electrically charged atmosphere stalling a garbage truck. Reese arrives in a foetal, defensive, position groaning in pain. The excessive musculature of the terminator’s body is shadowed by Kyle’s developed, but finer, musculature. Reese runs half-rouched behind a garbage unit where he takes the trousers from a derelict. Observed by the police
he is pursued down the alleys and through deserted shops and factories. Reese appropriates a trench coat and sneakers, and to complete his wardrobe a police shot gun. The terminator approaches three punks, who ridicule his nudity. His response is to literally rip the heart from one of them, holding it throbbing in his hand while the others give him their metal studded leather apparel. He shops for his weapons, a 12 gauge auto loader, a 45 millimetre long slide with laser sighting, an UZI 9 millimetre. "Any one of these is ideal for home defence" says the storekeeper.

In the opening sequences, the film cuts from one to the other in ways that confuse identification of the terminator and the father of the future. Even Sarah mistakes Kyle Reese for the person who has killed the other Sarah Connors. The gun battle appears to unite the two men in a scenario that only incidentally includes the woman. Reese is an unlikely hero in an eighties film for the most part he is coded as the 'sensitive' type, especially through his own voice over narration. But rather than being a validation of the 'new age guy' his characterisation seems to have much in common with the child/fathers of other films of the period. Sarah's affection for Reese has elements of the maternal, as she bandages his wounds, is solicitous about his well being, and strokes his scars to soothe away his pain. He is presented as younger than her, boyish, vulnerable. Combined with other signifiers in the film (leatherman sexuality, the male-male violation of Matt's post-coital death) the coding of Reese can be read in terms of homosexuality. His relationship to women has previously been as "good fighters". Goldberg suggests that "Sarah's pity for his sexual inexperience perhaps too quickly heterosexualises - or presses Reese into nominally heterosexual service" (1992:183). Reese's one experience of sex is described by Penley as 'perfunctory' (1989:212), certainly it contains few markers of heterosexual passion. Goschilo points out that the scene is filmed in slow motion, a technique otherwise limited to filming the terminator killing the other Sarah Connors (1987:8:41). The shot immediately following shows the terminator in full leather riding a large capacity motorcycle aggressively towards the viewer. If Reese is the 'father' of John Connor then the terminator is the anti-father, the embodiment of the antipaternal. While
Reese momentarily fills the paternal role, he vacates it. In *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* Sarah also resigns the maternal, leaving the role of both mother and father to the terminator.

Reese’s last words to the terminator, as he tucks a home made bomb in its abdomen, are “Come on, mother fucker!” but within the film’s narrative it is Reese that is the mother fucker. John Connor is the son who arranges his own primal scene. Kyle is both the father of John Connor and in his boyishness, the son of Sarah Connor. Reese declares, "I’d die for John Connor" enunciating a kind of Oedipal fantasy in which the father willingly dies at the command of the son. Reese’s desire to die for Connor is anticipatory; each of his ‘memories’ of the future ends with his death, and his existence in the present is overshadowed by his imminent demise. "I can never go back" he says. As Sarah ponders at the film’s end it is, in fact, difficult to say where or when he actually existed.

The film is preoccupied with issues of intercourse, penetration and reproduction; issues which are linked to notions of gender. Human relationships are depicted as mechanical. Ginger and Matt relate to each other through telephones and tape players. The yuppies at the singles bar talk to each other in meaningless cliches, their superficiality preventing any real horror at their massacre. Sarah is stood up by her Porsche driving boyfriend, and she declares that her iguana, Pugsley, is her true love. Human social intercourse is represented as mechanical, so much so that the terminator’s programming is able to select the appropriate reaction to a social situation. When the landlord is concerned by the smell of decaying flesh he calls out "Hey buddy, you got a dead cat in there or what?". The terminator viewing screen lists:
"Possible responses:
   Yes
   No
   Or what
   Go away
   Please come back later
   Fuck you, asshole
   Fuck you."

"Fuck you, asshole" says the terminator, the landlord half laughs, and moves off.

The terminator is continually presented as destructively penetrating objects, punching through windshields, crashing through doors and, reaching through walls, in an aggressively male system of imposing control on the world (cf Dworkin, 1987). Penetration can be seen as a system of reproduction which does not seek to interact with others in the production of original independent beings, but attempts to duplicate or extend the self in a system of control.

The mission to destroy Sarah Connor is nothing less than a mission to ensure the end of the human race. It is Sarah's reproductive potential that must be destroyed, and it is her reproductive potential that is saved. Sarah as a person is destroyed; the cheerful, feminised waitress no longer exists when the narrative Terminator 2: Judgement Day begins. Although some critics have read The Terminator in terms of a feminist challenge to stereotypical representations of gender (e.g. Necakov, 1987), its sci-fi and horror genre links are in fact reinforced by a series of stereotypical gender representations. Although "any popular action film featuring the demise of an Arnold Schwarzenegger character at the hands of a woman merits attention" as Gosch says, Sarah Connor is depicted first as a targeted victim, then as a damsel in distress. Her role within the narrative is cast solely in terms of her ability to bear a male child. (Safely delivering Jane Connor would not have made her the mother of the future.) Creed suggests that heroes such as Ripley, in Alien, and Sarah are male, in that they undergo a male passage through the Oedipus complex, separating themselves from the maternal and identifying with male cultural positions and male attributes such
as phallic aggression (1987:57). The 'male' Sarah having a primary function of maternity is not necessarily a dichotomy if read in conjunction with other representations of the male fear of and desire for the experience of childbirth, and the many depictions of a woman’s removal from the parenting process. Sarah functions as "a mere conduit of male power and supremacy between her son and her lover, assigned her role by their male discourse, most specifically John Connor's message from the future and Reese's directives in the present" (Goscilo 1987:46).

Sarah enters the narrative as a mechanically reproduced image. Kyle tells her about a photograph of her that was given to him by John Connor. He has fallen in love with her image: "I came across time for you," he says "I love you, I always have." Sarah the image, the thing, and Sarah the person are conflated. Kyle says he has always wondered what she was thinking about when the photograph was taken, suggesting she had a sad smile and a faraway look. After the terminator has been destroyed, Sarah heads for the mountains to give birth to her son and wait out the holocaust to come. She has traded her scooter for a four wheel drive, and the pet lizard for a dog. We last hear her voice as a recording, as she narrates John's story into a tape recorder for him, yet unborn. A small Mexican boy snaps her photograph as she is thinking of Kyle, beginning the time-loop narrative. In the final moments of the film Sarah is not being failed by machines, not being exposed or marooned by them, nor is she being threatened, menaced, or violated by them. She is being reproduced, made by machines.

The contested space between the man and the machine is the battle ground on which is played out the conflicts within hegemonic masculinity, in a time when "our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (Haraway, 1992:68). The cyborg in the eighties cinema is, on one level, a symbol of misogynistic resistance to change. The super-macho figure of the cyborg violently denies that there has been a feminisation of technology, a change in the nature of work, and a greater acceptance of human sexual diversity. The cyborgs perpetuate, in exaggerated form,
an industrial age metaphor of physical masculinity, in a nostalgic echo of a time when masculine superiority was taken for granted, guaranteed by an alliance with an empowering technology.

Although the cyborg films present a violent masculinist position, homosexual coding and strong women characters limit a single, unified interpretation of their meaning. *The Terminator* presents conflicting tendencies resulting in a contradictory mix of pro-fascist masculine imagery, feminist ideals and acknowledged homosexuality. The cyborg body becomes a contested site playing out a conflict between 'old style' masculinities and new ways of thinking about sexuality and gender; reconciling styles of masculinity in a restoration of patriarchy.
Chapter 5

MACHISMO AND MASOCHISM

The disciplined body

The human body is caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions (Foucault, 1977:11). Discipline, which produces a trained, productive body, and punishment, which as an agent of social control, functions in the interests of social reproduction, work together on the body. However the various penal practices constitute or institute their objects, it is always the body that is being acted upon, it is always the body that is being contested. The body is the site upon which social power is inscribed. In a patriarchal society, by definition, the inscription of social power is a mark of masculinity.

Punishment is not just a judicial act, but is also a political ritual. The public nature of a penal system encodes punishment as one of the ceremonies by which power is manifested. When the body belonged to the king, public torture and execution, in that they worked to redress the injury to the kingdom through the introduction of disorder, and the injury to the king through the violation of his sovereignty, were acts of revenge. Once the body became the property of the state, public torture and execution were replaced by "a closer penal mapping of the social body" (Foucault, 1977:78) where mechanisms of discipline and punishment became more overt, controls became more thorough, and penal interventions more numerous. The ceremonial of punishment survived, transferred to political and legal institutions, the hold on the body remained. If physical pain is no longer the major element of punishment, physical penalties – confinement, labour, constraint – still act upon the body. The difference is that where the spectacle of the punishment acted as an agent of control, the penalty must now operate as a sign of social control. Bearing witness to pain, be it
physical pain, or the pain of constraint and constriction, creates a "memory" for individuals, and through a socialisation process, for society in general. With the disappearance of punishment as spectacle, came a shift from punishment as an "everyday perception" to punishment as part of an "abstract consciousness", with its social effect the result of a perception of its inevitability, rather than the spectre of its intensity (Foucault, 1977:9). The punishment can be inflicted upon the offender, or as in Christian mythology, upon an 'innocent' who takes on pain as an atonement for a broad societal ill or offence.

In the eighties cinema the hero is invariably depicted as either the avenger holding punitive power, the scapegoat accepting punishment, or the youth coming to power through pain. These positions are culturally defined as masculine. Masculinity rites in male dominated societies contain elements of conformity and control, deference to male authority, and pain. Patriarchal rituals, from the initiation ceremonies of the Zuni to American college football, involve the official use of a variety of punishments to induce conformity to the requirements of the ritual, and establish the ability to endure pain as a defining quality of manhood. In sport males are taught to accept pain, "Players talked about learning to play with pain as one of football's greatest lessons" (Sabo and Panepinto, 1990:123), and are also taught to inflict pain on their opponents, with the result that the players are ritualistic accomplices in an avenger/altruist powerplay that operates as a training ground for hegemonic masculinity. "[Through sport] I learned to accept (rather than question) physical pain, to deny anxiety and anger, and to be aggressive in ways that were clearly valued as 'manly'" (Kidd, 1987:258). Conan the Barbarian is introduced with a quote from Thus Spake Zarathustra "That which does not kill us makes us stronger".

Male bonding through self-abuse, and the machismo of enduring pain, form major narrative themes in An Officer and a Gentleman. In a flash-back to Mayo's youth in the Philippine Islands, we see him as a young teen duped and beaten by a gang of young Filipinos, experts in the martial arts. In
thrashing him they somehow leave him with not just a bloody nose, but with some of their mystical knowledge. The beating becomes a male-bonding experience, on either side of the blow. Judo, implying the ability to discipline oneself and to punish others, carries Mayo through the brutality of officer training school, and the pitfalls of social relationships. Mayo’s will to endure punishment is represented as part of how he identifies himself as a man, and more specifically as a member of an elite male group – an officer and a gentleman – his ability to hand out punishment (to the drill sergeant, Foley) earns him the respect of that group. In common with other films of the period that deal with military training, *An Officer and a Gentleman* presents the rituals of brutality as leading to the construction of a efficient ‘fighting machine’, a finely tuned body that sublimes self for the good of the male group.

"The body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body" (Foucault, 1977:26). Discipline and punishment becomes a way of composing and organising the forces of the body in order to obtain an efficient machine. It is primarily as a locus of production that the body is invested with regimes of power, but its constitution as a productive body is only possible from within a system of subjection (Foucault, 1977:24-28). Disciplined bodies are produced from the distribution of bodies in space, and the control of activity. Enclosure, with each individual in their own space, coded according to use, and classified by rank, imposes a discipline upon the body. Controlling activity, imposing a ‘correct’ use of the body that correlates body and gesture and defines the relationship that the body has with the objects it manipulates, produces a body that operates as an element of a productive whole, an efficient piece of machinery (Foucault, 1977:135-169).

*Firefox* opens in the Alaskan forest, where Mitchell Gant is running, a steady measured stride and sweat stained track suit indicating that he has run some distance. An airforce helicopter drops into the valley, following Gant’s trail along the river. He races flat out for his cabin, and outruns the
chopper. "Good to see you're staying in shape," says the air-force officer. Gant's disciplined body is literally the productive machine required by the CIA. They want him to steal a sophisticated warplane and fly it to America. Despite suffering post-trauma syndrome after Vietnam, he is the only one who can undertake the task, as his body is a perfect match for the soviet pilot around whom the plane was designed. Codenamed Firefox, the plane is controlled by thoughtwaves and responds to the pilot's instinctive reactions. Gant's body will be part of the machine.

Torture is a ritual that marks the victim, firstly by the scar that it leaves on the body, secondly, by the spectacle that accompanies it (Foucault, 1977:34). Judicial torture, that seeks to uncover a truth, demonstrates the investment of an economy of power in the suffering body/speaking body. The body that is interrogated in torture, receives punishment as an extortion of truth. The tortured body endures a physical challenge that must define the truth (Foucault, 1977:41). Pain both reveals the truth and shows the operation of power. In the eighties cinema it is often excessive pain that defines heroism, that bestows a label on truth on the hero's feelings or actions, and that reveals his soul. The soul (or psyche, or subjectivity, or personality) is produced "around, on, within the body" by the powers operating on the body, in the punishment, supervision or constraint of the body (Foucault, 1977:29).

In a significant number of films of the period; the narrative involves the transformation or regeneration of the hero through pain. In *Days of Thunder* Cole Trickle's Daytona crash is the turning point of the narrative. Cole becomes romantically involved with the doctor who treated him, and by surviving the crash that ends the career of his rival, comes to terms with his fate, in a familiar tale of 'personal endurance and self discovery'. Through the pain of the accident he replaces a belief in his own infallibility with a macho bravery that allows him to face those things that are beyond his control.
The official torture of 'boot camp' is depicted as producing functioning soldiers. *Full Metal Jacket* traces the journey of a Marine, Private Joker, from boot camp to Vietnam. The first part of the movie depicts the brutality of basic training, as recruits are dehumanised and abused in a prison-like environment until they are transformed into the 'true men' that the Marine Corps wants. The sadistic treatment Joker receives, is portrayed as leading to his 'enlightenment'. He wears 'born to kill' written on his helmet, and a peace button on his jacket, which he explains to a general as representing "the duality of man – you know, sir, the Jungian thing". At the end of the film the squad locates and shoots a sniper, a woman. She asks them to kill her, but Animal Mother suggests they leave her to die slowly. Joker protests, and kills her. He has learnt one of the lessons of battle, or at least of the battle movie, 'sometimes we have to kill to be kind'.

In *Platoon*, Chris Taylor undergoes a "regeneration through violence" (Slotkin, 1973), a quest that takes him into a harsh, primitive world, and down into his own psyche. *Platoon* is one of those "quintessentially American fables ... centring on civilised heroes who undergo a deep inner transformation through their descent into a terrifyingly savage wilderness" (Schechter & Semeiks, 1991:19-20). Taylor is a middle class white male who drops out of college to experience firsthand the war that is the focus of his generation. The film suggests that his has been a life of normalcy and comfort, unlike perhaps the fairly grim lives of his fellow 'grunts', who are represented as low class, social misfits. Taylor’s confrontation with primitive violence, and therefore his psyche, is narratively organised around four combat patrols, each of which takes him deeper into the jungle, deeper into a physical and metaphorical 'hell'. On the first mission, Taylor is symbolically stripped of civilisation, as Sergeant Elias empties his backpack of hardcover books and other 'superfluous' items. Taylor writes home to his Grandmother, letters that serve as a running commentary on the action:

"Maybe I've finally found it, way down here in the mud. Maybe from down here I can start up again, be something I can be proud of, without having to fake it, be a fake human being. Maybe I can see something I don't see yet, learn something I don't yet know."
On the last patrol Taylor murders the brutal Sergeant Barnes, completing his metamorphosis from an over-civilised 'fake' into a soldier, brutal but honourable.

The concept of a vigilante male punishing criminals that the legal system cannot reach, was a recurring masculine myth in films of the seventies. In *Dirty Harry* and its sequels Harry Callahan demonstrates that "physical brutality alone and an outsize weapon to reinforce it offer sufficient proof of a penis in good working order" (Mellen, 1977:301). Accepting punishment as atonement for broad social ills has long been the province of female characters in the cinema. However, in the cinema of the eighties the male hero is not only dishing out the punishment, he is taking it too, in an apparent reversal of roles. But the male role is rarely one of altruistic sacrifice. Rather these films offer narratives of the empowering pleasure of pain. In oscillating between a passive masochistic position and an active sadistic one, the eighties' hero codes both positions as masculine. In *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, *Robocop*, *Lethal Weapon* (1 and 2), *Commando*, *Conan the Barbarian*, *Lock Up* and countless other films of the period, a histrionic display of the hero's pain and suffering allows the hero to be simultaneously the victim. In these films, carefully choreographed slow motion scenes emphasise the excessive punishment of the male body, and its ultimate resistance. Within the narrative the white male body is defined as both suffering and powerful, the combined positions arguing for, and enabling, a restoration of traditional masculinity.

**Male masochism**

Freud dealt with the question of masochism in several essays and his views changed over the years, describing it as both an unusually dangerous libidinal infraction, and as one of the "kindliest" perversions (1924b). However he was consistent in describing Oedipal conflict as the cause of the perversion. Guilt, and fear of castration by the father, led the male child to assume a passive position in order to placate the father and win his love. Being 'beaten' by the father was both atonement for guilt and substitute for the forbidden (Freud, 1919b). Freud distinguished between
various forms of masochism: "eroticgenic", "feminine", "moral" and "reflexive". However, he described eroticgenic masochism, "pleasure in pain", as underlying all masochism (1924b). As Silverman explains, "eroticgenic masochism ... provides the corporeal basis" for all forms of masochism (1992:88). Masochism, in whichever specific form it takes, involves the experience of pleasure in pain.

Within feminine masochism the male masochist occupies a 'female' position. Freud notes that femininity becomes a "subjective conviction" for the male masochist in that he believes himself to be a woman at the base of his identity, and at the level of his desire (1919b:197). In the three phases of the male fantasy of corporal punishment – I am being loved by my father; I am being beaten by my father; I am being beaten by my mother – the transformation of the agent of punishment from the father to the mother works to accentuate the male masochist's femininity in reversing the traditional gender roles (Silverman, 1992:209). The feminine masochist expresses a desire to inhabit the passive role, in a fantasy hinged upon castration. Silverman describes feminine masochism as representing "a form of phallic divestiture" (1992:9).

While feminine masochism has been drawn upon in theorising relationships between the cinema and its audience, (cf Mulvey, 1975; Doane, 1982; Studlar, 1985) the punishment of the male body in the eighties cinema is not necessarily explained in these terms. In the films of the period there is little evidence to suggest that the masculine manifests "a single minded determination to inhabit the passive role" (Silverman, 1992:327). The other versions of masochism, moral and reflexive, offer more in terms of interrogating the meanings of the excessive physical pain suffered by the eighties cinema hero.

Guilt propels the moral masochist. Unconscious guilt leads him to accept masochistic positions which bring pain and humiliation as the punishment for failure. Freud describes a "sense of guilt"
derived from a "severity of conscious" (1930:136); the morally masochistic ego derives
gratification from the super-ego's censorship and punishment. Moral masochism differs from
feminine masochism in that the moral masochist is both victim and victimiser; he brings the
punishment on himself by performing "sinful actions" which must be "expiated" (Silverman,

Rambo is depicted as accepting the dangerous mission to return to Vietnam (in First Blood Part 2)
out of guilt over 'failure': in the loss of the war; in the leaving behind of American soldiers; in
surviving when others did not. Once back in Vietnam his capture is facilitated by his own actions:
in trusting Murdock; in jettisoning his survival pack; in persisting, against logic, with his mission.
His 'punishment' at the hands of his Vietnamese and Soviet captors is both gruelling and graphic.
He is humiliated, cut with his own knife, electro-shocked, branded, and hung in a virtual
 Crucifixion. His acceptance of the masochistic position allows the replacement of guilt with an
alternative posture, that of being righteous.

A self-punishment motif runs through Raging Bull. Jake LaMotta is another victim/hero caught
between his desire to change the conditions of his existence and his ultimate inability to do so. He
challenges the power of 'the Father', in the knowledge of the punishment this will bring. The
morally masochistic position is demonstrated in the situations in which Jake actively seeks
punishment or participates in arranging the beating: in scenes such as where Jake demands that his
brother Joey punch him in the face; the prison sequence where Jake repeatedly beats his head
against the wall; and particularly the climactic fight with Robinson after Jake has refused to
apologise to Joey on the phone, where Jake allows himself to be literally beaten to a pulp, not
retaliating, scarcely defending. As Cook describes, "the hero [is] shown to be the guilty victim of
his transgressive desires" (1982:39). The guilt assuaged by self punishment, the film depicts
LaMotta as having redeemed himself, even if it suggests that the redemption may have been, in fact, a loss.

Silverman emphasises that there is a "narrow boundary separating moral masochism from an 'exemplary' male subjectivity" (1992:9). Moral masochism does not so much cancel the phallic legacy as defer it. It is a voluntary deferral or postponement of power and action rather than a 'phallic divestiture'. If moral masochism does not give up the phallus, but merely defers it, Silverman describes another category of male masochism that is "commensurate with virility and with paternal legacy" (1992:213) referred to briefly by Freud (1915). This category, reflexive masochism, "poses no threat to masculinity … it may even represent a necessary component of virility" (Silverman, 1992:328). The reflexive masochist suffers/enjoys pain without renouncing activity. The reflexive masochist dominates through his capacity to endure pain. Silverman's analysis of Lawrence's writings describes how "Seven Pillars obliges us to imagine Lawrence occupying the sadistic and masochistic positions simultaneously rather than in turn. Lawrence's sadism is moreover, primarily directed at himself … the masochism which Seven Pillars showcases does not place its sufferer in a passive position vis-a-vis anyone else" (1992:323-4). Reflexive masochism in its maintenance of an active 'masculine' position is in binary opposition to feminine masochism.

Because reflexive masochism does not demand the renunciation of activity, it is ideally suited for negotiating the contradictions inherent in masculinity. The male subject can indulge his appetite for pain without at the same time calling into question either his virility, or his paternal lineage. (Silverman, 1992:326)

This form of masochism is connected with mastery rather than submission, a mastery that is developed and demonstrated through the body of the male. The action/adventure films of the eighties repeatedly used the abuse of the male body to define heroism, and invariably implicated the hero in that abuse. In films such as _Lethal Weapon, Lone Wolf McQuade, Predator, the Rocky series, Sudden Impact_ and many others of the period, the hero took on a masochistic position
without ever giving up power. Indeed his power was increased by his demonstrated ability to endure pain.

The suspense of masochism is also relevant in examining 'masculine' pain and punishment in the eighties cinema. As Deleuze describes it, "Masochism is above all formal and dramatic: this means that its peculiar pleasure-pain complex is determined by a particular kind of formalism, and its experience of guilt by a specific story" (1971:95). The formal structure of masochism is suspense, its specific story a fantasy of impersonation. Suspense would seem to be at the centre of all forms of masochism. The masochist endlessly postpones the moment of climax or consummation, prolonging the ritual. Part of the ritual is histrionic, in that it is a dramatic playing out of a role. In Die Hard, these characteristics of masochism are evident.

Die Hard – the pleasure of pain

It is Christmas. New York cop John McClane flies to Los Angeles to see his children and his wife, Holly, who has moved west to further her career with the multi-national Nakatomi Corporation. He is met by the company limousine, chauffeured by a young black, Argyle, and taken to the post-modern tower of the Nakatomi building, where all the staff are gathered on the thirtieth floor for the Christmas party. He is in the executive wash room, freshening up after his flight, when a group of apparent terrorists take over the building. McClane evades discovery when the Nakatomi employees are taken hostage, and wages a guerilla war against the terrorists from the lift wells and air-conditioning ducts. McClane oscillates between a moral masochistic position, in that he accepts the punishment for a corrupt society, and a reflexive masochistic position, demonstrating his superior ability to endure pain, while never relinquishing power.

The society depicted in Die Hard is one that has been corrupted by corporate capitalism. The mythology of Christmas is used as a benchmark throughout the film, as an example of the way
things should be. Los Angeles itself is portrayed as an inappropriate setting for Christmas, without
snow it is not really Christmas, though this is rectified in the final scene where it begins to `snow'
bearer bonds. Argyle plays rap music in the limo, LL Cool J instead of carols. The Nakatomi
Corporation also fails to adhere to traditional Christian values. On Christmas Eve the building is
empty, except for the corporation employees. There is an office party, but some employees are
still working. Holly Gennero (McClane) is fending off a dinner invitation from a co-worker:

Any of these things ring a bell?"

Ellis: "Actually I was thinking more of mulled wine, a nice aged brie, a roaring fireplace.
You know what I am saying?"

The office Muzak is the Brandenburg concerto, not Jingle bells. Mr Takagi, head of the L.A.
office, thanks his employees for "making this one of the greatest years in the history of the
Nakatomi Corporation" and responds to McClane's surprise that the Japanese celebrate Christmas
with a joke: "We're flexible. Pearl Harbour didn't work out, so we got you with tape decks."
suggesting that the party is more a part of the Japanese business invasion than a celebration of
Christmas. The scenario raises a number of social guilts surrounding contemporary failures at both
home and work: the failure to maintain domestic traditions including the nuclear family; the
industrial and economic failure of America in competition with Japan.

The pseudo-terrorists also show themselves to be, if not anti-Christmas, at least cynical about it.
When Theo, the computer expert, is tracking the movements of the police outside the building, he
alerts his group to a SWAT attack:

Theo: "T'was the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was
stirring ... except for the four assholes coming in the rear in standard two by two
cover formation."

John McClane is doing more that preventing a robbery, he is defending Christmas by
masochistically atoning for the non-adherence to traditional values.
Die Hard also deals with the perceived threat to the family. By setting its action at Christmas, culturally held to be a time when families are together, Die Hard emphasises that John and Holly and their children are not together. McClane says to Argyle, "She had a good job that turned into a great career. I'm a New York cop, I couldn't just pack up and leave."

Holly phones home, and tells her daughter that she won't be home until after the children are asleep. The film specifically criticises working mothers. Holly insists that her secretary join the party:

Ginny: "Do you think the baby can handle a little sip?"
Holly: "That baby is ready to tend bar."

Behind the joke is the implication that Ginny devotes more attention to the cocktail hour than to her unborn child.

Holly has been treated less stereotypically than Ginny. Certainly she broke up the family, moving the children to Los Angeles so that she could further her career. She denies her married status, using her maiden name at the office. She says to her housekeeper, "What would I do without you?" suggesting that she cannot raise the children without help. On Christmas Eve she receives a gold Rolex as a reward for a job well done, while telling her children not to look for their presents. But when Takagi is shot by the villains, she takes on the role on head of the company of hostages:

Hans: "What idiot put you in charge?"
Holly: "You did. When you murdered my boss."

She insists on the basic needs of the hostages being met. When she is taken hostage by Hans she is not intimidated. With a pistol at her head she remains calm, and even tries to dissuade McClane from laying down his gun at Hans' request. When it looks as though he might not survive, McClane asks the uniformed cop he has radio contact with to tell Holly that he realises that he should have been more supportive. Holly punches the television reporter who reveals her identity to the gang. But at the end of the film the traditional nuclear family and hegemonic male/female
roles are reaffirmed. Hans, shot by McClane, falls through the window still holding Holly's wrist. McClane unclasps the Rolex watch, symbol of her corporate success, saving Holly and allowing Hans to fall to his death. When John and Holly emerge from the building she is wearing a policeman's black leather jacket, and it is tempting to say that this represents her re-discovered role as a policeman's wife (cf Parshall, 1991:139) but if so what does it mean that John is wearing a fireman's coat? Whatever the significance of the jackets, when Holly is introduced as "Holly Gennero" she corrects it to "Holly McClane", and John and Holly drive home together, the family re-united. The punishing pain that John McClane endures/enjoys through the movie is both the redemption that unites the family, and the and the proof of his masculinity.

The gang's entry to the building is marked by their cool, high tech efficiency. The security guard is shot through the forehead as Theo chats animatedly about Magic Johnson's moves in a basketball game. Theo immediately breaks into the computer system and takes control of the security program locking off all floors except the thirtieth. Despite state of the art security, they have taken the Nakatomi employees hostage before anyone suspects they are in the building.

Karl is played by Alexander Godunov, a Russian ballet star who defected to the US, and has the look of a dancer, with a taut masculinity, constrained movements, and long, startlingly blonde hair. The villains are, without exception, classically good looking, tall and thin, well groomed, immaculately dressed. Hans says to Takagi, "Nice suit. John Phillips. London. I have two myself. Rumour has it Arafat buys his there." Four of the group have shoulder length hair, one tied back in a ponytail. Most speak in German, or in English with obvious accents; only one, Theo the computer expert, is American. They are armed with machine guns, plastic explosives, and rocket launchers.
When they launch their attack, John McClane is in the washroom, stripped down to his slacks and singlet, barefoot so that he can "make fists with his toes" to relieve jetlag. His body exhibits a worked musculature, emphasised by his semi-clad state. He wears a tattoo on one bicep, the mark of a man's man. His hair is cropped short. He wears his service pistol in a shoulder holster. McClane takes the fire escape to the 32nd floor, still under construction, and sets off the fire alarm to bring help. His efforts are detected and cancelled, and Karl's brother is dispatched to the 32nd floor to find the cause of the alarm. McClane has Kristoff in his sights, but does not shoot.

Kristoff: "You won't hurt me. Because you are a policeman. There are rules for policemen."
McClane: "So my sergeant keeps telling me."

McClane hits him with the gun. He stumbles but does not fall. McClane jumps on his back. Kristoff turns and slams McClane into a pillar. At a half run he smashes McClane head first into a wall. They crash through a door, tearing it from its hinges, and tumble down the stairs. Kristoff's neck is broken. McClane is bleeding from a cut on the elbow, he has a deep weal on the front of his shoulder, a dark bruise on his forehead, his knuckles are cut and bleeding.

McClane goes through Kristoff's belongings, taking his gun, his walkie-talkie, his Zippo and his Gauloise, but his shoes don't fit.

McClane: "Five million terrorists in the world and I have to kill one with feet smaller than my sister."

He sends the body down to the 30th floor. He rides on top of the elevator car straining muscle and sinew to hold onto his precarious grip. Three of the crooks are sent to get rid of him. He jumps, sliding, evading bullets, he catches a ricochet on his ribs, crashes into the fencing, grazes his shoulder blade. He strains past the exhaust fan into the ventilation duct. He abseils down the elevator shaft, the makeshift rope gives way and he falls several metres, narrowly grabbing a duct entry and splitting an eyebrow in the process. He emerges from the shaft, his singlet black, his musculature defined by sweat, blood and dirt.
By the time of his showdown with the vengeful Karl, McClane's bare feet are badly cut, he leaves trails of blood across the white tile, using his singlet to wrap them leaves him bare chested. He has a gash on his forehead, a profusely bleeding cut on his upper arm. Karl presses the machine gun into McClane's neck, "We are both professionals, but this is personal." McClane disarms Karl, knocks him into a stack of drums and punches him repeatedly in the face. Karl kicks McClane off, knocks him to the ground, kicks him repeatedly. McClane rolls away, dives on Karl, they crash through a partition, McClane is bleeding from the nose and a split lip. McClane hammers Karl's head into the tiles, follows up with a volley of blows to the head. Karl picks up McClane's pistol and fires several shots, McClane dives through a doorway, blood runs down his arm from the deep cut on his shoulder. Karl follows. McClane kicks him in the head, dives on him from above. The two crash onto a trolley, smash into the wall. Karl karate chops McClane, he falls back onto a metal stairway, another karate blow to the neck. McClane headbutts Karl. They wrestle on the stairs, Karl forces McClane's head back over the edge of the railing. McClane grabs a chain hanging beside the steps, wraps it around Karl's neck and launches him into space. Karl swings across the room and slams into far wall. Every possible filmic device is used to magnify the violence. The excess is histrionic, exhibitionist. McClane not only endures the pain, he enjoys it. The climax is constantly deferred. Each time one or other appears vanquished he recovers to continue the beating. Karl survives until the final moments of the film, when significantly he is killed by the policemen, Al. It is not the conquering of Karl that demonstrates McClane's phallic power, but his capacity to endure pain.

The film emphasises the way that McClane accepts his cuts, bruises and strains without complaint, by contrasting one of the SWAT team who pricks himself on a rose thorn in charging the building, and stops, swearing, to nurse his finger; and the L.A. deputy police chief who complains of minor grazes when McClane's explosion covers him with glass.
The pseudo-terrorists are heavily armed and efficient, the security guards, Takagi, Ellis are all shot with a single bullet to the head.

Hans: "I wanted this to be professional, efficient, adult, co-operative."

But a literal hail of bullets is directed at McClane. They kill without pause. But when Marco steps out of the elevator to face McClane’s gun he yells "Don’t shoot, don’t shoot." McClane hesitates, Tony steps out firing.

Marco: "Let me give you some advice, next time you have a chance to kill someone, don’t hesitate."

McClane uses the two-way radio to contact the L.A. Police Department. Sergeant Powell is shopping for Hostess Twinkies, when he gets the call to drive past the building and check the disturbance. The crooks have convinced him it is a false alarm when McClane throws a body through the window onto the bonnet of Powell’s car. Powell and McClane establish a rapport and maintain radio contact. Powell ‘shuffles paper’ at a desk job, since accidentally shooting a teenager he has been unable to use his gun. In the final moments of the film he shoots down Karl before he can fire on McClane. Heroic masculinity draws a fine line between not being able to kill, and killing too easily.

McClane is identified as a cowboy repeatedly through the film.


McClane: "I was always kinda partial to Roy Rogers actually. I really liked those sequined shirts."

Hans: "Do you really think you have a chance against us Mr Cowboy?"

McClane: "Yippy-ky-ay mother fucker."

Hans continues to call him Mr Cowboy, until Ellis reveals his identity. Al Powell affectionately calls him cowboy. McClane blows imaginary smoke from his gun barrel in the manner of the old west. "Happy trails", he says when he shoots Hans. The cowboy persona that McClane adopts is the impersonation that supports his masochistic position.
The association with Rambo is also overtly drawn. Bruce Willis's bulging biceps, torn and grubby singlet, and machinegun worn as a sash across his chest echo the familiar publicity posters from the *First Blood* films. The film has the feel of a Vietnam war movie; the helicopters circling, the guerilla battle being waged in the labyrinthine landscape of the partly constructed building, and in case we miss more subtle allusions there is the scene where McClane tumbles into the water feature in the lobby's tropical garden and runs at a crouch through the palms, the sprinkler system softly raining down. One of the FBI Special Agents Johnson says "This is like fucking Saigon."

The Nakatomi Tower provides a hard, cold environment for McClane's heroics. *Die Hard* is a postmodern playground of mirrors and tiles, snaking cables, elevator shafts that stretch into infinity, galvanised ventilation ducts that intersect every space, winking computer terminals side by side with antique Japanese artefacts, and glass, acres of glass that cracks, shatters, explodes. Wide shots locate McClane in this high-tech landscape, as he runs, tumbles dives and crawls through the narrative. For action sequences the space contracts, McClane firing from under tables, through glass partitions; hand-to-hand combat fills the frame with battered and bruised flesh, with noise and pain. Many of the shots are canted, or framed from above or below so the film feels both dizzying and claustrophobic.

Part of McClane's masochism involves his conquering a vertiginous fear of heights. The first shots of the film show a plane landing and John's hand clutching the armrest. Heights, rising up as in the early shots of Nakatomi Tower which attracts John's gaze on the ride from the airport, or falling away as in the shots down the elevator shaft from above his head, are a constant motif in the film. Each time McClane goes to the roof of the building his life is placed in jeopardy. On the final occasion he has realised that the ersatz terrorists are going to blow the roof with the hostages and waiting transport helicopters, in order to fake their own deaths. McClane fires his gun in the air to force the hostages below, and is fired on in return by the FBI agents in the choppers. He
dives over the edge of the roof to a small balcony. With no way to go but down, he ties a fire hose around himself. "I promise I will never even think about going up in a tall building again," and jumps off the edge. "Please don’t let me die," he says.

Just as we feel he has smashed through the windows to safety, the hose reel breaks loose from the railing and threatens to pull him the rest of the way to the ground. Framing from above and behind shows us the lights, way below, and the weight of the reel dangling from his waist. He unties it just in time. In a climactic moment, McClane must hold Holly back from falling from the thirtieth floor with the dying Hans. The magnitude of the fall is emphasised by a shot from ground level, Hans’ body slowly falling past the layers of windows to land with a crunch that makes Deputy Chief Robinson wince. McClane’s deliberate abuse of his body enhances, rather than limits his capacity for action.

McClane is presented as a man of action. The skills of thinking and talking come less easily. He bungles his re-union with Holly, saying things that should have been left unsaid, while he later confesses to the policeman, Al, that he hasn’t given her the support she needed, or told her he was sorry. When he realises that the others have been taken hostage, he paces the washroom groaning, "Think, think, think." In is in his relationship with Al that John develops an ability to communicate honestly, with emotion. Argyle also, in the brief limousine journey, is able to get him to admit to feelings not consciously recognised. The importance of the male to male bonding is asserted in the films romantic ending. John and Holly hug and kiss, but John and Al’s eyes meet across a crowded plaza, dead bodies at their feet, the building falling around their ears, they walk towards each other, the music rises to a crescendo as their embrace is backlit by the searchlights, their bond emphasised in silhouette.
Al and Argyle provide McClane's only assistance. There are twelve vault robbers, John kills ten of them, Al shoots Karl, and Argyle captures Theo. The police S.W.A.T. team and the F.B.I. only manage to get themselves killed. The film doesn't invite us to give heroic status to McClane's accomplices, their actions are suggested to be against their better judgement, and are tinged with humour, and their appearance is far from heroic, Al is jovially plump, Argyle is a skinny kid. But, more critically, Al and Argyle get their men without any physical suffering on their part. At no time do they enter into the masochistic scenario, it is only McClane that adopts this role. As with Lawrence of Arabia, McClane's heroism "seems to reside primarily in his inordinate capacity for enduring a pain which frequently veers over into pleasure" (Silverman, 1992:314), a pain moreover that he actively participates in prolonging, and one that effectively erases subconscious guilt.
Chapter 6

MASCULINITY AND SEXUALITY

Sex and sexuality

For most men, masculinity is something that cannot be taken for granted, it must be constantly tested, proved (Metcalf & Humphries, 1985:155; Seidler, 1989:23), and sex is the way that masculinity is demonstrated. The concept of male sexuality that we have inherited is based on performance, as sexuality has become a measure of individual achievement and success. Sex is discovered, not as source of mutual whole body pleasure, but as an individual achievement that reflects upon the male ego in that it determines "the position of a man within the pecking order of masculinity" (Seidler, 1989:39). Human sexuality is not simply innate and natural, nor is it solely a cultural product, divorced from the biological. Sexuality is the capacity to derive pleasures from the body, and the form that it takes is a product of psychic potential, biological maturation, and social moulding. As Freud describes, biological maturation is accompanied by a development of the ego as we bring into the ego the structures and demands of society. Male sexuality as it was represented in eighties cinema was active and adventurous, and centred on genital performance. Instead of 'mutual whole body pleasure' sex was represented as divided into 'active' and 'passive' and the divisions labelled 'masculine' and 'feminine', and the vast range of possibilities of sexual pleasure were narrowed into heterosexual genital pleasure.

Freud saw the newborn infant as a seething mass of impulses or instinctual drives without any directing or guiding consciousness (the 'id'), the infant's responses to external stimuli are aimed at direct and immediate satisfaction. As the child comes to terms with external reality the 'ego
develops, the child's self or (loosely) personality. At a still later stage of development there arises out of the need to face society's moral prohibitions the 'superego', more and less a conscience.

The picture of infantile sexual life drawn by Freud saw activity and passivity as co-existing. In this phase of life "opposing pairs of instincts are developed to an approximately equal extent" (1905:97). Pleasure is actively sought through the instinct for mastery of the somatic musculature, and passively received through the erotogenic membrane of the mouth and anus. As the ego develops active and passive modes of gratification are subsumed into the general orientations of the ego, or personality types. Psychoanalytic theory stresses that in the first years of life the two modes exist in both males and females, and cannot "be described as 'masculine' and 'feminine' but only as 'active' and 'passive'" (Freud, 1905:96). By maturation though, instincts have been overlaid with social meanings as the ego tests 'reality' and directs responses to the external environment. In our male dominated society a boy comes to see the penis as representing activity, and through activity, power. As a consequence, an unconscious fear of 'castration' develops, "a fear that is so strong only because our patriarchal and heterosexist society creates a norm in which one cannot be powerful, active, or a lover of women, without possessing a penis" (Horowitz & Kaufman, 1987:86). Indeed a man's inability to penetrate a woman with his penis is described in both scientific and everyday language as 'impotence' - powerlessness. 'Castration' is a loss of power. In a patriarchal, heterosexist society boys must abandon 'passivity' in order to retain 'masculinity'. But as Freud shows, what is repressed is not erased, and sexuality for many men is a site of tension and conflict. Many men sense, and some actively explore, sexuality as relaxed, mutual, whole-body pleasure (Connell, Radican & Martin, 1987:13) while popular culture forms depict as the norm an adventurous, genital sexuality.

Freud suggested that children are innately "polymorphously perverse", that is they have a capacity for sexual stimulation and satisfaction that is virtually unlimited "since the mental dams against
sexual excesses – shame, disgust and morality – have either not yet been constructed at all or are only in the course of construction" (1905:88). Biological maturation focuses sexuality on the genitals, but cultural factors dictate the repression of other forms of sexuality. Horowitz and Kaufman see human sexual potential as a poly-sexuality, "a fluid capacity for sexual excitation and discharge through any part of our body including the brain, with its ability to fantasise, and through the various senses, touch, taste, hearing, sight, and smell" (1987:89). Freud believed that "it becomes impossible not to recognise that [a] disposition to perversions of every kind is a general and fundamental human characteristic" (1905:88). The repression of `perverse' forms of sexuality is a process of internalising cultural norms. The repression of a wide range of sexual pleasures and the focussing of sexuality on the genitals is not necessary for biological maturation, but for "progress in civilisation" (Freud, 1930). The "mental dams" that restrict sexual expression are an internalisation of the hierarchical divisions of society, active/passive, masculine/feminine, subject/object, normal/abnormal, moral/immoral. "Social outrage is power protecting itself, it is not morality" (Dworkin, 1987:160).

The view of an uncontrollable male sexuality is part of the mythology of everyday life. The `common sense' knowledge of male sexuality is based on a `hydraulic theory' that sees males as having barely controllable sexual urges and sees females as merely denying or accommodating these urges. Krafft-Ebing spoke of a "natural instinct" which "with all conquering force and might demands fulfilment" (in Weeks, 1982:295). In the face of an apparent waning of male social power, the discourses of contemporary popular culture in the eighties reinforced the position that the sex drive is male, and this drive is insistent, and inescapable. Such representations helped preserve the existing power relations. Power is organised through `knowledges', the discourses and practices which influence the way we conceive the world (Foucault, 1981). Cinematic representations of an active, insistent male sexuality helped preserve the power of men over women as "natural", based on a `natural' sexual drive that has the female as its passive object.
Tom says to his wife, Maria, in Cousins "Sometimes a man feels he has to prove himself by being with a lot of women." Mitch tells his buddies in City Slickers that "Women need a reason to have sex, men just need a place." In Running Scared two Chicago policemen are on holiday in Key West, Florida, and their primary recreational activity is depicted as picking up women. A montage sequence that runs for several minutes to a musical accompaniment shows the two in a variety of romantic/erotic situations with many different women. It includes one segment where Danny and Ray are riding scooters along the highway, a series of cuts giving them a different (female) pillion rider every few seconds. The sequence suggests that sexual pleasure resides in the quantity rather than the quality of the encounters. Heartburn depicts lust as a valid motivation for male behaviour.

When Rachel (Meryl Streep) meets Mark (Jack Nicholson) at a wedding her friends tell her he is "very single – famous for it". Mark's friend informs her later that he has been a womaniser and cheat for twenty years. Still she marries him. Despite the few jokes on marital infidelity and the wicked ways of men, the film makes it obvious that the 'fault' is Rachel's, she has failed to understand the true nature of men. When Rachel finally takes her daughter and returns home, she receives a little fatherly advice, "You want monogamy? Marry a swan!" About Last Night follows a couple whose one night stand turns into a relationship that the male is uncomfortable with. Danny and his friend describe the previous night's sexual encounters on the train to work of a morning. Women are constantly referred to as trying to trap them into 'relationships', Debbie's flatmate Joan is described as "trying to get her claws into" every man she meets. The pursuit of large numbers of women is presented as every man's natural urge. Danny exclaims "I like women. I like all women. I particularly like women I don't know very well".

Hollywood has always perpetuated the myth that a real man is always sexually potent, ready to perform, his record of achievement unblemished by a single failure, a waning of desire, or moment of ambivalence. But the sexual performance represented in the eighties cinema was tinged with an element of panic. Men's pursuit of sexual goals is routinely depicted as thwarted or problematised
by women. Sexual performance was epitomised by Warren Beatty's character in Shampoo, a Beverly Hills hairdresser who sets out to bed as many of his clients as time will permit. With the influence of feminism and the fear of disease the concept of performance may have shifted, the task now is for the male to make sure his partner has an orgasm, but it is still a reflection of the male ego. Sex is still a matter of individual self assertion. The male sex drive was frequently depicted in the eighties cinema, as in the popular imagination, as being 'blocked' by women who invariably say 'no' when they mean 'yes'.

Debbie is standing at the doorway to Dan's flat in About Last Night, she says "No, absolutely not" to Dan's invitation to come inside. The film cuts to the two of them making love on the beanbag. Debbie agrees to meet Dan for a drink, "Don't look at me like the cat who ate the canary," she says, "This is as far as this goes tonight". We cut to the two of them in Dan's bed, 'post coitus'... Glen Close's Teddy Barnes is an idealistic, ethical lawyer asked to defend a man accused of sadistically killing his wife and maid in Jagged Edge. While it is hardly ethical for an attorney to become sexually involved with a client in the middle of a case, Teddy's response to Jack's passionate kisses is simply a murmured "I can't, I can't". She can, and does, proving once again that women always mean 'yes' when they say 'no'.

The Big Easy frequently appears in women's magazines lists of 'best film sex scene', and the film does sensitively convey the complicated emotions between two people having sex for the first time: awkwardness and embarrassment accompanying lust. It also avoids titillation; Ellen Barkin's Bad Lieutenant rumples and unbuttons, but fully clothed. Denis Quaid's Remy is not a dominant male figure, and Anne responds to him only after he has exposed his vulnerability. Anne herself is conflicted, but not powerless. But the film's extended premise is the popular notion that a woman does not know her own mind. Anne repeatedly rejects Remy's romantic advances, but he refuses to take no for an answer. The rest of New Orleans validates his refusal. For example, Remy takes
Anne a police report she has been waiting for, accompanying it with a pizza and an invitation to an evening ‘at home’. Anne repeatedly turns down the invitation, insisting that she wants only the report. She eventually capitulates when a driver (male) who has been obstructed by Remy’s unorthodox parking yells “Go on, girlie, get in the car!”. Anne’s reticence is repeatedly ignored by Remy and ridiculed by family, friends and workmates – invariably men. Her definite ‘no’ is interpreted as girlish scruples, shyness, or misplaced morality, and is always heard as ‘yes’.

The news producer played by Holly Hunter in Broadcast News does not resist sex on moral grounds, she is simply too busy. Within hegemonic heterosexual relations women, emotionally, materially, and sexually service men (Walby, 1990:120). The displacement of sex onto work represents a disruption of the sexual economy threatened by the contemporary ‘career woman’.

Men’s ‘need’ for sex is regularly depicted as being used by women to blackmail men into providing for their ‘needs’ which are other than sex, and are usually material. In Breaking In Ernie arranges ‘dates’ with two women whom Mike later discovers are prostitutes. "I never paid before," says Mike. Ernie replies, "Yes you did, always. In one form or another, you paid."

Sex is something that men share. Women are the objects that are shared. In film after film post coital conversation is not male and female sharing thoughts and feelings, but two men sharing the experience. Stakeout, Running Scared, Heartbreakers, Tango and Cash, all represent sex as being shared by men. In discussing female pin-ups, Hearn suggests that "such displays are the displays of women used by men to display to men – to say the silence of masculinities, the homosexual subtext of heterosexual narratives – the speaking of the unspeakable" (1992:195). In the all male world of the eighties cinema the homosocial discourse underscores the homosexuality of male heterosexuality. Sex in the cinema is dominantly homoerotic, fulfilling the desires of the males in the narrative and the males in the audience.
**Genital sexuality**

With biological maturation particular zones of the body become the site of intense excitation, this is accompanied by a repression of non-genital forms of sexual desire (Horowitz & Kaufman, 1987). Our culture puts a great deal of emphasis on penetration, and stresses the importance of genital sexuality. Radical feminist Dworkin sees intercourse as part of social and political system that keeps women a sexually subjugated class (1987:159), penetrative, genital sex establishes a power relation that places men on top. The valorisation of genital sexuality is accompanied by the repression of non-genital forms of sexual desire, of a more diffuse and tender sensuality that involves the whole body. The primacy of genital sexuality devalues other forms of sexual pleasure to where they are seen as marginal or preliminary to intercourse, or are seen as non-sexual, or are even taboo. The various erotic possibilities of the body are organised through a variety of social laws and practices to produce a sexuality that supports a patriarchal hierarchy. What is defined as sexual is a function of specific discourses and power relationships (Foucault, 1981).

The symbolism of male sexuality centres it overwhelmingly on the genitals. In popular culture male sexuality is repeatedly represented by the penis. Men's sexual feelings are depicted as located in their penises (Metcalf & Humphries, 1985:29). The penis or symbols of the penis are used in numerous films to represent power, sexual arousal, or sexual satisfaction. When Axel Foley's creative policing threatens his superior's position in *Beverly Hills Cop 2*, his boss' reprimand is "You make my dick itch". *Bird on a Wire* ends with the unfurling of a spinnaker, lest its symbolism be in doubt it bears the legend "Mr Wriggly". Though sexual arousal in women is represented by a variety of indicators, parted lips, tongues running over glasses, arching, stretching bodies, hands caressing arms or breasts, there is no acceptable symbol of male arousal apart from the penis. Even when another body part is used, it is used iconically – such as the raised digit, or the clenched fist and forearm.
Although the male genitals are generally experienced as soft, rounded, vulnerable, they are represented as hard, tough, dangerous. It is swords, knives, fists and guns that symbolise the penis in the cinema. Film after film returns to the model of Dirty Harry, where male sexuality is not merely represented by the 44 Magnum, it is diverted into the gun. Top Gun affirms the merger of war and romance, weapon and penis. In the opening sequence Maverick (Tom Cruise) is engaged in a battle of wits and nerve with two MIG fighters. Maverick 'wins' the battle by flying upside down over the MIG and giving him 'the finger'. The scene where Maverick meets Charlie closely echoes this sequence, with social manoeuvres reflecting the battle, and the dialogue emphasising the connection, "on patrol", "target-rich environment". What Maverick gave the MIG pilot is a symbol for what he hopes to give Charlie, he bets Goose he can "hit the target" that is "carnal knowledge on the premises" within twenty minutes. In the classroom next day one of the trainees remarks that he gets a "hard on" watching combat films. War was erotic, sex was a battle.

The reduction of male sexuality to the penis, and the repression of other sources of erotic pleasure, has the effect of separating men from their sexuality. "The penis is seen to have a life of its own ... it is an object over which [a man] does not have full control" (Metcalf & Humphries, 1987:31). The idea of sexuality as being somehow separate, out of control, supports the mythology of 'the beast below', an insistent, overwhelming male sex drive. Percy realised the comic potential of the penis with a life of its own – after an accident a shy man has a penis transplant, the donor is a randy womaniser, and after the operation Percy finds he is constantly chasing women, led on by his penis despite his innate reserve. The notion of the penis as being somehow separate from the man is exemplified by the naming of the penis by some males. That this is a widespread practice is suggested by a 12 page spread in Australian Women's Forum (Oct/Nov 1991:34-44) which depicts neck to knee photographs of males with brief biographical details. Along with 'name', 'age', 'height', is 'nickname for penis' and more than half of the men give a name – Rat, Mr Strong,
Length. Mel Gibson's character in *Bird on a Wire* refers to his penis by a nickname. "Mr Wriggly's been on bread and water for three months" is part of his seduction repertoire.

*Texasville* brings us the teens of *The Last Picture Show* grown up into adulterous husbands and neglected wives. The film's premise is that men want the comfort of a secure relationship, but are driven by a sexuality over which they have no control. In the opening minutes Dwayne is sitting in a hot tub shooting at Shorty's dog house. He points the hand gun into the water, telling his wife, "I was thinking of shooting my dick off. It's caused me nothing but trouble my whole life".

**Subordination of women**

Sexuality is neither fixed nor immutable. Sexuality is not irrevocably linked to biological sex, but is in part constituted by social practices. However in mainstream cinema as in society in general, a male discourse is privileged in that it defines both male and female sexuality in terms of not just sexual difference but of sexual inequality. Sexuality has become a discourse of social control (Brittan, 1989:55). Male sexuality is premised on the subordination and exploitation of women, and the valorisation of male sexuality is part of the social and historical process that validates patriarchal power. The social organisation of male sexuality is read as 'natural', "experienced in the body as real and imposed on the world" (Dworkin, 1987:159), and this 'natural' sexuality is experienced by men as a physiologically real desire to subjugate women. Although the common sense discourses of popular culture suggest that anatomy determines sexuality, economic and ideological power "produces effects at the level of desire", determining the way that an individual conceptualises and experiences their sexuality (Foucault, 1980:59).

When Maverick attempts to seduce Charlie (*Top Gun*) his flamboyant come-on involves him singing a popular song directly to her. His fellow pilots endorse his actions and his sentiments by joining in the song's accusing chorus: "You've lost that loving feeling". Charlie is Charlotte
Blackwood, with her man's name and her PhD in astrophysics, she is one of the pilot's instructors at their specialist aerial combat school. The scene is played with humour, but its message is reinforced throughout the film and is meant to be taken seriously, women by asserting 'masculine' traits of intelligence and ambition to take up superior positions in a man's world, have lost the feminine "loving feeling". Charlie must recover her femininity if she is to be an appropriate object of Maverick's desires. This happens the next day in the classroom. Charlie is lecturing the pilots on the characteristics of the MIG fighter, Goose and Maverick point out that her expertise is illusory, their first hand experience with the MIGs giving them more accurate information on its maneuverability. When Charlie asks how they came to be so close to the MIG they condescendingly explain the finger gesture, implying that she is as ignorant of sexual matters as she is of fighter planes. Women's knowledge is inferior, bequeathed to them by the experience of men. The development of the romance between Maverick and Charlie follows the pattern of their relative superiority/inferiority. When Charlie arranges their first meeting for her needs, and on her terms, Maverick denies her 'aggressive' sexuality and leaves early. When she criticises his flying, he is angered at her refusal to acknowledge his expertise and storms off. It is only after she chases him down and admits to being "lost" in her emotions, "out of control", that they make love. When Maverick loses his confidence after Goose's death, the relationship with Charlie becomes impossible. When his superiority in combat is re-established, his confidence in love is revitalised as well. A sexual relationship is represented in the film as a battle in which the male establishes superiority over a female suffering delusions of equality.

Horney argues that men oppress women because they dread them. The social oppression of women is validated by making women the guilty party: "The man strives to rid himself of his dread of women by objectifying it. 'It is not,' he says, 'that I dread her, it is that she herself is malignant, capable of any crime, a beast of prey, a vampire...'" (Horney, 1967:135). Creed, in discussing Dead Ringers, notes that many horror films are obsessed with the connection between woman, the
womb, and the grotesque. She suggests that the films display a "phallic panic", a form of male hysteria that has developed in response to male fears and anxieties about the womb. The womb is at once a focus of envy, and a site of terror (Creed, 1990). Freud observed that "It often happens that male patients declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This 'unheimlich' place, however, is the entrance to the former 'heim' of all human beings" (1908:152). In later writings he speculated that probably "no male human being is spared the fright of castration at the sight of a female genital" (1927:354). In mainstream cinema from the mid-eighties this unease and fear is certainly evident in a number of films that portray the 'dangerous' sexuality of independent, successful women, a sexuality that threatens the lives of men and the stability of the patriarchal family.

*Someone to Watch Over Me* doesn't ask us to hate or fear the single woman, but it does ask us to pity her and to be aware of the threat she inadvertently presents. Claire Gregory is beautiful, wealthy and single. When she witnesses a murder at a fashionable club, she becomes the target of a mafia-connected psychotic. She has a lover, but one she is able to order around, and one who is emasculated by fussy mannerisms and strutting ineffectiveness. She is portrayed as frightened and isolated, without family or friends, and even without the ability to use her wealth to purchase security. The New York Police Department appoints good looking, tough but sensitive, happily married man, Mike Keegan as one of her guardians. It is Claire's 'femininity' that poses the threat to Keegan and the nuclear family; when she collapses weeping in terror, Mike offers her intercourse as proof of his protective ability. Claire is not a villain, but her single status means that she is a potential 'homewrecker', and the murderer takes Mike's wife and child as hostages to bargain for Claire's silence. Although the mother/whore roles are not rigidly defined in the film, it is the wife and mother who restores the family, shooting Venza, rescuing her son, and gathering Mike into the fold once more. The family unites in a group hug in the golden light streaming from the humble home, Claire is left in the cold, and the dark.
Matty Walker (*Body Heat*) is a femme fatale in the literal sense. Her aggressive sexuality is emphasised by the camera following the curve of the thigh high split of her skirt, by her overtly stated desires - "You don't want to lick it off?" "Do it to me" "I want you, now!" - by the close-ups of her hands grabbing at his body, undressing him, and by the repeated descriptions of her in sexual terms. She describes her husband as "small and weak", and says of Ned "You're not too smart, I like that in a man." She deliberately seduces Ned Racine, persuades him to kill her husband, and almost kills Ned herself. The film ends with Ned in jail, and Matty sunning herself on the Riviera. Although we see Ned in sexual liaisons with several different women at the beginning of the film, and his friends joke about his promiscuity, his sexuality is seen as natural and irresistible, hers is unnatural and dangerous. Ned's friend warns him, "Some day your dick is going to lead you into a very big hassle." Ned's desires are something he has no control over. Matty's desire is to control.

In *Black Widow* Theresa Russell's character marries rich men and then poisons them with an untraceable substance. When she is finally caught she admits "I used to think of it as my job" - the career woman as destroyer of men. The sexual politics of the film are complicated by a woman in the role of investigator. Alex rejects the sexual overtures of her co-workers, but becomes obsessed by 'Catherine' as she seduces, kills, collects and moves on. A sequence early in the film shows Alex projecting slides of the widow, she superimposes her hand, and then her body over the image, and cries. When Alex is attracted to 'Rennie's' current target it is unclear whether the women's separate sexual liaisons with Paul are evidence of Alex's fear of men, and 'Rennie's' abuse of them, or whether they are the women's attempts to hurt or entrap each other, or whether Paul is simply a conduit for their desire for each other that they cannot or will not act out.

The underlying theme of *After Hours* is the heterosexual male's anxieties and fears about women, as a casual date turns into a terrifying odyssey through New York's Soho district. Griffin Dunne's
character originally wishes to escape his monotonous, routine existence, but he is launched into a nightmarish world peopled by a variety of aggressive, grotesque women, and the narrative follows his unsuccessful attempts to return to his familiar environment, and by extension, his identity. Within the circular trajectory of the protagonist's experiences, the film raises issues of male hysteria and castration anxieties, but avoids any conclusive analysis, of the heterosexual, masculinist nightmare of the narrative.

The Krokers described eighties sexuality as an aesthetic of "panic sex" where sexuality was increasingly represented as involving "loss and sacrifice", and sexuality was marked by threat and fear, "it is just the hint of catastrophe that makes sex bearable" (Kroker & Kroker, 1988:14). Singer describes how the success of Fatal Attraction can be attributed to the way that the narrative works to link sex with loss, "loss of stability, security, respect, family and property" (1990:105). In Fatal Attraction, as in the other 'dangerous sex' films of the eighties, the threat is represented as a single, successful, sexually predatory female. The male character is linked with the family, with stability and security, and occupies a position of 'victim'. Alex is an editor with a publishing house, Dan is the company's attorney. We first see him at home, he is a loving affectionate husband, a warm and attentive father. When we first see Alex it is at a crowded cocktail party, she is beautiful, self-assured, intelligent and mildly flirtatious. As the attraction between the two builds it is clear that the social-sexual power resides with Alex. She makes the decision that the two will sleep together, and takes him to her stark white loft, leading him like a lamb to the slaughter through the hanging carcasses of the meat packing industry. To reiterate Alex's non-domestic position, they make love among the dirty pots and pans stacked high in her kitchen sink. Dan's desire is not depicted as problematic. It is not his desire that presents the risk, but its object. Dan's only mistake was to have picked the wrong woman. The narrative avoids the motivation behind Alex's obsession with Dan in tracing her increasingly predatory behaviour. The logic of the film suggests that the threat is not Alex, a motivated individual, but Alex, generic career woman.
Alex is constructed as a polymorphous menace, "an uncontained, unbound female agent in a masculinist social order" (Singer, 1990:109). *Fatal Attraction* emphasises that it is female transgression that poses a threat to the family, that men are innocent victims of their sexuality. The threat to masculinity posed by feminism has been displaced onto a contest between women, whore versus mother – and mother wins.

The hero of *Tender Mercies* is a former country and western star, physically and psychologically "down and out". His new wife helps him rediscover himself, regain his creativity, and recover his fame and fortune. He expresses his gratitude by writing a ballad with the tender refrain "If you hold the ladder, baby, I'll climb to the top." In the eighties cinema women who cannot or will not hold the ladder, or worse still try to climb up it themselves, are ritually punished. It is male success and male self advancement within the capitalist system that is rewarded within most of the film narratives.

**Homophobia**

Freud considered that male homosexuality developed out of an overintense fixation on a woman, usually the mother, during early childhood. This fixation led to an identification with a woman, and a narcissistic sexuality that led to their selecting as a sexual object a man who resembles themselves. This traditional reading of Freud has been criticised as too heavily based on biological determinism, too universalistic, denying the wide historical and social variations in sexuality, and too individuated to explain the homophobia which structures the meaning of homosexuality in contemporary society (cf Friedan, 1965; Masson, 1984).

Foucault (1981, 1987) argued against the notion of sexuality as a biological drive, seeing sexuality as a discourse, a set of practices based in social institutions and constructed in relation with other discourses. Foucault identified three axes along which he saw sexuality as being organised, or
even created: the knowledges referring to sexuality, the systems of power which regulate its practice, and the forms in which individuals identify their sexual selves. Heterosexuality is essentially a patriarchal institution (Millet, 1977). Radical feminist writers (Dworkin, 1981; Millet, 1977; Rich, 1980) reverse the usual practice of designating homosexuality as deviant, and heterosexuality as the norm and therefore not in need of explanation, in seeing heterosexualit not as an individual practice, but as a socially constructed institution that plays a central role in maintaining patriarchal domination.

Social knowledges of homosexuality are historically recent. The word 'homosexual' was first used in the 1860s, and was little used until the 1880s. Weeks (1981) traces the increasing stigmatisation of homosexuality, theorising that the development of capitalism led to a greater regulation of male homosexual behaviour. Male homosexuality was increasingly denigrated as it conflicted with the rising bourgeoisie and the ideology of a monogamous nuclear family with a chaste wife and a dominant husband. Laws against homosexuality protected men from being used 'as women'. Homophobia controlled men's sexuality, but it also directed their gender behaviour in defining 'masculine' as 'not feminine'.

In *Making Love* a young couple's idyllic relationship is broken up by the husband's discovery of his homosexuality. The film treats homosexuality as a 'disease', the husband is its innocent victim, the breakup of the marriage its tragic result. It even provides the husband with one of pop psychology's simplest 'excuses', a distant, critical father, whose love is now symbolically pursued through male partners. Zack and Claire Elliot are the perfect couple, successful in their careers, they watch old movies and read poetry, joking about their named, but as yet unconceived son, Rupert. But unknown to Claire, Zack spends his evenings driving around local gay beats. The marriage breaks up. Claire finds a good man, and finally gets baby Rupert, Zack also finds a good man and settles down in a simulacrum of marriage. Watney suggests that "*Making Love* uses gay
men as an exemplary stick with which to drive heterosexuals back into the marriage market and joint mortgage industry [as it] exhorts gays to lock themselves away discretely" (1982:117).

In *Cruising* Al Pacino plays an undercover policeman, Steve Burns, who is assigned to track down a killer terrorising the gay community. The film is set in New York's leather bar scene, and although the iconography is more 'realistic' than many other portrayals of gay subcultures, the chiascuro lighting and fractured camera style serve to mystify the environment and the sexuality it contains. The murderer is a repressed gay, who in an ultimate expression of narcissism, kills all gays who physically resemble himself. The film's logic is the contagion of homosexuality, Pacino resembles the killer, and through the film he takes on the identity/personality/sexuality of the killer. In linking the hyper-masculinity of the leather subculture with violence and death, *Cruising* reinforces the view that homosexuality requires regulation and policing, in order to protect the heterosexual world from moral contagion.

In *To Live and Die in LA* Master's sexuality is ambiguously constructed. We first see his lover in a bar dance troupe, while the sexuality is obvious the gender is hidden in slicked back hair, white make-up and black costumes. In the dressing room after the performance Masters greets one of the dancers with a kiss on the mouth. The first shot of the kiss is designed to give the impression that the lover is a male, we see his broad masculine back. The following shot uses a female actor pulling off her wig to reveal long hair. Later scenes continue to provide ambiguous readings, but while Master's sexuality may challenge the heterosexual norms that Chance's macho style embodies, it remains coded within dominant patterns of masculinity. As Sedgwick explains, the explicit sexualization of homoeroticism in homosexuality is only one pole of a continuum of male homosociality that permeates a patriarchal culture, "to be a man's man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed line from being `interested in men'." (Sedgwick, 1985:89)
In many action movies of the eighties the threat of prison is either directly or implicitly the threat of homosexuality, a homosexuality expressed in terms of men's violence against men. In *Lock Up* it is the violent death of First Base that suggests homosocial desire, not the tenderness of his relationship with Frank Leone. In *Tango & Cash* the shower scene underscores the homoeroticism of film's celebration of beautiful male bodies, displayed for each other as well as the audience. Cash drops the soap. "What are you doing?" Tango asks. "Relax, soap up, and don't flatter yourself, peewee." Cash responds. "I don't know you that well." says Tango.

In *Switch* Steve Brooks returns to earth in the body of a woman, to prove himself 'worthy' to enter heaven. Though in a woman's body, Steve/Amanda is consistently coded as male and heterosexual. When Amanda tries to have sex with Sheila Faxon in order to gain an important account for the firm, she is unable to do so. The logic of the film is that Amanda is a man, with a man's interests and desires, and a woman's body, so sex with Sheila would have been 'natural' under these terms. The film is less anxious about female homosexuality than male homosexuality. We do see Sheila and Amanda kissing, and are allowed to contemplate the possibility of sex between them. Sex between Amanda/Steve and Walter is far too explicitly homosexual for the film to depict, despite the female body. Amanda wakes after a drunken night with Walter, and he informs her that they have had sex. She has no recollection of the act, and accuses him of raping her when she was unconscious. Walter's lack of knowledge, and Steve's lack of consent negate the homosexual nature of the act.

A fairly frequent representation of homosexuals in eighties cinema is the gay neighbour as a girl's best friend, as in *Frankie and Johnny* where Tim plays an avuncular role in Frankie's life, looking after her safety, her health, and her emotional needs. It is Tim who persuades Frankie to go out with Johnny and nurtures the relationship through its rough patches. Tim is depicted as a 'harmless' male, the male without the phallus. *Nocturne* explores the difficulties involved in
establishing a gay relationship in contemporary New York City, focusing on love and respect and avoiding stereotypes. *Too Much Sun* satirises the accumulation of possessions through a story of a man whose son is gay and whose daughter is a lesbian, one of them must produce an heir or the estate is left to the church. The stereotypical portrayals produce much of the comic effect.

But films that have homosexuality as a major theme are not common in the "Hollywood" cinema of the eighties. More frequent are offhanded references to homosexuality, or homosexual allusions as insults or jokes: *Heathers* - "Doesn't this cafeteria have a no-fags-allowed rule?"; *Family Business* - "If you never take it in the ass you've got nothing to be embarrassed about"; *Raging Bull* - "Fuck him or fight him!"; *Lethal Weapon* - Riggs to Murtaugh as he pats out the flames on his back, "What are you? A fag?" Mark's girlfriend in *Once Bitten* asks his friends to find out whether he has been bitten by a vampire, and they look for the telltale marks on his inner thigh when they are all in the gym showers. Immediately the cry goes up "Fag alert! Fag alert! Fags in the shower!" Discussing the incident later the friend says "This is terrible, the most humiliating experience in my life, the suckiest thing that could ever happen. The whole school thinks we're gay. We might as well move in together and get his and his towels."

Freud's work on paranoia and homosexuality suggests that a man can repress his love for other men and replace it with excessive or paranoid emotions; hatred for men, obsession with women, self love, or jealousy (Freud, 1909-18:163-166). While mainstream American cinema seems to use all of these devices for sublimating essentially homosexual relations, it appears reluctant to represent homosexuality in the way that, for example, British cinema has been able to. In films like *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *Wonderland* and *The Crying Game* homosexuality is an aspect of a character's life in a film that deals with Thatcherian capitalism and racism, friendship and fear, or IRA politics and human connectedness. Or in films like *Maurice*, an adaptation of EM Forster's novel, where homosexuality is central to the narrative, a lyrical story of love, rejection and
acceptance as Maurice comes to terms with his homosexuality. One American film that dealt explicitly with male sexuality, fantasy, and erotic desire was *Tightrope*, a Clint Eastwood vehicle that explored the conflicts within contemporary masculine sexuality.

*Tightrope – sex, sexuality and masculinity*

Wes Block consults a psychiatrist to try to gain some insights into the behaviour of the serial killer he is pursuing. Her answer neatly summarises the theme of this film, "There's a darkness inside all of us Wes, you, me, and the man down the street. Some of us have it under control, others act it out, the rest of us try to walk a tightrope between the two." The film explores a number of Freudian concepts: that a disposition to perversions of every kind is a general and fundamental human character; that the repression of a wide range of sexual pleasures is necessary for social civilisation; and that what is repressed is not erased.

In trying to establish a lead on the killer, Block (Clint Eastwood) asks the police in his task force to pick up all recent sexual arrests "that goes for someone who's humping sheep to someone who's been swinging his dick." In briefing the media he explains that "the victims have all been women linked to unusual or aberrant sexual activity." But the film goes beyond dealing out punishment to the sexually perverse to an exploration of the tensions and conflicts within male sexuality. As Judith Butler observes:

> This 'being a man' and this 'being a woman' are internally unstable affairs. They are always beset by ambivalence precisely because there is a cost in every identification, the loss of some other set of identifications, the forcible approximation of a norm one never chooses, a norm that chooses us, but which we occupy, reverse, resignify to the extent that the norm fails to determine us completely. (Butler, 1993:126-7)

*Tightrope* negotiates the conflicts between sexuality and identification for the male. Identification with hegemonic male roles "involves a refusal of pleasure, or an anxiety in pleasure in order not to
surrender power" (Waldby, 1995:271). A phallic sexuality prohibits passivity, narcissism, and above all penetration; and demands a de-eroticization of most of the body.

The title sequence opens high over the Mississippi, the night is uniformly grey with few lights illuminating the gloom. A combined tracking shot and zoom focuses on a single New Orleans' building, then as we hear high pitched laughter it cuts to women's faces, laughing, lit only by the candles burning on a cake. The film begins with a woman walking alone through dark, wet streets. It is one of the women from the birthday party, she is carrying an armful of parcels. The camera follows her footsteps, her lower legs only in frame. The sound track conjures up gothic horrors; ships horns, dogs barking in the distance, chimes striking the hour, a second set of footsteps. The sneaker-clad feet of the second walker are intercut with the woman's legs. She walks faster, so does he. She turns the corner, takes a few running steps and drops a parcel. She bends to retrieve it anxiously watching the street corner. As her hand grasps the package, it is covered by a male hand. "Are you alright, Miss?" a man in a police cap asks, his face in shadow. He watches her safely inside her building. The camera slowly pans down his body to his feet, wearing sneakers.

From one pair of sneakers to another, just slightly different. A wide shot reveals Wes playing football in the street with his two daughters. The sun is shining, the street is broad, tree-lined, edged with lawns and flower beds. The older girl catches the ball, throws it back to Wes, then notices something in the direction of the camera. "Come and see this dad," she calls, and the three of them peer intently at the audience. A reverse angle shot shows a scruffy dog eating from a garbage can. Wes suggests that they take him to the pound where they'll find him a good home, he fondles the dog who licks his hand in return. The girls are on the sofa waiting to watch the evening's game on television. Wes is opening a can of dog food, he throws the stray a scrap, we see him throw another but this is caught by a second dog, a third scrap, a third dog, and then a fourth. Wes is a suburban dad who plays ball, loves his children, and is sentimental about pets.
The film's narrative is based on this patterning of difference; masculinity/femininity, light/dark, good/bad, feminism/misogyny, sadism/masochism, normalcy/perversity, heterosexuality/homosexuality. But the patterns of difference reveal similarities, the pairings are not oppositions but complements, one necessarily accompanying the other. The tightrope that Wes Block walks is between those parts of himself that are at odds with one another. His internal contradictions are magnified by the use of a double. In doppelganger fiction the hero's secret dark side is externalised, projected outward onto a villain (Rank, 1971). In Tightrope Wes's personal contrariety is mirrored externally in the equivalence and contrast of the 'good' cop and the 'bad' cop. Wes Block is a homicide detective pursuing Leander Rolfe, a homicidal ex-detective, who is following Wes Block. When Melanie speaks to the killer outside her apartment the film suggests that it is Block, the shadowed profile looks like Clint Eastwood, the slow drawl sounds like Clint Eastwood. The cut to the football game reassures the audience, but doubts are continually resurfacing, not that Wes is the killer, but that he is potentially a killer. "How are things at home?" says Wes' superior, "I'm not sure yet you're ready to be running this task force?"

Wes' wife has left him, and he is bringing up Amanda and Penny with the help of a motherly housekeeper. Since his wife left he has made a practice of frequenting the brothels and massage parlours of the French Quarter. Block and Rolfe together and separately weave a path through a polymorphous masculine sexuality challenging definitions of good/bad, normal/perverse. Wes asks about Melanie at Sarita's, and they talk about a threesome, a "sandwich" with one girl on top, the other beneath. At the Body Shop Jamie undresses while a man watches through a small window. Looking for Becky, Wes cruises a crowded bar with a male exotic dancer in g-string, tie and bowler hat, and women wrestling in jelly. Becky sucks on a popsicle, and talks in a childishly breathy voice while Wes handcuffs her to her iron bed. Wes shows a brothel owner a number of photographs.

Wes: "Did you ever see any of these in here?"
Man:  "I saw this one."
Wes:  "Anyone ever get violent with her?"
Man:  "It's part of the turn on, isn't it?" then
       "What about you? Did you ever see any of them in here?"
Wes:  "No."

He goes upstairs, several men and a number of women are involved in group sex in the first room.
In the second Judy, wearing glasses and a floral print housecoat, is sitting alone. He shows her the
photos and asks if she recognises anyone. As he moves to leave the shadow of the door cuts him in
half, one side of his body clearly lit, the other in deep shadow. "Why don't you come in?" she
says, "Close the door." She picks up a mechanical vibrator and massages him. We look down on
the two of them through a mesh ceiling, our view framed by gloved hands. A reverse shot shows
us the killer, watching, in an animal mask. Jamie is found dead in the hot tub. Judy on a bank of
the Mississippi. A doll is delivered to Block at the police station, attached is a card with a
typewritten message: "Another one will soon be dead. You could stop it if you knew what was
ahead." On the back of the card is a business logo, "Sam's". On arriving at Sam's Wes is shown
up to a room, a woman enters and slaps him, hard, across the face. "Ooh you're strong," she
says, "I like being punished by strong men." She picks up a plaited bullwhip from the bed.

Woman:  "He said you'd want this."
Wes:  "What for?"
Woman:  "Me."
Wes:  "He's wrong."
Woman:  "He said you were just like him."

Wes stands still, staring with Clint Eastwood's steely gaze and twitching mouth. The woman gives
him a black rose. "You're to wear this to Praline's."

At Praline's Wes is approached by a man wearing another black rose, he is stereotypical gay, with
a jisp and a limp wrist.

Gay:  "He said this was your first time."
Wes:  "Who?"
Gay:  "You don't know? He bought me for you." After a pause,
        "You don't want it?"
Wes:  "No."
Gay: "He said you did, you just don't know it yet."
Wes: "Well he's wrong."
Gay: "How do you know if you haven't tried it."
Wes: "Maybe I have."

Wes follows him to a warehouse where he is to collect his fee, but finds him hanging from the rafters. Back at the station Block takes the head off the message doll and finds a broken popsicle stick, a message that Becky is to be the next victim. Becky is found in a fountain in the French Quarter, the tie that Wes left at Sarita's is formally knotted around the neck of a statue.

But while the film explores the exotic sexuality of Block and Rolfe in New Orleans' red light district, it also presents alternative sexualities. Sex is suggested as a search for a nebulous love. Jamie, in death, reveals a tattoo on her buttock, "Looking for love." After a session at a brothel, Wes comes home late to his daughters.

Amanda: "Where did you go tonight?"
Wes: "Out to look for something."
Amanda: "Did you find it?"

The innocence of Penny, Wes' younger daughter, and the developing sexuality of Amanda provide a counterpoint for the deviant practices of the men. The family are driving along the street in one scene. It is a clear sun-lit day, the car seems overloaded with children and dogs, everyone is sipping drinks through straws, uncomplicated suburban family life exemplified.

Penny: "What's a hard on, Daddy? Amanda said it but she won't tell me what it means."
Wes: "It's when a man is attracted to a woman, he likes her. Understand? He likes her in a certain way. You know, male bears like female bears, and male bees like female bees and occasionally they get together..."
Amanda: "Dad, forget it."

At home Wes sleeps with the stray pup, the dog's head on the spare pillow, Wes' arm around it as he reaches for the phone.
A second counterfoil is Wes' developing relationship with Beryl Thibodeaux (Genevieve Bujold), she runs the local rape crisis centre and demands to be kept informed of developments in the serial killings investigation. They first meet in the police station. He has been avoiding her phone calls and now attempts to get out of meeting her. "Tell her I'm out of town," he says. But she is standing right behind him, "Welcome back," she says. After she complains to the mayor about his lack of cooperation he visits the rape crisis centre. Beryl is taking a class, "No" they yell, lashing out with both hands, "Stop" they scream kicking hard. Wes waits at the door. Beryl explains that women facing a potential rapist have choices, the important thing is not to stop thinking. She suggests they can try reason, they can yell, they can warn, or they can disable. She steps back and punt kicks the dummy at the front of the room, his eyes light up, his tongue protrudes, and his tennis ball balls explode across the room. One bounces towards Wes. He retrieves it, wincing. Wes goes to Beryl's gym, where the two work out dripping sweat, grimacing with pain, among torturous bars, weights and pulleys in a civilized enactment of sadomasochism. Afterwards they go out on a riverboat for oysters.

Wes: "They found another body. I'm sorry about it."
Beryl: "Why tell me?"
Wes: "I didn't know who else to tell."

Becky is the second prostitute known to Wes to be found dead, the tie he left at another brothel is left near her body. He calls Beryl.

Wes: "Can I see you tonight?"
Beryl: "I've got some work."
Wes: "Can it wait?"
Beryl: "Are you alright?"
Wes: "I don't know."

They take the girls to the carnival. The streets are filled with music, lights and costumes and laughing crowds. The girls are in fancy dress and the group strolls through the streets as a family, eating icecream. But the wide shots of family fun are intercut with close-ups of faces in grotesque
masks, watching. A smiling clown sells Amanda a balloon, as she stoops to collect a dropped coin. we see his feet in tennis shoes. They walk past the fountain where Becky's body was found.

Wes: "They found one of the bodies near here."
Beryl: "I know."
Wes: "They're getting closer."
Beryl: "Closer to what?"
Wes: "Me."

Wes Block is forced to confront not only his own desires, but the relationship between those desires and the world in which he finds himself. He enters through desire, and finds himself in an eternal night where garish neon reflects in the roadway puddles, but does not light the way. The lure is the simulacrum of power, but not its actuality. The film depicts a male masochism, where Wes needs to create, or reproduce, a set of rules which are immediately broken in an exploration of the boundaries of power. Block's dichotomy, and the conflict between Block and Rolfe, illustrate the relationships that exist between sexuality and societal power structures. For Foucault, sadomasochism is the "eroticization of power, the eroticization of strategic relations" (1980:29). Wes uses handcuffs on at least one of the prostitutes with whom he has sex, while Rolfe leaves the mark of handcuffs on all of his victims. The psychiatrist explains the killer's use of handcuffs as a desire for revenge, as a need to impose his will upon his victims. After the evening at the Carnival:

Beryl picks up Wes' handcuffs from his bedside table.

Beryl: "Why do you think he uses handcuffs?"
Wes: "Control."
Beryl: "Do you use them very often?"
Wes: "Well that depends."
Beryl: "On what?"
Wes: "The situation."
Beryl: "When you feel you are threatened?"
Wes: "Yeh, you could say that."
Beryl: "With these no one can get to you?"
Wes: "They'll stop just about anyone."

He smiles. Beryl puts the cuffs on one wrist and clasps it. She holds out both hands to him, hands together, fists clenched. Wes unlocks the cuff. She reaches out to touch his face. He moves his head away.
Freud explains that just as the masculine is not exclusively active, and the feminine not completely passive, nor are sadism and masochism opposites. Sadism is a reversal in aim of masochism, a turning around of subject and object. In S/M the power roles can be reversed or inverted, and in Tightrope they are. Block was the arresting officer when Rolfe was jailed for raping two teenaged girls. Rolfe then tries to punish Block for his sexual misconduct, implicating him in the murders, threatening the people close to him. Block, as a police officer, represents social control, but the film offers a critique of social power structures. The police are linked to prostitutes, and are depicted as powerless against the killer, it is only Block who can stop him.

Beryl: "No-one could know what he'd do."
Wes: "No-one but me."

Rolfe kills three police effortlessly while they are on protective duty outside Beryl's house. And Rolfe was a policeman.

Rolfe is in control. He watches Wes with sadistic pleasure. The audience also participates in this sadistic voyeurism, through the film's emphasis on the pleasure of the controlling gaze. Wes watches, searching for an enemy he senses but cannot see, he stares inwards, grimaces at reflections, peers into hazy distances. The characters exchange silent gazes, Wes and his ex-wife, Wes and the housekeeper, Wes and Beryl, strangers in bars and streets. The film presents intertextual evidence that the woman is the natural object of the sadistic or fetishistic look: when the forensic team photograph Melanie's body the scene resembles a glamour photo session, with the body draped across the satin bedcover, the circle of attendant men and the repeated flash of the camera; when Becky is being tattooed the framing is reminiscent of soft-core pin-ups, her legs splayed, her groin at the centre of the frame her head and limbs cropped; Amanda opens Wes' murder file and the black and white glossies that she spreads out suggest glamorous film portraits more than forensic evidence; Wes' sexual encounter with Becky invites us to vicariously participate, with a long slow pan dissecting her glistening body into easily consumed segments.
The film forces the audience to be active viewers. Many of the shots are canted, or taken from very high or low angles, or are extreme close-ups so that the subject is abstracted, not immediately recognisable. The night shooting also renders much of the action difficult to see, unrecognisable characters are silhouetted against windows and street lights, the audience is forced to search the gloom of hallways and alleys to fathom Wes’ actions, or decipher to whom he is talking. The audience cannot be passive spectators, they are forced to participate in the scopophilic pleasure.

The male dread of the feminine (cf Horney, 1967) is very close to the surface in this film. Wes’s desertion by his wife is both the explanation and the excuse for his fear of intimate relationships ("I don’t take women home.") and his recourse to S/M and the services of prostitutes.

Beryl: "That kind of friend have anything to do with your wife leaving?"
Wes: "I made those kinds of friends after she left."

The same dread of women, a fear of overt female sexuality, motivates their ritual abuse and murder by his double. Coupled with the fear of women is a sublimated homosexuality. As in male doppelganger fiction generally the homosexuality stems from a narcissistic self love which involves two mirrored characters. The love of men is constrained by sexual laws, consummation of homosexual desire involves stepping outside the boundaries of sexual law. But an attempt to break out of sexual constraints brings with it a threat of impotence, and a fear of castration. When Wes dreams that Beryl is being attacked by the killer, and that the killer is himself, the dream is from Beryl’s point of view. Wes is at once the abuser and the abused. In a film about women, about desiring them, controlling them, controlling the desire, and about protecting them from controlling desire, the lines between masculine and feminine are not always easily drawn. Abandoning an hegemonic male role to explore pleasure in passivity and submission brings with it anxieties about feminisation and the loss of power.
The film's resolution re-aligns dangerous desire with masculinity. The money that the killer gave to Jamie is traced to the Dixie Brewery. With beer and masculinity culturally linked, the brewery is tied to the murders through a series of flashbacks. Bottles vibrating on a conveyor belt cut to Judy's mechanical massager, the foaming beer to Jamie in the hot tub, hanging bottles to Melanie's closet, a wide shot of the brewery to Wes's dream of being the killer.

In scenes that seem to have more to do with genre conventions than the premise that underlies the rest of the film, Wes tracks the killer at arms length. When he returns home he finds Amanda gagged and handcuffed on his bed, the housekeeper dead in the clothes-dryer, the dogs with their throat cut, except for the stray pup who is in a partially closed closet. Wes puts the two girls in the closet, wrestles with Rolfe who gains the upper hand only to be attacked by the dog. Wes regains his gun, the two crash through the picture window and over the balcony. Rolfe escapes. Leaving the girls in hospital Wes returns and destroys his bedroom, "Motherfucker," he says, "I'm going to break your motherfucking head."

Four police are on protective duty at Beryl's house. Wes phones, but there is no answer, nor can he establish radio contact with the police. Beryl is no easy victim, she fights, scratching and kicking, she seizes a pair of scissors and stabs him repeatedly. He abandons the red ribbon that he has used to strangle his previous victims and grabs her by the throat. Wes breaks the glass in the door, "I'm OK," says Beryl. Wes chases Rolfe through the cemetery as other squad cars and a police helicopter join the pursuit. The chopper illuminates the scene, turning night into day. They leave the graveyard and run through a railway siding, through and under trains, alongside the tracks. Block checks out a stationary railcar, Rolfe jumps from it. The two wrestle. At the beginning of the film the killer speaks in Block's voice, the only other sound he makes is now, screaming as Wes pulls the mask from his face. They are evenly matched, neither one gaining an advantage, hands at each others throat, rolling on the railway tracks first one on top and then the
other. A train approaches, passes. Wes is still grappling with the hand gripping his throat, the camera pulls back to reveal the arm is severed below the elbow. Beryl runs from a police car, Wes lets her caress his face and the two walk arm in arm towards the light of the city.

Tightrope expresses the anxieties of sexual fantasies that are known yet censored, displayed yet repressed. The silence of masculinity is its sexual subtext, the repressed desires that have been internalised as feminine. Masculine sexuality is a role that guarantees hegemony, but it is a role that is occupied ambivalently.

The sexual body

The structure of the look defines visual pleasure, including cinematic pleasure, and it is through the codes of the look that identification and desire are articulated. The look of the camera, the look of the character, and the look of the spectator, and the disjunctions and discrepancies between these looks, are the source of a scopophilic pleasure for the spectator.

Mulvey's analyses of visual pleasure were based on the premise that narrative film is made for the pleasure of the male spectator alone (Mulvey, 1975; 1988). Mulvey fell back on biological essentialism, describing masculine and feminine as a fixed polarity, where the male is active and the subject of the look, and the female is passive and the object of the look. The essence of Mulvey's argument was that the male (camera, character, spectator) gazes at the female who connotes castration. The masculine unconscious has two avenues of escape from the resultant castration anxiety: sadistic voyeurism, through which the male ascertains the guilt of the female, asserts control, and effects either punishment or forgiveness; and fetishistic scopophilia, through which the male emphasises the physical beauty of the (female) object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself.
Although Freud begins with a biological definition of sexuality, he demonstrates how the developing libido is attached to a system of representations through which the individual ultimately comes to a definition of her/his sexual identity within a particular cultural frame. Freud recognised the bisexuality of every human being and the importance of psychic androgyney in understanding sexuality, identity, and pleasure (Freud, 1962). One component of bisexuality is the urge to become both sexes; we are always attempting both to affirm and deny our gender identities.

When Mulvey considered opposite-sex identification, it was not as a potential pleasure for both sexes, but as problem brought about by the lack of a female spectator position. But "the ability to simultaneously desire and also identify with the opposite sex has important implications for film spectatorship" (Studlar, 1985:615, emphasis added). Fantasy is one way of achieving the goal of re-integrating opposite-sex identification and desire. Fantasies are marked by multiple and fluid identifications on the part of the subject (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1986). Fantasy is the locus where sexuality is detached from any natural object, and thereby begins to exist as sexuality. It is both the site of desire and the articulation of desire, the setting in which desire is imaged or narrated (cf Cowie, 1991; Penley, 1985; Neale, 1986). In fantasy all possible roles are available to the subject, desire and identification are not limited by gender. The subject can, and does, adopt diverse and fluctuating positions in relation to changing scenarios, and in accordance with the fluid patterns of his or her own desire. "The very question of desire seems to require the transgression of the positionalities defined as 'masculine' and 'feminine' by constructing a sedimentary structure in which variable positions of identification and places of enunciation are overlayed." (Rodowick, 1982:13)

In Aliens Ripley is the primary object of identification for both male and female spectators. She is the character who motivates the narrative, and the discourse promotes sympathy or empathy on her behalf. Ripley is also marked by the conventions of costume, setting, lighting and framing as an
object of desire. Whether or not women have a more complete identification and men more intense desire, the plot does open up the possibility of multiple and diverse cross-gender responses.

In realist narrative cinema sexual difference is specified primarily in terms of the gender of characters, tied to representational images of the body. Characters are engendered by actions, functions, and positions that have been labelled 'masculine' or 'feminine' in accordance with cultural conventions. The nature of fantasy, the process of narration, and the demands of the story can produce 'male' characters in 'female' positions and vice versa.

"It is even possible, as is arguably the case with Brando as Kurtz in Apocalypse Now!, for a 'male' character to occupy both 'male' and 'female' positions simultaneously. Kurtz can be seen as representing both the father whom Willard has to displace at the end of his Oedipal journey, and the mother to whom he is drawn and from whom he has to separate himself. Kurtz's status as such is marked in the film by a fragmentation and incoherence in his language, by his place outside and in defiance of the law, and by the way Brando's body is photographed and lit such that its soft fleshiness is constantly emphasised. The instability of Kurtz's position as a figure within the scenario is marked by levels of incoherence within the film itself once he makes his appearance, in particular its narrative fragmentation and the ambiguities in its delineation of narrative space and optical point of view." (Neale, 1986:126)

Ellis argues that identification is more than men in the audience identifying with males on the screen. There are many different forms of identification, and identifications are multiple, changing, and even contradictory. Cinema also draws on and involves many forms of desire, and desire itself is constantly transgressing identities or roles (Ellis, 1982). Whatever the particular experiences and emotions that a viewer brings to a film, that leads them to fantasise in different ways, they trade off their identifications in accordance with the demands of the plot and the dictates of the discourse. "Overriding any channelling or regulating of identification in relation to sexual division are identifications with the vicissitudes of a particular narrative and with characters as mechanisms of narrative" (Green, 1984:38). Given the multifarious nature of fantasy and the complexity of the cinematic experience the spectator's patterns of identification and desire cannot be reduced to a simple male/subject, female/object polarity.
Mulvey's fundamental premise was that visual pleasure in realist narrative cinema is based on the workings of the castration complex, where the female represents lack and therefore signifies castration. But the signification of lack or castration does not necessarily have to involve the female. Both men and women are subject to symbolic castration, to the extent that they are both susceptible to a desire to occupy a position of control, and to locate an object for the scopic drive, and the threat of castration can be induced by either the male or the female body. "The male body can signify castration and lack, can hence function as the object of voyeuristic looking, in so far as it is marked as such - an arm, a leg or an eye may be missing, the body may otherwise be disfigured in some way, or it may be specified as racially or culturally other" (Neale, 1986:130).

Both male and female spectators have access to a voyeurism aligned with sadism, a controlling gaze. Both male and female characters can be objects of that gaze, although the male body has usually to be specifically marked to signify castration, where the female body does not.

But there are many instances, particularly in recent cinema, where the male body is so marked. Bruce Willis' accumulation of wounds in Die Hard, Mel Gibson's physical punishment in Lethal Weapon, the severed head that stands as a castration threat in Apocalypse Now, the Russian roulette scenes in The Deer Hunter, the beatings handed out to Stallone in the Rocky series, the threat of death or disfigurement to Tom Cruise in Days of Thunder are all instances of a sadistic treatment of the male body, which invites a voyeurism that allows the spectator a degree of power over what is seen, and in addition, accommodates the possibility of masochistic identification.

In The Deer Hunter the actual war sequences are brief but spectacular. A peaceful village in a tranquil landscape is suddenly bombed by American helicopters, the Vietcong retaliate with mortar shells and grenades. For the Vietnamese civilians death comes from both sides, graphically - pigs fight over the body of a dead child. Mike, Nick and Steve are captured by the Vietcong. The prisoners are forced to play Russian roulette, to point a revolver with one bullet in the chamber at
the head and pull the trigger. A threat to the head and the phallic gun suggest the idea of castration. The tiny, unsmiling Vietnamese commander for whose pleasure the game is played represents the figure of the bad father, that is, the father who enforces the threat of castration and offers no possible identification as the good father. In the light of the symbolic power of the phallus, castration can never be more than a threat, but the threat allows the spectator a degree of power, sanctioning a sadistic voyeurism.

The body of Martin Riggs in *Lethal Weapon* signifies castration, marked as 'lack' by his psychosis, by his exploration of suicide and the repeated instances of his placing a gun to his head:

Murtaur: "Don't hold it there. You'll only blow a hole in your head."
Riggs: "How about under the chin? Under the chin's good. Or in the mouth? Even better."

and by the beatings he takes in frequent hand to hand battles with criminals. The first shot of Riggs shows him naked, alone, in bed, a gun on the other pillow. He walks across to the fridge for a beer, the untanned skin drawing the gaze to his buttocks, his body presented as the object of the voyeuristic look of the spectator.

While a sadistic voyeurism is one means of disavowing the threat of castration described by Mulvey, another is fetishistic scopophilia. The feminine is discussed as an object which structures the masculine look according to its active (voyeuristic) and passive (fetishistic) forms. She referred to the male star as an object of the look, but denied the male the role of an erotic object. But the male image can involve an eroticism, since there is always a vacillation between accepting the image as a source of identification, or as a source of contemplation (Rodowick, 1982:8). Neale argues that the male as well as the female can be fetishised in films, but he suggests that there are different cultural conventions for inscribing the male body as the object of a fetishistic look (Neale, 1986:129).
But cultural conventions are in a state of constant change. Male heroes are at times marked as the object of an erotic gaze. If the subject of the gaze is female, then the feminine takes an active role in the narrative not usually ascribed, which raises the issue of whether male bodies can be considered as erotic objects for heterosexual male characters or viewers. "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" (Neale, 1983:8). But in 'male' genres such as westerns, action-adventure, and war films, women are often conspicuously absent, and are therefore unavailable as the Object-choice. In these films male bonding, male beauty, male sartorial style, and male to male violence, have been theorised as a repression of the erotic, but this argument begs consideration of the representability of the erotic. Willeman argues that spectacle and drama in the films of Anthony Mann tend to be structured around the gaze at the male body:

"The viewer's experience is predicated on the pleasure of seeing the male `exist' (that is walk, move, ride, fight) in or through cityscapes, landscapes or, more abstractly, history. And on the unquiet pleasure of seeing the male mutilated (often quite graphically in Mann) and restored through violent brutality." (Willeman, 1981:16)

but he suggests that the erotic component of this pleasurable gaze must be repressed, the look must be motivated in another way. But the pleasure of seeing a man "walk, move, ride, fight" is just as likely to be erotic as a displacement of the erotic. If all desire is a displacement of something, a repression of something else, then the violent mutilation and restoration of the male body can be the fulfilment of desire, rather than the perversion of desire.

Where voyeurism depends upon a distance between the spectator and the subject, fetishism seeks to remove the gap. Fetishistic looking implies the knowledge of the object that they are being gazed upon, and to that extent the object's complicity in the gaze. Fetishistic scopophilia compounds the physical beauty of the object, in fantasy the object becomes more perfect, more complete. Where the voyeuristic gaze is an inquiring look that seeks to know, the fetishistic gaze is captivated by
what it sees. Fetishistic looking relates to the spectacular, the object displays establishing a direct erotic rapport with the spectator (Ellis, 1982:47). Mulvey described Marlene Dietrich in *Blonde Venus* as exemplifying fetishistic scopophilia: "The beauty of the woman as object and the screen space coalesce; she is no longer the bearer of guilt but a perfect product, whose body, stylised and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look" (Mulvey, 1975:14).

Neale professed in the early 1980s that there are "no cultural or cinematic convention which would allow the male body to be presented in the way that Dietrich so often is in Sternberg's films" (Neale, 1983:14). But through Sheridan sheet advertisements, football calendars, centrefolds in women's magazines that are far removed from the twee poses of the seventies, touring male strip shows, and similar demonstrations of the contemporary visual objectification of the male body, cultural and representational conventions are being developed that allow a fetishistic gaze at the male. By the end of the eighties there were certainly innumerable instances of an erotic gaze from female to male characters within the eighties cinema: from Alex to Dan in *Fatal Attraction*, from Emily Reid at James Wheeler in *Wild Orchid*, from Annie Savoy at Crash Davis in *Bull Durham*.

Richard Gere takes a very long time to get dressed in *American Gigolo*, Arnold Schwarzenegger's body is lit and posed for display for an eternal moment before the Terminator sets off to find some clothes. Sylvester Stallone's characters wear costumes carefully constructed to reveal more flesh than they conceal. But where the female body as object of beauty is fetishised as a disavowal of phallic absence, the fetishistic gaze at the male body is a disavowal of phallic presence. The body substitutes for the phallus in erotic displays. This sexualised display of the male body could be read as an empowering of the female gaze in response to feminism. However, the male body in the eighties cinema is displayed as for a mirror. The sexualised male body is a symbol of masculinity,
for men. The phallic body is not an object of heterosexual display, but of masculine sexuality in
good working order. The `look, don’t touch’ sensibility is ultimately a pose of masculinity.

*Die Harder* opens with Captain Stuart in a small, sparse room. He is naked and is practising karate
moves in front of a mirror. The lighting accentuates the warmth of his skin. The tight framing and
varied camera angles present his body for the pleasure of the spectator. We watch Stuart as he
watches himself – the mirror marking his body `to-be-looked-at’. The scene has little narrative
effect, it provides no necessary information for the advancement of the plot; John McClane never
engages Stuart in hand to hand combat. It is a pause before the story begins to present the perfect
body, an object of physical beauty, a masculinity legitimately displayed.

In *To Live and Die in LA* all three of the leading male characters appear undressed or completely
nude. Most of the `deals’ between Masters and the Federal Agents take place in locker rooms,
steam rooms or men’s rooms. This works to legitimate the display, however the male body is
foregrounded and sexualised beyond the requirements of the locations. In a scene where Chance is
delivering money to Masters, the two men are shot in profile, their naked torsos in close proximity.
Masters reaches down and forward, out of the frame. "Is this my package?" he says stroking
something offscreen and then, "You’re beautiful". Earlier, the male bodily display is
heterosexualised in a love scene between Chance and the woman whose parole he oversees. He
enters the room in the early hours of the morning and undresses while she watches from the bed.
He takes his clothes off and poses momentarily, arms folded, legs apart in a full frontal display.
As they make love Chance’s body is centred, the penis framed as the focal point of the
composition.

*To Live and Die in LA* raises the homoerotic as an issue in a way that is unusual in the eighties
cinema. The maintenance of patriarchal power relations is dependent on an image of the male body
as impenetrable. "the male body is understood as phallic and impenetrable, as a war-body simultaneously armed and armoured, equipped for victory" (Waldby, 1995:268). Rambo's body is the image of the hegemonic masculine body, the fantasy of the always hard penis realised in the phallic body.
Rambo: First Blood Part 2 – the phallic body

Rambo opens in a quarry, towering cliffs of barren rock dwarf John Rambo. He was sentenced to five years hard labour for his one-man war against Hope, Oregon in First Blood. He seems part of the desolate landscape, his rippling muscles echoing the granite in tone and texture; "In here I know where I stand", he tells his Green Beret mentor, Colonel Trautman. Trautman offers Rambo a presidential pardon if he will undertake a Special Operations mission, ostensibly to get photographic proof of American POWs held in a camp in Vietnam. His unique skills are needed by the government. In First Blood Rambo was a victim, firstly at the hands of his Vietnamese torturers, then of the war that killed his whole unit, then of a society that did not understand, let alone appreciate him, and finally at the hands of the National Guard, the military apparatus he still feels part of. In Rambo there has been a shift in power. "Do we get to win this time?" he asks Trautman, "This time, it's up to you" is the reply. "The Vietnam veteran, erstwhile psychotic cripple and loser, has been given back his manhood" (Morrow, 1985:24). Rambo's heroic vengeance is legitimated by his past as a victim, and his present as a misunderstood, exploited veteran.

Rambo is to parachute into Vietnam, locate MIAs at a designated camp and photograph them to prove their existence. But when he arrives at the rendezvous point with an American who was being held by the Vietcong, Marshall Murdock aborts the mission. Trautman is told that Rambo's role was to lend credibility to an official statement that there were no MIAs unaccounted for, to provide a veteran's stamp of authenticity to the predetermined findings of the mission. Rambo is captured, but escapes. He rescues the POWs, defeating the Vietnamese guards and their Russian advisers, as well as the Washington bureaucracy.

Rambo is described as racially 'other', half German and half American Indian, a "hell of a combination," says Murdock. Costuming emphasises the 'noble savage' symbolism; long dark
hair, headband, bare chest, tanned skin, and pendant necklace. This appropriation of ethnic
ciconography is not an attempt to realistically portray the racial mix of the average rifle company in
Vietnam; Rambo, and most of the men he rescues are overtly 'white'. Rather it is an evocation of
the frontier myth. The situations and characteristics that Slotkin identifies as integral to the myths
of Daniel Boone have their parallel in Rambo. "Boone's initiation into knowledge of the wilderness
cannot be accomplished ... while even one civilised amenity remains to him. He must be stripped
to the barest essentials for survival in order to meet nature directly and without encumbrances"
(Slotkin, 1973:284). When Rambo parachutes into the jungle his pack becomes entangled in the
plane's superstructure, he is towed along facing certain death, so he cuts his pack free. Given that
the pack contained only the barest essentials of modern warfare, the incident strips him a second
time. He has only his body, and those weapons that are an extension of his body, to survive in the
'wilderness' of Vietnam. Boone lives a life of "semi-nomadic wandering" (Slotkin, 1973:294),
asked what he has done since the war Rambo replies, "I've moved around a lot." Rambo shares
Boone's kinship with the Native Americans (Slotkin, 1973:308). Boone is described as having a
"love of exploit and violence for the sake of blood-stirring excitement" (Slotkin, 1973:307), Rambo
is similarly described by Trautman, "What others call hell, he calls home." Boone has a "sense of
identification with the land" (Slotkin, 1973:299), Rambo is depicted as being in his element in the
jungle, working with the undergrowth, the rivers and pools, the boulders and mudbanks, to evade
or destroy his enemy.

The filmic strategy that makes the spectator search for Rambo's body marks his body as the object
of the look. Along with his enemies the spectator searches the jungle for his body as he leaps from
behind boulders, disappears in the undergrowth, slithers through dry reeds, vanishes in an
explosion. At one point Rambo's eyes suddenly appear in a wall of mud, his body completely
hidden, when he springs out it is though he has come from the earth itself.
Rambo's body is the film's greatest spectacle. The excess of his body marks him as a fetishistic object. His hyper-muscularity, his bare chest, and his seemingly omnipotent power create an object of display, Rambo as spectacle. The weapons that he carries contribute to his objectification. His opponents use de-personalised weapons that are operated by groups of men, highly technologised with dials to turn and buttons to push. Rambo’s weapons, his knife, his bow, his rifle are part of his body, physically attached to his body and operated personally as an extension of his body. Through the technologising of his body it becomes more perfect, more complete. Rambo’s body becomes a fragmented collection of disconnected parts, bulging biceps, hunting knife, prominent pectorals, massive forearms, silent, deadly bow. The parts coalesce in the spectacle of war, the narrative trajectory pauses and the spectator gazes at Rambo's body as it is displayed for him or her. "Stallone’s glistening hypermasculinity [is] emphasised in the kind of languid camera movements and fetishizing close-up usually reserved for female ‘flashdancers’" (Studlar & Desser, 1988:15).

Rambo is the perfect “fighting machine”. In Rambo: First Blood Pt 2 he kills over forty of the enemy, without acquiring visible wounds himself. His body is a weapon, extended by his bow, and his knife, but not dependent on them. His near naked body is displayed as the technology of war, the texture of his skin, the tension in his muscles, his way of standing and moving is opposed to the enemy’s abundant but inefficient hardware. Rambo remains untouched (physically and emotionally) by AK-47 rounds, Russian mortars, and massive electric shock. He masochistically invites their torture, demonstrating his masculine superiority through a body that remains unmarked. When a bamboo viper launches a trailside attack, Rambo reaches out and chokes it with one bare hand. When the Russians drop a napalm bomb Rambo dives into a pool at the bottom of waterfall to escape the sheet of flame. The helicopter’s door gunner strafes the surface of the water with multiple, seemingly unsurvivable, rounds. But as the chopper passes low to the water searching for the body, Rambo springs from the water, pulling the gunner overboard he scrambles
into the helicopter. The excess of the bodily violence displaces the focus from the resolution to the process. The spectator’s expectations are focused not on whether Rambo will succeed, but how he will succeed, masochistically prolonging the ritualised violence and deferring a final resolution.

Marshall Murdock is surrounded by an array of the latest in computerised defence systems, state of the art detection, analytical and communications equipment. Rambo’s response is "I’ve always believed the mind is the best weapon." Certainly his sophisticated equipment almost killed him when it became entangled in the hatch during his parachute jump, and it is his outwitting of the Russians that brings about his final victory, but the film tells us that the body is the best weapon. The body is the site in which the division of labour is articulated between male and female in pretechnological societies, and the narcissistic identification with an invincible male body redresses a perceived loss of personal power. The film’s major appeal was to male, working class audiences, to whom its fetishised male body as omnipotent weapon "functions as a bulwark against feelings of powerlessness engendered by technology, minority rights, feminism" (Studlar & Desser, 1988:15).

Running through Rambo is a theme of the purification and rebirth of the body, a regeneration of a stronger, purer masculinity, through a mythic purging in fire and baptism in water. When he realises that the boat crew have betrayed him to the Vietcong, Rambo orders his guide, Co Bao, and a rescued POW to swim to shore, he stays onboard to incapacitate his pursuers. The boat explodes in a wall of flame, and Rambo disappears. After a long moment he breaks through the surface of the water, the musical score triumphal. The situation is repeated when the napalm is dropped from the helicopter, he disappears in a ball of flame, and is reborn in the pool to come back stronger than ever. Drawing on Theweleit’s theories of the links between purification and the construction of masculinity, Jeffords describes Rambo as depicting "not simply the rebirth of a victimized character, but the simultaneous regeneration of masculinity itself in contemporary
American cultural productions" (Jeffords, 1989:130-134). In Fascist Germany water's purifying powers came to be associated with sexual purity (Theweleit, 1987:420).

Rambo's guide is the daughter of an intelligence officer killed during the war. Co Bao is depicted as resourceful and independent, though limited by a too strict adherence to the 'rules'. Rambo must rescue her from a camp guard, but she in turn rescues him. Though Rambo appears to be attracted to Co, he expresses no sexual desire for her, their personal relationship is limited to one chaste kiss. But, after their escape from the camp, Rambo does agree to take Co with him to Thailand and thence to America. Jeffords suggests that Co represents the tainted sexuality of which Rambo is cleansed. After Rambo's capture, Co gains admission to the camp as a prostitute, she kills the Vietnamese captain she has sex with, and rescues Rambo. During their pursuit by large numbers of Vietnamese and Russian soldiers, Rambo makes his promise to take Co with him. She is almost immediately killed by a surprise bullet. Rambo buries her body, and places her necklace around his own neck. Her elimination from the narrative, coming as it does immediately after she is identified as 'sexual' and linked to Rambo, assures that he is "sexually pure", his "masculinity unsullied" (Jeffords, 1989:134). His purification is completed by the rain that starts to fall after Co's death.

The subject of Rambo is essentially the male body. Stallone's body through its musculature, its naked display, its masochistic abuse, its performance in movement and gesture, and through its self-sufficient sexuality is the primary site of enunciation of an essential masculinity. The sexualised body is projected as a simulacra of a dominating male sexuality and Rambo's impenetrable body stabilises male sexuality in a position of mastery.
Chapter 7

Patriarchy and Paternity

As more and more families failed to conform in structure, membership and behaviour to the norms of bourgeois mythology, refusing to reward paternity with the benefits of patriarchal authority, mainstream cinema played out the conflicts involved in patriarchy's decline. The eighties 'family' dramas can be divided into three thematic groups: surrogate motherhood films which suggest that the patriarchal family is threatened by the mother's dereliction of duty; father/son films, where 'patriarchy' is the status and function of the father, and their inheritance by the son is at stake; and 'regression' films that deal with an alienated patriarchy and an ambivalently invested paternal figure.

Surrogate Motherhood

Films that dealt with fathers raising children alone could be seen as reflecting a participant theory of fathering, portraying a feminist inspired vision of the contemporary role. But most of these films were profoundly misogynist, and were more accurately allied with the conservative films of the Reagan and Post-Reagan era in which dominant male heroes returned to popularity and women were negated, villainised, or destroyed. From Kramer vs Kramer to The Good Mother a cycle of films showed a woman who had put her own needs before the needs of the family, and a man who stepped in as a surrogate mother. As the mother vacated her traditional role as the nurturer of children and supporter of men, her place was more than adequately filled by the husband and child she has abandoned, and the woman was punished for her desertion. The films move toward the formation of an all-male family from which the mother is expelled suggesting that, if women wanted to abandon the role of mother it was alright with men, women performed the role badly in
any case, causing trauma and distress and inhibiting the formation of intimate male bonds which rapidly develop in their absence.

In *Kramer v Kramer* Joanna Kramer walks out of a restrictive marriage to establish a career and a life for herself. The film then traces Ted Kramer's transformation from a self-centred, distant, career-oriented male into a sensitive, warm, caring person who shares a deep bond with his child. The transformation represents a certain feminisation of the character, the qualities that come to define Ted as perfect father are those that the cinema suggest make the ideal mother – emotionally expressive, communicative, soft, giving. Essentially Ted does not become a better father, he becomes a mother, taking up many of the attributes that feminists have rejected as false and oppressive. His transition is bookended by two occasions where he makes french toast for breakfast. On the first occasion he is ridiculously incompetent, his knowledge of kitchen procedures obviously a vague memory from childhood, he burns himself, breaks crockery, loses his temper, the toast is inedible. On the second occasion he and the child work as an efficient team, happily producing perfect french toast. "The subtextual point of *Kramer v Kramer* is that fathers make the best mothers" (Kehr, 1983:46). Ted acquires his parenting skills so easily that he goes from being a father who did not know what grade his son is in, to the perfect mother, in six short months. The film implies that the presence of the mother had inhibited the development and display of paternal skills.

*Tootsie* goes a step further to show that not only do men make the best mothers, they make the best women. When Michael Dorsey, unsuccessful, temperamental actor, `becomes' Dorothy Michaels to land the role of a hospital administrator on a popular soap opera, we are told that it takes a man to articulate the needs of women, and to use a `natural' assertiveness to have those needs fulfilled. The film's thesis is encapsulated in a sequence where Dorothy tries to hail a cab using her woman's voice, then quickly yells "Taxi" in Michael's deep baritone. The cab stops. Dorothy then fends
off a man trying to steal the cab, hitting him over the head with packages of designer clothes. Assertiveness, the willingness and ability to fight for one's rights, is a 'male' characteristic, the film says, exhibited by a 'woman' it is humorously out of character.

In *Ordinary People* the mother has withdrawn emotionally, rather than physically, from her family. The elder son has been killed in a sailing accident, leaving a guilt ridden brother, a father who appears part child, and a cold, distant mother. The whole trajectory of the film moves inexorably towards the final moment when father and son embrace and declare their love for each other. The mother has been found guilty, unable to respond to the accusations levelled by her husband, and has been symbolically excluded from the family. As with *Kramer v Kramer* the males of the family have only been able to express intimacy in the absence of the female. Traditionally male bonding took place in the act of rejecting the home and facing the challenges of the wilderness. In the eighties cinema the bonds were frequently forged in the conquest of the home and the exclusion of the woman from it.

*Problem Child* takes extreme measures to exclude the mother from the home, she is carted off in the back of a truck, nose to genitals with a very large boar. Women's basic incompetence at mothering a male child is a recurring motif of the film. John Ritter's character wants a son, to go camping with, play baseball with. When his wife proves infertile, he persuades her to adopt a child by convincing her that it will provide her with a entry to suburban society. The brat is the quintessential child from hell, but the film makes it clear that this is the fault of the women who have failed in mothering him, such as the nuns at the orphanage, and the dominant males in his life, including his adoptive grandfather who has 'ruined' Ritter's character's life with his excessive demands, and inadequate rewards. Ritter as a child/man bonds with his son forming a mutually beneficial family unit.
In *Table For Five* the mother is eliminated by an act of God, she is killed in a car accident while her children are on a Mediterranean cruise with her ex-husband. The film's narrative deals with the battle for custody of the children between the estranged father, a boyish, round faced professional golfer, and the manure responsible stepfather. John Voight's character has only the few remaining days of the tour to regain the love of his children and prove himself a 'better' father. A French woman he meets on the ship helps him in the endeavour, and seems to be a perfect 'new' mother, gentle, loving, supportive. But again, the film's logic is that fathers make the best mothers, there is no suggestion of a romantic ending, she waves goodbye at the end of the trip. Voight's character and his children are a family, complete unto themselves.

Eighties cinema seemed to be suggesting that an adult who chooses a satisfying adult relationship and the possibility of personal fulfilment is a 'bad' parent, while the one who sacrifices an adult life (relationships, career) out of loyalty to his child, is a 'good' parent. After a repressive childhood with an absent father and a domineering grandfather, and then a restrictive marriage Dianne Keaton's character in *The Good Mother* finds happiness in an open, caring relationship with a man who actively participates in childcare and domestic duties, and encourages her to pursue a career. Her ex-husband believes the daughter to be in moral danger, and successfully sues for custody. The film gives us little information about the father, and none of his new wife or their domestic situation, it assumes on our behalf that any father is a better mother than a woman who won't sacrifice personal fulfilment for motherhood. Keaton's character is condemned out of her own mouth, "I made a mistake." She ends the film without child, lover, or career.

*The Terminator* inverts reproduction, the child chooses his own father. As the android is sent back into the past to assassinate Sarah Connor, it is John Connor who decides that Kyle Reese should return to the past to protect Sarah, and incidentally father himself. In *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* the android has been reprogrammed by the future adult John Connor to protect the present
child John. As Sarah concentrates on military training and missions, it is the Terminator that takes on the role of mother, talking to John, playing with him. While John teaches the Terminator how to give high fives, Sarah acknowledges that he is a better mother than she, "The Terminator would never stop. It would never hurt him. It would never leave him or get impatient with him..."

Modleski's analysis of *Three Men and a Baby* describes "the explicitness with which the film reveals men's desire to usurp women's procreative function" (1988:69). She suggests that 'womb envy' is no longer an underlying theme of narrative cinema, but the overt content of many films. The three men experience a communal, virgin birth – the baby is left on their doorstep, and for some time the biological father is unknown. The humour of the film circulates around the men's lack of specific parental skills, particularly in regard to the baby girl's bodily functions, and their reduction of fathering to a "Peter Pan fantasy" where they get to perpetually play with the baby. Modleski speculates that "the popularity of a film like *Three Men and a Baby* is partly attributable to its successful negotiation of homosocial desire ... Father's rights, male appropriation of femininity, and male homoeroticism fuse perfectly in a film that nearly squeezes woman out of the picture altogether" (1988:74). The three men bond in the formation of a `perfect' family. The response to feminist demands for the increased participation of men in parenting, was an assertion of patriarchal power and the further marginalisation of women. While "the absence of the father has become ... a crucial feature of the American family" (Lasch, 1979:299) the absence of the mother has become a primary feature of American cinema. Men can now not only take the place of the feminine, but can appropriate reproduction as well and eliminate women from their narratives.

In American culture sublimated homoeroticism has always been a possible mechanism for dealing with a perceived threat from women (Britton, 1986:25), but it is a homoeroticism that has been rigorously disassociated from any 'feminine' identification. The homoeroticism, evidenced in an
exclusive male comradeship, overtly maintains its connection with hegemonic masculine characteristics and behaviours. Father and son in *Problem Child* do ‘guy’ things together, camping, football, baseball; Kramer and son deal with their problems as males, unemotionally; the *Three Men* are overtly ‘masculine’ with their lack of domestic skills, their rampant sex drive, and their career focus. The love between friends or between father and son accounts for the feminine, its further presence is unnecessary.

**From father to son**

From *Kramer v Kramer* to *Rising Son* American cinema in the 80s demonstrated a virtual obsession with father/son relationships. Through a range of narratives these films explore the changes in and challenges to patriarchy and paternity evident from the sixties, but becoming pronounced during the eighties. Many of these films are concerned with sons who reject the social/sexual identity that is represented by their fathers. The fathers symbolise a particular set of norms of masculinity which the son is inclined to reject, impeding the development of the male to male bond. The narratives are predicated on a conflict between father and son, or an absence of a proper degree of attachment between them, resulting from some unspecified or indeterminate wrong committed by either or both. But the ‘wrong’ is invariably a too strong, or an insufficiently strong, attachment to patriarchal norms of behaviour. The films vary in suggesting that these norms must be ignored, accommodated, or more frequently, reaffirmed. The films assume that the traditional patriarch is no longer a viable model for paternity, but go on to assert that the problem lies not with the patriarch, but with the changing society. The narrative of these films require sons to resolve their guilt, a guilt of inadequacy, of not being the son the father expects. Sons must seek atonement with fathers.

Britton suggests that the Star Wars trilogy is an archetypal example of the eighties film’s resolution of the problem of a son identifying with a father who is perceived to be ‘bad’. In the final shots of
Return of the Jedi Darth Vader joins Yoda and Obi One Kenobe to make up Luke Skywalker's trinity of fathers. Darth Vader has not been portrayed as a 'father' any son would wish to identify with. But, "Darth Vader, monstrous patriarch and leading representative of the ruling class of a brutally oppressive and rapacious imperial regime, turns out to be good after all, and, while the irresistible surge of family feeling to which he finally succumbs may suggest a 'change of heart', its dominant function is clearly to imply that when the chips are down the paternal heart is just fine as it is" (Britton, 1986:26).

Gus, Brian Dennehey's character in Rising Son, has worked in the same factory since the war, priding himself on never taking a sick day, and slowly working his way up to middle management level. He forbids his wife to work, even after the sons have left home and her boredom and frustration are evident. He counts his sons' career achievements as his own, one is a lawyer, the other studying pre-med, and he talks continually of their successes at the local bar. When Charlie decides he cannot be a doctor to please his father, he comes home from college, only to discover that Gus has been retrenched after a corporate takeover. Father and son fight, in silences, with words, and finally with their fists. The final compromise suggests that the father's stand on a work based masculinity is the 'correct' one, but that contemporary society makes it difficult, if not impossible, to live according to 'the code'.

In many of the father/son films the death of another 'more perfect' son provides the father with a reason to hate the surviving son. In Ordinary People, Gleaming the Cube, The Stone Boy, Dakota, Stand By Me, The Rookie, the surviving son exhibits a guilt far beyond his involvement in the death of the brother. In all of these films the survivor loved his brother as much as the father did, and only Arnold in The Stone Boy directly contributed to his brother's death in a shooting accident. The 'crime' of the son is not implication in the death of the brother, but of failing to possess the qualities that would allow the father to love him. 'Lovable' qualities are generally portrayed in
terms of academic, commercial, and sporting prowess, and their lack in the surviving son is read as a rejection of the father. The sons in all of these films expiate their guilt by earning their fathers’ forgiveness for not being the sons they want or expect.

The eponymous hero of *Dakota* takes a job on a Texas ranch in his flight from assumed guilt at his brother’s death. When he saves a life he is able to seek atonement, asserting that “for the first time I really felt that I could be forgiven, and maybe forgive myself”, and he sets out to find his father, with the implication of reconciliation and forgiveness. Dakota’s guilt is nebulous, the most he could be said to be guilty of is not doing enough to prevent his brother’s death, but it is he who must seek and earn the forgiveness of the father.

In *Gleaming the Cube* Brian is a rebel on a skateboard. He is not implicated in any way with his brother’s death, yet he assumes the guilt. It is this guilt that motivates the narrative as Brian investigates the death his parents and the police have assumed was a suicide. The guilt is a guilt of inadequacy, Brian must change himself, or at least that external indicator of self, his appearance, conforming to his father’s image of what a son should be before he earns absolution.

In *Stand By Me* four boys set out on an overnight hike to find the body of boy of about their own age. When they locate the body, Gordie breaks down and sheds the tears he was unable to cry at his brother’s funeral. In an emotional outburst he tells Chris that his father hates him and wishes he had died instead of his brother. Chris is abused by his own brutal father, but doesn’t accept that fathers can hate their sons. He tells Gordie that his father doesn’t hate him, it is just that he doesn’t know him. This feeling that a gulf exists between the males of the two generations is echoed in many films of the decade, and suggests a growing uncertainty about the social place of the patriarchal father.
The child-father

Bourgeois capitalist culture saw patriarchy and paternity as incontrovertibly linked, but feminist discourses have led to a broadening perception that not only are patriarchy and paternity substantially different, they are frequently at odds. The difference becomes problematic in the home, where patriarchy as an economic and political power structure, and paternity as an intimate relationship, seek to constitute the same object, the child. The child becomes the focus of a cultural drama which seeks to resolve the crisis in bourgeois patriarchy since the late 1960s, and also to reconstitute a disintegrating bourgeois family. As Heung indicates:

"What is striking in recent films ... is the way ... the child not only acts as humanizer, but also as the overseer of familial roles and responsibilities. Thus the child is a contradictory blend of precocity and vulnerability, often helpless in controlling his own situation, but instrumental in influencing the actions of adults. In fact, his control over familial relations is so great that it is practically parental" (Heung, 1983:81).

It is the child that recuperates the family, the child who has the power to validate familial relationships, and authorise the father. It is the 'wise' children and 'insightful' teenagers who represent patriarchal law in film after film. Dad, in giving up patriarchal power and authority to the child, becomes paternal. The father can only be accepted as a 'good' parent when he no longer represents the phallus. Sobchack described the horror film as playing out "the terror and rage of patriarchy in decline" in narratives where fathers were savaged by their children or murderously resentful of them, at the same time as family melodramas were depicting "a sweetly problematic patriarchy in ascendance" (1986:15). In the family melodramas 'good' dads were depicted as assuming not so much the maternal role, as the child's, 'good' fathers were powerless. "Now playful, now 'abandoned', they figure as little more than children themselves" (Sobchack, 1986:15). Dad gives up patriarchal power, in being represented as an 'innocent' child, and passes over authority to the child, in an enactment of a version of patriarchy that accommodates paternity.
In *Starman* an alien on an investigatory trip to earth assumes the body of a young widow’s late husband, becoming a child/father. He is at once inexperienced and wise, vulnerable and powerful, innocent and mature. Starman cannot survive on earth and must return to his extra-terrestrial home, but the widow is left carrying his child, and holding, encapsulated, the Starman’s wisdom, knowledge and power to be passed on to the child. The father is narratively inscribed as an invisible presence, the child bears patriarchal power.

Heung, in describing the new family in American cinema, says that “the child in these films is precocious and confident, it is the adults who are, in converse logic, desperately undergoing the process of maturation, through which they seek to re-establish their priorities and re-define their adult roles.” It is not the children in these films who are seeking to establish their identity, but their parents, and “these adults mature, not by embracing adult relationships, but by affirming their relationships with children” (Heung, 1983:81). From *Ordinary People* to *Problem Child* fathers come to know themselves through knowing their child, on the advice of their offspring they reconstruct their lives in an affirmation of previously suppressed identity.

In films like *Big*, *Like Father, Like Son* and *Vice Versa*, where father and son change bodies, it is the child that rescues the father from an obsessive career drive, resolves a problematic romance, and closes the generation gap. The adult male recovers his ‘true’ identity only after he has given up the phallus. In *Big* the son doesn’t replace the father, though he does wear his clothes when he suddenly finds himself with an adult body. He is hired by a toy company where the boss recognises the economic potential of his ability to “think like a child”, and a co-worker discovers the erotic potential of nurturing. The son never gives up being the son, but is empowered in the adult worlds of economics and desire. *Like Father, Like Son* and *Vice Versa* have as their focus the recuperation of the relationship between father and son, in both films this is achieved by the father becoming more childlike rather than through the maturing of the son. The boys win back their
fathers through identification, as children, not adults; it is identification with the child that brings pleasure and growth.

The passing over of patriarchal power has been given an historical context by Ehrenreich who shows the extent to which masculinity in the last thirty years has been characterised by a flight from commitment, responsibility, and adulthood (Ehrenreich, 1983). The eighties cinema reflected this desire to return to childhood, with the theme of male regression providing a popular narrative device in film after film. Modleski discusses the extent to which heterosexual masculinity has been constructed, in American society, "at the edge of the territory of the child," the very territory Huck Finn "lit out" for, while women have typically represented the repressive forces of civilised, adult society – that which man rejects in order to live out his perpetual youth (Modleski, 1990:63). In the cinema men are turning to childhood to escape the pressures of a post-feminist society, where hegemonic notions of masculinity are increasingly under threat.

In *Family Business* Adam drops out of college three months before completing his Masters degree in molecular biology. Avoiding his father, Vito, he looks up his grandfather, Jesse to enlist his help in a scam. Jesse agrees to help in the robbery, and Vito goes along to keep an eye on Adam. Adam is caught, Vito turns himself and Jesse in. Adam and Vito get probation, Jesse receives a fifteen year sentence, and dies in jail. As with many of the father/son film of the decade *Family Business* has a strong undercurrent of guilt. The guilt creates a gulf between generations, each feeling they have been wronged in some unspecified, barely understood way by the other, but still bearing a guilt of inadequacy, of failing to measure up to the standards of the previous generation. As Adam explains to Jesse, "Vito tries, but he makes me feel guilty". Jesse as a father ran a numbers racket, tucking the betting slips into the infant Vito’s blanket; he stole a fully decorated Christmas tree from a garage roof, while a seven year old Vito stood watch; he took a twelve year old Adam to school in a stretch limousine owned by someone who was working off a debt. Vito as
a father works long hours building up his own meat packing business; he always carries `a few grand' in his pocket; he wears expensive suits and complains about a $24 cab fare to the Bronx; his ambition is to be `safe'. Vito tells Adam, "I broke my ass to give you what he didn't give me."

The two fathers represent sets of social norms. The hegemonic male role is associated with attributes that many men would like to repudiate. Vito stands for those values; commitment, responsibility, maturity, middle-class security. Jesse represents male regression, a regression back to childhood in his ability to have fun, live for the moment, and a regression to a previous, simpler time. Jesse enjoys himself, chatting up hookers or brawling with off duty cops, making the most of any opportunity that presents itself. He chides his son, "Vito, can't you ever just have a good time." Adam, the `child' and Jesse, the `child/man' are custodians of wisdom and truth in the film, a theme supported by the dialogue on several occasions, "I'm half your age and I already know that." It is the child that restores the family, the `right' way for the adult male is to give up adulthood.

E.T. – fathers/sons

In E.T. - The Extraterrestrial a space ship lands in a pine forest, and its inhabitants leave the ship to collect plant specimens. One of the creatures wanders further than the others and when a convoy of pick-up trucks arrives to investigate the landing it is cut off from the ship, which is forced to leave without it. The creature ends up in a suburban back yard, where it is discovered by a young boy. The two form a bond, but the creature is homesick, and when it falls ill the boy agrees that it must return home. While E.T. is the story of a small boy and an Extraterrestrial who find each other, only to be necessarily parted, its essential project is as Britton describes "to reconcile [the boy] to the paternal function from which his real father has alienated him, while accommodating a fantasy of rebelling against his father and dispensing with him altogether" (1986:38). In another version of the eighties' father/son redemptive plot E.T. dramatises the disintegration of the nuclear family and the estrangement of the son from the paternal role; the
narrative renovates the patriarchal family by reinstating a father, "a new benign father who has and does not have the phallus" (Britton, 1986:39). The disruption of patriarchal succession by the betrayal of the father is countered by a small extraterrestrial 'father' who inhabits the paternal role without exhibiting its threatening or oppressive characteristics.

Within the narrative Elliot's father is the real alien. "I can't phone him" Elliot complains, "He has gone to Mexico with Sally." "He doesn't like Mexico" Mary weeps. The boys find his work shirt in the garage and sniff its familiar smell, trying to put a name to the cologne they remember, and reminiscing about games he once took them to. His 'exile' from the family is emphasised by the boy's inability to contact him, in the light of the later importance of the phone to the plot. Unlike E.T., Elliot's father can't phone home. In abrogating his paternal responsibilities, he has problematised the role of father, and the function of the fatherless family. While little information is given about the new woman in his life, 'Sally' suggests a much younger woman, while 'Mary' connotes the maternal. When Mary is upset by Elliot's revelation of her husband's travel plans, Michael chides him "Damn it, why don't you grow up? Think how others feel for a change!" As it is of course, the husband who has upset Mary, the implication is that he has failed to 'grow up'.

The film represents all men as potential threats through framing techniques that highlight their groins. The men searching for the space ship, and later for E.T., the scientists and doctors, and even Elliot's teacher are all framed so that only that part of their bodies between waist and thigh is seen on screen. In a child-centred film this could be seen as an attempt to represent a child's-eye-view, however Mary is never so depicted, and the shots of the teacher are actually taken from a high angle, looking down at the teacher's groin and the tops of the desks he stands beside. The men in protective suits are shown full length, but made strange, and threatening, by their alien masks and bodies. The men are de-personalised by the framing, their generic status reinforced by the total absence of names for any of the adult males.
The domestic space that Elliot's father has abandoned is depicted as lawless in his absence. The children call their mother 'Mary', symbolically refusing her parental status and therefore authority. The household is disorganised to the point of chaos, the mother is depicted as always running late, of being unaware of what the children are doing, and of being unable to enforce the family rules. Michael and his friends order pizza despite being told that they cannot. When one of Michael's friends calls Elliot a "douche bag", Mary tells him that she won't tolerate such language in her house, yet she merely giggles in mild shock when Elliot uses "penis breath" as a brotherly insult.

While the boys discuss "power" on a number of occasions, delegating "power" to each other in a Dungeons and Dragons game, or in return for favours and secrets, it is clear that Mary has no power within the family. The children ignore or disobey her commands, Elliot does not report his next sighting of E.T., Gertie does not stay watching television as Mary leaves the house, Michael doesn't drive "not one foot beyond the driveway". "What happened here?" she asks, entering Elliot's room after he has been home for the day. "My room?" he queries. "This is not a room, it's an accident" she responds, and leaves him with a list of things to do, "Put the shelves back on the wall, make your bed if you're not using it, pick up those toys" to which he makes no response.

Normal parental functions, getting food, driving the car, nurturing Gertie, cleaning up, have no fixed locus. While Michael takes on some of the functions, he does so uncomfortably, reluctantly, and incompetently. Mary is depicted as being overtly sexual, although the children are the only audience for her sexual display. When Michael and his friends are gathered around the table, she dances around the kitchen wearing a silk kimono, clasped only at the waist. When she bends to the oven her buttocks wave irresistibly in the face of one of the boys, who reaches out to touch her, stopped only by Michael's command. On Halloween, she dresses in a skin tight mini-dress, stilettos, curly wig, and feathered mask, in a parody of sexual availability. The domestic situation suggests that the absence of the patriarchal father is synonymous with the absence of the Law; the space left by the father is filled by anarchy, chaos, and perverse sexuality.
The film poses the threat of patriarchal fatherhood on one hand, and the threat of its absence on the other, playing out contradictory desires of phallic lack and presence. The narrative solution is the extraterrestrial; E.T. "physically escapes traditional patriarchal form without yielding traditional patriarchal power" (Sobchack, 1986:24). E.T. is the father who has and does not have the phallus; a child/father. He "fills the paternal space" but he "is insistently figured as a child" (Sobchack, 1986:25).

E.T. is configured as a child. He runs shrieking from the searchers, and on his first encounter with Elliot the two respond identically to the surprise, with high pitched screams. He walks with a childlike toddling gait. He is ignorant of the world around him and insatiably curious. He has a child’s appetites, especially for candy and junk food. He tests everything he is unfamiliar with by putting it in his mouth, including a toy car that Elliot is using to demonstrate earthly forms of transport. He needs to learn basic survival skills. He is unable to speak, until taught to do so.

The creature is labelled ‘male’ by Elliot, but despite its lack of external sexual identifiers, its gender is never ambiguous. There is no difficulty in accepting Elliot’s label, or in supporting his outrage when Gertie dresses E.T. as a girl, and his demand that E.T. be given back his "dignity". E.T. is overtly linked to the absent father, from the first sighting when Elliot asserts that his father would have believed him; to the day he spends at home alone when he dressed in the father’s dressing gown and slippers, drinks several beers and settles down to watch television. When Mary reads Peter Pan to Gertie, E.T. listens from the closet, dressed in the father’s coat and scarf, he completes the family circle.

E.T. is also unequivocally the holder of ‘power’ within the film. His ability to perform supernatural tricks such as making the clay spheres move in a representation of the solar system, and enabling Elliot to ‘fly’ on his BMX bicycle, is one demonstration of this power. The power is
also a nurturing power: he restores the dying pot plant to full flowering vigour; he heals Elliot's finger when he cuts it on a saw blade. His power is however benign, concentrated in the glowing tip of one finger.

E.T. doubles Elliot, from the similarity of their names through the telepathic sequence at school to the linking of their metabolic systems. The bond is described as emotional rather than intellectual; when a scientist queries, "You mean, Elliot thinks [E.T.'s] thoughts", Michael corrects him, "Elliot feels his feelings". When E.T. is left at home while the children go to school, he consumes several beers, burps loudly, and is aroused by a scene from The Quiet Man. His feelings during this period are experienced by Elliot, who, released from restraint, frees the frogs that the class were about to dissect, and grabs a little blond haired girl and kisses her in a choreographed imitation of John Wayne's treatment of Maureen O'Hara. Britton describes the scene's function as being "to dramatise the process of the exemplary male Oedipal complex in terms of the rejection of the law of the Father ... One can have the culture, and one's privilege within it, and overthrow it too – all without the least sense of contradiction" (1986:39). Elliot's rebellion negates the patriarchal power of the teacher, who throughout the chaos, as Elliot screams "He wants to kill you," repeats hysterically, "I can deal with this, children". However the narrative replaces him with John Wayne as a model for action, an archetypal phallic authority. E.T. reconciles a rebellion against patriarchy with an internalisation of the paternal role.

Keys is initially treated as a sinister figure, the bunch of keys hanging at his groin connoting power, knowledge, phallic authority. They are both a threat and an object of desire. He is shown hunting E.T., listening in with an array of high technology equipment, invading the privacy of the family with telephoto lenses, and finally physically forcing his way into the home. However, when E.T. and Elliot fall ill, Keys reveals to Elliot that seeing an alien is a childhood dream of his, something he has wanted since he was ten years old. Elliot's naked, prone body is reflected in
Key's visor. Keys then goes on to validate Elliot's occupation of the paternal role, "You've done the best that anyone could do ... I'm glad he met you first." Keys takes Elliot's hand in his, and at precisely that moment the graphic display on the monitoring equipment reveals that the metabolic patterns of the two have diverged. Elliot begins to improve. E.T. sinks further. From this point in the film, Keys is shown without his protective suit, and in full length shots, or medium close-ups of his face. The keys hanging at his groin are not depicted again. Keys has become the new benign father.

E.T.'s fellows make contact, which brings him back to life, his red heart lights up the stainless steel coffin. The children commandeer the truck, Michael driving forwards for the first time, and take him back to the clearing in the forest to meet the spaceship. Mary, the scientists, and Keys all follow. The children transfer to bicycles as the men in white coats attempt to stop them, E.T. lifting them to the sky when rifles are drawn. "I'll always be here" says E.T. to Elliot, touching the boy on the temple with a glowing fingertip. Elliot looks skyward, as the spaceship takes off, in the background Keys, Mary, Michael and Gertie stand as a family group, waiting to incorporate Elliot.

Whether portraying fathers as the best mothers, depicting the unproblematic passing on of patriarchal authority from father to son, or, as in E.T., representing childlike models of paternity, the films of the eighties were primarily concerned with the ongoing struggle to hegemonise particular forms of masculinity. The participant father represented more the taking on of an exemplary role within the family than the re-figuring of masculinity along more nurturant lines.

Marsha Kinder identified three works as challenging the triumphal Oedipal dramas of eighties mainstream cinema. Blue Velvet, Track 29, and the television series The Singing Detective "do not see the restoration of the patriarchal family as the answer to renewed power, but rather see the
family as the site of greatest entrapment, as still the most repressive Ideological State Apparatus" (Kinder, 1989:7). Significantly two of the works were British productions, and while Blue Velvet's director was the American David Lynch, he had a reputation for a radical perspective. All three works present a regressive journey into the past, but what the son finds is not loving identification with the father, but a world of Oedipal crime and pain. A corrupt patriarchy, whoring mothers, and sado-masochistic sons feature in narratives that alternate between violence and humour in interrogating the construction of masculine subjectivity. In contrast, the mainstream films of the eighties depicted a celebratory Oedipal trajectory where the restoration of the father, and the 'coming to manhood' of the future father guaranteed the continuance of patriarchy. The role of the patriarch was made secure, and made available in the face of an increasing problematisation of fathering in social discourses. The eighties cinema responded to the anxieties of those who did not want to live out the masculinity of their fathers, but did not want to lose it either.
Chapter 8

MASCULINE BONDS

Performing friendship

Fear of women’s demands for ‘equality’, nervousness over the changes in the material and economic base of society, and homophobia and racism, were at once condensations and reflections of masculine anxiety over identity. As the myth of the coherence and stability of masculine subjectivity became increasingly experienced as just that, a myth, anxieties surrounding the nature of masculine identity were played out in buddy movies. The history of American cinema has always included narratives of men who travelled together or worked together: the cowboy and his sidekick; the gangster and his associate; the cop and his partner. However, the defensive male-male friendships that began to appear on movie screens in the seventies proliferated in the eighties. The buddy movies negotiated both the fear of and the desire for intimate male friendships. At the same time they presented dual male heroes, two men who complemented and supplemented each other’s masculine styles, between them confirming normative versions of masculinity. The buddy movies also suggested that the male hero was so besieged by hostile forces that a dual hero was required, in the form of two characters that accept and support each other, and are necessarily bonded for survival in the face of threat not only from the forces of evil, but from the system, and from the opposite sex.

Ray Tango and Gabe Cash in Tango & Cash are Los Angeles policemen. Ray is independently wealthy – he’s a cop for the excitement – dresses in Armani suits, drives an expensive car, and out-smarts or out-maneuvers the criminals. Gabe is a plain talking, sloppy dresser who out-muscles or out-guns his opponents. The two are framed for a crime, convicted, and placed with the general
population of a high security prison. Through the ardours of the prison beatings, their escape, and their efforts to clear their names and simultaneously bust a major drug ring, the two become friends, despite their differences. As the film's promo says, "Team them and they're like oil and water. But frame them for a crime and they're like a match and kerosene." By the end of the film they are finishing each other's sentences. Their relationship is cemented, and heterosexualised, by Cash's romance with Tango's sister. The action/comedy format simultaneously invokes and disavows homosexual desire through prison violence, jokey drag and sexualised repartee.

Many of the police dramas of the last decade have a similar theme. In *Lethal Weapon*, the mature black cop and the reckless young white cop become friends when they are made partners. The mythology of Vietnam is recirculated as an agent of bonding, the death and betrayal that was the Vietnam War is invoked through Murtaugh's 'buddy' who requests his help, and through Rigg's weapons expertise. Riggs' and Murtaugh's friendship is cemented after dinner at Murtaugh's, in the males only territory of Murtaugh's boat and Riggs' pick-up truck. Crushing a beer can, Riggs says, "When I was nineteen I did a guy in Laos from a thousand yards out with a rifle shot in high wind". "Did you really like my wife's cooking?" is Murtaugh's response. Together Riggs and Murtaugh are an invincible combination, despite any individual weakness or lack.

The eighties cinema repeatedly depicts men who have formed obsessive male friendships, that are homosocial yet homophobic. While the masculine is confirmed in its own presence, this validation is based upon a knowledge of what it is not – the feminine. The masculine bond requires the exclusion of the feminine, women must remain outside the collective, as audience, as justification, as enemy. The apparently changeless and undifferentiated world of the masculine bond is "a world that women, by inscribing difference, both sustain and destroy, or, more accurately, sustain by threatening to destroy" (Jeffords, 1989:67). The belief that women can, and want to, destroy the bonds between men provides a constant tension that consolidates the collective and prevents its
dissolution in the face of other forms of difference. Normative masculinity demands the heterosexualising presence of women within the narrative, but women generally fill the role of an experience that men share.

Blue, a driven, unsuccessful artist, and Eli, a prosperous attractive businessman, have been friends for a long time in Heartbreakers. They’ve always shared their experiences with women, but have never been able to talk about what they’re feeling, so the relationship falters when they both fall in love with the same beautiful young woman.

In Stakeout the partners are friends at the beginning of the film. The narrative involves the two on all night stakeout duty, they are not shown interacting in any social sense, although they know each other’s wife/girlfriend and some interaction outside the job is implied. The friendship is delineated by a continuous dialogue, consisting primarily of the jokes and put-downs typically involved in fraternal bonding (Fine, 1987; Lyman, 1987). "Lick my left one!"; "Sir, Phil doesn’t have any nuts". While the conversation never stops, it involves the not sharing of emotions and experiences, but the competitive quoting of lines from films and television: "Lucy, you’ve got some explaining to do"; trivia quizzes: "Who was the fifteenth president?"; arguments on popular mythology, such as the Kennedy conspiracy theory; and sexual references. Norms of masculinity discourage talking seriously about social relations; studies of locker room conversations show that any personal revelations will be quickly followed by macho posturing, jokes or put-downs (Curry, 1991:128). When Chris meets Maria the attraction between the two is treated seriously by the film, but ‘real men’ don’t talk seriously about personal relationships. Chris says, "I’m in love, Bill. I’m leaving you. I have to face up to my heterosexuality - but don’t worry, you’ll be well provided for". Making fun of homosexuals is a ploy often used by men to distance them from being categorised as gay themselves (Curry, 1991:130). Chris and Bill promote an overt heterosexuality in their
conversations, with references to the sexual desirability of Maria, the sexual prowess (or otherwise) of each other: "You're a walking hard on!" and other references: "Kiss Carol for me. Lower!".

"The male bonding ... epitomised by the cowboy and his sidekick ... resembles the preadolescent bonding of young males who temporarily fear women and prefer each other's company, yet indulge in excessive displays of machismo to convince everyone that despite their exclusively male grouping they are really heterosexual" (Mellen, 1977:15). In The Rookie the friendship has a paternal quality, but as Nick and his rookie partner, David, eliminate a gang of car thieves, each has the opportunity to present a number of physical and verbal macho poses. After David is beaten up in a bar Nick says, "I didn't know you were into group sex." The first minutes of the film emphasise the distance between the two men, in age and experience, in economic and social position, in dedication and bravery, but the final scene underscores their similarity as they reprise Nick's response when introduced to a new partner. Similarly in Red Heat the dual hero's masculinity is on display in battling Soviet drug smugglers, Chicago crooks, dance hall girls, the KGB and the Chicago police department to bring about their own form of justice; eliding the inherent differences between a highly disciplined Russian police officer and an unorthodox, wisecracking Chicago cop. Male friendship is pictured as 'doing together'. Their lack of communication is emphasised, Danko refuses to fill Ridzik in on the details of the case, Ridzik continually points out his lack of understanding of American slang, Ridzik asks about Danko's family only to be met with silence, "You don't want to talk, do you?", "I guess not."

In Black Rain Charlie and Nick are New York cops, partners but not necessarily friends. Their relationship is a joking one, based on gags and games such as the mock bullfight routine. But Charlie has doubts about Nick's honesty, and Nick mistrusts Charlie's ambition, and it is their differences that are emphasised by the opening scenes of the film. The two escort a prisoner to Japan, where they lose him. Charlie is killed by Sato's thugs, decapitated, and it is through his
death that Nick comes to a closer understanding and emulation of Charlie. The Japanese Inspector assigned to the two is the agent of the bonding. Masahiro is in essence a reincarnation of Charlie. The two are linked through the singing of a song in a Karaoke bar "It's you and me, baby"; Charlie gives Mas his tie, and Mas wears them both; and after Charlie's death Mas accepts his badge. Mas gives Charlie's gun to Nick, re-arming him and symbolising a return of the power taken away by Charlie's decapitation. Nick and Mas are united in the responsibility they assume for Charlie's death; Mas says "It wouldn't have happened if I'd been there, I feel responsible". Nick tells an Oyabun "He killed my partner", "Yeh, right in front of you, I'm not impressed", is the response, implicating Nick in the death. The bonds between Nick and Mas are ritualised in the restaurant where Nick learns to eat noodles with chopsticks and speaks Japanese for the first time. The precedence of the group over the individual is an underlying theme of the film. The Internal Affairs investigator tells Nick "I don't like heroes, they think the rules don't apply to them"; Mas tells Nick "I'm one of a group, I can't just do what you want"; and the Oyabun reprimands Sato for placing individual desires before the Yakuza code. Nick is in a position to kill Sato, but (the film suggests it is for the first time) considers the needs of others before his desire for revenge and, with Mas, delivers him to justice and returns the banknote printing plates.

**Bonding in war**

Jeffords describes a feeling that "the Vietnam veteran has fallen ... across the barbed wire of the perimeter of social change" (1989:118), in that the veteran bore, at least symbolically, the brunt of a presumed discrimination against men, as men paid the price for women's liberation. Vietnam veterans in popular representations were portrayed as victims, parading a widely based belief in the victimisation of men and masculine ideals. The Vietnam war provided a context in which males could be graphically identified as victims of a wide range of social determinants, and an element of self pity is endemic to early eighties films of the war.
Where the films of the Second World War used comradeship as a positive dynamic, those revolving around the Vietnam conflict depict a defensive bonding in the face of castrating forces. The narratives speak of the powerlessness of the `ordinary soldier' while at the same time offering the hope of the `extraordinary soldier', the warrior hero. The bonding of soldiers from diverse and often oppositional backgrounds is a familiar narrative element, but the bonds are always established as masculine. The overdetermination required of masculinity in the eighties lent an hysterical quality to their reaffirmation in Vietnam dramas.

Violence operated as a reference point of shared experiences, a physical bonding that celebrated `masculine' perceptions and actions. Violence substituted for understanding, a retreat into physical force enabling differences of race and class to be disregarded in a celebration of a masculine mythology of mateship in the face of the enemy. "War ... is the ostentation of bonding" (Jeffords, 1989:73), and the arenas of war, provided named, if imaginary, spaces where males could prove their own, and confirm each others, value, in overelaborate performances of connectivity. Womens' roles in the military and achievements in wartime are negated in the filmic versions of the war, which invariably depict war as a male pursuit.

The war films of the eighties display a central concern with male bonds as a response to perceptions of masculinity under threat. In Platoon the Vietnam war enables a college boy to find his place, the arena of the battlefield combining collective combat and individual endurance, in an assertion of the honour of the ordinary grunt. In Born on the 4th July Kovic's literal and metaphoric castration is revealed to have at its source his betrayal of the collective in accidentally killing one of his own men. In Navy Seals the super-commandos exist in a tightly knit masculine world, their suicidally dangerous missions reprised by their social activities of excessive drinking, dangerous pranks and rabid womanising. In Full Metal Jacket a sergeant comments on the death of a soldier "Danny didn't ... leave his guts on a goddamn trail in the goddam Ashau Valley for
hometown, a medal, any of that bullshit. He took it out for you and third squad, and don't give him anything less."

Basic training provides the initiation into the masculine collective, with films such as *Full Metal Jacket* depicting basic training as a ritual of violence and abuse that bonds disparate civilians into a cohesive military unit. *Full Metal Jacket* also exemplifies the struggle necessary to maintain an unproblematic heterosexual male group, as basic training is reduced to a mechanism for repressing the feminine. The feminine in the film is represented by the figure of Gomer Pyle, a pudgy, ineffective, baby faced recruit. While all of the men are subjected to terror and abuse as a way of transforming them into the 'few good men' that the Marine Corps wants, Pyle is marked as sexually different, and therefore a source of contamination that must be eradicated. The recruits are called 'ladies' by the Drill Instructor, they earn the status of male through training. Pyle's status is suspect, his name (Leonard Lawrence) invokes connotations of homosexuality, his sensitivity, lack of physical prowess, and feminised appearance explicitly contrasting with the masculinisation of the recruits. The Drill Instructor emphasises Pyle's threat to the masculine bond, at one stage he is forced to eat jelly doughnuts while his comrades pay the price of his gluttony with push-ups at his feet. The recruits are urged to bring him into line, give him the proper motivation, so they viciously assault him while he is asleep, flogging him with cakes of soap wrapped in towels. But rather than bring Pyle into the collective, the violence sends him over the edge and he kills the Drill Instructor and himself.

The National Guard Unit in *Southern Comfort* is a reverse image of the fighting unit in American war films. The film's central irony is that, despite the military ethic of team loyalty and mutual cooperation, this platoon is a purely artificial group, without the shared values or common background of the Cajuns who seek revenge on them. The emptiness of the military bond is depicted as the real enemy. Hardin and Spencer are motivated by personal survival; Reece and
Stuckey, the rednecks, want to prove their superiority to the Cajuns regardless of consequences; Bowden's football-coach reverence for authority limits his capacity for action; and Casper knows nothing but the 'rules'. The image of collectivity could not be maintained as each of them acts out his personal version of military masculinity, insensitive to the values of the Cajuns, and completely ineffectual as a unit.

The logic of collectivity is dependent on the elision of differences of race and class, and a construction of a unified gender position. Masculinity asserted a cohesiveness in opposition to that against which it defines itself, the feminine. But as Jeffords describes the dependence of the bonding ethos on gender difference explains the tension in war narratives arising out of homoeroticism. It is only through constant re-affirmation of sexual difference that the collective can be maintained. Sexual difference is emphasised "as an aspect of the collective, something that men share together in the same ways" (Jeffords, 1989:68-72). The sexuality 'shared' by men is displayed in the eighties war film, spectacularly, and violently.

The insistent heterosexuality upon which masculinity depends is enabled by constant reaffirmation of male sexual identity. In the war film that reaffirmation allows the possibility of homosexual desire. "In the dominant versions of men at war, men are permitted to behave towards each other in ways that would not be allowed elsewhere, caressing and holding each other, comforting and weeping together, admitting their love" -(Easthope, 1990:63). But death is the inevitable consequence of the release of homosexual desire. Symbolic homosexual desire may be both freely expressed and openly endorsed, but only at the moment of death.

As Simpson (1994:215) explains, "Death justifies and romanticises the signs but not the practice of queer love – death ... is itself the consummation, the cathartic masochistic climax that satisfies the audience and keeps the desublimation of homoeroticism on the battlefield". The death of a friend,
one of the collective, provides a moment when the love of one man for another can be fully revealed. Death is as much the logical conclusion of an impossible romance as the result of war. The war films offer an impossibly masculine world, "a world in which the privileges of heterosexual manhood can be combined with a boyish homoeroticism" (Simpson, 1994:214). Depicting something of an escape from the Oedipus complex where a boy is able to identify with the father without a rejection of the mother, creating a masculine world that incorporates the role of the feminine.

*Platoon* foregrounds the masculine community in a tapestry of bodies; groups of seminaked men lying in the sun, men packed into jeeps and trucks, crowded into jungle clearings, the physicality of the sweat and the mud translated into a masculine sexuality. The new recruit's relationship with one of the sergeants is marked as homoerotic. The platoon that Taylor joins is divided into two camps – the Heads and the Rednecks. Sergeant Barnes is leader of the Rednecks; he is heavily scarred, excessively macho. Leader of the Heads is Elias. Elias is depicted as sensitive, in comparison with Barnes; when a new recruit collapses on the trail, Elias carries his pack. He has a headband and wears his shirts with the sleeves ripped off, bare armed in a reflection of gay muscleman style. When Taylor first enters the Heads' camp Elias points a shotgun at him. "Put your mouth on this" he says, and blows smoke through the gun barrel into Taylor's mouth. Later he dances arm in arm with one of the men to "Tracks of my tears". Elias dies in slow motion, arms outstretched in crucifixion, soaring strings masking the sounds of battle. Shot by Barnes and left for dead, he is virtually dismembered by Vietcong gunfire. The 'feminine' he represented was a symbolic presence that could be accommodated on the battlefield, so long as it remained on the battlefield.

*Memphis Belle* is set during World War II and tells the story of an American B-17 bomber crew operating out of Cambridgeshire. The film begins with the group playing football at the base.
Their attractions are emphasised by a male voiceover listing their personal qualities by way of introduction. The voice is eventually identified as belonging to an Army public relations officer, who is intent on constructing the boys as heroes for propaganda purposes. Two of the boys are specially marked. Rascal, boyishly physical, is the only one playing without his shirt and the voiceover gives his bodily measurement as his physique is presented to view, "five foot, four inches, one hundred and twenty pounds". That this physicality is sexual is not left to implication, the voiceover continues, "with a reputation as a ladies' man." The qualifier "at least that's what he says" opening up the question of his sexuality to multiple readings. As these words are spoken Rascal is standing behind a player bent over the ball, swinging his hips in a campy mock-sexy movement. His stocky stature, baby face and curly hair mark him a boy; a physically attractive boy amongst other boys. The boys' physical desire for him is a motif through the film; he is constantly being wrestled, danced with, hugged or having his hair rumpled. If Rascal exemplifies the physical sexuality of the male collective, then Danny symbolises male love. He is revealed as a poet, romantic, sensitive, caring, an appropriate object of the love of the boys. At the dance the tailgunner, Clay, sings Danny Boy on stage, the other boys join in to directly address Danny with the final line, "Oh, Danny Boy, I love you". The scene is jokey in tone but it is reprised when Danny is hit by shrapnel. He seems to be dying, and the lives of the others are in jeopardy as they attempt to land their crippled plane. They begin to whistle Oh Danny Boy, but this time it is no joke. The price for this love is paid by the boy to whom Danny showed real tenderness, cleaning him up after he was ill, comforting him, and even giving him his four-leafed clover. The boy is a radio operator, and Danny listens to his screams as his plane plummets to the ground. The film contrasts the homosocial environment of the war with the heterosexual world outside. Danny has no brother, but four sisters. The only girl to feature in the film is approached by Rascal at the dance, and when she turns him down he dances with Danny. The homo/hetero split between the two worlds emphasising the impossibility of the masculine union outside the boundaries of war.
The struggle to maintain a hetero-male group is always problematic, as masculine identification with and of the feminine necessitates incorporation and/or exclusion. The buddy films assertively heterosexualise their homosocial heroes, combining exclusively male camaraderie, brutal violence and homophobic comedy in an hysterical performance of masculinity. The paradoxical combination of homoeroticism and homophobia recuperates a masculine identity from differences of race and class.

In Saigon Griff and Babe's relationship elaborates on mythic wartime camaraderie. Willem Dafoe and Gregory Hines offering lithe, muscular bodies that are racially complimentary, their bond is based on a physical response to a common threat. Griff and Babe are sergeants in the Joint Services Criminal Investigations Detachment, policing wartime Saigon. As they cruise the streets, the front seat of their car defines their relationship, locating them in close proximity to each other and separate from the world outside, interdependent and isolated. The car also contains their mutual erotic desire, a desire that is displaced by comedy – on one occasion they are sitting in the car talking about sex, Babe has a banana in his mouth while Griff fiddles with a bag of seeds and nuts in his lap.

Their pursuit of a serial killer who is murdering Vietnamese prostitutes is framed by the daily body counts of the war. The threat of death gendered by the linking of the prostitutes’ bodies and the feminised bodies of the Viet Cong; Colonel Armstrong abusing both equally. By displacing the most visible difference onto the Vietnamese, the film privileges the bonds between the two men, citing these bonds within gender. The film’s final moments overemphasise the sexual dynamic, in an orgy of spectacular penetration. Their car explodes, and Babe is arrested by Colonel Dix’s men, while Griff escapes, bloodied and bare-chested. He takes refuge in a nun’s apartment until Babe escapes. The two pledge their support for each other, find the proof that Colonel Dix is the serial killer and confront him as he is about to kill the nun. The partners' slow motion,
simultaneous shooting of Dix establishes a climax of male-male penetration. Saigon depicts extremes of obscenity and violence in its narrative of a crime war within a larger war. But if violence is the problem, then it is also presented as the only solution. Babe and Griff play out a male supremacist fantasy. The ending validates their rejection of explicit allegiance to any kind of social organisation apart from the male community. The two of them alone represent righteous power.

Although these dramas show the bonding of men from diverse and often antagonistic backgrounds, these bonds are always and already masculine. An established structure of gender difference maintains a framework within which other changes or differences can, apparently, be mitigated by the masculine bond. The masculine bond insists on a denial of difference. Differences in masculine style are deflected onto race and class confirming a 'normative' masculinity.

The exclusive male bonds of the 'buddy' film are essentially homosocial. In the absence of women, men are capable of loving other men but the love must be demonstrated in a way that does not violate social taboos against homosexuality. Homosocial relations may reflect homoerotic desires, but are explicitly distinguished from homosexuality, and are indeed often characterised by an intense homophobia (Sedgwick, 1985:1).

"An analysis of certain aspects of homophobia suggest how it becomes a key site not only for the conflation of anxieties about gender and sexuality, but for acting out fears of dissolution and deterritorialisation" (Byers, 1995:14).

In as much as identity is assured through the stabilising concept of gender, the 'incoherence' of homosexuality threatens a coherent masculine identity that was always already imaginary. The problem for the buddy film was to depict exclusive male to male relationships while at the same time effacing any suggestion of homosexuality. This was achieved through three primary strategies: the heroes undertook endless tests designed to demonstrate an unchallengeable heterosexual masculinity; women were used to enable a sharing of heterosexual experiences...
between men; and homosexuality was deflected through the representation of class and racial
otherness.

Buddy movies emphatically heterosexualise their homosocial heroes. The cool toughness of *Harley
Davidson and the Marlborough Man*, the masculine context of war in *Off Limits*, the (hetero)sexual
prowess jibes in *The Last Boy Scout*, the homophobic gags in *Hudson Hawke*, all work to efface the
homosexual character of the homosocial relationship. In addition *Off Limits*, *The Last Boy Scout*,
*48 Hours*, *Lethal Weapon*, and numerous other buddy films of the last decade deflect the intimacy
of homosexuality through a bonding of racial others, in which the inter-racial transgressiveness is
used to displace homosexual anxiety.

**White hero, black buddy**

Fiedler describes an archetypal relationship that recurs in American literature. In the
*Leatherstocking Tales*, *Moby Dick*, and *Huckleberry Finn*, "two lonely men, one dark-skinned, one
white, bend together over a carefully guarded fire in the virgin heart of the American wilderness"
(1966:182). In the interracial buddy films that proliferated during the eighties the archetypal
relationship continues, but is significantly rewritten. The frontier of the eighties is not the virgin
wilderness but the urban jungle, the relationship is forged at the junction of violent crime and
violent law enforcement. Fiedler described an "idyllic anti-marriage ... between a white refugee
from `civilisation' and a dark skinned `savage', both ... male". The black man possesses the skills
necessary for the white man's survival in the new world, it is through the black man that the white
male achieves ritual manhood (1982:15). In the eighties version of the narrative it is the white man
who is the `savage equipped for survival', the black man is excessively civilised, feminised,
emasculated. The pairing is depicted as a reluctant one, the two imposed upon each other by a
situation beyond either's control, and their initial response is mutual antagonism. The open
hostility however, gives way to grudging respect and evolves into love, violence being the catalyst for each progressive step in the relationship.

In a period of social tensions revolving around issues of race and gender, as Tasker suggests, "an aggressively active black hero seem[ed] to provoke altogether too much anxiety for Hollywood to deal with" (1993:40). The black man's fantasised hypersexuality was necessarily negated in films, where black characters performed a kind of servicing role, shoring up the patriarchal masculinity of their white 'buddy'. The eighties films draw on other long established stereotypes: the association of blackness with criminality; the willingness of the black man to sacrifice himself for his white associate; the black man's 'long suffering' passivity. Bogle describes how in narratives of "interracial male bonding, black men are a cross between toms and mammies: all-giving, all-knowing, self-sacrificing nurturers" (1991:276). For the black character to occupy such a role, in films such as 48 Hours, Badge of the Assassin, Running Scared, Saigon, Downtown, Die Hard and Lethal Weapon, amongst others, the character is overtly marked as castrated.

In some of these films the black man is physically damaged in some way, Joshua in A.W.O.L. has a deformed leg and walks with a pronounced limp, in Death Warrant Hawkins has a 'dead' eye, a classic signifier of the fear of castration (cf Freud, 1919). Yearwood designates the comic image as 'castrated' in that it is used to undermine notions of masculine power (1982:46-7), and in 48 Hours, Running Scared and Beverly Hills Cop, comedy undermines the 'heroic' status of the black character. In other films the narrative marks the black character as 'castrated' in terms of his inadequacy with firearms. In Shoot to Kill, Tom Berenger's character, John Knox, is a wilderness guide who has to lead Warren Stanton (Sydney Poitier) through the Cascades. Stanton is a citified FBI agent - he has packed electric foot warmers - who lost a hostage through his failure to "shoot to kill". Die Hard's Al Powell is a Los Angeles beat cop who holds down a desk job and comforts himself with confectionery; he has been unable to fire his weapon since accidentally killing a child.
In *Lethal Weapon* Detective Murtaugh's inadequate weapon is the source of a running gag in the film and its sequels. When Murtaugh shows Riggs his service revolver, Riggs responds, "A lot of old timers carry these". In the second film Murtaugh, embarrassed over his daughter's appearance in a condom commercial, orders her boyfriend out of the house. Riggs tells him to stay. "But Mr Murtaugh's got a gun", protests the boyfriend. "Yeah, but it's an old gun and he's not a very good shot" Riggs responds. In *Lethal Weapon 3* Murtaugh accidentally discharges his gun in the locker room, and Riggs covers for him by fabricating a psychotic rage.

The narratives make it clear that in the eighties it is the white man who is the 'savage'. *Lethal Weapon* opens with Murtaugh in the bathtub, most of his body obscured by bubbles, his wife and children burst into the room carrying a birthday cake in celebration of his fiftieth birthday. His daughter makes fun of the grey hairs in his beard. It is a picture of comfortable, mature, domesticity. The scene shifts to the beachside trailer that is Riggs makeshift home. He stumbles out of bed naked, a beer and a cigarette begin his day, the television keeps him company. The first part of the film establishes that Riggs is a lethal weapon, Murtaugh is not. Riggs is depicted urging a criminal holding him hostage to shoot, contemplating suicide as he holds a gun to his own head, and daring a ledge jumper, handcuffed to him, to take the plunge. Murtaugh is represented as focused on his impending retirement, his boat, his hobby room, his children and his wife's cooking.

*Death Warrant*'s black buddy is 'castrated' by an ambiguous sexuality. Priest controls the lower floor of the prison, an area where even the guards won't visit. The protagonist Burke's cellmate warns him that he should "cover his ass", "literally" when dealing with Priest, and Priest offers Burke (Claude Van Damme) one of his 'ladies' in a challenge that is part threat. Burke takes "a raincheck", and the prisoner is later killed for warning him of the danger. Priest also dies for Burke. For reasons not fully explained in the narrative, Priest decides to help him escape and in
doing so is killed by an axe to the stomach. The Sandman, wielder of the axe, is the film's excessively violent arch-villain.

Just as the Sandman functions as a kind of super-ego in respect to Burke, in several films the villain's extreme whiteness creates a link between the white hero and the villain. *Die Hard* features an albino sadist; *Lethal Weapon 2* has white supremacist South Africans as the villains; in *Saigon* the villain is the commanding officer. In the first *Lethal Weapon*, the drug cartel are former members of the crack Special Forces unit. Riggs was also in Special Forces during the Vietnam War and he and the ruthless Mr Joshua each have the same tattoo on their arms. The similarity between the white hero and the villains may arise from an attempt to find politically correct 'monsters', but the effect is to set up a three way tension between the villain and the two buddies, a tension that is erotically charged. The quasi-erotic climax of these relationships occurs in the physical fight scenes. Although the heroes have access to sophisticated weaponry, in all of the films the ultimate battle is hand to hand. McClane and Karl in *Die Hard*, Burke and the Sandman in *Death Warrant*, Riggs and Joshua in *Lethal Weapon*, fight it out, grunting, panting, flesh on bloodied flesh. Invariably the black buddy watches the hand to hand combat, a symbolically protective figure on the sidelines of the primary action; but in the process of watching has his 'virility' restored in his renewed ability to effectively use his weapon. Believing Karl dead, McClane leaves the building in *Die Hard*, where having previously only had radio contact with Powell, he meets his gaze across the forecourt. But Karl resurrects himself, emerging from the building with a machine gun aimed at McClane. He is shot five times in the chest, and the focus shifts from the close-up of a gun barrel to reveal that Powell has fired the climactic shots. Powell has been remasculinised by his friendship with McClane. Similarly Stanton in *Shoot to Kill* is empowered to do just that. In *Lethal Weapon*, after the fight between Riggs and Joshua, Riggs and Murtaugh embrace as the beaten Joshua is taken away by a uniformed cop. But he grabs the arresting officer's gun. With their arms still linked, the buddies fire simultaneously felling the
villain. A medium close-up fills the screen with Riggs and Murtaugh, their arms entwined, their guns smoking, in an orgasmic celebration of homosocial masculinity. The relationship between white hero and white villain is one of opposition and identity; a narcissism that is subverted by the black buddy once his virility has been restored by its erotic charge.

While explicit eroticism was unrepresentable in the buddy film, its homosocial relationships were not without erotic and romantic undertones. Many of the narratives follow a classic romance trajectory of two people who appear to be opposites, and who are initially antagonistic towards one another, but who discover their love. One such narrative is 48 Hours, the romance of a camp, black criminal and a macho, white cop.

48 Hours – partners, brothers, friends

48 Hours opens with a rural scene, horses galloping across gentle hills, long grass rippling in the wind, open spaces as far as the eye can see. The film ends in the dark alleys and neon lit streets of San Francisco's Chinatown. The frontier where men prove their masculinity and affirm the bonds of manhood has shifted from the wild west to the wilder cities.

With the help of former associate Billy Bear, Albert Ganz escapes from prison and heads for San Francisco, looking for the money that Reggie Hammond has stolen in a drug deal and secreted with the help of Luther, another former gang member. Reggie is still in jail for the gang's last robbery. Jack Cates answers a back up call from two detectives following up a stolen credit-card case. The detectives tell Cates that they don't need his gung-ho style of assistance and leave him to stake out the lobby. One detective is killed by Ganz, and the other, badly wounded, convinces Cates to surrender the gun to save his life. Ganz shoots the wounded detective with Cates' gun. When
another ex-gang member is found dead Cates arranges a forty-eight hour release for Hammond, who agrees to help track down Ganz knowing his nest egg is under threat.

Cates, the cop, and Hammond, the criminal, are established as two distinct male types. We first see Cates in extreme close up, his head on a pillow, asleep. After the alarm rings the shot cuts to the woman beside Cates who sits up and takes off a man's shirt. "If you let me come over to your place once in a while at least you could put on a clean shirt in the morning" she says, throwing him the shirt. He puts it on, "What makes you think I've got any clean shirts at my place?" He empties his hip flask into his coffee mug, runs his hands through his hair, and looking more tousled than when he woke up, utters a promise to call in a voice sanded by years of cigarettes and whisky, and heads off for a day on the job. We hear Hammond first, singing in falsetto voice "Roxanne, you don't have to put on the red light", he's young, black, smooth talking, sharp dressing. When Cates gets him released from jail Hammond walks out in a Giorgio Armani suit, crisp white shirt and tie. Cates reminds him that they are "after a killer not a bunch of hookers".

Before the two can form an intimate friendship women must be relegated to a minor place in their lives, from where they can't jeopardise the sustaining bonds of male friendship. It is immediately evident that Elaine does not understand Cates and the demands of his duty. Watching him pour a breakfast whisky she says, That's a fairly crummy way to start the day. " "What would you know?" he responds, "Maybe I've got a fairly crummy day ahead." It is also established early that her demands of him are unreasonable, "I make you feel good, you make me feel good - now what the hell more do you want from a guy?" Cates says. The rest of their relationship is played out over the phone, Elaine demanding, complaining, failing to understand.

The presence of women in the film is just sufficient to deflect homosexual anxieties, but not enough to threaten homosocial bonds. Reggie has been in prison for two and a half years, and he's looking
for 'some trim', not a meaningful relationship with a member of the opposite sex. He puts the hard word on every woman he sees and talks constantly about sex. Sex with women becomes something that the two men share. Cates muses "I should be at home with my girlfriend, giving her the high hard one." Hammond says "Tell me about her, has she got big titties?" At the end of the film Jack lets Reggie take a girl he has met in a bar to a hotel. "Have fun" says Jack. Says Reggie "I'm gonna have sex." Afterwards Jack says "Go on, tell me how good you were." Reggie answers "I'm not going in for all that macho shit, Jack - I was great. I should have my dick bronzed." The place that Candy occupies in Reggie's affections is unequivocal, when they say goodbye at the hotel door Reggie gives her a roll of banknotes, saying "here's a little something for you". She responds "I told you I wasn't a pro", but he insists "Take it, buy yourself something nice. I would, but I'm short of time." Women are necessary markers of heterosexuality, but just as necessarily outside the supportive world of male-male friendships.

The pairing of Cates and Hammond is necessitated by the hostility of the world that surrounds them. Ganz is portrayed as an exceptionally violent psychopath. Bear is depicted and described as an Indian, six foot four inches tall, of muscular build, but while he may physically be threatening, it is Ganz who does all the killing. Reading Ganz's file a detective describes him as "a real animal". But Ganz represents a broader social threat. Society is depicted as in decline, the forensic officer says "A lot of people are getting shot with 44s lately. Last year it was Saturday night specials, now it's the heavy stuff. People must be getting madder about something." The rest of the police force is inefficient or misguided, when the detectives are shot Cates says "They were good cops who fucked up, they just got careless, that's all." On two occasions when Cates has Ganz covered he is forced to drop his gun by uniformed police officers who misread the situation and allow Ganz to escape. At the railway station where Luther is to exchange the money for the girl Jack draws his gun and in edging closer to Ganz is seen by a cop who yells "You, put the gun down." Ganz shoots the cop, and he and Bear take the girl and board a train, Jack follows
them and has them covered in the last carriage when another officer orders Jack to freeze, and refuses to believe he is a cop. The train pulls out with Bear and Ganz and their hostage on board. Jack is seen as standing apart from the rest of the police force as he accepts information from Keogh, but works without a partner. His departmental superior calls him into his office after the police shooting, "You might be more of a team player and less of a hot dog on this one," he says. "Hot dog has been working just fine for me so far," Jack replies. Even Reggie is appalled at the inefficiency of the system. When they track down Luther he fires at Cates, and refuses all knowledge of Ganz's whereabouts. When Hammond later admits to the existence of the money Cates stakes out its hiding place, and Luther arrives to collect it. "That's a damn shame man," says Reggie, "The guy took a shot at a cop yesterday and today he's walking the street. The judicial system ain't worth shit." Where Fiedler found in classic American literature an archetypal pairing on men who faced the danger of the "virgin wilderness" (1966:182) in the eighties film its metaphorical counterpart is the corrupt, violent society and its inefficient law and order mechanisms.

The bonds between Jack and Reggie are forged in violence, through the violence of police and prison life, the pathological violence of Ganz, and literally through the violent fist fight between the two of them. Jack warns Reggie that he fights dirty, but Reggie is no adherent to the Marquise of Queensberry rules either. They are evenly matched, trading blows and acquiring cuts and bruises equally. The bonds between the two reach a quasi-sexual climax in the body to body contact, the physical fight substituting for the physicality of sexual union. The fight is broken up by two uniformed cops, Cates admits to them "I'm too tired to put my hands up". When Cates initially releases Hammond from prison, Reggie says "OK partner", Jack responds "We aren't partners, we aren't brothers, we aren't friends, and if Ganz gets away you'll be sorry we ever met." Reggie answers "I'm already sorry." After their fight Reggie tells Jack that Ganz is looking for the half-million dollars that Reggie stole in a drug deal. Reggie offers Cates half the money. "Right
partner" says Cates. Reggie replies, "We aren't partners, we aren't brothers, we aren't friends, and if Ganz gets away with my money you'll be sorry we ever met." "I'm already sorry" says Cates. The exchange suggests that their friendship is reciprocal and tidily symmetrical. Racial difference is elided in support of gendered solidarity.

The development of their friendship is depicted through a patterning of similarities and differences. The differences are primarily of race, class and style, and are depicted as appearance or modes of dress.

Reggie: "You got no class, Jack"
Jack: "Class isn't something you buy. Look at you you're wearing a $500 suit and you're still a low life."
Reggie: "Yeah, but I look good."

The similarities are depicted situationally, through a number of set pieces such as the repeated conversation. When Luther runs from Cates, Hammond slams the car door into him. Cates then slams Luther into the car door. Hammond takes the role of a cop in the country bar, Cates' is told by the prison official "You've a big career as a forger if you decide to go that way," and by Hammond "You're on the wrong side of the law and order business". The two sit together at an office desk when Jack is being dressed down by his superior. Their poses are mirror images, both have their arms folded, leaning forward, their heads inclined towards the other. As the white cop and black criminal are being reprimanded by a black Inspector, Reggie says "Don't you think you're being a little hard on him?"

Racial difference is foregrounded in the calculated excess of the three bar scenes. In the first, Reggie remembers that Billy Bear worked in a bar called Torchy's and takes Jack there. Cates warns Hammond that there could be trouble. The two begin to argue about what it takes to handle an antagonistic crowd, "a badge and a gun" or "attitude and experience". Reggie accepts a bet to get the information they need, using Jack's badge and the implication of a gun. The two walk into
the bar together and are framed in a medium-wide shot that shows the confederate flag on the wall, oil lamp style lighting, cow horns, and a sign saying "It takes a real man to be a cowboy". A band is playing a fiddle tune, a girl in dancing on the bar in white fringed chaps, bra top and cowboy hat, we cut from close-ups of the fiddler to medium close ups of the girl, and back to Jack and Reggie.

Reggie: "Not a very popular place with the brothers."
Jack: "My kind of place. I always liked country boys. They sure as hell don't like you."

The camera follows Reggie as he walks through the crowd to the bar, the cowboys stop to stare as he passes. Reggie's exchange with the barman is filmed in close-up, the two faces fill the frame in shot, reverse shot, with an occasional cut to Jack's (impassive) face.

Reggie: "How do! I'd like something to drink, preferably vodka."
Barman: "You'd better have a Black Russian."

Reggie laughs an exaggerated, high pitched laugh, slapping the bar with his hand.

Reggie: "Black Russian? You hear what he said? Black Russian! That's funny. I get it. I'm black. That's a funny joke, but I'd rather have plain old vodka."

The barman gives him a vodka in a shot glass.

Reggie: "That's nice. While we're all standing here talking nice and friendly, I'm looking for a good old boy by the name of Billy Bear. (He shows the badge with his thumb over Jack's photograph.) I wonder if you could help me find him?"
Barman: "Never heard of him."
Reggie: "Never heard of him? Never heard of Billy Bear?"

Reggie throws his glass at the bar mirror, smashing it. We get a wide shot of the crowd, the band has stopping playing, the crowd has turned towards the bar, they're silent. Cut to a close up of Cates, without any discernible expression. Hammond grabs the barman by the shirt and pulls him half-over the bar, "Fucking heard of him now?" he says. But getting no helpful information from the bartender, Reggie walks through the crowd who mill around in resentful silence, moving back when he passes to avoid physical contact.
Reggie: "Never seen such backwards assed country fucks in my whole life. It makes me sick just to be in here."

He walks up to a table, framed against the ceiling decorations as if from the seated cowboy's point of view.

Reggie: "You boys look like regulars. I'm looking for a guy named Billy Bear (shows badge), know where I can find him?"
Cowboy: "This is our place. I don't give a shit what the fuck your badge says, nigger."
Reggie: "You're a big tough country faggot, aren't you?"

The cowboy swings a punch, Reggie hits him twice, hard, and slams him up against a pole. A second cowboy makes a move towards him, Reggie grabs his arm and twists it up behind his back and pushes him, too, against the pole. The cowboys lean, hands on the pole, legs spread, Hammond frisks them, pocketing the gun and switchblade knife that he finds.

Reggie: "Hey listen up. I don't like white people. I hate rednecks. You people are rednecks, that means I'm enjoying this shit."
Cowboy: "What the hell kind of cop are you?"
Reggie: "You know what I am? I'm your worst fucking nightmare. I'm a nigger with a badge, that means I got permission to kick your fucking ass whenever I feel like it."

He turns and walks towards the barman, accuses one of the cowboys of being under age, the other of attacking a police officer, and suggesting the barman is on the way to being out of business, starts smashing the glasses piled on the bar. The barman capitulates and tells Reggie he doesn't know any more about Billy Bear than that his girlfriend lives in Chinatown, up the alley on top of a jewellery store. Reggie grabs the barman's hat and puts it on, he assumes a slow drawl.

Reggie: "Well look hoss, you start running a respectable business and I won't have to come in here and hassle you every night, you know what I mean? I want the rest of you cowboys to know something, there's a new sheriff in town."

There is a cut to a low angle shot of Reggie, hat tipped back on his head he exaggeratedly chews on a toothpick. He throws the hat back to the barman and switches to an over the top black pimp accent. "The name is Reggie Hammond. You all be cool. Right on." The crowd parts to form a corridor as he walks out of the bar.
At one level this scene is a set piece that allows Eddie Murphy to capitalise on the humour of the foul-mouthed, smart-talking character that he made famous on television's Saturday Night Live. But it functions in the narrative to underscore the racial difference between the two heroes, and at the same time to emphasise the similarities between the two. Jack fits into the bar scene, his appearance, dress, drinking habits, speech style, allow him to blend into the crowd, and the film demonstrates this with numerous wide shots where Jack is just a face in the crowd, and in the incident where he tackles a guy on parole who tries to run from the bar, "Some of us citizens are right behind you, Officer" he says. Reggie stands apart with his elegant suit, his vodka, and most obviously, his skin colour. But Reggie plays the role of cop as easily as Jack does, with a combination of brain and muscle he gets the information Jack is looking for. Different they may be, but it is a difference underscored by similarity, and is ultimately complimentary. Reggie's difference enables Jack's similarities to be read as masculinity.

The second bar scene occurs after the aborted exchange at the railway station, Jack chases Ganz and Bear and is thwarted by uniformed police, Reggie follows Luther and the money and tracks him to a hotel in the Fillmore district. He calls Jack from a bar across the road from the hotel. The bar is spacious, filled with light and colour, the band is The Busboys, they play four different songs intercut with Reggie waiting for Jack's return call, Jack driving to the bar, Reggie dancing with Candy. The crowd is all black, but are both male and female, they are shown dancing – one male with extroverted expertise – talking animatedly, or generally having fun, unlike the morosely silent crowd at Torchy's. Jack comes close to apologising to Reggie for the racist insults.

Jack: "Thanks for calling. You know, nigger, watermelon, I didn't mean that stuff. I was just doing my job, keeping you down."

Reggie: "Yeh well, doing your job don't explain everything."

Jack: "Yeh, you're right."

When Reggie leaves to take Candy to a hotel room, Jack steps up to the bar for a drink.

Barman: "You come here often, home?"

Jack: "Yeh, it's my favourite place."
Difference in this scene is depicted as an exotic ‘otherness’, the threat implicit in Torchy’s is absent here. The difference is less pronounced, Jack is wearing a jacket, Reggie’s tie is loosened and the dress style of the patrons is diverse. The visual emphasis of difference has been eroded. Only the barman marks Jack as racially different.

In the third bar scene the bartender is white, a black guy is playing the piano. The music and decor are not racially marked and the other patrons are not seen. The bus carrying Ganz and Bear, the now dead Luther, his girlfriend and the money, has eluded them. They have been dressed down by Jack’s superintendent, but more significantly they have failed. They need a drink. For most of the scene Jack and Reggies faces fill the frame, side by side, as they discuss their partnership. They have established a racially neutral territory, that of the masculine.

Although the racial difference subverts the homosocial nature of the bond, the characters exhibit an excessive heterosexual masculinity to efface any indicators of homosexuality. A number of motifs of masculinity are used to underwrite the heroes’ heterosexuality, especially cars, locations, sexualised language, and violence. Jack drives a pale blue Cadillac convertible, scratched, dented and partially patched. It’s a big car, an ostentatious car. Reggie asks "You buy this car from the brothers?" He drives fast, with constant screeching of tyres, and a series of minor accidents in his wake. Cates’s fellow officers continually comment on his car and his driving style, "How’s the car running?", "Nice paint job!", "What’d you run into now?". When Luther finally exchanges the money for his girlfriend aboard a stolen bus, Cates and Reggie drive along side ramming the bus and trading shots until Cates loses control and crashes the car through a shop window. Reggie has left his money hidden in his car, a 60s Porsche convertible, which has been in a parking station for nearly three years. He is appalled when Luther doesn’t immediately take it to a car wash, querying how he can drive it with so much dust on it. When Jack says he didn’t know that blacks went in for foreign jobs, Reggie responds that "Some white motherfucker took the last shitty sky blue
convertible." Much of the action, and most of the conversation takes place in the car, as the two follow up leads, track Ganz, or stakeout suspected meeting places. When Ganz has been shot and Jack is taking Reggie back to jail, he puts the briefcase of money back in Reggie’s trunk, telling him he doesn’t want any of it, it will be waiting for him when he gets out, at which time Reggie can buy him a car, a convertible. As well as the cars owned by the heroes, the emphasis on traffic, on trains and buses and crowded city streets, offers a masculinized imagery which connotes both potency and aggression.

Similarly the locations are repeatedly those associated with men and the masculine. Bars, police stations, jails, deserted pavements, dark alleys, and neon lit, late night city streets connote a tough, noir, masculinity. All these spaces exist within the broader location of San Francisco, which exists almost as a character within the film. The skyline is a reminder of Dirty Harry’s machismo. Cates’ girlfriend quotes from Escape from Alcatraz “The coldest winter I ever spent was the summer I spent in San Francisco” where the line was attributed to Mark Twain. San Francisco is depicted as a tough ‘mens’ town.

The relentless and excessive use of sexual references or sexualized language suggests an aggressive masculine sexuality, and a repressed homoeroticism.

Jack: "Well my ass bleeds for you."
Reggie: "Kiss my black ass goodbye."
Reggie: "They probably wouldn’t let your tight ass in."
Reggie: "Hey motherfucker!"
Jack: "You’ve been dickin me around."

The violence of 48 Hours is part of the films excessive display of machismo, designed to convince the audience that despite the exclusive bond between Jack and Reggie, they are firmly heterosexual. Physical violence is the mark of masculinity. Jack and Reggie punch, kick, wrestle and shoot their way through the film. Jack even fights another cop over an allegation that he ‘fucked up’. Reggie spends much of his time trying to acquire a gun, and eventually succeeds. Violence is inseparable
from the male bonding that occurs, it is their 'no-holds-barred' fight in the alley that convinces each of the others worth. When the two finally track down Ganz and Bear at the girlfriend's flat, Reggie shoots Bear as he advances towards him with a hunting knife, Ganz escapes through the window. Cates and Hammond track him through the back alleys of Chinatown. Ganz ambushes Hammond, and holding a gun at his head, calls Cates. In a reprise of the scene in the hotel at the beginning of the film Ganz orders Cates to drop his gun, or see his partner shot. In the first scene Algren sobs "Don't give him the gun, don't do that for me." Cates hands over the gun and Algren is shot. In the re-enactment Reggie says "Shoot the motherfucker!" Cates appears to drop his aim, but quickly fires, hitting Ganz in the arm and allowing Reggie to break free. Cates fires four more shots into Ganz's chest.

Jack and Reggie's male romance plays out a defensive bonding that negotiates the desires for masculine intimacy and the fears of a loss of masculine identity. The major challenges to masculine identity, the feminine and the homoerotic, are suppressed in a performance of friendship designed to demonstrate their machismo, to marginalise women except as markers of their heterosexuality, and to deflect homosexuality through racial otherness and erotic violence. The dual male heroes between them act out a stable, coherent masculine identity.
Chapter 9

NOSTALGIA FOR THE MASCULINE

Nostalgic revisions

Baudrillard (1994) suggests that "somewhere in the course of the eighties of the twentieth century, history took a turn in another direction ... a sliding back of events set in, an unfolding of inverted meaning". If, in the eighties, the present was unsatisfactory, and the future a threat, then the past addressed a void of hope. If the present struggled to sustain national myths of shared economic prosperity, the centrality of the family, and the cultural stability of gender norms; and the 'new bad future' abandoned a myth of progress in the face of social and environmental decay; then the past was elevated to a mythic 'Golden Age'.

Jameson saw in the nostalgia films of the period "the failure of the new, the imprisonment in the past" (1983:116), describing in Star Wars and Body Heat a reinvention of the feel and shape of the past, not a past as lived but "some indefinable nostalgic past, an eternal 30s say, beyond history" (1983:117). The 'failure of the new' was ultimately a failure of capitalist patriarchy, the 'retrospective melancholy' (Baudrillard, 1994) brought on by a crisis in masculinity. The 'new' social and political conservatism of the late seventies/early eighties reflected a hope that allegiance to old doctrines might somehow restore 'masculinity'; the quest elevated to the mythic in the cinema in a romantic reaffirmation of boys own adventure in a magical past.

The past recreated in the eighties cinema was not a lived, or remembered past. It was not a recreation of facts or historical details (although it was authenticated by objects and images of the past). The past of the cinema was the mythical past of a desired future, sidestepping the present.
In playing out normative masculine roles the eighties cinema enabled an allegorical expression of a collective yearning for a particular style of masculinity which was becoming increasingly difficult to live out in the present.

What Jameson (1989) describes as a "nostalgia for the present" took two dominant forms in the films of the period: the recreation of a `small town' lifestyle, and the rewriting of `aberrations' of personal and social history. The `small town' had little to do with any home town reality of life in fifties America, but was rather "a kind of distorted form of cognitive mapping" (Jameson, 1989:522) an unconscious retrojection of desires for an unremembered past, and an unable to be imagined future. Viewed from this perspective, "the future no longer exists" replaced in representations of the present by a "retro-curvature of a history" (Baudrillard, 1994). Stepping back from the present the eighties cinema retraced the footsteps of its history, erasing its own traces in the process. "To remake history proper – to whitewash all the monstrosities" (Baudrillard, 1994) in a reversion of history that offered a talisman for masculinity in the present. The recuperation of hegemonic masculinity involved, in the eighties cinema, a return to a prelapsarian past, or a reliving that rectified that past.

At a societal level nostalgia functions as a sanctuary from disappointment and frustration in the face of the loss of valued standards. Collective nostalgia acts to restore a belief in the superiority of traditional social arrangements and practices, while at the same time facilitating the adoption of new ways and beliefs. The "obsession with pseudohistory" marked "a culture trying desperately to rope off, sanction, and harden its myths into an intellectual iconography" (Graham, 1984:350). A masculinity that was in retreat from contemporary social realities, produced and consumed stories and images that offered an alternative history, promising a different future.
The nostalgia evidenced in the eighties cinema was never memory, or reminiscence, of a certain style of lived masculinity. "[S]ince our awareness of the past, our summoning of it, our very knowledge that it is past, can be nothing other than present experience," (Davis, 1979:9) nostalgia is necessarily of the present. Nostalgia is a response to a fear of change, either actual or impending, it represents concern over, or denial of, the future (Nawas & Platt 1965:55). The creation of a nostalgic past in the films of the eighties allowed a restoration, at least temporarily, "of a sense of sociohistoric continuity with respect to that which had verged on being rendered discontinuous" (Davis, 1979:104) – patriarchal masculinity.

A nostalgia for a normative version of masculinity that was naturalised by the body; proven through a reflexive masochism; demonstrated in an adventurous (hetero)sexuality; passed down from father to son; and celebrated through male-male friendships was played out in many films of the eighties. Comedies, dramas, and adventure films such as Back to the Future, Biloxi Blues and Raiders of the Lost Ark, all called upon a mythic masculine past in negotiating contemporary social anxieties. However films that had sport or war as a major narrative element were significant in the frequency with which the narrative reconstructed a small-town lifestyle, or re-wrote aberrations of personal or social history.

**Boys' games**

The 'Black Sox' scandal of 1919 tarnished forever the innocent image of baseball. The eight Chicago White Sox players who colluded with gamblers to fix the World Series drew a permanent line between the industry of baseball, and the sandlot game of America's childhood. No longer was baseball a simple game, "you hit a few, you catch a few", but part of a corrupt capitalist system where individual talent was subverted to the needs of big business. *Field of Dreams* is a retrospective fantasy that allows the sport of a mythic past to remake personal and cultural histories in a pseudo-reconciliation of generations, moralities and ideologies. *Field of Dreams* retreats into a
nostalgic, prelapsarian time where one man's personal vision can restore the father in various symbolic representations. Baseball is a metaphor for traditional masculine values, for a time when sons conformed to the practices of their fathers. The willingness of Ray Kinsella to pursue his personal vision enables an erasure of eighties conflicts in lived masculinities, conflicts arising out of rapid social change and the erosion of traditional values. Kinsella, former hippie, Berkeley dropout, estranged from his now dead father, has abandoned life in the fast lane to return to his mythical roots, an Iowa farm, where despite problems with the mortgage he is content to watch the corn grow. A disembodied voice tells him "if you build it, he will come", and Kinsella obeys the voice and his own inner promptings to plough under his corn crop and build a baseball diamond. Through this patently absurd action a variety of personal and social ills are magically righted. Shoeless Joe Jackson and the other Black Sox are declared innocent by association with cornfields, white clapboard farm houses and porch swings. Fictional writer Terence Mann is forgiven for sixties liberalism. Doc Graham plays again in the Major Leagues, and this time gets to bat. Daughter Karen's life is saved. Ray is reunited with his father and his financial problems are solved. Based on the novel Shoeless Joe, Field of Dreams foregrounds Ray's relationship with his father, in a way the novel did not. Ray's regret that the two never reconciled, and his nostalgic yearning for a boyhood not experienced, runs through the film as a leitmotif, turning the film into a man's story, in contrast with the book. The film begins with a photographic life story of John, Ray's father, as a voice over tells us that his mother died when he was three. As with many other films of the eighties, the mother's nurturing role is appropriated by the father. Richard, Ray's twin in Shoeless Joe, does not exist in the film. By removing half of Ray/Richard, the feminine/masculine, passive/active, light/dark, good/bad polarity is dismantled, leaving Ray an idealised masculine subject. Removing the mother from the narrative and downgrading the narrative agency of the wife, completes the conversion of the story to a father/son redemptive plot.
Many men in the eighties may have felt insecure in their masculinity, relatively powerless in the economic sphere, and vulnerable in the face of the changing social roles of women. However, in general, males continued to have an advantage over females in physical size and strength. The prevalence of media images that "equate masculinity with the qualities of size, strength and violence" worked to reinforce patriarchal power relations (Katz, 1995:138). In the face of pervasive cultural imagery linking masculinity to physical power, sport provided an opportunity to experience (if vicariously) that power. In the eighties cinema nostalgic sports films provided a narrative element that enabled the `natural' empowerment of the male hero, through the physical body.

In many films of the eighties sport was a mechanism of empowerment. In films such as *All the Right Moves, American Anthem, Breaking Away, Running Brave, Lucas, Split Decisions*, and *Best of the Best* excelling in sport is the narrative device that allows males to transcend familial conflict, working class life, personal tragedy, a 'nerdish' disposition, or being born on the wrong side of the tracks. In some of these films sport performs the function of re-masculinising those whose maleness has been threatened or has never had the opportunity to develop. The team in *Major League* is a bunch of losers and misfits, one of the recruits is actually dead. Their emasculation is symbolised by the fact that the new owner is a former showgirl. Rachel Phelps is depicted as an empty headed clothes horse, but she has the power to control the team with a series of curt commands. She describes the team as a "bunch of pansies". The only way that they can re-assert their masculinity and re-establish an `appropriate' power structure is to win the pennant. The link between their winning and her debasement is emphasised. A cardboard likeness of her is set up in the dressing room and with each win part of her clothing is removed. By the time they reach the playoffs the model wears only a g-string. As the men find performance and power on the baseball field, their personal lives are also transformed. In winning the pennant they become real men, in normative terms.
The *Rocky* series offers a fantasy of escaping a working class life through physical attributes and individual initiative. It is boxing that offers an alternative to menial low-paid jobs, and Rocky's success is measured in terms of accumulated possessions. Rocky's story is one of individual achievement, his success merely reinforcing the system of class oppression. In *Rocky IV* he is a hero of the middle classes, defending the rights of ostentatious consumers (Rocky's brother-in-law receives a Robot as a birthday present). Property ownership is confirmation of a battle fought and won: "We're the warriors, and without some war to fight, the warriors might as well be dead" Rocky expounds. Sport ensures that there will always be a 'war' to fight.

Chuck Norris translated the martial arts tradition of Bruce Lee into a series of films celebrating physical power as social power. In films such as *An Eye for an Eye* and *Code of Silence*, Norris played characters whose conservative law and order moralism was underscored by his martial arts ability, leaving him unbeaten in a world purged of socialised feminine traits such as empathy and attachment.

Discussing films of the decades prior to the eighties Sinyard (1982:15) says that "The primary characteristic of the fictional sports film is the connection made between sport and morality. The sporting hero must not only be seen to be capable of winning but deserving of success". This is not the case in the decade in which he is writing. In the sports films of the eighties it is still the hero who wins, but it is not usually his morality that marks him as heroic. In the eighties cinema the hero *needs* to win, rather than *deserves* to win.

Steph in *All the Right Moves* contributes to the loss of the crucial high school football game when he doesn't follow instructions. After the game he abuses the coach for making a wrong call and then gets caught up with a group of locals who trash and graffiti the coach's home. Steph does not face a moral dilemma and come through it a worthy winner. Steph is facing a life in a town where
the only employer is 'downsizing'. His father and brother have been laid off by Am Pipe and his only chance of being successful lies in a football scholarship. Where they have been emasculated by the loss of the breadwinner role, he has been re-masculinised through sport. Steph's girlfriend has no chance of leaving, her talent is music and, as the narrative stresses, music does not empower in the (masculine) way that sport does. When the depth of Steph's need is made known to the coach, he gets his full scholarship.

Films such as Everybody's All American, Chasing Dreams and Dead Solid Perfect used football, baseball and golf as narrative agents that reproduced and affirmed the democratic belief that the individual controls his destiny, so that success is available to all. A man's psychological imperative "to prove himself, to perform to achieve, to win," (Messner, 1985:40) meshed with the nostalgic world of sport, where the competition was tough, but the rules were clear. The 'sport' films of eighties Hollywood capitalised on this nostalgic revision, producing parables that comfortingly suggested that the singleminded pursuit of individual success would bring happiness.

One of the success fantasies of the eighties was The Natural, a screen version of Bernard Malamud's grim novel about one man's desperate, and ultimately doomed, pursuit of the American dream. The film version reverses the ending of the story and makes it into yet another parable about a USA that was a paradise where success was available to all; to the stars through a combination of talent and determination, and vicariously, to the fans. The final baseball sequence is liberally interspersed with reaction shots of boys in the stands all waiting to see Roy Hobbs succeed, for them. In case the audience does not comprehend the significance of the narrative resolution, the film's dialogue repeatedly emphasises its moral, Roy proclaiming, for example, "I've got to reach for the best that's in me". The Natural defines tragedy as potential unfulfilled, but the film version refuses to permit the tragic. Despite the obstacles, Hobbs triumphs at the end. Most of the obstacles that Hobbs must surmount suggest a misogynist cast to the narrative, echoing
many of the films of the period. First the film uses a deranged and dangerous femme fatale to end Roy's first bid for success by shooting him in the arm. Then at Roy's comeback a greedy, treacherous vamp almost succeeds in getting him to fix the big game. Iris is, however, the dream woman, understanding and supportive, she stays well in the background, sacrificing herself for his career, bringing up their child alone until Roy acknowledges "A father makes all the difference."

The importance of a paternal role model is a subtheme of this film, as with many others of the decade. The film begins with Roy playing ball with his dad, soft focus, slow motion, it ends with him playing ball with his son, both blond, smiling, in a golden shaft of light. We all know that if Iris had told Roy that he had a daughter he would have hit a single at best, not a home run. In the novel Roy says to Iris, his sometime girlfriend "My goddam life didn't turn out like I wanted it to."

She replies "Whose does". When Robert Redford delivers that line, Glenn Close, playing his long lost childhood sweetheart, says "Think of all those boys you've influenced. There are so many of them."

*Hoosiers* takes us back to rural Indiana in 1951, the camera following Norman Dale down the narrow country road to Hickory, a town "so small that it doesn't even appear on most state maps."

Dawn breaks over the fields of corn, a new day peacefully begins. Hickory signifies the sealed self-contentment of small town America. Most of the residents are small businessmen, owning a farm, a diner, a barber shop or seed store; self-reliant, independent, providing for their families. Dale was blacklisted as an NCAA coach for hitting one of his own players, a mistake that ten years in the navy could not erase. Hickory is a chance of redemption.

Religion as it is represented in *Hoosiers* supports a patriarchal social organisation. Religion, like basketball, is about fathers and sons. The minister's son, Strap, is on the team, and the minister says prayers in the locker room before each game. There is one church in town. Its use for town meetings and its connections with high school sport implies a religious unity and absence of
divergent, or deviant, beliefs. The universality of religious beliefs are underscored by the links drawn between religion and sport. When Dale first meets some of the local men at the barber shop the minister acknowledges the introduction saying that he knows Norm is a man with "high Christian morals who'll set a good example for the boys. Do you believe in – a zone defence or man to man?" A belief in traditional basketball strategy is equivalent to a belief in a traditional God. This is underscored in the game of the regional final when religious faith enables a Husker victory. Before coming into the game as a substitute, Strap pauses to kneel in prayer at the sideline. He quickly scores two goals, explaining "I felt the power of the Lord." Through a handclasp Strap passes this power to Ollie who shoots the free throws that win the game.

High school basketball is constructed as a world of fathers and sons. Jimmy was the team's star player. Without a father, the death of Dale's predecessor leaves him under the influence and control of his invalid mother and the school's assistant principal, Myra Fleenor. Myra tells Dale that she and Jimmy "have decided that it would be best for him not to play ball." Myra wants Jimmy to work hard and win an academic scholarships, seeing his talent as merely being able to give him "two or three years of glory, and what then?" "Most people would kill for that" responds Dale. The way Myra is presented in the film makes her point of view unattractive. With a postgraduate degree, a successful career and an independent lifestyle she could be seen as a 'modern' woman, an eighties threat to masculine harmony. Physically she is depicted as a frustrated spinster; drab clothes, severe hairstyle, controlled, prim speech and body movements. Contrasted with Dale's open friendliness, she is suspicious and reserved. She is resentful of her brothers, commenting on several occasions how the family revolved around their basketball activities, and how she, being a woman, had to return to Hickory to look after her mother. In taking on the role of Jimmy's mentor Myra disrupts the father son nexus. Her linear plans for Jimmy's future are set beside Dale's statement that his talent is his own, and the decision to play is therefore also his, leaving Jimmy with a choice between Myra's way and the independent (male)
course of action. Jimmy supports Dale at the town meeting declaring "I play only if coach stays". Myra is unable to take the place of the father, Jimmy and Dale go on to prove an indomitable combination. Much of what Myra says is a rational critique of the valorisation of physical achievement over other types of success, but the film refuses her logic, and she abandons it to accept woman's traditional place in team sports (cheering from the bleachers) in exchange for Dale's 'love'.

Until the state final, the all-white Huskers play only all-white teams. The only black face is a drummer in a high school band. The small town of fifties America is depicted as an ethnocentric white enclave. Although this has some basis in realism (integration in professional sport in America began cautiously in the fifties), it allows the state final to become a mythic contest of white versus black, as the all-white, wholesome, rural Huskers take on the urban, racially mixed South Bend Bears in the climactic game. As Richard Dyer points out, any instance of white representation is immediately something more specific, the representation of black people is first and foremost about blackness (1988:46). The athletes on the opposing team narrativise what Di Piero calls the "struggle to remain white" (1992:124), as the Huskers identity is construed through what they are not. The 'white boys' of Hickory are engaged in a battle, for victory, for masculinity, against women, ethnic minorities, and changing social conditions. Aberrant readings of the game's significance are deflected by the minister's pre-game prayer, where he quotes the story of David and Goliath, identifying the Bears with "the philistine". The 'philistine' reference, with its connotations of barbarians, emphasises that the final game is a conflict between the 'real America' normalcy of the fifties small town, and the menace of 'progressive' social policy embodied in the city.

_Hoosiers_ creates a nostalgic world where Americans were unified by a common set of values, women were passive supporters of the active man's quest for success, a belief in white domination
was largely unchallenged, and 'alternative' masculinities unknown, or at least unacknowledged. In an eighties where race, class and gender issues increasingly problematised traditional masculinity, *Hoosiers* presented the fifties as the desired past of a specific future, a future in which an hegemonic masculinity might be comfortably lived out.

**Working class heroes**

At the beginning of the eighties, Hollywood exhibited a significant nostalgia for the working class, producing a significant body of films focused on the lives of working class males, predominantly white 'ethnic' men, in varied explorations of masculinity and male anxieties. In films such as *Blue Collar*, *Bloodbrothers*, *Breaking Away*, *F.I.S.T.*, *Paradise Alley* and the *Rocky* series, blue-collar workers were used as a metaphor for the conflicting possibilities of masculinity. In these films normative masculinity was assigned to the working class; violence, machismo, male bonding, and patriarchal family structure. White collar or middle class masculinity was defined either as maturity, a regrettable but necessary 'growing up', or as a modern way of life occasionally attractive but ultimately suspect. The focus was on the working class but the anxieties and desires were middle class ones, metaphorically transposed, "the blue-collar world had replaced the Old West as the mythical homeland of masculinity." (Biskind & Ehrenreich, 1980:115).

*Bloodbrothers* is the story of a Catholic Irish American family in the Bronx, or at least the story of the son of family, Stony, as he tries to decide whether to join his father and uncle as construction worker or follow his real interest, as a children's recreation assistant in a hospital. The masculine alternatives are clearly defined, and against a background of vibrant machismo, Stony explores these choices. The attractions of the blue-collar world are valid; bar room camaraderie, the bonds between father and son, the pleasures of a job well done, the security of a patriarchal rule of the family. The appeal of the world of white-collar service is harder to understand – at least for Stony's father. "A recreation assistant? That's woman's work," Tommy tells his son. The film
fails to resolve the basic conflict. Stony leaves and takes his younger brother with him, but it is the excessive violence of his father and his mother's crippling hysteria that force his flight. The breakdown of the family has made traditional masculinity impossible, but not undesirable. When Stony goes to work with his father for the first time the score climbs to a crescendo as the camera pans up the imposing frame of the building. There is no narrative reason for this visual and aural climax. It is a spectacular celebration of a type of masculinity that had become almost impossible to live.

The father/son plot is a common feature of these films. The father lives a blue-collar lifestyle and the son aspires to something 'different' if not necessarily better. In The Flamingo Kid, Harry and Son and Over the Top class conflict is also displaced onto a conflict between styles of masculinity, the old and the new. Blue-collar masculinity, the father's way, is seen as fraught with difficulty, but still as perhaps the ideal way. Most of these films assign any blame to a society which has changed in a way that makes normative masculinity problematic.

Matt Dillon's character in The Flamingo Kid is taken out of his rundown Brooklyn neighbourhood to make up a group for a card game at the luxury El Flamingo Beach Club. He ends up getting a job parking cars, a promotion to 'cabana boy', and the attention of an attractive blonde UCLA student. The film is essentially about the critical choices facing a boy on the verge of manhood and the choices offered are different styles of masculinity exemplified by the boy's working class, but good hearted and sincere, father, and the girl's uncle, a sharp talking, fancy dealing, sports car salesman. The film idealises working class masculinity, and suggests alternatives are choices against family and community.

In Over the Top Link Hawk, a down on his luck trucker, has lost touch with his son. The boy's maternal grandfather enrolled him in a military academy, where he is being groomed to follow in
grandfather's footsteps. Hawk, played by Stallone, appears to collect his son when he graduates, proposing a getting-to-know-you truck ride across America. At truck stops along the way Hawk introduces Michael to working class masculinity in the form of arm wrestling, and by the climactic Las Vegas championship has transformed his son into a regular guy.

In comparison with white middle-class male lives the cinematic version of blue-collar workers seemed to possess that which was lost in the social and economic changes of the seventies; independence from corporate control, power over women, the friendship of men, and value attached to physical strength and skill. But the working-class male of the eighties cinema occupied a world whose time has past, a period before computerisation downgraded blue-collar skills, before women demanded equal place in the workforce, before multinational corporations rendered insignificant the efforts of individuals. However appealing the glamorised working-class lifestyle appeared, eventually middle class sensibilities and eighties greed provided a new model of masculinity.

A group of 'coming-of-age-in-business' films during the eighties validated ambition and economic status as markers of masculinity. Night Shift, Risky Business and Doctor Detroit all featured prostitution as a wealth enhancement venture. Various night workers at the city morgue, a recent high school graduate, and a wimpy college professor become involved in running brothels, business ventures that invariably bring them the excitement, cash and male validation that was previously missing from their lives. Tom Cruise's character in Risky Business was named a Future Enterpriser in one of his high school's more blatantly greed-oriented programs, and his foray into prostitution not only brings significant financial rewards, but ensures his entry to Princeton.

The pursuit of wealth is not a theme restricted to the eighties cinema, but in these films the corporate world is presented as a new frontier in which contemporary Natty Bumpo's must
successfully forge their way. *The Secret of My Success* features Michael J. Fox as Brantley Foster, fresh off the bus from Kansas, looking for a penthouse with a jacuzzi, a beautiful girlfriend and a private jet. When the only job he can get is in the mailroom, he sets himself up in an empty office and masquerades as an executive. In a world where appearances mean everything, his role playing soon brings him within sight of his economic goals.

In *Cocktail* Tom Cruise plays Brian Flanagan, a young ex-serviceman who dreams of becoming a millionaire. Brian Brown is Doug, the hard bitten veteran who has made it his own way. Following Doug’s advice, Brian drops out of school, becomes a full time bartender and waits for his big break. Brian is depicted throughout the film as a cynical, success-oriented 80s materialist who only wants to meet a rich woman and own his own bar. But when he has his moment of redemption and chooses love over money, his waitress girlfriend turns out to have a very rich daddy. The film ends with Brian the owner/operator of a slick singles bar in Manhattan, and we are left with the impression that Doug’s advice turned out to be sound, and Brian’s materialism has been rewarded.

The world of the corporate raider features in *Wall Street*, another film of the eighties where calculated ambition and obsessive drive are the necessary characteristics for success. Reaching for the top is not a new theme in the cinema, but in earlier decades there was invariably a strong association between virtue and financial success. In films such as *Executive Suite* and *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* in the fifties, it was the good and the worthy who rose to the top. But in the business films of the eighties the heroes are not only overambitious but usually deceitful and dishonest in their pursuit of success. The deceit is accepted as a necessary strategy in the early stages of a career, essential in the attainment of economic goals. Economic status is similarly presented as an obvious aim. In *Wall Street* the story of Gordon Gekko serves as a version of the American Dream in the Reagan-Bush era of financial adventurism. Bud Fox is impatient for
monetary success and enslaves himself to Gekko, only briefly raising issues such as the work ethic, and the illegality of insider trading. Fox is torn between two opposing father figures. Gekko is the embodiment of eighties patriarchy, endowed with signifiers of late capitalist power; money, knowledge, vision. Carl Fox, Bud’s father, is an airline machinist who believes in the old way good craftsmanship, an honest day’s work, a moral family life and the friendship of men. Carl says to his son "At least I don’t measure a man’s success by the size of his wallet." But the film reminds us that the world in which Bud is struggling to make his way is not the world that his father knew. The knowledge and capital that mean power are shown to be irresistible, and Carl’s advice does not mesh with Bud’s experience. Bud’s dream of economic power is merely an exaggerated version of the promise of consumerism. And although Gekko may be forced to serve a prison term, the film still supports his assumption that everyone would break the rules if they only had the knowhow, and the balls, to try.

Other People’s Money is Wall Street played for laughs. Had it been a Capra comedy of the thirties the wicked capitalist would have been defeated by the small-town folks with their belief in the value of honest labour. But Danny de Vito’s Garfield wins in an affirmation of the attractiveness of greed. As he puts it, "Whoever has the most when he dies, wins."

The anxieties surrounding masculine identity under late capitalism were deflected in nostalgic tales that valorised a 'simple' working class life or that re-wrote eighties corporate capitalism as a parable of success of the ordinary man. The re-living of the past, or its re-writing, worked to enable a belief in a future that would support traditional social arrangements and hegemonic masculine roles. Nowhere was this more evident than in the 'war' films of the period.

Regeneration through war
The increased number of filmic depictions of combat and the soldier hero in the eighties, reflected an increase in nationalistic fervour and supported a commonsense acceptance of militarism as a solution to political and economic crises, but as Jeffords describes, the eighties narratives of war were primarily "a forum for the reaffirmation and reconstitution of the masculine in the modern polis" (1989:62). Films drawing on the Vietnam war or other conflicts, such as Grenada, for their characters and narratives functioned as a mechanism of 'remasculinisation', regenerating and legitimising a construction of masculinity challenged by social and economic change. The war film was, perhaps, the ultimate revisionist masculine text with its dominant themes of the exclusion of the feminine, initiation into manhood, and bonding through violence.

These films fuse a number of mythological archetypes in presenting narratives of individual heroism that allow for a 'coming-to-manhood' through masculinising quests or trials. The soldier is rarely depicted as an adult, but as a boy whose war experiences grant him the right to call himself a man. The threat is usually represented as a symbolic castration, a wounding to the head or the loss of limbs. Survival is linked to maturation and the acquisition of knowledge, and often involves the death or killing of a symbolic father. In Hanoi Hilton, Hamburger Hill, Full Metal Jacket, Bat 21, Born on the 4th July, Rambo: First Blood Part 2, and Casualties of War the hero is subjected to a masochistic scenario which motivates his regeneration into an heroic, masculine subject. These films are eighties versions of "regeneration through violence" narratives, where the hero embarks on a quest that takes him, figuratively or literally, back in time into a primitive world and downward into his own consciousness, until the basic or primitive core of the psyche is revealed" (Slotkin, 1973:308). What is depicted in these films is a masculine essence that cannot be separated from physical violence.

In Platoon Chris Taylor, the hero and narrator, is an immature, bookish college-boy who volunteers so that he can experience for himself "the war of [his] generation". Chris is
dramatically separated from his middle-class existence, being reborn from the womb of a transport plane into a world of filth and violence. The soldiers sleep in the mud, pluck leeches from their skin, and press their vital organs back into gaping wounds. A soldier cuts an ear from a corpse as a souvenir, another shoots a village woman when her crying irritates him. Their lieutenant directs a bomber attack on their own position decimating their platoon. This is the ‘heart of darkness’ through which Taylor must pass. His regeneration is structured through four combat patrols, each one taking him deeper into the literal and symbolic jungle. On the first, Elias empties the rookie’s backpack of superfluous gear; several books symbolising the accoutrements of civilisation which would impede his progress towards visceral manhood. The final stage of the regenerative process is marked by Chris’ killing of Sergeant Barnes, avenging Elias shooting by Barnes in the midst of the cathartic slaughter of the Platoon. In repeating Barnes action, Taylor has become Barnes, a culmination of the quest where the hero recognises and identifies with the father. Taylor flies home, transformed into a man, a hero able to take on the role of the father. In his voiceover he commits himself to passing on what he has learned.

_Apocalypse Now_ also adheres to the form of a metaphoric quest narrative, as Willard’s journey up river echoes a psychic journey to a point of identification with Kurt’s power and violence, and a ritualistic journey from boyhood to manhood. John Rambo undergoes a transformation through violence in another version of the quest narrative. His pack is entangled as he leaps from the plane, so he lands on the jungle floor having literally cut all connections with civilisation. Rambo’s initiation through blood is magnified by extreme close-up, stereo sound, vivid colours and choreographed action. Rambo dangling in a pool of leech infested muck, writhing on an electric rack, having his face carved with his own knife: his suffering is offered as a coming of reason; an alibi for the violence he perpetrates; and a demonstration of his superior masculinity.
The films demonstrate the generative potency of violence as the war becomes an individual and
gendered 'coming of age'. The determining aggression of masculinity is acknowledged, brought to
the surface and cathartically deployed. Masculine identity is reconstituted through the heroic
endurance of pain and the final sacrifice of a designated other.

Technology was one of the key defining features of the Vietnam film. The technology of the war
and the technology of the cinema, combined in a spectacle that transformed the history of military
conflict into a myth of masculine regeneration. *Missing in Action*’s Colonel Braddock attempts to
rescue a group of POWs as they are being transferred to a new camp. His high speed raft is hit by
Vietnamese bazooka fire and explodes in flames, throwing Braddock into the water. His death is
assumed, and the guards laughingly congratulate each other. But Braddock rises from the water,
slow motion cinematography capturing an aura of water droplets against a fiery backdrop. The
music reaches a crescendo as Braddock’s stuttering M-16 dispatches the Vietnamese, freeing the
POWs in a display of righteously employed technology.

In *Apocalypse Now* a dozen helicopters rise over the horizon in an assault on a Vietnamese village;
a spectacular re-interpretation of the four horsemen. A sudden cut then transfers the spectator to
the position of participant, riding beside the gunner in the chopper. The vertiginous movement, the
overwhelming music, and the disorienting cuts between images of the ground below and closeups
of the chopper crew, produce a vision of war as spectacle, "a world of foreground" (Polan,
1989:60). The background of historical experience disappears behind a cinematic wall of elaborate
stunts, special effects and surround sound. Helicopters became a defining motif of the cinematic
Vietnam War, the synthesised chopper sounds of the opening of *Apocalypse Now* framing a version
of the conflict that became more firmly established in the public imaginary than historical accounts.
On the screen helicopters, motor cycles, trucks and motor boats provide evidence of technological
superiority and therefore superior power.
But the reliance on technology emphasised, rather than supplanted, the body as a marker of masculinity. A narcissistic display of the male body saw the glistening hypermuscles of Rambo and Colonel Braddock redress a perceived loss of social power through a literal embodiment of personal power. The scenario of military life validated a display of the male body, and in films from *Good Morning Vietnam* to *Hamburger Hill* and *Platoon* the action unfolds against a background of semi-naked males, lying in the sun, playing ball, trudging through streams, or propped up on stretchers. The male body as a weapon functioned as a defence against anxieties in the face of threats to a stable masculine identity from technological development, economic downturns, and social upheaval. And the male body on display naturalised and therefore legitimised a violent, self contained, white masculinity.

A significant number of films dealing with the Vietnam conflict were produced during the eighties, but the depiction of the War as an historical or political event was not the primary purpose of these films. The Vietnam War offered a performance space for the reconstitution of a patriarchal male hero. Restoring an image of masculinity in a conservative response to changing social conditions, the war films of the period allowed a (re)enactment of mythological archetypes from the collective unconscious, Natty Bumpo in Vietnam. The appropriation of the markers of history simply masks attempts to re-establish a traditional version of masculinity through the narrative reconstitution of the heroic male subject within a postmodern frontier. A necessary element in this attempt is the revision of women's supporting function in war.

Jeffords describes how the Vietnam War films depict primarily a battle between masculine and feminine; a gendered opposition in which a "reaffirmed and confident masculinity" is posed against a threatening "enemy feminine" (Jeffords, 1989:171). In the terms of these films the survival of masculinity is threatened only by a castrating femininity.
In *Full Metal Jacket* the first glimpse of Vietnam is a leather-skirted prostitute. Two further scenes involving prostitutes set the stage for the confrontation with a sniper, who turns out to be female. In the first scene a Vietnamese woman approaches Joker and Rafter Man in Da Nang, her appearance and her words, "Me so horny", marking her as a prostitute. While they are haggling over the price, Rafter Man's camera is stolen. Sexuality and treachery are linked and bonded to the feminine. In the second episode a Vietnamese soldier offers "his sister" to the squad, but she refuses to "boom-boom with soul brother" because she thinks Eightball is "to beaucoup". When the black soldier shows her his penis, she changes her mind, denying sexual difference between males and eliding racial difference in the face of gendered otherness. All of the women in the film are stereotyped as whores. This characterisation is extended to the sniper when an Hispanic soldier says over her dead body "No more boom-boom for this baby-san". The repeated words characterise her, not as an enemy soldier but as a woman and a prostitute. Most of the deaths in the film are at the hands of the sniper, portrayed not as a member of an opposition force, but as a single woman deliberately and determinedly attempting to destroy the masculine collective. In the final confrontation the sniper is wounded, and begs Joker to shoot her, absolving the masculine of violence against the feminine while reinforcing the notion of the conflict as a gendered opposition in which the feminine is at fault.

*Born on the 4th July* lays the blame for Kovic's literal and metaphorical castration firmly with his mother. She is depicted as sexually repressed - "Don't say 'penis' in this house" is her screamed response to his struggle to come to terms with his impotence. The masculinist and militarist fantasies that sent him to war are hers. Her overevaluation of masculinity commits him to excel and then labels him failure.

In the 'missing in action' films women are absent, or removed, from the narrative. The MIAs represent a major fear within masculinity; they have been 'feminised', reduced to passivity by
physical punishment and sexual humiliation. The narrative of Rambo progresses through a series of oscillations between sadistic and masochistic positions, where both positions are marked as masculine. The woman's position is suppressed, she enables the remasculinisation of the hero, then is removed from the narrative before she can complicate the masculine subject position. Co Bao is the Vietnamese guide who leads Rambo to the prison camp; she poses as a prostitute to facilitate his escape. When she asks him to take her back to America, he agrees and kisses her and she is immediately shot down. Rambo's kiss is fatal, any bond with a woman negating an ethos of masculine production where all positions are occupied by the masculine. "Masculinist production depend[s] upon the prior cannibalisation of women, and the emulation of female qualities" (Sofia, 1984:47). Rambo subsumes the (erased) feminine, placing Co Bao's jade charm around his own neck.

_Casualties of War_ depicts the brutal abduction, rape and murder of a young Vietnamese girl, a scene reprised in various forms in other Vietnam films. As Daly observes "the secret bond that binds warriors together ... is the violation of women" (1978:357), and the insistent sexualisation of women in the Vietnam war films legitimates that violation in the service of upholding the masculine collective. In _Casualties of War_ the girl is raped, but Private Eriksson is depicted as the casualty, caught between conflicting fear and desire. The ambivalence is reinforced by the framing of the rape scene in long shot, blurred by rain, over the shoulder of Eriksson who faces the camera in close-up.

In the war films of the eighties the feminine is used to provide an audience for a performance of the masculine, an 'other' that is used to label the enemy, to account for failure, or to validate masculine bonds. The films of the eighties spectacularly depicted the reconstitution of an heroic male subject, and a prerequisite for this 'remasculinisation' was the devaluation, abuse, or exclusion of the feminine.
Gibson (1989:90) describes the defeat in Vietnam as creating "a cultural crisis among the American people" but Selig (1993:2) suggests that the "cultural crisis" is only a "crisis among the American people" insofar as America and its culture are read in masculine terms. While the loss of the Vietnam War was a crisis of 'Americanness' and a disruption of American identity, it was a crisis of masculinity as much as of nationalism. As Jeffords (1989) outlines, a number of characteristics of the fictionalised conflict make it an ideal space for a reconstitutive performance of the masculine; it is a stage occupied almost exclusively by male characters, it is an arena that necessitates and therefore legitimates violence, and, through a mythology of masculine bonding in wartime, unites all men as victims of social change. "History is what hurts," Jameson says, "It is what refuses desire and set inexorable limits to individual as well as collective praxis" (1981:102). The re-writing of personal and social history in the narratives of the eighties opened up the possibility of restoring traditional patterns of normative masculinity, increasing the possibility of "getting to win, this time".

**Uncommon Valor — getting to win**

In *No More Vietnams* Richard Nixon recuperates Vietnam as a military victory, "On January 27, 1973, when secretary of State William Rogers signed the Paris peace agreements, we had won the war in Vietnam. We had attained the one political goal for which we had fought the war: the South Vietnamese people would have the right to determine their own political future." (1985:97) The importance of winning had necessitated a reversal of history, an amalgamation of fact and fiction. As Nixon went on to say "Win must be properly defined" (1985:225). *Uncommon Valor* presents winning as a victory of masculine strength and comradeship. Through the reaffirmation of a masculine performance ethic that excludes the feminine, and the portrayal of masculinity as a 'victim' of bureaucratic government, the film provides a space for a redefinition of winning that reasserts a patriarchal version of masculinity. *Uncommon Valor* is the story of a group of Vietnam
veterans, recruited by an ex-Marine colonel and funded by a prominent businessman, who go back to South East Asia in 1983 to rescue the buddy they had to leave behind, Colonel Rhodes’ son.

The film begins with a flashback, identified as such by the slow motion, soft focus cinematography as well as the superimposed title, "Vietnam 1972". The opening shot is a rice field, saturated colour and classic composition emphasising the picture postcard landscape. As a helicopter rises through the background mists, soldiers run into the foreground firing back towards the camera. Close ups of faces, and a soundtrack that combines battle sounds, oriental instruments and the impending disaster notes of multiple cellos, creates a tension that underscores meanings of confusion and traumatic loss. Point of view changes to the helicopter, the camera looking towards the approaching soldiers as the enemy bombardment becomes increasingly accurate. A soldier falls, wounded in the leg, but another stops to pick him up and struggles on towards the chopper impeded by his voluntary burden. The soldiers in the helicopter watch in anguish, "C'mon Frank" they shout. A second helicopter explodes in flames. The scene’s last shot is from inside the helicopter as it takes off. Frank and the wounded soldier lie at the edge of the rice field, Frank’s arm stretched out towards his comrades in the chopper. They quickly become part of the landscape, Vietcong troops advancing in the background.

This opening scene establishes not only the background information that explains the narrative of the film but sets up the parameters through which the narrative will develop: the primacy of male to male relationships, the notion of the masculine victim, the ethos of masculinity tested through violence and the rightness of war properly fought. These parameters are explicitly stated later in the film.

In a speech to them at the beginning of their training camp, Colonel Rhodes tells the former members of his son’s unit that:
"There's a bond between you men, as strong as the bond between my son and me. Course there is no bond as strong as that shared by men who have faced death in battle. You men seem to have a strong sense of loyalty because you're thought of as criminals because of Vietnam you know why? Because you lost. In this country that's like going bankrupt ... you cost too much and you didn't turn a profit. That's why they won't go over there and pick up our buddies and bring them home. Because there's no gain in it. You and I know that the books are still in the red. And the politicians know too. The same politicians that never lost a single son in Vietnam, not one. Now they say they've been negotiating for ten years. Well, the other side's not buying. Gentlemen, we're the only hope those POWs have. So we're going back there. And this time, this time, nobody can dispute the rightness of what we're doing."

The wives in the film serve to validate Rhodes opinions, Helen Rhodes, Mrs Wilkes, and Charts' wife each underscoring one aspect of his speech; the bond between men, the devaluation of the veteran, and the economic rationalisation of the defeat.

As the sound of the helicopters from scene one fade out they are replaced by the voice of a reporter covering the homecoming of prisoners of war from Vietnam. The visual image is of a telegram, the camera zooms in on phrases "Colonel and Mrs Rhodes ... Frank Rhodes ... missing in action."

As the reporter speaks of the 2,500 men still listed as missing in action the image cuts to a display stand, panning in extreme close up over photographs of a young man in military uniform – the young man who was left behind while trying to save his buddy. The camera tracks across military medals, tiny American flags, and baseball photographs; a shrine to American masculinity. Rhodes is watching the television broadcast, tightlipped, obviously emotional. Helen walks into the room, and stands behind the sofa handing him what looks like a straight scotch. The scene establishes that the important relationship here is the father-son bond, it focuses exclusively on the point of view of the male parent. This emphasis is intensified in the next scene where Rhodes dreams of a time when Frank came to his room in the night, frightened by a thunderstorm. Rhodes reaches out his hand to the boy, who places his tiny hand in his father's. The boy's image disappears as Rhodes wakes. He clenches his fist and sobs in anguish. Helen sleeps soundly, undisturbed by her own
dreams or her husband's distress. Not only is she depicted as being unable to participate in the bond, but of being unaware of its existence.

Mrs Wilkes tries to prevent her husband joining the mission, telling Rhodes that "It's taken me ten years to get that goddam war out of his head." Rhodes looks around at Wilkes' twisted metal sculptures and responds, "Looks to me like it's still in his head pretty strong." Later he tells Wilkes that the ghosts never go away, but they eventually become friends. Forgetting is clearly a feminine response.

Charts' wife is dressed to go out, early enough to catch 'happy hour' at the local bar. She asks him to come too, demonstrating a lack of understanding that causes Rhodes to raise his eyebrows in sympathy. Revealing baby pink dress, blond curls, red mouth and stilettos mark her as aggressively sexual; her 'castration' of Charts indicated by his symbolic blindness. "You know he hasn't taken those sunglasses off in six years" she tells Rhodes. He removes them as soon as she goes. Before she leaves the house she declares "You know, maybe you should take him back to Vietnam. He sure doesn't give a damn about anything around here." She pauses only long enough to ask "If he did go, how much would he be paid?"

The only other woman with a significant role in the film, Lai Fun, functions to indicate the restoration of Charts', and symbolically 'men's', masculinity. The drug dealer who arranges a weapon sale for them volunteers to act as their guide. "Unfortunately I have no sons to offer you ..." he says "however, I'm sure my daughters will prove themselves worthy." One daughter is killed in their first encounter with border guards. Lai Fun continues on, the only female in the group. She wears a muslin dress, covered from head to toe, only her face revealed. The sexual dimension between her and Charts is simultaneously emphasised and subverted, contained in three moments. The first is an exchange of glances, held for a significant instant before she attends to
the donkey. In the second Chart crawls in beside her as they sleep on a hill side. She draws a knife and holds it at his throat, but he reassures her "I'm just trying to keep warm, honest." She puts the knife away and he nestles against her. Their final contact comes when she is playing a full role in the battle to take the helicopters, wrestling with an enemy soldier. Charts kills the soldier and helps her up. They run to separate choppers and as they take off Charts nods towards her in an apparent gesture of approval and farewell. Her recuperation of the feminine as non-threatening supporter of the masculine enables the final scene where Helen greets Rhodes as he restores the POWs to their families to be read as a happy ending for him, despite Frank's death.

The film makes it clear that the real villains are a government bureaucracy, and a society that failed to appreciate the heroism of its men. The inability of the government to appropriately respond to the defeat that is depicted in the early scenes has later developed into actively impeding the response of Rhodes and his team. Bureaucrats attempt to dissuade them from the mission; the CIA wiretap their conversations, photograph their activities and confiscate their weapons; and a senator suggests to McGregor that if he continues to finance the operation "they're prepared to take serious measures against your company" including IRS audits and anti-trust suits. All levels of government are depicted as collaborating in the denial and the repression. However, individual men within the system prove their loyalty to the male/war bond, giving Rhodes the name of a contact and providing aerial photographs of a POW camp. The government are also aligned within the film with a technology that is used to control stacks of tape recorders, banks of computers, cameras with excessively long lenses. The groups use of the technology of combat is comparatively low-tech; make shift weapons from the "bargain basement", a stolen ramshackle truck, US helicopters abandoned ten years before. These all have to be mended or modified before use. The men control the technology, it doesn't control them.
It is the men's experience of war that binds them together. Kevin Scott is the one member who is not a Vietnam veteran, he was too young for service. He is an ex-Marine, discharged for striking a soldier who fell asleep on watch duty, and it is his responsibility to bring the others back to combat fitness. The others are antagonistic towards him, resenting his instructions, "You weren't there" they tell him. Rhodes reminds Scott that he has to earn the respect of the others, but we see him unable to do that through his physical strength, superior marksmanship, or martial arts skills. However, after a brutal fight between Scott and Sailor, Rhodes informs the group that Scott's father is an MIA. They pick him up and carry him, immediately respecting his right to be one of the team.

The group go back to South East Asia, not as an American army, but as guerilla fighters. In 'doing it right this time' they fight their war as Viet Cong did. Rhodes tells his group at the beginning of training "We'll be eating nothing but Vietnamese from now on. We don't want to be tramping through the jungle smelling like Americans." They lose four of their team rescuing four American POWs, but only their guide and his daughter are killed by enemy gunfire. The Americans effectively suicide in the ultimate sacrifice. When the explosives he has set fail to detonate, Blaster climbs onto the bridge and sets off the explosion in front of an approaching enemy jeep; the bridge is spectacularly destroyed, and Blaster is immolated. Sailor pulls the pin on the grenade he has always worn around his neck and leaps from an observation tower into a fuel storage area again creating his own funeral pyre. No one will be left behind this time.

The re-writing of the Vietnam conflict as an individual triumph rather than a national loss allows for the recuperation of a masculine heroic. The eighties Vietnam soldier was at war not only with the designated enemy, but also with his society. Getting to win this time means being able to recuperate some of the power and privilege ceded to the demands of capitalism, feminism, and gay
politics. Re-writing the role of the veteran from transgressor to victim/hero enabled a pleasurable recuperation of hegemonic masculinity.
Chapter 10
THE MASCULINE MASQUERADE

Cinema as masquerade

Joan Riviere's *Womanliness as a masquerade* describes a defensive exaggeration of 'feminine' attributes and behaviours as a masquerade. She saw professional women who "wish for 'recognition' of their masculinity from men" (1986:37) adopt "a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety" (1986:35). Within a system of male identities and identifications, the assumption of an ultra-femininity functioned as both a "device for avoiding anxiety" and as "a primary mode of enjoyment" in both professional and social contexts (1986:38). Bick explains that what Riviere's patient feared was exposure, "both a penetration of her deception and the destruction of her self image" (1992-3:85). The masquerade was driven by envy, shame, and "the reversal of helplessness" (Bick, 1992-3:87), but at the same time offered the pleasures of performance and play.

While identifying a 'mask' of womanliness, Riviere emphasised that it is impossible "to draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade'", suggesting that "they are the same thing" (1986:38). Heath expands on this inability to differentiate, saying that "In the masquerade the woman mimics an authentic – genuine – womanliness, but then authentic womanliness is such a mimicry, is the masquerade" (1986:49), going beyond Riviere's position that the capacity for womanliness is always inherent, to describe femininity as always a dissimulation of a fundamental masculinity. Riviere believed that there is no given essence of 'womanliness' that exists as distinct from the masquerade. The "capacity for womanliness" that already exists in the woman could be adopted and "worn as a mask" in a defensive pose "both to hide the possession of masculinity and
to avert the reprisals expected if she were found to possess it" (1986:38). The wish to possess masculinity is the desire to steal the phallus, and is hidden beneath a mask of feminine compliance and coquetry. Heath explains that "The masquerade serves to show what she does not have, a penis, by showing – the adornment, the putting on – something else, the phallus she becomes” (1986:52). In order to disguise a lack of the phallus the woman becomes the phallus through a display of excessive femininity.

But Lacan explicitly states that men can `have' the phallus just as little as women can ever `be' it (1982:85). In *The meaning of the phallus* he maintains that `having' the phallus (masculinity) and `being' the phallus (femininity) are both performances disguising the same lack of the phallus. Since both sexes lack and desire the phallus, both find protection, and pleasure, in disguise. A man's masculinity is an assertion that he possesses the phallus; normative masculinity as a defence against phallic anxiety. In Lacan’s words "an `appearing' ... gets substituted for the `having' so as to protect it on one side and to mask its lack on the other" (1982:84). Lacan labels masculinity a display (parade) and sees this display as intimately linked to social structures of power. The accoutrements of phallic power, the costumes of authority, betray the lack that they display. No one has the phallus.

The use of the concept of masquerade in film criticism has been primarily to analyse hyper-feminine or masculinised female roles as fetishised images of woman produced for the male spectator. The analysis of Sternberg’s *Morocco* by the editors of *Cahiers du cinéma* sees Dietrich wearing the trappings of femininity as a costume, and her abandoning of these accoutrements "immediately makes them rise retroactively to become fetish objects in their turn" (1970:92). The *Cahiers* analysis draws not only on Riviere’s theorisation of the masquerade, but also on Freud’s description of fetishism, and Lacan’s account of the woman-as-phallus, establishing a pattern for later critiques of the masquerade in cinema. Johnson applies these same theories to an analysis of
the figure of a woman in male dress in Tournier's *Anne of the Indies* arguing that the image of the woman is positioned first as a negation of the male, and then as the fetish, "a phallic replacement, a projection of male narcissistic fantasy" (1976:211). The masquerade is read as a performance that is not so much a defence, as a distancing, that allows a possession of the female image by the male spectator. As Doane says, "the effectivity of the masquerade lies precisely in its potential to manufacture a distance from the image, to generate a problematic within which the image is manipulable, producible, and readable" (1982:87). She urges female film spectators to use the gap between the woman and the image of femininity, to highlight the artificiality of gender and gendered power relations.

However, Cohan has demonstrated that the masquerade is not the exclusive province of the feminine. In discussing William Holden's role in *Picnic*, Cohan says that "*Picnic* uses male spectacle in masquerade, in a performance of virility" (1992:68). He describes the masquerade of masculinity as an attempt "to recuperate a more traditional version of masculinity" (1992:68) and as a "nostalgic yearning for an obsolete form of masculinity – that is, one made antiquated by the Suburban American ranch house and back yard" (1992:49). If as Bick describes it, "masquerading [is] a way of reversing humiliation and of restoring the integrity of the self" (1992-3:85) then a spectacle of masculinity, a performance of virility, in the cinema could be "symptomatic of the breakdown of consensus ... about the constitution of masculinity" (Cohan, 1992:68). The masculine masquerade in the cinema could be one response to widespread cultural anxieties about the erosion of patriarchal authority, and the fragmenting of masculine identity.

In a 'queer' reading of Sylvester Stallone's performance in *Tango and Cash* and *Lock Up* as a masquerade like that enacted by a homosexual man who wishes to pass as a heterosexual, Holmlund warns of the political limitations in thinking of masquerade as simply parody (1993:215-
6). The repeated re-enactments of narratives of masculinity in the cinema is more that a homovestite display, or a series of exercises in male drag. As Holmlund says

"masquerades change according to who is looking, how, why, at whom. If we are to assess how they are linked to power, and to resistance, we must think about how they function and unravel the ways they are interconnected. We need, in other words, to distinguish dressing up (embellishment) from putting on (parody, critique), from stepping out (affirmation, contestation)" (1993:216).

In looking at the cinema of the eighties in terms of a masculine masquerade, the key points seem to be that masquerading is a defence, a protection against anxiety; it is a way of reversing humiliation; of recuperating power in the face of feelings of helplessness; of restoring the integrity of the self.

But masquerading is also a positive performance, an affirmation of hegemonic values; an embellishment of personal identity; a playful critique of social styles; and a fantasy space that can be pleasurably occupied.

**Masculinity in the eighties cinema**

The versions of masculinity represented in the cinema of the eighties can be read in terms of a backlash against progressive attempts to destabilise patriarchal hegemony. In a period where patriarchal authority and hegemonic modes of masculinity appeared to be under threat in the wake of women's and minority rights movements; changes in the nature of work and the organisation of the family; a downturn in the economy; and altered modes of social interaction, the movies reflected a condensation and displacement of popular anxieties. A body of films characterised by excessively muscular action heroes; all-male scenarios that punished or excluded women; narratives that prioritised father-son bonds; a romanticised depiction of working class masculinity; a fascination with technology; and a representation of violence as an appropriate response to crisis, supported a reaffirmation of patriarchy in simple contests between good and evil, or conservative and progressive. However, while the eighties cinema did function as a way of recapturing ritual
forms of masculinity long since abandoned, the depiction of those forms was not without an
element of self reflexive parody. The exaggerated masculinity of the films also suggested a
postmodern play with traditional notions of manhood in a way that refused fixed political meanings.
The very excess of the bulging muscles, the male mothering, the all male enclaves, the macho
poses, the revisiting and revising of male history, demanded a label of `performance'. Masculinity
was transformed into a show that was beyond ideology, beyond politics. The excesses of
postmodern vision found expression in a cinema of spectacle, and masculinity became one more
element in a display of superficial effects. The eighties cinema incorporated postmodern practices
such as: the recycling of cultural forms in pastiche and parody; a self-conscious mobilisation of an
aesthetics of style; a deconstruction and dissolution of distinctions; and a disassociation of cause
and effect, resulting in an `entertainment as containment' that encouraged a sense of the social as
something unable to be understood, and therefore unable to be challenged. Whether as a
reactionary utopian dream, or as a postmodern spectacle, the cinema of the eighties offered a
fantasy space in which questions could be posed about identity and power, about desire and
knowledge. As fantasy the cinema allowed for an identification with a misremembered past, and a
projection of desires for an unable to be anticipated future.

These films evidenced a nostalgic yearning for a `traditional' masculinity. If the present was
unsatisfactory, and the future a threat, then the eighties cinema provided a sanctuary in nostalgia.
The movies provided a space in which masculinity could be represented in terms of conformity to
patriarchal values in a series of retrospective narratives that either revisited a mythic past of an
hegemonic masculinity, or that revised the past, re-writing masculine scripts to accommodate an
alternate future. Films like Hoosiers, Field of Dreams, Back to the Future and Biloxi Blues
functioned as a lookback to a style of masculinity based on white, middle class hegemony. In re-
writing personal and social history they enabled the recuperation of normative versions of
masculinity. A large number of films had as their narrative focus the recuperation of masculinity
through a renegotiation of the Vietnam War. In 'getting to win this time' the heroes of films like *Rambo* and *Uncommon Valor*, recuperated an heroic version of masculinity righting individual and collective wrongs. War provided a stage upon which the spectacle of masculinity could be enacted. The theatre of war enabled overelaborate performances of heroic masculinity, offering fetishised physical power; mechanisms for repressing the feminine and eliding differences of race and class; the opportunity to regenerate hegemonic masculinity through violence; and the possibility for the heroic subordination, integration and deployment of advanced technology. Re-creating the past enabled the acting out of nostalgic versions of masculine heroism with pageantry excess.

An attempt to recuperate a traditional version of masculinity was evident in many films of the eighties. A symbolic restoration of hegemonic masculinity is to an extent dependent on a belief in a coherent masculinity; a belief that was enabled by the creation of an undifferentiated world of the masculine within film narratives. Film after film created male mono-cultures. On battlefields and sportsgrounds, in police cars and suburban back yards men worked out their friendship, paternal and sexual relationships - with other men. The survival of hegemonic masculinity seemed dependent upon the exclusion of women in the creation of an all-male world. *Tango and Cash*, *Red Heat* and *48 Hours* are among films that pair men from diverse, and even antagonistic, backgrounds but then establish a masculine space in which it is demonstrated that men are not significantly different from one another. The 'buddy' films demonstrate the perfect adequacy of the male couple. In the undifferentiated world created, the masculine is performed by males, for males, and women, as the only threat to the masculine bond, are excluded from the narrative. Intimacy, with its suggestion of vulnerability, was allowed only at the moment of death, and homoeroticism was displaced onto an overt verbal homophobia. Male friendships were depicted in the terms of a boys-own adventure, acted out in scenarios of adversity, competition, comedic exchange, and simultaneous individuated performance. Masculinity was represented as a game that men played, together, in a spirit of joking camaraderie.
Within the all-male world of the eighties cinema, a concern with father/son bonds reflected collective anxieties over the ambivalent relationship between patriarchy and paternity. In film after film absent fathers held mothers to blame for inhibiting the male bond and, once mother was excluded from the family, went on to establish the close connections with their sons that asserted the viability of a patriarchal paternal model. In *Kramer vs Kramer*, *Author, Author* and *Table for Five*, the fathers demonstrated that it was a simple matter to combine patriarchal authority with paternal nurturing, once the interference of the feminine had been overcome. Another group of films, including *Rising Son*, *Dakota* and *The Rookie*, echoed concerns over the ability of the next generation to assume the patriarchal role, the plot lines offering a reassurance that the problems lay not in the nature of hegemonic masculinity, but in a changing society which made traditional masculinity a difficult role to occupy. The world of the father threatened by social change was often represented as a romanticised blue collar masculinity, and the challenge as coming from a breakdown of gender barriers, which threatened patriarchy. The masculine conatus was essentially a struggle to have, or not have, the phallus. Cinema heroes demonstrated their possession of the phallus with guns, musculature and patriarchal authority, or hid their possession, in a regression to a childhood of power without commitment. The child/father who both has and does not have the phallus was depicted in a large number of films, including *E.T.*, *Big* and *Starman*, in narratives that contained oppositional or subversive elements, in a constant re-negotiation of hegemony.

The crisis in masculinity in the eighties was a crisis of identity. A masculinity based on notions of physical power, unambiguous sexuality, the breadwinner role, and the patriarch as head of a family unit, was increasingly unavailable to men. Yet this version of masculinity as normative had been nurtured and sustained through generations, and alternative masculinities lacked similar levels of cultural approval. The failure of identity was compensated for in the eighties cinema by consolidating identity in the body. Muscular physiques connoted masculinity in excess. White heroes struggled to constitute their difference from gays, women, blacks, and inscribed that
difference on the body. The body was a commodity that could be acquired, built, worked on, modified; constructed as a facade. The hard body simultaneously disguised a desire for new models of masculinity, and a fear of renouncing the old. The masculine body in the eighties cinema had an overwrought quality, its excess suggesting an hysterical response to the growing impossibility of hegemonic masculinity. The hard body was never simply an articulation of a collective wish, but a compensatory fantasy that articulated not just the wish, but also the prohibitions and repressions that accompany the desire. The excessively muscled body cloaked the impossibility of a macho masculinity.

A conservative representation of a transcendent masculinity depended upon being able to depict the masculine as victim of social change, and avoid any characterisation as transgressor. The difficulty of taking on the role of the social victim without at the same time giving up social power was resolved through the acting out of a reflexive masochism. Robocop's mutilation, McLane's beatings and Rambo's torture were proof of a superior ability; the ability to suffer was a mark of masculine power. But at the same time as the hero was depicted as the innocent victim individually accepting physical pain for the general social good, he was represented as the lone avenger, wielding punitive power. The hero's ability to both accept and mete out a cleansing physical punishment displaced material anxieties onto rituals of valiant suffering and vanquishing resurrection. Physical pain was linked to self discovery and coming to manhood, in a reassurance of the inevitability of masculine power. Reflexive masochism allowed the spectacle of pain to be positively experienced as another element in a display of effects.

Anxieties regarding the feminine were reflected in a masculinity that accommodated and incorporated the feminine, rendering it redundant. Robocop's violent mutilation leaves him with feminised facial features within a kevlar body fortress. Rambo accounts for the feminine with his often noted 'breasts' and long hair, and through his torture and the threat of castration. Reggie's
camp performance in *48 Hours*; E.T.’s genderless paternity; the Terminator’s mimicry of women he has previously exterminated; all render the feminine superfluous, accommodated by the masculine. Fantasy is marked by multiple and fluid identifications and the incorporation of all roles by the hero allows the fulfillment of desire without transgressing hegemonic gendered identities. The eighties cinema accommodated both collective desires for access to hegemony, and individual hopes for transformation, in accounting for both masculine and feminine subject positions within the heroic role.

In a reflection of the ‘panic sex’ of the period, sex in the eighties cinema was tinged with catastrophe, accompanied by the threat of death or castration. The hero retained his bodily integrity through a sexual purity that required the exclusion of a female object of desire. Women who attracted the gaze of the hero were soon domesticated, dead, or disappeared. Co Bao is shot moments after Rambo agrees to take her back to America. Riggs’ wife is ‘absent’ except in flashback in *Lethal Weapon*, and Holly McLane subordinated into wifely submission in *Die Hard*. The sexuality of men is displaced onto a competition between women, between stifling domesticity and castrating sexuality. In *Fatal Attraction* and *Someone to Watch Over Me* the threat to the security of the family is not the uncontrolled sex drive of the married man, but the sexuality of the single, successful, career woman. A dread of women runs through the eighties cinema in narratives that reflect masculine uncertainties and anxieties about the womb. Science fiction and horror films play out the fears of a patriarchy in decline with monsters and aliens that take the form of the feminine or the child. Male melodramas depict the appropriation of the maternal by the male. Thrillers enact social dramas across the amorphous boundaries of homophobia and homoerotica. As *Tightrope* explores, the line between masculine and feminine is not always easily drawn, and being masculine involves a constant defence of imaginary boundaries as desire threatens to transgress established roles and identities.
A significant number of films during the eighties reflected an ambivalent relationship with technology. Where science fiction had always depicted a fear of the machine as other, the eighties films seemed to have as their concern a lack of differentiation between man and machine, or a fear of incorporation by the machine. At the centre of these collective fears was an anxiety about the collapse of previously taken for granted boundaries. Advanced technology in the eighties cinema is out of control, it malfunctions, is subject to misuse, or is simply superfluous. It afforded, however, the possibility of a pyrotechnic display as a backdrop for the hero's demonstration of the appropriate and efficient use of a subordinate technology. In many of the films technology was simultaneously maternalised and demonised; in *Alien*, *Hardware* and *Eve of Destruction*, amongst others, technology was linked to the womb and hystericalised. In other films technology was the mechanism for a recuperation of a sense of self; in *The Terminator*, *Robocop* and *E.T.* the machinery of reproduction affirms personal identity. Time travel films were also concerned with identity, memory and the construction of self. Unlike their antecedents that explored life in future worlds, the time travel films of the eighties were overwhelmingly concerned with attempts to alter the present by constructing more desirable identities. The experience of technology as a threat to stable boundaries, was re-written as an affirmation of masculine identity.

**The masculine masquerade**

The eighties films looked back from a position of embattled masculine hegemony to an imagined period of patriarchal security, and looked forward in anticipation of a stable masculine identity quarantined from the reorganisation of the family, changes in the nature of work, and demands from women, gays, and ethnic minorities for a share of social power. They can also be seen as an excessive performance, a display of the artefacts of hegemony in a game that recognised their impossibility. They are also a utopian fantasy, a pleasurable escape from social anxieties; a defence against feeling of gender insecurity. In a period of widespread anxiety about the fragmenting of masculine identity and the erosion of patriarchy, and a time when the images of a
previous generation formed part of a postmodern circulation of fragile signs, the eighties cinema made available a traditional, hegemonic male role. This role could be adopted, within the space of the narrative, as a protective embellishment, shoring up an 'insufficient' masculinity to prevent imagined exposure. Or the role could be affected, in a parody or critique of a defunct masculine style. Or it might be taken up in a display that could be either affirmation or contestation of this version of masculinity as normative.

In sum, the eighties cinema constituted a masquerade. In Riviere's terms a masquerade was an exaggeration of gendered attributes and behaviours, that was both a performance that offered pleasure, and a disguise that was a defence against anxiety. The masquerade of masculinity was a source of pleasure in the participatory acting out of macho styles of behaviour; but it was also a defensive pose in the face of anxieties surrounding a crisis of masculine identity. What makes masquerade a more effective rationale for the eighties cinema than other monological explanations is Riviere's conception of the masquerade as a transgressive duality. The masquerade is an acting out of alternate wishes. The eighties cinema was a performance of a wished for hyper-masculinity, a vigorous assertion of potency and virility; but it disguised a desire to inhabit the feminine, to validate nurturing, intimacy, vulnerability, as modes of masculinity.

Riviere's case study concluded that the masquerade covered up the attempted theft of the phallus. The masquerade that was the eighties cinema similarly was a dissimulation that hid the struggle for the phallus. Under the disguise was the necessity of power, and the fear of power. In different ways most of the films of the period act out fantasies of having, not having, or being the phallus, in that 'appearing' substituted for 'having'. Masculinity was displayed. Reality was re-ordered, replete with signifiers of un-reality that offered a protection against the realisation of desire. A desire for supremacy and fantasies of power could only be indulged behind the protection of the mask, and with the reassurance that the mask was just that, a mask. The eighties cinema provided
this dual comfort: a masquerade that enabled the working through of desires and anxieties surrounding the possession of the phallus, or its lack; and the inherent reassurance of the performance or the game. The wish to possess masculinity is the desire to steal the phallus, but the pursuit of social power through the masquerade was defused by the awareness that it was a masquerade, there was no need to fear the reprisals that would accompany the stealing of the phallus.

For Riviere’s patient, the masquerade functioned as a reversal of helplessness. During periods of rapid social change feelings of impotence are engendered by the collapse of previously taken-for-granted norms and patterns of behaviour. The eighties cinema with its narratives of male supremacy; female subjugation; technological domination; nostalgic revisionism; and rejuvenating violence, was the inscription of a masculine masquerade, reversing helplessness. A performance of excessive masculinity compensated for a destabilised patriarchal hegemony, in an empowering enactment of a traditional masculinity. For Riviere’s patient the masquerade was also a mode of enjoyment. In these films, in the narratives of super heroes, self-sufficient fathers, warriors and sportsmen, buddies and pals, was a masculine masquerade that was a source of pleasure in its affirmation of gendered norms while it playfully critiqued masculine style. The eighties cinema was a masculine masquerade, a defensive yet celebratory exaggeration of the masculine; an acting out of a nostalgic masculine style. Just as Riviere saw no essence of womanliness that existed as distinct from the masquerade, so too the masculiné masquerade that was the eighties cinema cannot be described as somehow less real than lived masculinity. Lived masculinity is experienced in varying and changing ways, and these lived masculinities reflected, informed and negotiated the representations of masculinity in popular culture, including the cinema. The masquerade is linked to social structures of power. Riviere’s patient adopted the feminine masquerade both to hide the possession of masculinity, and to avert reprisals against its possession. The masculine masquerade in the eighties cinema similarly betrayed a lack of social power, while it masked attempts to
maintain that power. The masculine masquerade disguised the renunciation of hegemonic masculine values, and at the same time masked the refusal to renounce them; simultaneously evidence and critique of the eighties crisis in patriarchal masculinity.
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Die Harder (1990) USA dir: Renny Harlin
   cast: Bruce Willis, Bonnie Bedelia, William Atherton
Diner (1982) USA dir: Barry Levinson
   cast: Steve Guttenberg, Daniel Stern, Mickey Rourke
Dirty Dancing (1987) USA dir: Emile Ardolino
   cast: Jennifer Grey, Patrick Swayze, Jerry Orbach
Dirty Harry (1971) USA dir: Don Siegel
   cast: Clint Eastwood, Harry Guardino, Reni Santoni
   cast: Dennis Quaid, Meg Ryan, Daniel Stern
Doctor Detroit (1983) Michael Pressman
   cast: Dan Aykroyd, Howard Hesseman, TK Carter
Down and Out in Beverly Hills (1986) USA dir: Paul Mazursky
   cast: Nick Nolte, Richard Dreyfuss, Bette Midler
Downtown (1990) USA dir: Richard Benjamin
   cast: Anthony Edwards, Forest Whitaker, Joe Pantoliano
Easy Rider (1969) USA dir: Dennis Hopper
   cast: Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper, Jack Nicholson
Escape from Alcatraz (1979) USA dir: Don Siegal
   cast: Clint Eastwood, Patrick McGoohan, Fred Ward
Escape from New York (1981) USA dir: John Carpenter
cast: Kurt Russel, Lee Van Cleef, Ernest Borgnine
cast: Dee Wallace, Henry Thomas, Peter Coyote
Everybody’s All American (1988) USA dir: Taylor Hackford
cast: Jessica Lange, Dennis Quaid, Timothy Hutton
Executive Suite (1954) USA dir: Robert Wise
cast: William Holden, June Allyson, Barbara Stanwyck
Eye for an Eye, An (1981) USA dir: Steve Carver
cast: Chuck Norris, Christopher Lee, Richard Roundtree
F.I.S.T. (1978) USA dir: Norman Jewison
cast: Sylvester Stallone, Rod Steiger, Peter Boyle
Family Business (1989) USA dir: Sidney Lumet
cast: Sean Connery, Dustin Hoffman, Matthew Broderick
Fatal Attraction (1987) USA dir: Adrian Lyne
cast: Michael Douglas, Glenn Close, Anne Archer
Field of Dreams (1989) USA dir: Phil Alden Robinson
cast: Kevin Costner, Amy Madigan, Gaby Hoffman
Firefox (1982) USA dir: Clint Eastwood
cast: Clint Eastwood, Freddie Jones, David Huffman
Fisher King, The (1991) USA dir: Terry Gilliam
cast: Robin Williams, Jeff Bridges, Amanda Plummer
cast: Matt Dillon, Richard Crenna, Hector Elizondo
Frankie and Johnny (1991) USA dir: Garry Marshall
cast: Al Pacino, Michelle Pfeiffer, Hector Elizondo
Frantic (1988) USA dir: Roman Polanski
cast: Harrison Ford, Emmanuelle Seigner, Betty Buckley
cast: Emile Charles, Tony Forsyth, Robert Stephens
Full Metal Jacket (1987) USA dir: Stanley Kubrick
cast: Matthew Modine, Adam Baldwin, Vincent D’Onofrio
Gleaming the Cube (1988) USA dir: Graeme Clifford
cast: Christian Slater, Steven Bauer, Min Luong
Goldfinger (1964) UK dir: Guy Hamilton
cast: Sean Connery, Honor Blackman, Gert Frobe
Gone With the Wind (1939) USA dir: Victor Fleming
cast: Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable, Olivia de Havilland
Good Morning Vietnam (1987) USA dir: Barry Levinson
cast: Robin Williams, Forest Whitaker, Tung Thanh Tran
cast: Diane Keaton, Liam Neeson, Jason Robards
Graduate, The (1967) USA dir: Mike Nichols
cast: Anne Bancroft, Dustin Hoffman, Katharine Ross
Great Outdoors (1988) USA dir: Howard Deutch
cast: Dan Aykroyd, John Candy, Stephanie Faracy
Hamburger Hill (1987) USA dir: John Irvin
cast: Anthony Barille, Michael Boatman, Don Cheadle
Hanoi Hilton, The (1987) USA dir: Lionel Chetwynd
cast: Michael Moriarty, Paul LeMat, Jeffrey Jones
Hardware (1990) USA dir: Richard Stanley
cast: Dylan McDermott, Stacey Travis, John Lynch
Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man (1991) USA dir: Simon Wincer
cast: Mickey Rourke, Don Johnson, Chelsea Field

Harry and Son (1984) USA dir: Paul Newman
cast: Paul Newman, Robby Benson, Ellen Barkin

Heartbreakers (1984) USA dir: Bobby Roth
cast: Peter Coyote, Nick Mancuso, Carole Laure

Heartburn (1986) USA dir: Mike Nichols
cast: Meryl Streep, Jack Nicholson, Jeff Daniels

Heathers (1989) USA dir: Michael Lehmann
cast: Winona Ryder, Christian Slater, Shannen Doherty

Hercules in New York (1970) USA dir: Arthur Seidelman
cast: Arnold Stang, Arnold Strong (Schwarzenegger), Taina Elg

Hidden, The (1987) USA dir: Jack Shoulder
cast: Michael Nouri, Kyle MacLaughlin, Ed O’Ross

Hoosiers (1986) USA dir: David Anspaugh
cast: Gene Hackman, Barbara Hershey, Dennis Hopper

Hudson Hawke (1991) USA dir: Michael Lehmann
cast: Bruce Willis, Danny Aiello, Andie MacDowell

In Country (1989) USA dir: Norman Jewison
cast: Bruce Willis, Emily Lloyd, Joan Allen

Innerspace (1987) USA dir: Joe Dante
cast: Dennis Quaid, Martin Short, Meg Ryan

Invasion USA (1985) USA dir: Joseph Zito
cast: Chuck Norris, Richard Lynch, Melissa Prophet

Jagged Edge (1985) USA dir: Richard Marquand
cast: Jeff Bridges, Glenn Close, Peter Coyote

Kindergarten Cop (1990) USA dir: Ivan Reitman
cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Penelope Ann Miller, Pamela Reed

Kramer v Kramer (1979) USA dir: Robert Benton
cast: Dustin Hoffman, Meryl Streep, Justin Henry

Last Boy Scout, The (1991) USA dir: Tony Scott
cast: Bruce Willis, Damon Wayans, Chelsea Field

Last Picture Show, The (1971) USA dir: Peter Bogdanovich
cast: Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges, Cybill Shepherd

Lethal Weapon (1987) USA dir: Richard Donner
cast: Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Gary Busey

Lethal Weapon 2 (1989) USA dir: Richard Donner
cast: Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Joe Pesci

Like Father, Like Son (1987) USA dir: Rod Daniel
cast: Dudley Moore, Kirk Cameron, Margaret Colin

Live and Let Die (1973) UK dir: Guy Hamilton
cast: Roger Moore, Yaphet Kotto, Jane Seymour

Lock Up (1989) USA dir: John Flynn
cast: Sylvester Stallone, Donald Sutherland, Darlanne Fluegel

Long Goodbye, The (1973) USA dir: Robert Altman
cast: Elliott Gould, Nina van Pallandt, Sterling Hayden

Lost in America (1985) USA dir: Albert Brooks
cast: Albert Brooks, Julie Hagerty, Garry Marshall

Lucas (1986) USA dir: David Seltzer
cast: Corey Haim, Kerri Green, Charlie Sheen

Major League (1989) USA dir: David S Ward
cast: Tom Berenger, Charlie Sheen, Corbin Bernsen
cast: Michael Ontkean, Kate Jackson, Harry Hamlin
Making Mr Right (1987) USA dir: Susan Seidelman
cast: John Malkovich, Ann Magnuson, Glenn Headly
Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, The (1956) USA dir: Nunnally Johnson
cast: Gregory Peck, Jennifer Jones, Fredric March
Married to the Mob (1988) USA dir: Jonathan Demme
cast: Michelle Pfeiffer, Mathew Modine, Dean Stockwell
Maurice (1987) UK dir: James Ivory
cast: James Wilby, Hugh Grant, Rupert Graves
Medium Cool (1969) USA dir: Haskell Wexler
cast: Robert Forster, Verna Bloom, Peter Bonerz
Men, The (1950) USA dir: Fred Zinnemann
cast: Marlon Brando, Teresa Wright, Everett Sloane
Metropolis (1927) Germany dir: Fritz Lang
cast: Alfred Abel, Gustav Frolich, Rudolf Klein-Rogge
Midnight Cowboy (1969) USA dir: John Schlesinger
cast: Dustin Hoffman, John Voight, Sylvia Miles
My Beautiful Laundrette (1985) UK dir: Stephen Frears
Daniel Day Lewis, Gordon Warnecke, Saeed Jaffrey
Natural, The (1984) USA dir: Barry Levinson
cast: Robert Redford, Robert Duvall, Glen Close
Night Shift (1982) USA dir: Ron Howard
cast: Henry Winkler, Michael Keaton, Shelley Long
Nocturne (1946) USA dir: Edwin L. Marin
cast: George Raft, Lynn Bari, Virginia Huston
No Man's Land (1987) USA dir: Peter Werner
cast: Charlie Sheen, DB Sweeney, Randy Quaid
Octopussy (1983) UK dir: John Glen
cast: Roger Moore, Maud Adams, Louis Jordan
Off Limits [Saigon] (1988) USA dir: Christopher Crowe
cast: Willem Dafoe, Gregory Hines, Fred Ward
On Golden Pond (1981) USA dir: Mark Rydell
cast: Katherine Hepburn, Henry Fonda, Jane Fonda
Once Bitten (1985) USA dir: Howard Storm
cast: Lauren Hutton, Jim Carrey, Karen Kopins
Ordinary People (1980) USA dir: Robert Redford
cast: Donald Sutherland, Mary Tyler Moore, Judd Hirsch
Other People's Money (1991) USA dir: Norman Jewison
cast: Danny De Vito, Gregory Peck, Penelope Ann Miller
Over the Top (1987) USA dir: Menahem Golan
cast: Sylvester Stallone, Robert Loggia, Susan Blakely
Paradise Alley (1978) USA dir: Sylvester Stallone
cast: Sylvester Stallone, Kevin Conway, Anne Archer
Peggy Sue Got Married (1986) USA dir: Francis Coppola
cast: Kathleen Turner, Nicholas Cage, Barry Miller
Percy (1971) UK dir: Ralph Thomas
cast: Hywel Bennett, Denholm Elliott, Elke Sommer
Personal Foul (1987) USA dir: Ted Lichtenfield  
cast: David Morse, Adam Arkin, Susan Wheeler Duff

Planes, Trains and Automobiles (1987) USA dir: John Hughes  
cast: Steve Martin, John Candy, Laila Robins

Platoon (1986) USA dir: Oliver Stone  
cast: Tom Berenger, Willem Dafoe, Charlie Sheen

Problem Child (1990) USA dir: Dennis Dugan  
cast: John Ritter, Jack Warden, Michael Oliver

Pure Luck (1991) USA dir: Nadia Tass  
cast: Martin Short, Danny Glover, Sheila Kelley

cast: Mia Farrow, Seth Green, Julie Kavner

Raging Bull (1980) USA dir: Martin Scorsese  
cast: Robert De Niro, Cathy Moriarty, Joe Pesci

Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981) USA dir: Steven Spielberg  
cast: Harrison Ford, Karen Allen, Wolf Kahler

Rambo: First Blood Part II (1985) USA dir: George P Cosmatos  
cast: Sylvester Stallone, Richard Crenna, Charles Napier

Rashomon (1950) Japan dir: Akira Kurosawa  
cast: Toshiro Mifune, Masayuki Mori, Machiko Kyo

cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, James Belushi, Peter Boyle

Return of the Jedi (1983) USA dir: Richard Marquand  
cast: Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher

Rising Sun (1990) USA dir: John David Coles  
cast: Brian Dennehy, Piper Laurie, Graham Beckel

Risky Business (1983) USA dir: Paul Brickman  
cast: Tom Cruise, Rebecca DeMornay, Curtis Armstrong

River, The (1984) USA dir: Mark Rydell  
cast: Sissy Spacek, Mel Gibson, Shane Bailey

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves (1991) USA dir: Kevin Reynolds  
cast: Kevin Costner, Morgan Freeman, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio

RoboCop (1987) USA dir: Paul Verhoeven  
cast: Peter Weller, Nancy Allen, Ronny Cox

Rocky II (1979) USA dir: Sylvester Stallone  
cast: Sylvester Stallone, Talia Shire, Burt Young

Rocky III (1982) USA dir: Sylvester Stallone  
cast: Sylvester Stallone, Talia Shire, Burt Young

Rocky IV (1985) USA dir: Sylvester Stallone  
cast: Sylvester Stallone, Dolph Lundgren, Carl Weathers

Roe vs Wade (1989) USA dir: Gregory Hoblit  
cast: Holly Hunter, Amy Madigan, Terry O’Quinn

Rookie, The (1990) USA dir: Clint Eastwood  
cast: Clint Eastwood, Charlie Sheen, Raul Julia

Rumble Fish (1983) USA dir: Francis Ford Coppola  
cast: Matt Dillon, Mickey Rourke, Diane Lane

cast: Robby Benson, Pat Hingle, Claudia Cron

cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Maria Alonso, Yaphet Kotto

Running Scared (1986) USA dir: Peter Hyams
cast: Gregory Hines, Billy Crystal, Steven Bauer
cast: Michael J Fox, Helen Slater, Richard Jordan
Shoot to Kill (1988) USA dir: Roger Spottiswoods
cast: Sidney Poitier, Tom Berenger, Kirstie Alley
Silkwood (1983) USA dir: Mike Nichols
cast: Meryl Streep, Kurt Russel, Cher
Someone to Watch Over Me (1987) USA dir: Ridley Scott
cast: Tom Berenger, Mimi Rogers, Lorraine Bracco
Something Wild (1986) USA dir: Jonathan Demme
cast: Jeff Daniels, Melanie Griffith, Ray Liotta
Split Decisions (1988) USA dir: David Drury
cast: Gene Hackman, Craig Sheffer, Jeff Fahey
Stakeout (1987) USA dir: John Badham
cast: Richard Dreyfuss, Emilio Estevez, Madeleine Stowe
Stand By Me (1986) USA dir: Rob Reiner
cast: Wil Wheaton, River Phoenix, Corey Feldman
Starman (1984) USA dir: John Carpenter
cast: Jeff Bridges, Karen Allen, Charles Martin Smith
Star Wars (1977) USA dir: George Lucas
cast: Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher
cast: Robert Duvall, Jason Presson, Frederic Forrest
Switch (1991) USA dir: Blake Edwards
cast: Ellen Barkin, Jimmy Smits, JoBeth Williams
Table for Five (1983) USA dir: Robert Lieberman
cast: Jon Voight, Richard Crenna, Marie-Christine Barrault
Tango and Cash (1989) USA dir: Andrei Konchalovsky
cast: Sylvester Stallone, Kurt Russell, Teri Hatcher
Tender Mercies (1983) USA/UK dir: Bruce Beresford
cast: Robert Duvall, Tess Harper, Allan Hubbard
cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Michael Biehn, Linda Hamilton
Terminator 2: Judgement Day (1991) USA dir: James Cameron
cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, Edward Furlong
Texasville (1990) USA dir: Peter Bogdanovich
cast: Jeff Bridges, Cybill Shepherd, Annie Potts
Thelma & Louise (1991) USA dir: Ridley Scott
cast: Susan Sarandon, Geena Davis, Harvey Keitel
Three Fugitives (1989) USA dir: Francis Veber
cast: Nick Nolte, Martin Short, Sarah Rowland Doroff
Three Men and a Baby (1987) USA dir: Leonard Nimoy
cast: Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, Ted Danson
Tightrope (1984) USA dir: Richard Tuggle
cast: Clint Eastwood, Genevieve Bujold, Dan Hedaya
Tin Men (1987) USA dir: Barry Levinson
cast: Richard Dreyfuss, Danny DeVito, Barbara Hershey
T-Men (1947) USA dir: Anthony Mann
cast: Dennis O’Keefe, Mary Meade, Charles McGraw
To Live and Die in LA (1985) USA dir: William Friedkin
cast: William L Petersen, Willem Dafoe, John Pankow
Too Much Sun (1991) USA dir: Robert Downey  
cast: Robert Downey Jr, Laura Ernst, Jim Haynie
Tootsie (1982) USA dir: Sydney Pollack  
cast: Dustin Hoffman, Jessica Lange, Teri Garr
Top Gun (1986) USA dir: Tony Scott  
cast: Tom Cruise, Kelly McGillis, Val Kilmer
Tough Guys (1986) USA dir: Jeff Kanew  
cast: Burt Lancaster, Kirk Douglas, Charles Durning
Track 29 (1988) British dir: Nicolas Roeg  
cast: Theresa Russel, Gary Oldman, Christopher Lloyd
Trading Places (1983) USA dir: John Landis  
cast: Dan Aykroyd, Eddie Murphy, Ralph Bellamy
Tucker (1988) USA dir: Francis Coppola  
cast: Jeff Bridges, Joan Allen, Martin Landau
Twins (1988) USA dir: Ivan Reitman  
cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Danny De Vito, Kelly Preston
Uncle Buck (1989) USA dir: John Hughes  
cast: John Candy, Amy Madigan, Jean Louisa Kelly
Uncommon Valor (1983) USA dir: Ted Kotcheff  
cast: Gene Hackman, Robert Stack, Fred Ward
Unforgiven (1992) USA dir: Clint Eastwood  
cast: Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman, Morgan Freeman
Up the Down Staircase (1967) USA dir: Robert Mulligan  
cast: Sandy Dennis, Patrick Bedford, Eileen Heckart
Vice Versa (1988) USA dir: Brian Gilbert  
cast: Judge Reinhold, Fred Savage, Corinne Bohrer
Wall Street (1987) USA dir: Oliver Stone  
cast: Michael Douglas, Charlie Sheen, Daryl Hannah
Wild Orchid (1990) USA dir: Zalman King  
cast: Mickey Rourke, Jacqueline Bisset, Carre Otis
REAL MEN:
REPRESENTATIONS OF MASCULINITY
IN THE EIGHTIES CINEMA

MD Kibby

Thesis submitted to the
University of Western Sydney, Nepean
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
April 1997
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
CERTIFICATE

This thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other institution.

M D Kibby
15 April 1997
PREFACE

Initially this study was influenced by Susan Jeffords's writings on the remasculinisation of America through Vietnam War narratives, and I set out to uncover evidence of this 'backlash' in other mainstream American films of the period. However, watching and re-watching large numbers of films, and recalling my initial viewings of them as part of a cinema audience, I decided that the narrativisation of masculinity in these films, while depicting signs of anxiety or panic, was more complex than a staged fightback against progressive social forces. I have concentrated on uncovering the meanings of masculinity in 'Hollywood' cinema, that is, mainstream American film, although these meanings are at times compared with differing representations in alternate or non-American films.

I have drawn on the research of sociologists studying lived masculinity, and on the work of poststructuralist theorists, and their specific contributions are acknowledged in the text. The application of their ideas to answering the questions posed by the representations of masculinity in the cinema during the eighties, the identification of common themes and narrative strategies, and the detailed analysis of many individual films, is what constitutes my original research.

I acknowledge the support and advice of my supervisor, Dr Hart Cohen, and co-supervisor, Dr Zoe Sofoulis, but take full responsibility for the methodology and content of this thesis.
SYNOPSIS

Social, economic, and cultural changes in the 1970s brought about a level of anxiety as to what constituted masculine identity in an era of rising unemployment; diminishing paternal authority within the family; a feminising of the workplace accompanying technological development; and the insistence on 'equal rights' by homosexual, women's and racial minority groups. The feeling of panic that accompanied the rapid social change of the period was reflected in a body of mainstream American films that have come to categorise 'eighties cinema'. These films depicted a style of masculinity that centred on tough, muscular, bodies; violence that was both sadistic and masochistic; sexuality that was simultaneously homophobic and homoerotic; patriarchy restored through a refigured father that incorporated the maternal; the creation of all-male worlds through the exclusion of the feminine; and a nostalgia for a stable masculine identity derived more from a fear of the future than a remembrance of the past.

The representations of masculinity in these films can be seen as part of a New Right Movement, symptomatic of Reaganite values. The films can also be read as a postmodern play with the images of another generation, in an acting out of excessive cultural expectations. The movies' version of masculinity also offered a fantasy space, providing heroism and power as a counterpoint to dissatisfaction and impotence. In encompassing elements of all of these, a conservative role playing that offered the protection of fantasy and the fun of a game, the films functioned as a masquerade. This group of films were a masculine masquerade, in that they were an enactment of a conservative version of masculinity that was a pleasurable game of excess, and at the same time a defence against anxiety in the face of changing social patterns. The masquerade disguised a quest for the phallus, hiding both the desire, and the refusal, to renounce masculine social power.
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