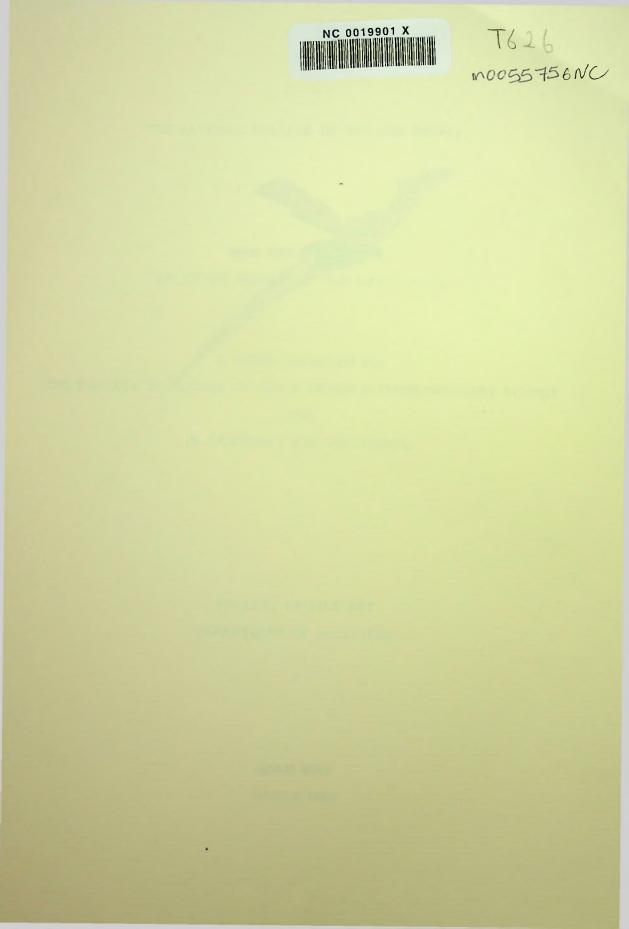
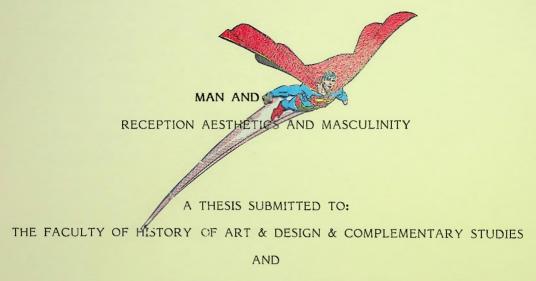
MANAND RECEPTION AESTHETICS AND MASCULINITY

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INTRODUCTION

Analyses of media representations of women and men have been in great supply since Roland Barthes' application of semiology to media and mass culture. Recently, the standard of analysis has apparently reduced by inverse proportion to the proliferation of these essays, using the language of poppsychology, feminist-identified rhetoric and the usual selection of examplessupposedly typical representations, no doubt carefully chosen to support the author's particular argument. The apparent purpose of these critical analyses is to enlighten the reader as to the means of manipulation that these images employ. However, the chosen viewpoint of these discussions, the evidence which is omitted from studies, the language in which it is written and published, gives the impression that they serve to confuse and obscure the subject. This undermines any valid argument contained in the study, weakening the general effect of reason and logic that genuinely confronts the function and methods of authority in popular culture. If anything, they serve these methods by creating their own gods; figures of authority to be quoted and referred toin attempts to validate an insecure argument. Also, analyses and criticisms have tended to be defined by the different applications of visual representation, whether pornography, advertising, film or family snaps. This method has led to confusion as to which is "worse", which is more damaging to one's personal respect or social status, and has writers making claims that appear exclusive to their area of study. I find these elements produce a resulting inadequate study, not that they are inaccurate but that because of the approach that seems to exclude other possibilities, they do not adequately identify the general mechanism as visual communication of social injustice.

What I want to do is take the argument from the other end, look at the production of visual images within the culture, see them as a resultant of the society and thus what conclusions can generally be applied to the function of visual language in our society, with specific reference to gender based social injustice. Also, I want to propose a model of the viewer and image relationship, how this serves to maintain the definition of what is masculine and consequently the possible effects on relationships between men and women. As will be shown in the study of the nature of conditioning, it is not that the behaviour preferred by society is necessarily bad or unsuited to men, but that it excludes all other behaviour as unacceptable.

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This, I believe, is the principle of the social injustice that men suffer on the basis of their gender.

The visual language of popular culture is through the understandings set in play by such groups of pictures which help people to discriminate and to categorise. They provide a structure, within which they can recognise certain key elements and overlook other elements in any image or series of images. Thus the image that Superman, Conon the Barbarian, Masters of the Universe, Rambo, Dan Dare, Roy of the Rovers or Judge Dredd portray is an underlying reference for attitudes towards and understanding of any other image of men and consequently men as a group. This has nothing to do with prejudice. It is quite impossible for individuals in every instance to be understood simply as an individual. it is always necessary to use general knowledge in the assessment of any particular situation, thus any piece of evidence that is acquired about a particular man may be applied to the gender group as a whole. Therefore it is to be expected that men will tend towards resembling the dominant characteristics perceived of the group. That is, boys will collude with behaviour that they believe is true of all men, this information having been provided by a society that has a fundamental interest in the maintenance of the definition of masculinity.

CHAPTER ONE BLOOD/MONEY The treatment of men in popular culture can be divided into two basic categories, "man as warrior" and "man as wage earner". These are both traditional ways of portraying men and there are of course exceptions and various combinations of elements from each category present in each character. For the purposes of this essay though these general categories will be accepted and illustrated by contemporary examples indicative of this treatment.

MAN AS WARRIOR

In the consumerable images present in films and comic books men are often associated with violence. This can be a display of sheer physical strength, Tarzan and Superman, (Figure 1) or combined with various weaponry to give the body-as-weapon effect of Rambo and Conon the Barbarian. (Figure 2).

This trend has produced the physical synthesis of these elements of physical strength and weaponry/technology in the form of the "cyborg" (cybernetic organism). In two recent films, Terminator and Robocop men are physically combined with cybernetic hardware to produce "the ultimate in law enforcement", man and machine in perfect harmony (1).

The other method of associating men with violence is that of the resourceful intelligent man depicted by such examples as James Bond and recently Martin Fallon, the IRA terrorist in Michael Hodges' <u>A Prayer for the Dying</u> (Figure 3). Invariably these characters will use weapons/technology but only to complement their seemingly inherent ability to be resourceful and respond with quick thinking in violent situations.

An interesting note here is that there is no general differentiation made between the methods of violence employed by those portrayed as good and evil in these productions. That is to say that no distinction is made in moral terms as to what is a valid means of achieving an end. In specific scenarios the methods of the good guy are portrayed as acceptable or even necessary, those of the baddie are deplored usually on the basis of his intent rather than because his means are excessively violent or even a form of violence considered abhorrent. For example, the character John Rambo (Figure 4), "the man who has beliefs, is straight and fights through to the end" (2), has a physically huge muscular body and has available to him a vast selection of armory with which to wreak vengeance on his enemies. He is associated with 245 violent acts during the 90 minute running time of his latest appearance in <u>Rambo III</u>. On the other hand, Bloodsport (Figure 5), a character based on John Rambo, displays the same mayhem, blood-letting and grunt-style dialogue, the only difference being that he is an enemy of "truth, justice and the American way" (4). In this manner men are implicitly associated with acts of extreme violence and death, the violence itself rarely receiving any comment or judgement, but depicted as appropriate or at worst necessary action. In advertising, this portrayal of physical violence and the male body is almost exclusively associated with perfume products (Figure 6), pour homme.... "The Power to Provoke", although it is implied ambiguously in recent advertising trends. An example of this is the latest campaign for Smirnoff Vodka (Figure 7), where the male characters are performing gestures and actions which are implicitly violent, the ambiguity being provided by the Smirnoff label concealing his facial expression.(5)

MAN AS WAGE EARNER

The visual association between men and money is most often made in advertisements. The devices used to make this association are very simple, relying primarily on traditional class codes, i.e. expensive clothes and environment, the particular commodity advertised being one or a combination of these elements (6) (Figure 8).

The main feature of this visual association is its relentlessly repetitive nature. The elements of men's apparel are consistantly based on the traditional western businessman style of the suit and tie. The signifiers of affluence in the environment are typified by reference to technological hardware in the standard forms of car, hi-fi etc. These signifiers also take the elements of the owning class environment, such as fine art sculpture and paintings, antique furnishings and decor. This reference can be made to traditional elements or the contemporary, but no less prestigious, "designer" style.(Figure 9). In consumerable images, this association is characterised by a successful young man, "impressed by the epitome of big business in action" (7), who is portrayed as intelligent and capable of turning every situation to his advantage. (Figure 10). As with violence, there is no judgement made on the monetary resources that a character employs. For example, Lex Luther, billionaire, "honest businessman" (8) is never criticised on the basis of his methods of manipulation and coercion. Indeed, Superman will, on occasion, ally himself with Luther if "he is doing the right thing" Lex Luther is a master of private enterprise, controlling the technological resources of Metropolis, Superman's home town. This monopoly is never criticised, it is only Luther's evil intent that identifies him as the enemy of Superman.

Indeed, if the system of good and evil is analysed in more detail, the means of the Justice League (Superman's following of vigilantes) replicate the affluences and technology that Luther employs.

THE POWERFUL INDIVIDUAL

Characters that embody both key features of violence and affluence portray a more complete picture which unambiguously defines success in our culture. Batman (Figure 11) and James Bond are modelled on the concept that produced Zorro, son of the rich, who rides against the oppressors of good, decent working people. Familiar conventions which indicate a male character, hero or anti-hero are those of:

independent, the lone man up against the odds.
resourceful, ability to turn every situation to his advantage.
responsible, to whatever his cause or intention is, willing to
risk his life for that purpose.
capable, of controllingtechnology and financial resources.
intelligent strategist.
powerful, physically or financially.
invulnerable, ability to withstand any crisis or violence perpetrated
against him.
composed the cool clean here rarely shows emotion rarely anger

composed, the cool clean hero rarely shows emotion, rarely anger, never grief.

These attributes manifest themselves to a single apparent product, that of control or domination of the environment and all its constituent parts: other men, women, children, animals, technology, the physical and spiritual environment. But primarily it demonstrates control of the man himself, for whatever purpose or ambition he espouses or aspires to. This positioning of men as dominant is most apparent when examining images of men and women together. Common to all vehicles of representation in our culture, men universally maintain control of any relations with women, whether by physical force or coercion due to woman's financial dependence on a man.

Sex is always an element of the depicted relationship, this may be explicit or implied by various means. For example, the Conon story Phantasm (9) depicts a violent assault and attempted rape made by the hero on Red Sonya. The depictions of the rape are juxtaposed with frames that presumably represent the sexual fantasy that Conon is attempting to act out. I have included a large section of this comic book (Figures 12,13,14) as I have found it is indicative of a trait within popular culture representations that associates sex with violence. This relates directly to pornography and the insidious effect that it has on all mediums of visual depictions associated with gender or sexuality (Figure 15). More importantly though, it is obvious that these models seek to propagate the meaning of pornography and the system of power in which pornography exists. In Superman No.12, Lex Luther, (a large bald man who surrounds himself in his high-tech computor complex with slim women whose uniform consists of blouse, jacket, tight mini-skirt and stilettoes) (10), sexually harrasses one of his computor scientists (Figure 16), intimidating her into seeing him for dinner that evening. As her boss, he has the power of money to compromise her position so that she must agree to his demands. As Andrea Dworkin writes:

> "In the hands of men, money buys women, sex, status, dignity, esteem, recognition, loyalty, all manner of possibilities. In the hands of men, money does not only buy, it brings with it qualities, achievements, honour, respect. On every economic level the meaning of money is significantly different for men than for women." (11)

When Luther has Amanda in his luxury suite he is interrupted by a telephone call informing him that his attention is immediately required (Figure 17). There follows a violent and brutal interrogation of Lana Lang, a friend of Superman's who has been captured by Luther's men. During her ordeal she is drugged, blindfolded and bound to a chair. She is severely beaten and tortured for nearly two days, then left in an abandoned factory complex partially naked, bruised and with bloody feet (Figure 18). The next scene returns to Luther and Amanda in his suite, they are both wearing dressing gowns (as opposed to evening wear in the earlier scene) and Luther is smoking a fat cigar..... satisfied (Figure 19). The violence is explicit, the sex is implicit.

> "A sabre penetrating a vagina is a weapon, so is the camera or pen that renders it, so is the penis for which it substitutes. The persons who produce the image are also weapons as men deployed in war become in their persons weapons. Those who defend or protect the image are, in this same sense, weapons. The values in the pornographic work are also manifest in everything surrounding the work. The valuation of women in pornography is a secondary theme in that the degradation of women exists in order to postulate, exercise and celebrate male power." (12)

This power is made apparent by the physical size and physique women are given in relation to their male counterparts, and the manner in which men and women are depicted relating to each other. This is true for both good and evil male characters, whether their intent is to protect or inflict harm upon the helpless woman, the message is clear: your destiny is in the hands of the men (Figure 20).

THE NEW MAN (13) "Because...work is only half of it" (Figure 21)

"His aquiline features and well rounded musculature have become a common denominator of the 80s, a sign of the sexual times. A potent symbol for men and women searching for new images and visions of masculinity in the wake of feminism and the men's movement. The new man is a rebel and an outlaw from hardline masculinity, from the shirt-busting antics of the Incredible Hulk to the jaw-busting antics of John Wayne. He is an about-face from that whole fraternity of the Right Stuff, from Eastwood to Stallone, with their staccato utterances and their castellated emotions." (14)

"He is everywhere. In the street, holding babies, pushing prams, collecting children, shopping with progeny, panting in the ante-natal classes, shuffling sweaty-palmed in maternity rooms, grinning in the Mothercare catalogue, fighting with absentee mums and the vagaries of washing machines in the Persil ad." (15)

The apparent renegotiation of masculinity that recent productions have displayed, primarily in the medium of advertisements and magazines is also featured in films such as <u>Fatal Attraction</u>. It has led writers to make such claims as "advertisers are beginning to treat male and female, for all their marked differences, as formally interchangeable terms".(16) If one examines the treatment of male and female that is being referred to here, where the apparent social constraints on each gender are relaxed (strong, tough career woman, men nursing children), the fact is to a large extent that the characteristics that are becoming supposedly interchangeable are the same characteristics that are already admired in both men and women because they are essential to the functioning of our society. Success, independence, intelligence, caring and sensitivity have not become interchangeable because of the good intentions of the new image makers "helping to redefine the norm for masculinity itself".(17) Considering the economic interests invested in popular culture, as I outline in the next chapter, the empirical deduction to be made from this occurrence is that it will serve the ideology of the society's economic base: capitalism.

This is quite obvious when the changes in representations of men are considered. The first thing to note is that these changes occur predominantly in advertising and magazines aimed at young, upwardly mobile men, i.e. those men who can afford to risk the critical repercussions from the traditionalists because they have already established social success as wage earner. The essential non-sexual gender identity of masculinity is retained, while associated social values are relaxed. As if in return for his allegiance to the requirements essential for our society's economic needs, the individual is given a certain privilege to disrespect other traditional male conventions. (Figures 22 and 23) Although this is an exception to the general trend in representations of masculinity, I think that it is important for three reasons.

Historically, as the economic base of society has evolved, the specific nature of men's functional role in society has fluctuated accordingly. This maintains the basic category which is considered natural and eternal - masculinity - while making appropriate adjustments which are effectively superficial to suit an environment which is constantly shifting. As the guise of masculinity remains stable, the process of change is rendered invisible. If radical feminism has provided the insight and momentum for the next evolutionary step of our society, "the key to human survival and transformation"(18), then as Chapman concludes:

"in times to come we will be more influenced by what we regard as feminine characteristics. If what we define as female qualities will be highly valued in our brave new future, then to maintain hegemony it is in men's interests to co-opt femininity. In this case, the future may be female, but I fear it will still belong to men."(19)

Secondly, the function of the critical analyses that describe this as "progressive renegotiations of maleness..... being represented in the culture of popular consumerism"(20), serve only to disguise the primary functions that are associated with men. They distort the reality by arguing primarily that this trend is general and applies in some profound way to the cultural definitions, signs and meanings of masculinity, and secondly that it is beneficial for men to be depicted in this "progressive" way.

I have questions consequently arising from this. Is the current interest in men's gender roles, masculinity and male feminism exclusive to the men who would be identified as middle or owning class, i.e. those who are directly involved with or who are related to economic provilege in society?

Will genuine enquiries into men's gender conditioning be undermined by the current proliferation of material that is ill-thought out, contains spurious arguments and makes inaccurate conclusions, showing all the elements of another middle class fad?

The third, and most important reason why I think these apparent changes are significant is because they allow us to identify the primary social function that is associated with men. Identified by deduction from what has changed and what remains consistent in the images of men. Men are indisputably represented as an accomplice with capitalist ideology and economic expansion. This is not to suggest that sufficient proof has been provided for these points, however, they constitute an important argument that will be developed throughout this essay.

"THIS COULD BE FOREVER" (Figure 24)

The depictions of men, many and varied as they at first appear, generally fit within several distinct conventions identified by Andrea Dworkin, as the tenets of male-suprematist ideology.(21) I will give a concise and hopefully adequate description of each of these seven tenets as described by Dworkin.

The first tenet of male-suprematist ideology is that men have a metaphysical assertion of self, an "I am" that exists a priori, bedrock, absolute, no embellishment or apology required, indifferent to denial or challenge. It expresses intrinsic authority.

Second, power is physical strength used over and against others less strong or without the sanction to use strength as power.

Third, power is the capacity to terrorize, to use self and strength to inculcate fear, fear in a whole class of persons, of a whole class of persons. Fourth, men have the power of naming, to define experience, to articulate boundaries and values, to designate to each thing its realm and qualities, to determine what can and cannot be expressed, to control perception itself. This relates as much to the production of images as to the content, the power to make a photograph or image, and control the necessary resources for circulation, dissemination of ideology. This will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter. Fifth, men have the power of owning. Historically, this power has been absolute, denied to some men by other men, in the main upheld by armed force and law. By way of representations of the relationship between men and women, men's ownership of women is implicit by the portrayal of abusive economic power.

Sixth, is the power of money, already described in detail earlier in this chapter.

Seventh, men have the power of sex. This depends on the ability to define meaning as men insist on women conforming to his supremely ridiculous definition of her as sexual object. Thus relating to her as such, implying the charasteristics of owning, naming, power with the attempt to realise his self.

Thus men and women are defined in relation to each other (Figure 25). Because of the exclusive nature of male and female, neither makes sense without the other. By this method of making one definition dependent on the other, the construct of of masculinity is implied in depictions of either gender. This is true even for the more complex issue of the new man, despite the feint, the information about how men are supposed to be remains essentially the same. For example, The Big Easy (23) tells the story of a young hot-shot D.A. Ellen Barkin, sent south to investigate corruption in the police force and to nail Dennis Quaid, a worldly Lothario and lovable rogue who is suspected of corruption. She falls for him, he falls for her, and the rest of the story is about his moral salvation and their capture of the real villain. Throughout this film Barkin's role as the strong, tough career woman is constantly undermined, she is shown as neurotic and instable. This is in contrast to Quaid's version of masculinity, affected by the new images: his approach to sex is sensitive, he responds caringly to Barkin and breaks down in tears occasionally. This is a masculinity suffused with emotion and warmth, feeling, responsive, caring, vulnerable and yet playful and competent. As Chapmen states: "Feminity is yet again unstable and aberrant". (24) Masculinity contains and defines control, Maintaining power.

The depictions of men contain explicit and specific rules for men in our culture. The visual devices used to signify this information are repetitive and rigid, relying on the most basic references to the symbols and surroundings that constitute our perception of how men should behave and appear.

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Consequently the image makers must rely on novelty and current style to remake the tired, prescriptive scenarios of conformity in such a way that is above suspicion. The qualities that determine masculinity are rarely itemised and almost never explicitly stipulated. This uniformity of information suggests a negative root, that is, it is not the uniformity itself that is so greatly valued, but the fact that it demonstrates the absence of other values. For men, what remains absent is personal expressiveness. Our subject is now the manner of men's collusion with this mechanism of communication, whether images reflect or shape these attitudes.

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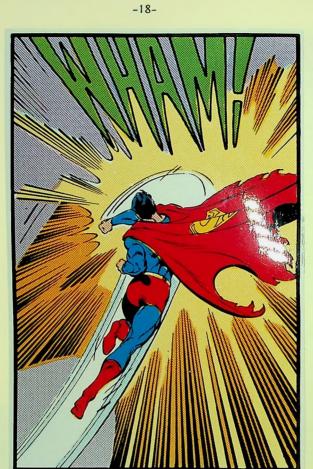
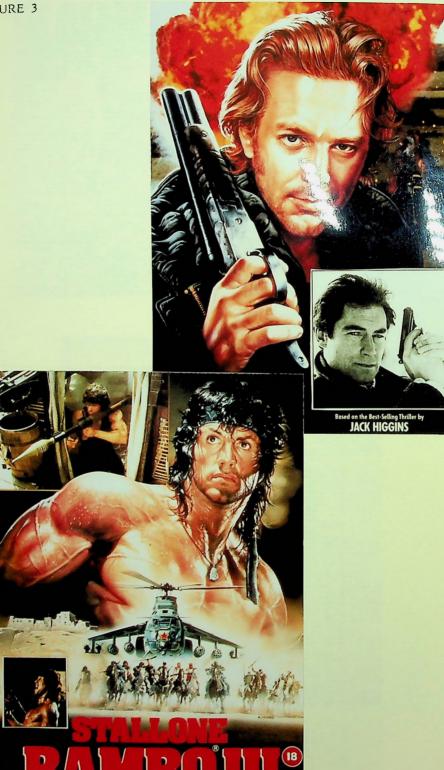




FIGURE 2 INSET: ROBOCOP



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FIGURE 4



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FIGURE 5







FIGURE 7



Good friends

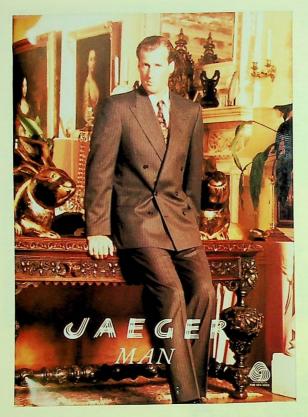


FIGURE 8





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FIGURE 10





FIGURES 12 and 13



FIGURES 14 and 15







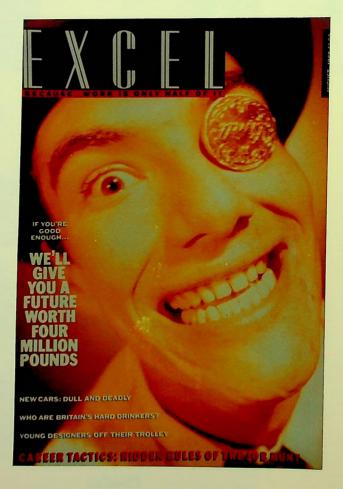
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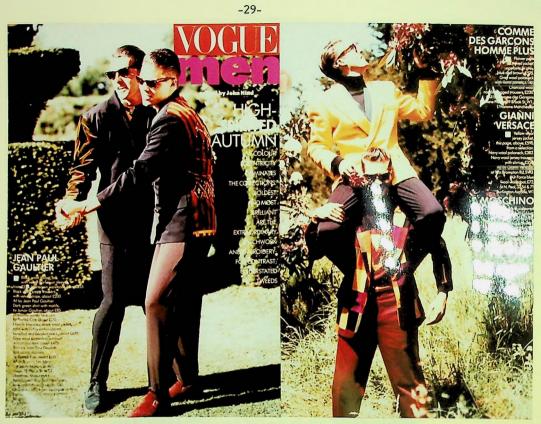
FIGURE 18





FIGURE 20 GOOD AND EVIL, SPOT THE DIFFERENCE











FOOTNOTES CHAPTER ONE

- Quote from Robocop initiator of programme. 1.
- Sylvester Stallone, Movie (magazine) Issue V February 1989, Newsfield. 2.
- Featured in Superman No.15. London Edition Magazines 1989 3. Bloodsport is another Vietnam veteran, a huge muscular black man, whose psychological state has been manipulated by Lex Luther with the purpose of luring and assassinating Superman. Racism is another characteristic of western popular culture, allying the forces of the great white superhero against the implcit evil threat that other races embody. This issue and its social implications are discussed fully in Male Order; editors: Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford; Lawrence and Wishart, London 1988, in the chapter "Race, Sexual Politics and Black Masculinity: A Dossier"; Kobena Mercer and Isaac Julien. Also Black Masculinity: The Black Male's Role in American Society; Robert Staples; Black Scholar Press London (USA) 1982.
- 4. 1988 Celebrated "50 Years of Truth, Justice and the American Way", DC Comics making the most of Superman 50 years on.
- 5. Margaret Lonergan, "Towards a Theory of Iconism in Advertising".
- An example of this is the recent Vogue promotion featuring Pentax 6. cameras and Homo Regine clothes; Vogue September 1988, pages 261-269.
- 7. Dick Grayson, alias Robin, to Bruce Wayne, alias Batman, on his grand tour of the "lofty Wayne Foundation Building"; Batman #7 London Editions Magazines 1989.
- 8. Bloodsport again!when Superman's assassin goes on the rampage in Metropolis, Luther sends a regiment of his private army to "corral his trigger-happy agent before more damage is done".Superman lends a hand. Superman No. 15. London Editions Magazines 1989.
- 9. Featured in The Savage Sword of Conon the Barbarian No. 153. Marvel Magazines 1988.
- 10. Superman No. 12, London Editions Magazines 1988.
- Andrea Dworkin, Pornography page 20. 11.
- 12. Ibid, page 25.
- 13. Subtitle to Excel magazine.
- 14. Rowena Chapman. "The Great Pretender: Variations on the New Man Theme". Male Order page 226. This is without doubt the best reasoned contribution to the subject of the New Man, amongst many irrelevent and confusing discourses. Chapman's essay provides an excellent insight into the ideology and implications of this apparent renegotiation of masculinity.
- 15. Ibid, page 226.
- Andrew Wernick, "From Voyeur to Narcissist", Beyond Patriarchy page 280. 16. A typical example of the sort of nonsense I referred to above, Wernick's claims are spurious and beyond reason. For example, "an even more basic aspect of the old patriarchal code has begun to come unstuck, putting in question not just the traditonal model of male identity, but the very polarity between the sexes that has hitherto defined gender as codable at all". page 287. This sort of analysis is simplistic and can only weaken genuine arguments as I indicate later in the chapter. 17. Ibid, page 280.
- Robin Morgan, The Anatomy of Freedom, Martin Robertson, 1982. 18. quoted by Rowena Chapman.
- 19. Rowena Chapman, "The Great Pretender", Male Order page 248.
- Frank Mort, "Boy's Own? Masculinity, Style and Popluar Culture" 20. Male Order page 197. A man who doesn't "believe that consumption is simply foisted by marketing hype and a lust for profits". page 215, and claims to be a socialist?
- 21.
- Andrea Dworkin, <u>Pornography</u> pages 13 25. Marylyn French, <u>On Women, Men and Morals</u> 22.
- An example cited by Rowena Chapman in "The Great Pretender". 23.
- 24. Ibid, page 245.

CHAPTER TWO

REFLECTION OR REFRACTION

When referring to popular culture I intend the term to mean mass media, which encompasses all visual images designed for mass distribution and consumption.

The first relevant point in this approach to identifying the dynamic between men and popular culture images of men is that to produce and distribute for this market requires a large investment of capital. For example, the cost of buying a single page advertising space in one issue of <u>Woman's Way</u> is in the region of £1000.

> "The capitalist has no personal concern about the use values he produces; that is, he has no concern, whether his commodity be guns or medicine, or what use is made of it, as long as he receives his exchange value. He has only the indirect concern that if no person buys his commodity, then the exchange value cannot be realised in money." (1)

The primary factor in the production of an image for the popular culture market must be that it will maintain or increase the level of excess profit for the producer. An image can fulfill this function in two different ways. Firstly, if the image is incorporated in a magazine, film or comic, commodity as defined as any product sold in the market. The exchange value of a commodity is only realised when it is exchanged for money. Secondly, if the depiction of masculinity is associated with a product. by way of advertising. In this case the meaning of the image is not necessarily explicit but must be created by the viewer with recourse to cultural conventions, transferring the qualities of masculinity onto the product, masculinity signifies the concept of male-suprematist ideology. When applying Marxist analysis to the utilization of images of masculinity we are confronted by the fact that these depictions are invariably combined with other representations of contrasting characteristics. This is to say that in a scenario containing many characters there may be evidence that conflicts with male-suprematist ideology. For example, the character of Rampage (2), a giant, muscular woman, who beats up Superman. Then this application of theory can be reasonably criticised on the basis that it chooses examples to fit the argument expounded. It would appear that there is a chance that a commodity will be bought, on the basis that it contains a certain depiction of masculinity. But, that chance is relatively small because of the many other characters depicted in the complex format of a popular culture production. i.e. The purchase of a commodity may not reliably be solely attributed to the inclusion of one character in a story.

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There are two relevant points to make in response to this. Firstly, the a priori knowledge with which a person approaches such a depiction of a gender interaction will inevitably instill certain presumptions as to the manner in which that interaction will evolve. This is the result of a historical tendency to value whatever is "male" greater than those things associated with "female". In terms of the stories and scenarios featured in popular culture, it is fair to say that a basic formula of "the good guy always comes out on top" has been established, by means of repetition if little else. This means that any characters that do not "fit in" with the male-suprematist ideology will be interpreted merely as a device, by which, the tenets of that ideology may be enhanced. In actuality, this is the case, exceptions to the gender roles are incorporated into scenarios for the express purpose of reinforcing the traditional role models. In the case of Rampage, she is created and controlled by an enquiring scientist who exploits her strength for his own personal and political aims. Eventually, after a number of violent clashes with Superman (whose strength she can absorb), he saves her by destroying the scientist's equipment. Rampage returns to her original form as a timid, feminine woman, ever grateful to Superman for his intervention and protection. As the cover of the comic reads: "Superman meets Rampage,...she ain't no lady!".

The second point considers advertising as an indirect method of realising the exchange value of a commodity by utilizing certain images. For example, all of the depictions of masculinity illustrated in the first chapter become primary features associated with their vehicle of communication (commodity) as advertising images. In the case of such characters as Rambo, Conon the Barbarian, Robocop, Superman and Crocodile Dundee, it is obvious that the means of communication is advertised as the character. Indeed, the character has become the essential element of the product. There is little room for "irrational mental leaps" (3) between signifier and signified, reference to the commodity is now so insignificant that we may deduce that effectively, the character functions as the commodity.

MARKET: UTILITY AND DEMAND

The competitive market tends to allocate resources to produce things according to the pattern of consumer demand. The basis of neoclassical economics is the notion that consumer demand, in turn, is determined by the utility of each commodity to the consumer.

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Utility is defined as the pleasure or satisfaction one receives from consuming a product. On the basis of their radical viewpoint, Hunt and Sherman write:

> ".....we believe the pattern of consumer demand is forced into a particular form by many things other than the actual pleasure or satisfaction derived directly from consumption of each commodity. But because the term utility is almost always used to explain demand, it will be retained but redefined for our purposes. We conceive of utility as synonymous with desire. If we saw that a particular good possesses utility for a particular person, we simply mean that that person desires to buy the good in question".(4)

An argument common to radical analyses of the media is that these images act:

"to position us as sexed individuals within a network of unequal power relationships which it validates, with its ideology of photographic "truthfulness", as natural and immutable." (5)

A strong argument against this suggestion is that the consumers must already be incorporated into such an inequitable social system for these depictions to be effective. This is to say that the images must reflect values that the consumers already consider as their own, rather than impose desires or ideals that are not already strongly identified with. If we refer to the economics of advertising and its social context, the amount of capital investment required to produce an image that will increase the utility of a commodity. Then we can assume without any doubt that the elements used in the composition of an image, will function to predictably to increase the level of profit for the capitalist by causing a reallocation of consumers' expenditures among the commodities advertised.

> "Some small amount of advertising is needed in any society to supply useful information to consumers. Studies in the U.S. economy, however, indicate that more than 90% of all advertising is not information but an attempt to persuade consumers that each of several identical products is better than the others".(6)

So, in this sense the argument against radical media analyses is correct, men must already identify with, and aspire to, the values of masculinity if it constitutes an effective element of commodity exchange. If this is the case then the next logical step in our enquiry is to examine the question of whether these values are inherent or instilled in men, nature or nurture?

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER TWO

- 1. E.K.Hunt/Howard. J.Sherman, Economics page 209.
- 2. Superman January 1989. London Editions Magazines.
- 3. Judith Williamson, <u>Decoding Advertising</u>, discussing the referent system: "Things mean to us and we give meaning to the product on the basis of an irrational mental leap invited by the form of the advertisement".
- 4. E.K.Hunt/Howard. J.Sherman. Economics page 176.
- 5. Patricia Holland, Jo Spence, Simon Watney. Photography/Politics: Two page 1.
- 6. E.K.Hunt/Howard. J.Sherman, Economics page 501

CHAPTER THREE CONDITIONAL POWER

ENQUIRY

If, as the depictions of men would have us believe, men are free to determine their individual ambition or desire, then it is reasonable to assume that men choose the behaviour which most suits them. From this we can deduce that the conventions which represent masculinity in popular culture reflect accurately men's interests in our society. Men are depicted in the position of power, control and domination; clearly a position of privilege in capitalist culture.

Ruskin in 1864 invented the doctrine of separate spheres to avoid the danger of sexual equality by defining what was natural, i.e. as complimentary opposites. (1).

"Now their separate characters are briefly these. The man's power is active progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention, his energy for adventure, for war and conquest....But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle and her intellect is not for invention or recreation, but sweet ordering, arrangement and decision....By her office and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation. The man, in his rough work in the open world, must encounter all peril and trial - to him therefore must be the failure, the offence, the inevitable error, often he must be wounded or subdued, often misled and always hardened." (2)

Much attention has been paid to the social injustice that women have continued to be subject to due to such arguments. However, very little consideration has been given to the effects that such assumptions, about the nature of men, have on men's lives. On occasion when men do notice any contradictions in their lifestyle, they have tended to blame women, that they should sacrifice themselves in unsatsifactory or humiliating work for the demands of an insatiable wife and family. This reaction of indignant men, that they are oppressed by women, is clearly inaccurate.

The insights provided by feminist enquiry are valuable and relevant to this essay. They offer an incisive and systematic method of identifying the precise nature of the injustice women suffer and the mechanisms by which it is perpetrated. This enquiry into male gender conditioning is modelled on the argument made by Janet Radcliffe Richards in her excellent book <u>The Sceptical Feminist</u>, an excellent analysis of contemporary feminism that sacrifices neither rationality nor radicalism. (3) My account differs fundamentally in that it is applied to men's situation in society, the other aspects that differ arise from this and do not significantly change the argument.

The question of whether men are conditioned by social influences is one of the most basic issues confronting us when regarding men's role in society. Does the culture train men to fit into the dominant and privileged positions or are men destined by their inherent nature to be the rulers and subsequently the organisers of a patriarchal system. When the word "conditioning" is referred to, it is generally meant to describe a constraint on the development of the individual nature of any person, that it comes between a man and his individual potential. Conditioning is used as a basic argument by anyone identifying social habits that are supposedly against the best interests of the people themselves. The question is: Does men's conditioning act against the individual man's potential development, or does it complement that development?

CONDITIONING

Conditioning is claimed to form the basis of men's lifestyles (4), that men are stronger and more aggressive because these are the expectations that society has of them. They are businessmen, the workers, providers and producers of the world, trained from birth to fit this role. This may be true, but it does not necessarily address the claim that conditioning causes a man to deviate from fulfilling his individual potential mainly because we cannot determine what his potential may have been, using his present likes and dislikes as evidence.

The essentialist argument accounts for the apparent fact that men are incapable of cooking, cleaning, organising a household or caring for children, and that their personalities are fundamentally different because they are men. This may be true but it may also be true that these characteristics are particular to men, merely as a result of the particular and exclusive treatment that men receive on the basis of their gender. The only attributes that may be inequivocally associated with men are the distinguishing features of their sexual function and reproductive function. These are universal differences between the genders as opposed to the specific differences that may be conditioned by any particular society relative to its own needs. In the reproductive function, females everywhere have the ability to carry, give birth to and nurse children, males are always coopted to inseminate the female. In the sexual function we have different biological roles in the activity as an end in itself.

This offers no reason for our current roles where our differences seem to provide a justification for having different expectations of the genders. The masculine attributes of bravery, logic, spatial skills, inability to care for children and express emotions are invariably explained with reference to men's different biological functions.

> "Every culture in the world makes a distinction between what is men's work and what is women's. However, with a few universal exceptions (hunting large aquatic fauna and smelting ore, both by men) what is men's work in one culture may be women's in another." (5).

The provision of a specifically male-orientated environment is something that men experience from birth in terms of expectations and consequent treatment by parents, teachers, in fact all adults. Our society is organised to cater for the genders separately in institutions (i.e. schools, hospitals, hostels, social organisations). Economically, in capitalist society, women have been manipulated to be dependent on men. Men are expected to be providers. Legally our system makes judgements relative to gender. Our educational system is designed to favour the progress of men, indeed, one's manhood is demonstrated by exhibiting these advantages, showing power over women, property and other men. The genders are identified and separated by the clothes and colours that they are dressed in, different clothes being suitable for different functions and games. For young men there are constant reminders that associations with girls are not conducive to respectful status amongst his peers. Indeed, being identified with any non-masculine group of people will target an individual for similar treatment which that group receives as an oppressed group in society. This is described in more detail later in this chapter under "direct social pressure".

Such discrimination on the grounds of gender is counting gender as relevant in situations where it is not, and which therefore must count against many individual men who do not follow the prescribed norm of masculinity.

However, this is not an adequate explanation of "conditioning" in terms of individual freedom because if we change the circumstances of a man's upbringing then we may produce characteristics that are perhaps more desirable or appropriate for a fair and equitable society. But this new man is not necessarily fulfilling his individual potential any more than he may be in our present society.

This is to say that social influences undoubtedly shape the way a person is, but it is not enough to say that they force a man to deviate from fulfilling his individual potential; that he is not free to determine and control his own destiny at any given moment in time. To examine this concept of conditioning one must first presume that rational human behaviour consists of responding to each situation and experience, as it occurs, with a new response, created afresh at that moment to precisely fit and handle the situation as that situation is defined by the information received through all the senses of that person. This concept and its implications are elaborated in later chapters, for now it is sufficient to say that conditioning interrupts rational human behaviour and the individual's ability to determine their true desires.

The effect of the specific expectations that are presented to men, as they grow up, the fact that these expectations are exclusive and particular to men and that they are excluded from all other possibilities, results in a form of education which is based on limitations and which demands a narrow range of specific appropriate responses.

> "Usually when children are subjected to pressures in growing up they do not think separately about what they would like to do and what adult pressures and encouragements compel them to do; they just get into habits of doing what produces the least unacceptable consequences. The result is that when the situation changes, or when there is some prospect of it's changing, they may not rush to embrace the new but cling to the habits they have grown up with. They do not understand that their present preferences came about by the forcible suppression of their natural (that is, inherent) inclinations, but even if they do, they may well have difficulty in ridding themselves of the habits they have gathered. These habits may then come between the adults and their real desires." (6)

This system of predictable responses operates in an automatic rigid manner as a result of training which is gender specific and is exclusive of other possibilities. This implies that in addition to the information regarding our gender role, there is a mechanism that must first interfere with men's ability to evaluate that information in terms of their individual requirements. This process is, it must be stressed, in addition to the institutionalized methods of withholding information and the structure of possibilities. Ignorance, as a result of insufficient exposure to that which is supposedly different to men and unsuitable for men to learn, has them in the situation that even if they were inclined to do certain things that were not conducive to these expectations, they would be immediately impeded by their lack of experience and familiarity with even such simple, everyday tasks as cooking and cleaning.

This means that not only their ability to choose between possibilities is restricted because of the narrow view of appropriate responses available for a young man, also their very ability to see possibilities is curtailed by the selective experience available to men.

Failure to understand the nature of the world and the structure of possibilities is thus at the root of internal lack of freedom, where a man is impeded in his desires by his ignorance or habit. It would make sense then, if this is the case, that other people may be justified in overiding someone's immediate desires for what they actually do want. The difficulty that arises here is to distinguish between a man and the effects of his conditioning, how can we tell if it is not in an individual man's true nature to be interested in fast cars and football as opposed to things that the liberators think he should be interested in. Of course, in a society where men are conditioned in general to favour certain interests and behave in certain ways, it is impossible for us to discern between men who are inherently suited to their genderrole and those who have had to go along with the gender-role because doing so is less unpleasant than suffering the social consequences of resistance. This is because all men will appear to have similar likes and dislikes whether these are intrinsic to their nature or not, so this cannot be used as any guide to the extent of the effect of conditioning on any individual. In fact it seems quite impossible to be absolutely certain as to whether a man is conditioned, and if so, what his real desires are and how they could be realised. This means that any intervention by a well intentioned liberator may well be as uncongenial to a man's real wishes as the supposed "conditioning" that produces characteristics disapproved of by the liberator's particular ideology. For instance, if a man is interested mainly in engineering, then it is true to say that this may be attributed to his formative influences, and if these were different then he may exhibit different interests.

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However, an interest in engineering may be ideally suited to his particular nature and these "conditioned" symptoms may be a genuine development of his intelligence. So, whether liberation from something is good depends on whether the thing to be liberated from is really bad, and in the case of an individual's behaviour, it is impossible to know this from a man's expressed likes or dislikes.

The different social pressures exerted on men may be clarified in two ways, of indirect social pressure and direct social pressure.

INDIRECT SOCIAL PRESSURE

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Indirect social pressure is probably the most insidious process of coercion applied to men, as it is apparently invisible or regarded as "natural" as a force which determines a man's actions. Indirect social pressure relies on the assumption that there are certain "correct" ways of being and that if you, as an individual, fit these requirements then there are certain social gains to be made.

For example, society has not decreed that all young men must be successful businessmen and any who are not will be made suffer. However, any man knows that when applying for a job or a bank loan, it is apparently in his own interests to look smart, clean and "well" dressed with the aim of influencing what is believed about him as an individual man. What is believed about individual men must be influenced by what is believed about all men; what is believed stems from what is wanted. So what appears to be a personal choice to dress in a certain manner, is in fact an act of subservience resulting from the need to compete in society for certain personal gains. The focus of this indirect pressure then, is on the prize that you will get if you will act and appear a certain required way. The function of advertising in our culture is to raise the value of the prize to such a level that men will adopt certain behaviour beneficial to their chances of acquisition. These social forces exist by way of accidental and selfish desires, pressures to conform to other people's desires and needs by making yourself highly desirable. The purpose of raising men's aspirations and ambition increases the amount of competition for the better jobs, for the more desirable women, thus increasing the extent to which one must compromise oneself to succeed far to the extreme of any social norm. These social pressures work on individuals without any consideration of what is suited to them, working to make them conform to the wishes of other people, for the functioning of society.

DIRECT SOCIAL PRESSURE

Direct social pressure on the other hand is when other people or the society actively tries to change you to become what they want you to be.

A clear example of this is the pressure exerted on men, when they do not follow the expected norms, in the form of gay oppression. This prejudice, as well as being about men's sexual choice or preference, has to do with being in anyway different from the required characteristics of the male gender-role. So, while generally attached to people who are identified as gay, it in effect becomes the excuse to maintain the violence and humiliation that enforces the role onto all men. The culture says that men are not to love each other and more than that, we may be killed for loving each other and the queer bashers who perpetrate such actions are supported or condoned by society, overlooked by the judicial system.

Lack of civil rights, laws against gay sexual activity, negative stereotypes portrayed by advertising and the media are all elements of the systematic repression of a possible area of development in all men, which is invariably experienced as violence or threats of violence from their peers, if ever they dare to show unmanly traits such as caring for or wanting to be close to other men.

The combined effects of the indirect and direct social pressures, result in men as individuals interested in achieving certain, similar objectives for their apparent benefit and avoiding being identified with certain behaviour or certain groups of people to avoid the consequent unfavourable social consequences.

This does not, however, adequately explain the apparent susceptability of human intelligence to such formative influences. So we are left with the question : If human intelligence is qualitatively different from that of other life-forms, why do humans respond in such a predictable manner to what amounts to basic methods of behavioural psychology in the form of conditioning? I will attempt to answer this question in the next chapter and at the same time outline a key feature of male gender conditioning; suppression of emotion.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER THREE

- 1. A detailed analysis of Ruskin, Mill and Carlyle's abuse of reason is provided by Kate Millet, Sexual Politics, pages 88 - 106.
- Ibid. page 93 quoted from John Ruskin, "Praeterita" reprinted in part in The Genius of John Ruskin, edited by John D. Rosenberg, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1963. page 441.
- 3. Janet Radcliffe Richards. <u>The Sceptical Feminist</u>, pages 50, 195. This is the first book I would recommend to anyone on the subject of feminism or social justice. It is without doubt the clearest analysis I have come across.
- 4. Michael Kaufman "The Construction of Masculinity", Beyond Patriarchy pages 1 27.
- 5. Eileen Kane, <u>An Anthropological Assessment of the Difference between</u> Men and Women. page 25.
- 6. Janet Radcliffe Richards, The Sceptical Feminist. page 109.

CHAPTER FOUR THE COST OF PRIVILEGE Over the past decades feminists have analysed, with a great deal of clarity, the contradictions in the expectations that women find themselves subject to in their upbringing: for example, women must submit to the power and authority of men and yet be capable of managing a household proficiently; she must appear weak and unable to cope on her own in the world and yet be strong enough to carry out the very physical labour of traditional female work. Whereas men it seems have great difficulty in identifying their position, men spend a lot of their energy appearing as social convention would have them, as if in a perpetual conspiracy against themselves. So, when these conventions are of such a nature that they make most men unhappy, we have no way of realising this because no man will want to admit to what society regards as failure.

There exists the argument that men have conspired to occupy the positions of privilege and power in society. The normal expectations of men being conducive to their controlling world and family resources. They don't have to become involved with the "boring", repetitive and "insignificant" duties of housecare and childrearing. Men's position in society it is argued, is one that they have established and maintained by violence and coercion. Their will is enforced when men's interests are not complied with by way of this tradition of violence.

Women are oppressed as second-class citizens who make up a large pool of cheap or free labour; having women excluded from "important" occupations and forced into traditional female work. According to this viewpoint, men's role, as defined by masculinity, is no different than that which is generally regarded as success in society, those aspects of personality that men are dissuaded from developing are undesirable anyway. This argument concludes that it is in men's optimum interest to maintain the structures of society as they exist, for men to remain the controlling agent of their own destiny.

I think that this argument is particularly dangerous and misleading as it claims to criticise the structures of an inherently inequitable and oppressive system, that is patriarchy. Yet the values and definitions of power and privilege used by the argument remain consistant with the ideology of that system. In this chapter, I will examine the basis upon which men assume such "power" and the implications that ensue for men as individuals.

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In the last chapter the conditioning mechanism is described as a very crude type of learning, so that individuals can learn from distress experiences to avoid similar situations. For other mammals, this process of substituting a new rigid pattern of behaviour for the inherited, instinctive behaviour, does not degrade their functioning. However, assuming that rational human intelligent functioning is qualitatively different from that of other life-forms, the conditioning process degrades our functioning enormously.

The following description of human nature has been reached by inductive logic, that is, reasoning from particular observations to a general conclusion. It applies without exception to all human beings. The process of inductive logic carrys with it the possibility that one more observation could undermine the generality of the conclusions. So, although the description of human nature given here is by no means provable, it is a premise which is accepted for the purposes of this essay.(1)

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Human intelligence manifests itself as rational behaviour. The essence of this behaviour is the ability to respond to each situation, as it occurs, with a new response, created at that moment to precisely fit and handle the situation. The situation as defined by the information received through all the senses of that person. This is qualitatively different from the pre-set, inherited response patterns or instincts which other living creatures respond with. This ability to create new responses operates by comparing and contrasting new information with that of past experiences, and constructing a response based on the similarities to past experience, modified to account for new information.

Allowing for a physically undamaged forebrain, each human has a large inherent capacity for intelligence, very large as compared with to the best functioning of presently observable adult humans.

The natural emotional tone of a human being is that of enjoyment of life. The natural relationship between any two humans is that of loving affection, communication and cooperation.

This description is clearly in conflict with the models which are provided by the media of popular culture, and the actual behaviour of human beings within our society. What follows is an account of the insights that have been gained by counselling and the theory that has been consequently reasoned by deductive logic. That is, elements derived from counselling experience that prove to be consistantly reproducable in practice. Even though there may be superficial similarities between this and other theories and practices, it is important to note that there has been no attempt made to borrow from or hybridize with other theories. This is essential as we attempt to maintain logical consistency by requiring logical consistancy.(2)

The natural intelligent behaviour of a human being is temporarily suspended by an experience that is emotionally distressing. The information relating to that experience will be retained by the individual in the form of a literal recording of all aspects of the incident. Immediately following a traumatic experience or at the first available opportunity, the distressed person will seek out the aware attention of another human being. If they are successful in getting this attention of another person, then emotional release ensues.

This emotional release manifests itself externally as one or more of the following precise physical processes; crying, trembling with cold perspiration, laughter, vigorous shaking with warm perspiration, scratching, stretching and yawning. This release often requires considerable time for completion. During this process of emotional release, other memories of similar incidents or experiences will be recalled and reviewed; the individual is not necessarily aware of this process occuring.

Rational evaluation and understanding of the information received during the distressing experience occurs only after emotional release. The level of understanding relates directly to the amount of emotional release completed. When completed, the irrational influences of the experience are completely eliminated.

The workings of this process are observable in any human, given an appropriate environment. Due to our cultural repression of emotional release, which I will review in more detail later, it is probably easiest to see this process occuring in young people who would not necessarily observe the same social rules which adults respect. For example, if a young boy falls and scratches his knee he will immediately look for company to share his hurt with. Given respectful listening and encouragement, from the other person, he will proceed to cry about the physical pain and any other distress associated with his fall, humiliation or fear. If the attention of the other person is maintained then the young boy may use the opportunity to review and release the emotions stored from similar, previous incidents. This process may not occur awarely, that is, he may be reviewing previous incidents by repeatedly referring to the scratch on his knee, long after the distress from the recent experience has been completely released. Having completed this process, his intelligence is functioning again, completely free from any negative effects related to the fall.

As a result of long term conditioning of the entire population, the spontaneous attempt to get the aware attention of another person to aid emotional release and evaluation is almost always rebuffed. If someone cries, it's "Here now, I'm sorry, but it can't be that bad". For men, "Big boys don't cry". "Here, here, here, I'll pour you a drink, stop shaking". "You're being silly. Life is serious, you can't spend your time giggling". "You're yawning, dear, you'd better go to bed". "Don't you take that tone of voice with me, young lady". "Yes, I know, but I'd like to tell you....." and none of us gets listened to. Applied to small children, these rebuffs begin and perpetrate the conditioning of the population which prevents emotional release.

This is the key element in men's conditioning which has men functioning at the level of masculinity. The suppression of emotion is generally applied to all members of society, for men as a group, this suppression is particularly strong, as emotion is associated with weakness, vulnerability and mental instability.

When the emotion associated with a distressing experience becomes suppressed, the unevaluated recording of that experience becomes a compulsive pattern of behaviour, occurring when later situations resemble the original experience strongly enough. Under such conditions, the rational, intelligent faculty of the person is again inhibited and the new information of the current experience is added to the rigid behaviour pattern. This reinforces the behaviour pattern and increases its possibility of being restimulated in the future. This process of restimulation and suppression can continue to the degree that the rigid behaviour pattern becomes an integral part of all activity.

There are three sources of these rigid, compulsive behaviour patterns. The first is the distressful experience that occurs due to an accident, such as the young boy who falls and scratches his knee. The second is by contagion, a person hurt in a certain way, when restimulated, will respond in the rigid behaviour pattern adopting a different role than when the original incident occurred. "....in beating their children, they (parents) are struggling to regain the power they once lost to their own parents. For the first time, they see the vulnerability of their own earliest years, which they are unable to recall, reflected in their children. Only now, when someone weaker than they is involved, do they finally fight back, often quite fiercely." (4)

Thus the beaten child becomes the beating father, the sexually abused youngster becomes the adult rapist. This is basically a system of transmission of aberration by contagion, well meaning adults unawarely but systematically instilling their own rigid distress patterns onto each child. The third source of these behaviour patterns is by the imposition of an oppression by conditioning, this will depend specifically on the group of people that an individual is identified with (class, gender, race, age etc.) The society operates to systematically impose these patterns, not only on the exploited members but also on the exploiting members in order for the rigid structure of the society to be maintained. This process is institutionalised in the education system, which educates slightly and installs patterns thoroughly.

A MAN'S WORLD

The culture has associated men with power and control. This image of man is one that all men can identify with, and in which all men can take some pride. However, this identity is not intended to give men a sense of individual power. The power as defined by our culture, is power over someone or something else, whether women, children, other men or the environment. Effectively this means that men portray bravado, a rigid ignorant strength that manifests as brutality in the home and in the company of peers. In the presence of those men of greater status and power, men must show humility, obedience and subservience.(5) Male-suprematist ideology always places men in a relatively privileged position in society, this is an illusion that becomes fundamental to men's basic motivations. Consequently the double binds and contradictions by which men are conditioned become invisible to them. However ridiculous these illusions of power may appear to someone who has not suffered the same mistreatment, to men these illusions represent survival. Men are caught between expectations to be in complete control at all times, yet they must surrender control to their superiors while maintaining dignity and self respect.

"Anthony Sampson describes the workings of ITT in a book published in 1980. In this conglomerate, the highest executives, ultimate authorities in their own companies, were controlled, constricted and terrorised by the chief executive, Harold Geneen.....According to the executives, these meetings were terrifying ordeals. Geneen supervised them using a strategy of confrontation, humiliation and exposure: You have to be prepared to have your balls screwed off in public and then joke afterward as if nothing happened." (6).

Men are expected to be committed to the pursuit of power while denying self expression, emotion and sensitivity, because these elements are, by definition, incompatable; sensitivity implies weakness. The behaviour required of men can be observed resulting in two basic attitudes; loyalty and conformity are forms of obedience and conformity as uniformity, i.e. the absence of other values. This absence is that of personal expression, men must suppress their emotions to function in the role of masculinity that demands the exercise of power over others.

> "The annihilation of the individual self and the attempt to overcome thereby the unbearable feeling of powerlessness are only one side of the masochistic strivings. The other side is the attempt to become part of a bigger and more powerful whole outside of oneself, to submerge and participate in it. This power can be a person, an institution, God, the nation, conscience, or a psychic compulsion. By becoming part of a power which is felt as unshakably strong, eternal and glamorous, one participates in its strength and glory. One surrenders one's own self and renounces all strength and pride connected with it, one loses one's integrity as an individual and surrenders freedom; but one gains a new security and a new pride in the participation in the power in which one submerges."(7)

This is the nature of the illusions that result from the susceptibility to being conditioned by stress experiences; men can endure mistreatment as long as they can get to mistreat someone or something else in turn. Perhaps the most devastating effect of this is in men's relationships with their children. Where traditionally fathers have been identified as tyrants, imposing judgement and punishment. Obedience and a blind acceptance of values and expectations are the demands of the father. In turn, he is feared and revered, more often than not it is the father who insists on imposing gender stereotypes on children, dealing out physical and psychological violence to offenders. This role is further enforced by the collusion of the mother, who casts the father as an admonisher and chastiser. "Just wait and see what your father has to say about this". This isolates and alienates young people from their father, by means of fear and confusion. Witnessing the perpetration of violence upon sisters, brothers and mothers reinforces that fear. As there is little or no consideration given to the emotional needs of young boys, this fear will be internalised and become part of the rigid, masculine behaviour that is respected and revered by society.

This effect of a repressed incident determining a compulsive, repetitive re-enactment of that distress experience is an adequate explanation of all observable irrational behaviour in human beings, of whatever kind or degree.

The nature of mistreatment that any person will suffer is specific to their gender. Therefore the rigid behaviour patterns that they consequently exhibit, whether as oppressed or oppressor, will be specific to their gender.

From the counselling process that I referred to earlier in this chapter, we can observe that any human being can become free of the restrictions, inhibitions and aberrations of the accumulated distress experience recordings. This is done by reinstating a relationship with some other person's aware attention and allowing the emotional release to proceed to completion. In our society the direct pressure on men to suppress emotions effects them as children,

"Big boys don't cry".

and is continued into the workplace in adult life, where emotional sensitivity is perceived as feminine and consequently unacceptable. A man who spends most of his life in the workplace, suppressing his emotions, will find it very difficult to relax or allow himself to feel, when the environment allows.

The patterns of domination or power over other people and the environment makes it feel virtually impossible for men to establish relationships that would in any way risk or compromise that power. Men thus avoid being equal, honest, intimate or trusting others for fear of losing control; the very fear that is repressed in men as young boys, as this would be a position of vulnerability and defencelessness to the very people who men have been taught to treat with contempt and disrespect.

The extreme competitiveness conditioned in men results in fear and distrust of each other. The indirect social pressures outlined in chapter 3 rely on men competing for a particular prize or reward, for which, the minimum requirements are simply being male. The gender based prejudice in our society, despite any contrary legistration, means that men will still be competing with each other for the employment with better pay and conditions. The heterosexual prejudice in society portrays certain "feminine" women as sexually desirable, so men again will find themselves competing with each other. This competition as indirect social pressure, and with gay oppression as direct social pressure, results in men's inability to get close to, confide in or trust each other. The familiar topics of banter and bravado between men, consist of sport, politics, work and entertainments, anything that does not concern the personal as this would leave them vulnerable to the same abuse, humiliation, ridicule and threats of violence they suffered as boys.

The consequence of men's collusion with these values of self control, control over others and extreme competitiveness, is chronic isolation as an inability to share experiences or problems in an intimate and personal manner. The reality for many men is life as a barren, cold and lonely existance, isolated from other people and unable to express themselves. This leaves men susceptable to manipulation and coercion by the institutions in society, forcing them into boring, repetitive and often dangerous work, into the armed forces where men are expected to kill or be killed. The tension that men have to accommodate as part of their everyday lives, results in a high incidence of stress related diseases, physical deterioration and early death. The underlying message for men is that they can perform useful and sometimes important functions, as producer and protector, but as individuals they are essentially superfluous and may be treated as dispensable if necessary.

CONCLUSION

There are some things, about which, there are no doubts as to their goodness and badness. For example, frustration, distress and suffering cannot be considered as anything but intrinsically bad, to be endured only when they serve as a means to good. If social injustice is defined as a system of conditioning and pressure that will operate against a man's individual interests, then it is clear that men suffer social injustice on the basis of their gender.

This is in conflict with the principal complaint of so many feminists, that men have contrived by various means to get for themselves an inordinately large share of the good things in life, leaving women with a corresponding disproportion of the poor. The effect of this analysis, evaluating advantage

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FOOTNOTES CHAPTER FOUR

- Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology. Andrea Dworkin, Intercourse. 1.
- This description is based on the theory that has been developed 2. by a worldwide group of similarly interested people, myself included, through the reevaluation counselling network.
- 3. For example, many of these conclusions are similar to those of Alice Millar's work, as described in The Drama of Being a Child. However, it differs fundamentally in that she maintains Freud's drive theory and a "true self that in the end is and must be the subject of those instinctual drives". pages 15 - 16. Alice Millar, For Your Own Good page 16. Marylin French, On Women, Men and Morals, French gives an accurate
- 4.
- 5. analysis of the power orientation of society, exposing the internal reality of corporate politics in chapter 4.
- 6. Ibid, page 334.
- 7. Erich Fromm, The Fear of Freedom, page 133.
- Alice Millar, analysises the effects of this cultural system of pedagogy 8. in For Your Own Good. Eileen Kane, An Anthropological Assessment of the Differences between
- 9. Men and Women; "In 89% of cultures, only males participate in fighting and warfare" page 22.
- 10. "On average the life expectancy of men is 7 years shorter than that of women". Population Division of the UN Secretariat 1985.

CHAPTER FIVE MECHANISMS OF MAN(IPULATION)

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Visual depictions become part of the social mechanism that limits individual freedom by restimulating rigid patterns of behaviour present in individuals as a result of those individuals being subject to specific mistreatment on the basis of their gender. The information contained in any gender related image may be associated with the direct representation of a gender role, or it may infer information, indirectly representing that gender role by depicting the other. In this chapter I will examine the nature of this mechanism following the basis of assumptions outlined in the last chapter.

MAN MADE IMAGE

Whoever creates a picture of a man, whether male or female, is already personally incorporated into a society which is built upon traditional inequity and injustice between the genders. Therefore, the decisions that the producer makes with regard to a picture, will be influenced by the values and dominant prejudices prevailing in their conditioning. So the picture will, to a degree, reflect this prejudice. This will of course depend upon how well equipped the producer is to deal with this issue. How aware they are of the social injustice and particularly how knowledgeable they are of the methods of perpetration of the attitudes that maintain this injustice. Then it becomes a question of whether they choose to collude or interfere with the stereotypes of the male gender role. This ability to make personal choices is, of course, inhibited by the effects of their own conditioning. So someone may, with the very best intentions and will for humankind, depict the male gender role as highly desirable; reinforcing the values of the society by way of promotion.

The other end of production of an image, from conception, is perception. Here also, social values permeate the process, to influence the effect of any male depiction on the viewer.

This is further complicated by the association of genuinely attractive human attributes with the male gender role. Characteristics such as gentleness, strength, charm, intelligence, independence, courage and success are all highly desirable in any person. Yet because of the emphasis in our society that gives everything that men are, and everything that men do, far greater importance than women, the reading of any picture is going to be determined by what the viewer has grown accustomed to in terms of relative associated value. Thus a picture of a strong, intelligent man may unintentionally act as as promotional tool for gender conditioning because it fits in without any conflict to the definition of the male gender role; i.e. it is recognised as an element of the whole preconceived idea that people acquire about the nature of men.

I think that this has resulted in many weak liberation strategies on the part of men who maintain this confusion between admirable traits (in women and men) and the gender role; denouncing strength, independence, intelligence in men as inherently oppressive attributes. These tend to be the men who humbly espouse feminism, and patronise women by playing themselves down, creating a lower profile for men, thus enhancing women's relative position in their local "liberated" social circle. I find this attitude of the "cut-my-penis-off" faction a pathetic token gesture aimed more at alleviating men's feeling of guilt than any genuine social change. It also has damaging effects on strategies of education and expansion that aim to assist men of all backgrounds recover from the effects of gender conditioning (1). This is firstly because no man is going to be attracted to a policy that demands that he apologise for his existence just because he was born with a penis. Secondly, acting from a position of affirmed guilt is encouraging reverse discrimination where men maintain a humbleness and timidity rather than effectively taking charge of their lives in a manner that contradicts the rigid nature of the conditioned response.

Here we are concerned with the effects of a historical tendency to value whatever is associated with men greater than those things associated with women. This has as much to do with the space in society that is occupied as the function that is traditionally performed by the members of each gender. Men gain validation and appreciation for their work on the basis that it has a high public profile (men invariably leave the home environment to work) and that it is usually wage-earning work. Also because of the current prejudice thatruns in our society, men have greater access to employment opportunities and have therefore a greater chance of doing work that will be personally fulfilling.

This is the background to the reception of any depiction of man or woman. Even if the stereotypes are not directly encompassed by the image; i.e. wage-worker man, housewife woman, the viewer's own conditioned prejudice will impose value judgements on each. This is to say that whatever a man is seen doing is immediately given more relative importance than if a woman is depicted in the same situation. This is one of the "benefits" that men enjoy having been set-up as "useful" members of society.

OBJECT / OBJECT

In chapter 1, a basic analysis was provided of the different ways in which men are depicted in popular culture. Given that the means of production in popular culture is by necessity enmeshed with the other institutions and structures in our society, to identify the mechanism with which these depictions exert their influence we must acknowledge the same means by which these structures manipulate and coerce individuals to society's purpose. To clarify this it is necessary to note the assumptions outlined in the last chapter and thus make the clear distinction between the person and the pattern of behaviour.

Any man who has been subjected to the suppression of distress experiences will compulsively and repeatedly attempt to reenact that distress experience in the form of a rigid behaviour pattern. There are two possible consequences of this reenactment. When a visual depiction colludes with the pattern of the male genderr role, it will function as a cultural medium of restimulation and reinforcement of men's conditioned behaviour responses. (2)

"Meaning is socially created in the consumption of the work(it is) ... impossible to separate the production of the work from its consumption."(3)

From observation it is clear that the mechanism of meaning construction in popular culture invariably functions in this capacity with specific regard to masculinity. This mechanism operates within the context of utility by providing the consumer with the promise of sufficient emotional restimulation in the form of violence, sex or any other facet of the male gender role. The primary factor that motivates the purchaser is that which constantly seeks access to the emotional trauma of an early repressed incident, that he may release that tension and with it the restrictions and aberrations that have resulted from that incident. This is an adequate explanation for the "attraction" that all forms of horror, violence and other irrational scenarios hold for people. Each individual will of course, be particularly susceptable to specific reconstructions of events that collude with their own distress recordings.

The pornographic industry is a perfect example of how the market of sexual distress is catered for by explicitly categorising the nature of the pornographic

representations in terms of the actions and actors that they contain.

This utilisation of visual depictions to manipulate and influence a man's actions by engaging the repetitive, rigid and compulsive responses of his gender conditioning is the basic means of popular culture. It is integral to our culture as is noted in chapter 1 of this essay, functioning as a primary means of manipulation, control and therefore degradation by respecting the pattern and disregarding the person.

The roles of masculinity and femininity are defined in exclusive terms. This is to say that the male gender role represents everything that the female role does not and visa versa. Each defines the other and neither makes sense without the other. Thus in the terms of this essay depictions of the female gender role characteristics will serve to further define and entrench a male viewer in his conditioned patterns.

For example, a pornographic representation of a woman will depict the female body as a desired object in the sense of masculine sexual fetish. This aspect reinforces the female gender role by presenting only the superficial characteristics of being sensually pleasing, physically desirable. This fits in with the economic interpretation of woman as commodity, associated with other related objects, attached by advertising to the social meanings: status, luxury, power, eroticism; presumably available for consumption by the individual man. This consequently carries unequivical information relating to the male gender role; how men are supposed to relate to women.(4)

This occurs for two reasons. Firstly, because of the relationship between the gender roles as outlined above; the depiction of one set of characteristics associated with women will infer an opposing set of characteristics for men. The second reason relates to the logocentric(5) nature of our culture, that the viewing point of our culture's preferred reality is that of a white, heterosexual, adult male. The implications of this pose a problem for everyman who is the least bit interested or concerned about the quality of his life and his relationships with women. If the conditioning and expectations which men are subject to result in a systematic social injustice against men because of the possibilities that they deny, then any visual representation which does not contradict the definition of the gender role relationship may be said to collude with this social injustice.

CONCLUSION

There is no contradiction to the male gender role provided in the depictions of popular culture. The representations of masculinity serve only to restimulate and reinforce these behaviour patterns by reaffirming the misinformation about men; that they are naturally evil, violent, hungry for power and money, they are thoughtless with regard to the concerns of others and will probably go out of control at any moment. Representations of femininity serve to strengthen these definitions and misinformation relating to the male gender role by negation. All visual depictions employed for the purposes of popular culture serve to position men, as gendered individuals, in the role of power and privilege in our society, as oppressor.

From this we can say that the industry of popular culture has been established on the pronciple of reaffirming the cultural patterns of distress behaviour in all individuals. This may take the form of advertisements which exploit class based patterns as indirect social pressures, "encouraging" individuals towards upward-mobility, or it may be in the form of commodities that reinforce the misinformation of gender oppression.

This principle is probably unawarely adopted as strategy in the quest for profits. However, it is important to note that the industry would never exist, to the degree that it does in our society, without the predictable and rigid responses instilled in individuals as a direct result of cultural conditioning.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER FIVE

- This refers to the strategy of the Irish Men's Network as outlined in their policy document, copies available from Raymond Cadwell, 96 Trees Road, Mount Merrion, Dublin.
- 2. The other possible consequence of the reenactment of a rigid behaviour pattern is that the man may successfully elicit the aware attention of another human being, be provided with an appropriate contradiction to his distress recording and obtain emotional release, thus freeing his intelligence from the restrictions and aberratoins internalised by the original incident.
- 3. Michelle Barrett, "Feminism and the Definition of Cultural Politics" Feminism, Culture and Politics 1982.
- 4. Jean Gagnon, Pornography in the Urban World. Gagnon gives a very thorough examination of the relationship between men, pornography and women; id entify very useful models of understanding in the process.
- 5. Logocentric thought is defined by dualistic oppositions where one idea supercedes the other: physical vs spiritual; feminine vs masculine; natural vs cultural etc. Logocentricity can order the world then, an epistemology using these binanes means you can conceive of "reality" or objectivity, so long as you stay within the value system. Anything outside that binary system becomes artistic, subjective, unquantifiable, unrecognisable. See Angela Partington's essay, "Feminist art and Avant-Gardism", Visibly Female pages 228 250.

CONCLUSION STRATEGIES AND POSSIBILITIES This essay set out to identify the mechanism of oppression that operates to co-opt men as agents of social injustice. More specifically, how the media of popular culture functions as a communicator of indirect and direct social pressure, thus colluding with the system of injustice. During the course of the enquiry it was shown that men as individuals must be subjected to severe mistreatment and suppression of their emotional faculties, before sacrificing their rational, human intelligence for the rigid masculine role. We saw that in the application of this theory to the media of popular culture, the behaviour patterns of the gender role cannot be reasoned with, cannot be communicated with and in their very nature capable only of repetitive, rigid responses.

This poses many questions for those of us who are working with visual communication and intervening in the media popular culture; traditionally the home ground of the dominant ideology. If we take the conclusions of chapter 5, that any visual representation which does not contradict the definition of the gender role relationship may be said to collude with this social injustice. Then we may refer to the strategies employed by Barbara Kruger, and "a collective" (Figures 26 and 27). The success of these works is achieved by using the value system and semiology of the dominant culture to reveal the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in the structures of society.

"By refacing the surface of the hoardings we put the right to question before the right to indoctrinate. This provides an opportunity to offer levels of access into the subject, intent and ideology of the advertisement, while maintaining the guise of the advertising language. What appears to be a usual feature of the environment immediately confronts its apparent purpose by addressing the flexible intelligence of the audience."(1)

"... ads select an unthinking audience and tell what to think or buy while art, ideally, tries to provoke people to perceive and think for themselves."(2)

As the mechanisms of popular culture operate on the basis of a prior conditioning of the audience, we can conclude that although social injustice may be represented adequately by this form of intervention, it will never the less, have little effect on the rigid, conditioned responses of any individual. This is to say that although the piece may contradict the pattern of the gender role, by providing information that conflicts with or exposes the intent of the dominant culture;

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it does not provide any facility for the release of emotional tensions that this form of contradiction restimulates in an individual. As was stated in chapter 4, we can observe that any human being can become free of the restrictions, inhibitions and aberrations of the accumulated distress experience recordings. This process involves reinstating a relationship with some other person's aware attention and allowing the emotional release to proceed to completion.

The problems that these assumptions entail for the producers of visual communication are considerable and, I think, are providing challenging material for further enquiry and practice. To conclude, I want to introduce two projects that, by the findings of this essay, can be described as successful interventions into the mechanisms of societal conditioning.

"Expansive acts will aim to encourage and expand social meanings wherever they are strong. They will move beyond the determinist fallacy of seeing people solely as the products of a given and pre-existing culture, and take into account their role as co-authors of that culture."(3)

The form of photo therapy developed by Rosy Martin and Jo Spence, challenges many of the themes of representation, questioning the concepts upon which the traditional photographic viewpoint is based. They have developed a comprehensive theoretical base for their evolving work that consistantly integrates the politics of feminism and demystification of photographic proactice. The results for the individuals (both photographers) cooperating in this project has been to re-invent and then reclaim the pleasure of looking, and of image making and circulation (Figures 28 and 29).

> Jo Spence: "We all have sets of personalized archetypal images in memory, images which are surrounded by vast chains of connotations and buried memories. In photo therapy we can dredge them up, reconstruct them, even reinvent them, so that they can work in our interests, rather than remaining the mythologies of others who have told us about that "self" which appears to be visible in various photographs. The point where image production in society intersects, through our snapshots, with personal memory is where a disruption can be caused, so that we never see ourselves in quite the same light again."(4)

Rosy Martin: "Photo therapy is photographing feelings, in all their rawness. It is a means of shifting the understanding of concepts from the celebral intellect to the gut. I have found that certain issues and ideas which I thought I had worked through and understood, for example in relation to my mother, could still produce feelings of angst. By making images of these feelings working with Jo, I have been able to integrate my intellectual knowledge at a deeper, unconscious level."(5)

The following chart(6) compares the dominant practices which surround the production of portraits and the evolving practices of photo therapy.

PORTRAITURE

- Photographer has control * Sitter and photographer create together
- * Traditional methods of encoding used* Evolving methods, working against the grain.
- * Naturalizes
- * Universalizes
- * Makes statements
- * Freezes in time
- * The"perfect moment"
- * Making sweeping statements
- * Stereotypes
- Confers "status" and "importance" (respectability); offers image of social mobility
- Reinforces stereotypes (blocks our perception of ourselves and others)
- * Self hatred
- * Assumes heterosexuality
- Repetition of dominant cultural fantasies
- * Reinforces symbols, eg power, beauty* stars, heroines
- * Offers possibility of the "desired" image. Narcissism is unquestioned

- Exposes the construction of the "natural"
- * Particularizes, personalizes
- * Asks questions

PHOTO THERAPY

- * Opens time out; looks at past, present and future.
- * The perfect moment is challenged
- * Shows important tiny details, and thereby validates them
- * Shows individuality
- * Examines power and powerlessness
- * Unblocks perceptions; gives permission to change
- * Self love (making portraits for ourselves)
- * Opens up question of how you explore or express your sexuality
- * Allows exploration of "good" or "bad"self in fantasy
- Old symbols are explored, enjoyed, reworked and subverted towards finding and creating new symbols
- Reveals the possibility of exploring the desire and pain inscribed in such impossible images

- * Colludes to help us present a public face
- * Self denial (portraits are invariably * Self acceptance made for other people)
- * Hides/blocks
- * Closes down on feelings
- * Reinforces anxiety about "looking right"
- * We collude to fool ourselves
- thoughts of the sitter

* Suspicion

- * We collaborate to make visible and share private inner selves
- - Reveals/unblocks
 - * Opens up and encourages acceptance of feelings
- * Reclaims women's pleasure in looking through recognition and release of anxiety
 - * We cooperate to help ourselves
- * Shows little regard for feelings and * Works with the feelings of the sitter, to give those feelings a visible form

* Trust

The second project is a process which I am developing in collaboration with men of similar interests, through the Irish Men's Network; a network of individuals who are committed to assisting each other's recovery from the effects of male gender conditioning. The aim of the project is to provoke interest and enquiry into the social constructs of sexuality, male gender conditioning and the implications and effects this has for each man. The initiative is provided by myself or another group facilitator, to instigate the topics with examples and images such as those used in chapter one of this essay and constructed images that decode the implicit rules of the gender role relationship (Figures 30 and 31). Then each man gets a chance to be listened to, and encouraged to recount his own formative experiences, this is usually accompanied by some release of emotional tension: laughing, shaking, sweating, gentle crying.

The use of images in this project is only a means of access to areas of experience that may otherwise be difficult to relate to in a group context. They may however, provide the basis for future development in therapy sessions along the lines of the photo therapy mentioned previously. This may include adopting roles, reconstructing scenarios, remaking images of role models etc., with the intention of obtaining emotional release and consequently reclaiming our rational, human intelligence.

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The recent developments in art practice, such as those mentioned in this conclusion, do not require any presupposed morality or value system on the part of the viewer, for the work to be used as the producers intended. In fact, as these practices demand participation and involvement from the "audience", they effectively induce a peer relationship based on cooperation and common interest through creativity.



FIGURE 26 BARBARA KRUGER



FIGURE 27 " A COLLECTIVE"







FIGURE 30



FIGURE 31

FOOTNOTES CONCLUSION

- Adam May, Caroline Williams, Shattering the Looking Glass, Mythology 1. and Response-ability. page 22.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- Lucy Lippard, <u>Get the Message?</u> page 206 Owen kelly, <u>Community</u>, <u>Art and the State</u>, page 51. Jo Spence, <u>Putting Myself in the Picture</u>, page 172. Ibid, page 174, Abreviated from that chart included in the article on Photo Therapy; 6. Ibid, pages 184,185.

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