"Men Made Out of Words": Reading Men Writing Masculinities in Australian Literature

by

Matthew Heley

Department of English Language and Literature,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Adelaide.

Submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts,
March 1996.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I consent to this thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

Matthew Heley

Contents

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to enlarge upon the possibilities which have been opened up by feminism and gay studies to the study of masculinity in some Australian literary texts. If feminism has made "masculinity" a problem of gender, then gay male activism has made it a problem of sexuality. This thesis seeks to problematise hegemonic constructions of masculinity along both of these axes, as well as along the axes of race, and, to a lesser extent, class.

In the introduction I argue that conventional or androcentric reading practices dissimulate "masculinity" as a constructed category, and argue that for straight white men in society, the so-called "hegemonic subjects," locating a reading position from which to analyse masculinity means inaugurating a discourse of gender *through* feminist discourses of sexual politics. I argue that if men are serious about building into their critical practice a performative understanding of masculinity then they must also be able to theorise their identities as relational, and never completely articulable in relation to, the other.

The chapters that follow attempt to lay bare some of the discourses constructing hegemonic and marginal masculinities. In Chapter One, I read two postmodernist texts as disarticulating the patriarchal-masculine through their problematising of patriarchal inscriptions of Woman.

In chapter two, I interpret the crisis of masculinity in chapter one as a crisis of hegemony experienced by the "white" male subject in "Asia." The crisis of hegemony arises precisely from his "alterity" in the gaze of the other, and, ironically, his homogenisation in this gaze *as* a racial other.

Chapter three picks up a theme mentioned in chapter two: that is, the territorialisation of the male body in hegemonic social practices. In this chapter I argue that hegemonic discourses of masculinity are constructed precisely around a binary of a "lacking" and "complete" male body, a binary which is able to be deconstructed through the very logic of intelligibility it deploys to tell the two bodies apart.

In chapter four I focus on the production of sexuality and the homosexual man in discourses of hegemonic masculinity. In this chapter I discuss the most pervasive of all foreclosures, the one effecting the terms of male homo/heterosexual definition, a binary relation which is itself able to be read as being constitutive of, and constituted by, the binaries of masculine/feminine and male/female.

I conclude by arguing that male subjects must always theorise their identities from a position within the Symbolic order, such as it is, since only by contesting the terms of their engendering and problematising patriarchal social practice can masculinity be reconstructed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help of the following people, in order of height: my supervisor, Dr Philip Butterss, whose professionalism kept the whole show going; Michael Lim, for his keen insights; Mum and Dad; my sister and brothers, Sara, Simon and Daniel; and Jacqueline Lim, an incisive reader and excellent companion, and quite tall, really.

Preface

> I knew in certain crucial ways I was outside the mainstream, that the dominant male world of football and alcohol and cars frightened me, although I believe that I disguised my fears behind a veneer of sophistication and intellect, which in rètrospect seems painfully priggish.
>
> Dennis Altman, *The Comfort of Men*, 107

In his article from *Men in Feminism*, "Reading Like a Man," Robert Scholes comes to the belated conclusion: "For me, born when I was born and living where I have lived, the very best I can do is to be conscious of the ground upon which I stand: to read not as but like a man" (Scholes, 218). Scholes is responding to Culler's piece, "Reading as a Woman," in which Culler argues that deconstruction allows the reader to hypothesise, and thus move into, a feminine reading position, which in turn presumably allows male critics to read as women.[1] For Scholes, however, the appropriation of this "space" by men is exactly a repetition of the patriarchal tradition, in which a man's speaking as a woman is also a speaking for and of women. Scholes argues that Culler's position is made possible only if we do away with the importance of the "experience" of being a woman, to which he responds: "No man should seek in any way to diminish the authority which the experience of women gives them in speaking about that experience" (Scholes, 217-18).

In the context of the *Men in Feminism* forum, Scholes' criticism of Culler is warranted, and echoes contributions by Stephen Heath in his article "Male Feminism" (of which more later). In the wider context of the sexual politics of masculinity (which differ from those of "male feminism"), however, his conclusion takes us nowhere in particular. Ironically, in the traditionally male discipline of literary criticism, to read

---

[1] "Reading as a Woman" is contained in Culler's *On Deconstruction*.

like a man has always been...not declaring what reading like a man is like. Indeed, the shift from reading *as* to reading *like* a man in the last line of Scholes' article might well make the necessity of asking *what* men do when they read less pressing. Scholes implies that as long as men acknowledge that they can not read as women, or even as feminists, then there should be no problem.[2] Such a declaration, as Heath points out in "Male Feminism," is the first step in the construction of an "ethics of sexual difference" (Heath, "Male Feminism," 26). Scholes' proclamation that "the best I can do is be conscious of the ground upon which I stand" may be a kind of "chivalry" (Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, 26), but it is also an explicit bracketing of the discursiveness of the "male" and the "masculine." Scholes indicates that "reading like a man" involves some kind of interpellation into an institutional framework, but does not consider how this framework *works* to conceal the very genderedness of "reading like a man." To read "like" a man means to be *like* other men who read like you. But upon what basis can equivalences among men – the basis of this "likeness" – be established? Mimicry?

Joseph Bristow argues that straight-identified men are still without a "vocabulary for articulating a radical difference within the sex/gender hierarchy" (Bristow, "Men After Feminism," 60). Bristow notes that in literary studies in particular, "there is little discernible movement by men to situate, analyse, and realise historical changes in the masculinities represented in the texts (often male ones) set before them" (Bristow, "Men After Feminism," 60). Scholes' resort to the "ground upon which I stand" in order to define his subject-position may let traditional humanism in the back-door, but we can see how it is allowed precisely by the kind of

---

[2] In an extreme reading of Scholes' position, Diane Elam argues: "If a man can never read like or even as a woman, can never really be a feminist and thus can never be 'right,' all he can do is look up (not down) and try to enjoy the show. The spectator's position can be highly irresponsible because it allows the viewer to ignore the obligations that feminism and deconstruction impose" (Elam, *Feminism and Deconstruction*, 23).

absence to which Bristow is referring: an absence of a language (and I would add a sexual/political imperative) from which to problematise the "ground," the "masculine," the "experience" of being a "man."

At the beginning of his article published in *Engendering Men*, "(In)visible Alliances: Conflicting 'Chronicles' of Feminism," Robert Vorlicky, a man living in New York, describes an experience he thinks many men are finding familiar, namely that of being made "invisible" by his female feminist friend's declaration that "'men have nothing to offer me, as a woman'" (Vorlicky, 275). The conversation from which this declaration springs has been prompted by the news of a brutal beating, rape and murder of a woman by a group of men in Central Park, and Vorlicky's friend is laying the blame squarely at the feet of men as a whole: "'What is in men to make them do this?' she remarked. 'In a woman-centred world this wouldn't have happened'" (Vorlicky, 275). Vorlicky, too, expresses outrage at the brutal actions of these men, but takes as his point of departure not the macabre event, but the exchanges that follow between him and his female feminist friends. As a self-identified "male feminist," Vorlicky feels hurt by the blanket association of him with men who clearly are not like him: "Aside from men's biological bodies, we can no longer assume that the collective body of 'men' is (if it ever was) a visible, cohesive identity" (Vorlicky, 276), adding that this is "certainly true of those males who have come of age within feminism" (Vorlicky, 276). Vorlicky's lament in this article is that men engaged in "feminist" activity are often ignored, repressed or made invisible in the public sphere, while nonetheless being

> visible presences in life – men who are actively living the change. [Men] can be seen in homes raising their children while their partners are at work; on the streets marching for Equal Rights and Pro-Choice movements; in conversations discoursing on their relationships to women and other men, mindful that the personal is political. (Vorlicky, 276-7)

Vorlicky is appealing to a kind of empiricism, but this time it is one substantiated not by a "ground" but by an "identity" forged from his engagement in progressive sexual politics. This engagement with the theory and practice of sexual politics also makes him feel "different," invisible. The matter of his invisibility, however, comes down to the question of who is "looking" and from where. Vorlicky wants women to see him as a man set apart from other men. However, his own identification is not with the images of the male contained in radical feminist newsletters, but with those images of reconstructed, post-feminist masculinity coming from men's groups. For Vorlicky, the trouble is that society does not know how to cope with this (self)representation of masculinity; it ignores or ridicules it.

Vorlicky's article highlights two important difficulties in the construction of masculinity *after* feminism, some of which are also implied by Scholes. With specific reference to Scholes, the first difficulty arises when we posit "experience" as the "ground" of subjectivity, and relatedly, as the basis of a shared or collective identity. Indeed, Scholes' own objection to Culler is to his elision of the bodily processes which, Scholes argues, are experienced differently by men and women (I will come back to this point). The second difficulty has to do with Vorlicky's declaration of his difference from other men: how can this difference be framed or articulated within feminist-centred discourses of sexual politics, and does it really matter if it can't be? To return to Scholes for a moment, to see the ground of "experience" and the "body" as suitable referents, or sites, of political and social identification for men, is problematic because of the difficulty of quantifying it. As Diana Fuss argues, "Bodily experiences may seem self-evident and immediately perceptible but they are always socially mediated" (Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, 25). In short, men experience their

bodies differently. If the body is the referent of experience, then "experience" cannot be a referent of "likeness."

Men must be able to consider their own differences from each other (otherwise any idea of change, movement or exchange might as well be forgotten about), but also how these differences are themselves constructed in a system of gender relations which values the "male" and the "masculine" over the "female" and the "feminine," and which, in this construction, also produces the discourses through which the analysis of gender can take place. The need to address masculinity as a "structure" (rather than as just a personal "style") is particularly acute when we consider the position of men who are empowered along some axes (because of their "whiteness" or their heterosexuality), and disempowered (including in relation to women) along others. White middle-class gay men, for example, who do not "publicly" identify themselves as gay men may well be empowered in relation to women, as well as over non-white heterosexual men: "It is ... a significant fact of the social being of a very large number of gay white males that we have always had the option of power and privilege" (Bersani, *Homos*, 67). As Bersani points out, this option means that white gay men cannot simply line themselves up along a continuum of oppression, for example, with gay black men, or white women (Bersani, *Homos*, 66ff). Eve Sedgwick argues that we must ask how certain kinds oppression are intertwined with each other, "and especially how the person who is disabled through one set of oppressions may *by the same positioning* be enabled through others" (Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 33).

In this thesis I want to argue that the movement between "men" as a "collective body" and "men" as a fractured and multiple site can be made, but that it must be accompanied by an address to the political status of men, as a "collectivity," in

patriarchy. Initially, I wanted to avoid installing a master narrative of patriarchal oppression. I have since been made aware that perhaps this avoidance is symptomatic of patriarchal social practice itself. Because I always tried to resist the imperative to be a "man," I did not think it necessary to consider what reading or writing as a "man" meant; to do so would have been to comply somehow with this imperative, to interpret the conduct of my life within its terms. But there is another dimension to this: what if the refusal to acknowledge my gendered and sexed "reading" position actually proves my flush interpellation into the hegemonic discourse of masculinity in our culture? What if the most damning indictment of my complicity with this discourse is the fact that I do not want to confront it?

At the same moment, I want to build into the argument of this thesis a certain scepticism toward what Nancy Miller calls the "position of representativity" (Miller, ix), especially when it comes to "men" speaking. I do not want to suggest that men should not "speak" about their masculinity, as they see it, but that speaking is not *necessarily* an act of liberation or empowerment, just as the act of self-representation is not necessarily affirmative. Men should always be concerned with *how* they speak, through what discourses, and how these discourses are shaped. A major concern of this thesis is with how the subject-position "men" is itself constructed. What does it mean to constitute oneself as a "man," and to declare oneself "masculine"? Moreover, how is declaring oneself a man (or not a "man") itself a kind of declaration, or marking out, of a power relation? If I suggest that because of my age or class I am somehow de-centred within hegemonic masculinity, am I just dissimulating my own power? Perhaps so. Hegemonic masculinities, I will argue in the course of this thesis, maintain their dominance precisely by passing themselves off, with the complicity of men, as

incontestable. The points of resistance to the hegemonic imperative have been generated by feminist and gay practice, and it would, as Scholes, for one, argues, be disingenuous for men to think these positions of resistance, or subject-positions, are open to everyone.

The main purpose of the Introduction is to place my reading and writing "self" within a discursive space, even though I know that this space is not anything I can "name" or mark out definitively. The exasperated "and so on" supplementing the list of differences along which identity can be tracked mocks the very attempt to construct a stable position of enunciation. A subject, as post-structuralist theory argues, is a site of multiple and heterogeneous differences (Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, 33). The whole question of how we can interpret identity or map the movement of subjects into subject-positions rests on how we understand the interaction of social and discursive practices, and how these practices "fix" identities in the field of difference that comprises the social. Within this field, "masculinity" dissolves and reappears like an apparition: it dissolves because we mostly regard it as being "natural," the proper way of being; it reappears because hegemonic masculinity is *itself* defined by what it attempts to exclude. The resistance to hegemonic masculinity tracks along the various vectors of difference forming around feminist and gay politics, and inflecting all other responses to it, including, hopefully those of the men hegemonic masculinity most privileges.

To this extent, the calibration of the theoretical gaze in this thesis is from the "reified identity" – and the questions we might ask of it, for example, "what is a man?" "how does a man read?" and so on – to the discursive structures and practices that present us with such a thing as a "man," the "masculine," the "male," a complete

subject. In "Interrogating Identity" Homi Bhabha frames this shift as "the interrogation of the discursive and disciplinary place from which questions of identity are strategically and institutionally posed" (Bhabha, 47). Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* calls on the Foucauldian model of "genealogical inquiry" to analyse the ways gender performatively-constitutes that which it "names," that is, the "naturalness" of gender difference as it is mapped across bodies within the regulative frame of "compulsory heterosexuality":

> A genealogical critique refuses to search for the origins of gender, the inner truth of female desire, a genuine or authentic sexual identity that repression has kept from view; rather, genealogy investigates the political stakes in designating as an *origin* and *cause* those identity categories that are the *effects* of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin. (Butler, *Gender*, ix)

Whatever constitutes hegemonic masculinity in our culture at any moment, it should be thought of principally, though not exclusively, in its political dimensions. The deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity should involve the "making visible" of the repressed vectors of difference that it articulates into an "identity." If gender identity, in Butler's formulation, is "performative" in the sense that is (re)iteratively produced, then any intervention into the discourse of hegemonic masculinity should also follow this logic. If hegemonic masculinities appear as "positivities," as stable and self-identical structures of identity, it is not because they are either, but rather because of the predisposition of the social and political imaginaries of our culture. These imaginaries, at the risk of entering a circuit of circular logic, are held in place by the power of the collective belief in the opaqueness of the power and difference constructing them.

In the Introduction I begin to address the question of how we might see the "masculine" as a fractured site, and, at the same time, a site of sexual politics for men.

Additionally, I argue that this problem impinges directly on how we might read masculinities in texts. If to read "masculinities" as fractured – against the dominant or hegemonic idea of the "masculine" as stable, monolithic – is to be efficacious, then we must be able to place this fracturing in a (sexual) political context. Indeed, I argue that a sexual politics of masculinity must accompany any attempt to reconstruct masculinity. To this extent, the reading practices of this thesis are performative: in them I attempt to negotiate the various hegemonic and alternative or abject reading positions made available in texts *through* a conception of sexual politics. Diana Fuss argues that when we read, we are "caught within and between *at least* two constantly shifting subject-positions (old and new, constructed and constructing)" (Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, 33). To apprehend alternative and non-hegemonic masculinities in texts which are heavily overdetermined by ideologies of gender means negotiating with the terms of hegemonic discourse, and of carving out alternative reading positions, and through this clearing of space, the imagining of alternative male subjectivities. Tania Modleski's assertion that a feminist reading practice should be "performative" resonates significantly here:

> [A] fully politicised feminist criticism has seldom been content to ascertain old meanings and (in the manner of ethnographers) take the measure of already-constituted subjectivities; it has aimed, rather, at bringing into being *new* meanings and *new* subjectivities, seeking to articulate not only what *is* but "what has never been." In this respect, it may be said to have a performative dimension – i.e., to be doing something beyond restating already existent ideas and views, wherever these might happen to reside. (Modleski, 46)

I take the "masculine" in this thesis to be an unstable signifier. The first thing we must do is to forget about trying to get at the "truth" of masculinity. Rather than argue from a preconceived idea of what "masculinity" is, I want to analyse the ways in which "masculinity" signifies a particular relation of power, or a particular

configuration of subjectivity. This means not only divesting masculinity of its "universality," which is an essential first step, but rather of developing a deconstructive or "performative" reading practice, in Modleski's sense, which is not predicated on the rediscovery or recuperation of "masculinity" within the terms of hegemonic masculinity, but of analysing how the articulation of discourses of gender, sex, class, race and so on (re)produce "instances" of masculinity, and proscribes the assumption of identity for male subjects.

Introduction

> [I]f the genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is "something altogether different" behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms.
>
> M. Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 78

I want to remain self-conscious of the limitations of androcentric reading practices, in which the generic or unmarked subject is thought to be "masculine," because, as Stephen Heath argues, any discourse which does not explicitly position itself within sexual difference in a patriarchal society "will be ... a reflection of male domination" (Heath, "Difference," 49). Sexual difference theory often proceeds from some conception of the "male" and the "masculine" as being the arbiters of subjectivity. Luce Irigaray's proposal that "We can assume that any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the 'masculine'" (Irigaray, *Speculum*, 133), is salutary to a great extent, but it also automatically makes any political contestation of the "masculine" from the position of the "masculine" an impossibility. On the other hand, the political efficacy of "sexual difference" comes not from the postulating of a universal antagonism between men and women, but from its deconstruction of the logic of the "same" deployed in patriarchal discourse. In this thesis, I want to retain this element of "sexual difference," while not assuming the consistency of the links between the male, the masculine and patriarchy; that is, while assuming neither that the "masculine" should reduce men to the "same," nor that to be a man is to be a subject wholly determined and positioned in patriarchal discourses, automatically, as an oppressor of women.

essentialising of "women." In this body of work, "women" is theorised as a category fractured by class, race, sexuality and many other kinds of difference. In the current introduction, I want to address in relation to the category of "masculinities" the problem energising much contemporary identity politics; namely, the problem of "fixing" a political or social identity when the "fixing" of identity always requires some delineation of difference and sameness. This problem can be framed like this: how can we conceive of "masculinities" as a nodal-point of political identification and affiliation, and at the same time, a way of conceiving of "men" and the masculine as having an historically and culturally variable character, and thus, as allowing some room from which, in the context of this thesis' exploration of literary texts, to read and write against patriarchal ideologies of gender?

The "masculine," as Irigaray points out, is the standard, the universal sign of subjectivity. This universality of the "male" has not arisen simply from some preternatural disposition on the part of men, but through the reproduction of a hierarchy of difference presided over by the male. In this hegemony the masculine is unmarked, while as Irigaray argues in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, (re)producing a representational economy which is driven by a "desire for the same, for the self-identical, the self (as) same, and again of the similar, the alter ego and, to put it in a nutshell, the desire for the auto...the homo...the male dominates the representational economy" (Irigaray, *Speculum*, 20).

I want to provide an example of what I think the hegemony of the male means in the study of literature through a reading of Kenneth Slessor's "Five Visions of Captain Cook," and a response to this poem by Andrew Taylor from *Reading Australian Poetry*. Here are the quotations relevant to my reading:

So Cook made choice, so Cook sailed westabout,

> So men write poetry in Australia. (Slessor, 57)
>
> It is more than tempting to see in this vision of Cook an embodiment of those qualities which enable men – and, of course women – to "write poems in Australia." His daemonic power to defy chaos, to engage with "mystery," to choose a passage into the dark and to charm order across the face of disorder – all is linked causally with poetry in such a way that it insists on being read as being metaphoric of it. If indeed "men write poems in Australia" it is because – the poem suggests – they deploy those qualities celebrated in Slessor's portrait of Cook. (Taylor, 64)[1]

These two quotations, and the texts from which they are drawn, are exemplary in their appropriation of the "masculine" as both generic and unmarked. Taylor makes it clear that in "Five Visions" "men" refers to "men" *and* "women," but a gendered reading of the text shows something else: namely, that when Slessor writes "men" he *means* "men." Taylor's contention that "Five Visions" is a poem about the writing of poems is significant here, since the qualities needed to write poetry are clearly masculine ones.

The mis-reading of gender in this text is all the more curious when we consider what "Five Visions" can be made to mean if it is examined through the optic of gender analysis:

> Cook was a captain of the sailing days
> When sea-captains were kings like this,
> Not cold executives of company-rules
> Or bidding their engineers go wink
> At bells and telegraphs, so plates would hold
> Another pound. Those captains drove their ships
> By their own blood, no laws of schoolbook steam,
> Till yards were sprung, and masts went overboard – (Slessor, 57)

It is not difficult to spot in what way the distinction between the captains of contemporary capitalism and those of the "sailing days" is intended as a critique of contemporary constructions of masculinity. The toadying "cold executives" tied

---

[1] Taylor also writes that Slessor rejects this idea of the artist. Slessor may be ambivalent about who the "poet" in this poem is, but my point is that the articulation of the "poet" depends crucially on an identification of him as male and masculine, and that this articulation is mis-read by Taylor as being neutral, generic.

umbilically by "company-rules" and the "schoolbook" compare unfavourably to the captains of history, such as Cook, who "drove their ships by their own blood." In this construction, the contemporary captains are both castrated and alienated by their economic dependency on "company-rules" (bent on restraint and maintaining their margins), while Cook's own body, which is contiguous with the ships he controls, expends itself "Till yards were sprung, and masts went overboard." In their alienation from their work, men are also stripped of some primal element of their identity, an element which Slessor's poem can be read as articulating a desire to recover.

Cook is not just an avatar of heroic masculinity, he is also, in Taylor's reading, an avatar of the poet himself. A major part of this construction of masculinity, if Taylor is correct, is in the demarcation of domestic/feminine and public/masculine space. Domesticity, clearly, is not desired. The tellingly-named Home must fantasise an alterative reality, an other world to his mooring in his wife's kitchen: "His body moved/In Scotland, but his eyes were dazzle-full/Of skies and water farther round the world –" (Slessor, 61). If this text can be read to be about the construction of poetry, then it is not in the space of the home, the space of the feminine, that this poetry will be written. Or is it? In an alternative reading, Home, more than Cook, is the "poet" of "Five Visions." Home's gaze is analogous to the "imagination" of the poet: in it he stages the desire for exemplary masculinities. The real poet is not like Cook, slashing and tearing a course through the night, but like Home, the incessant rambler, on "half-a-crown a day," attempting to transmit the oral history of a country to anyone who'll listen.[2]

---

[2] Taylor's suggestion that Cook can only "live by virtue of the imagination of another" (Taylor, 65), resonates significantly in the context of a discussion of hegemonic masculinities. Like the position of the patriarch in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, Cook becomes an embodiment of ideal masculinity only after he has been killed off. The point is that no one, not even Cook, can remain in this position. See

From Taylor's reading of "Five Visions," it is possible to see how masculinity is invisible to "conventional" analysis. From my own reading it is possible to see how gender illuminates otherwise occluded aspects of a text: it is possible to see how the demarcation of gender difference is inscribed spatially across a divide of the public and private spheres of work and home, and how this divide is central to the articulation of masculinity, inequality and power in contemporary culture and cultural production.

The kinds of analysis which feminist criticism has deployed in the excavation of female and feminist subjectivities have not been applied by men to the study of masculinities in literary texts and the masculinities that are constructed in their reading practices. Indeed, gender analyses is still largely considered "women's work" in a gendered division of labour. The word "gender" itself, moreover, is often thought of as simply being a synonym of "women," as Bristow points out (Bristow, "Men After Feminism," 61). To repeat a point made in the Preface, if men do not on the whole think about "masculinity" and "men" as a very particular and contingent congruence of discourses of sex, sexuality and gender, then the hegemonic discourse of "gender" produced by feminism over the last four decades, which excludes and homogenises men, has not done much to change this situation. But it is certainly not at the feet of the various feminisms that "blame" for this "hegemony" should be placed. As Bristow follows up: "[I]f masculinity is a man's problem...then perhaps men should be left to get on with doing something about it? That is the perfectly reasonable assumption on which a great deal of feminist enquiry would seem to subsist" (Bristow, "Men After Feminism," 61).

Thomas DiPiero, "The Patriarch is not (Just) a Man," for a discussion of Freud's thesis and its relevance for theories of hegemonic masculinity.

In feminist criticism, "gender" aims at displacing the factitious models of subjectivity which conventional criticism produces, with the displacement of the "masculine" in literary discourse being an implicit challenge to the bases of literary criticism's claim to representativeness. By taking to the furthermost the assumption of the linkages between culture and criticism, feminist criticism has been able to show how the construction of knowledge in literary and other discourse has a determining relation to both the construction of subjectivity and the distribution of power. Feminist criticism shows that not only do men reproduce their hegemony in their gender-blind practice of criticism, they do it by occluding, and proscribing, whole aspects of subjectivity, as well as the access to power of other people, namely women.

If "gender" in this sense operates as a nodal-point of "difference" for women, particularly in the public sphere, then its appropriation by men will be compromised unless they can attach it to what Heath calls a "progressively political project":

> For men...exactly because of the fundamental asymmetry that holds between them and women (their domination), there can be no [male] equivalent [to feminist political projects]: men's writing, male discourse, will simply be the same again; there is no progressively political project that can work through that idea (unless perhaps in and from areas of gay men's experience, in a literature for that). (Heath, "Male Feminism," 25)

This passage provides us with clues as to how we might look at the question of "male feminist" criticism differently, as well as how we might conceive of a sexual politics of *doing*, performing and writing about, masculinities. Joseph Boone, for example, argues, in response to the impasse reached in *Men in Feminism* – with an oblique reference to Heath – that a political alliance with feminism may be formed in the production of a politicised male "identity" through a different way of thinking about the "me" in "me(n)"; that is, by breaking up the logic of the "same" deployed in sexual difference theory (and, of course, by patriarchy):

> In exposing the latent multiplicity and difference in the word *me(n)*, we can perhaps open up a space within the discourse of feminism where a male voice professing a feminist politics can have something to say beyond impossibilities and apologies and unresolved ire. (Boone, 12)

Boone's position is close to many of the men in the volume *Engendering Men*, whose redefining of the terms of male feminist discourse depends importantly on an examination of the discourse of "male identity" itself, and the siting of men's "own sexual/textual body" within the frame of sexual difference (Boone, 12). That is to say, Boone argues that men's engagement with feminism should involve inextricably, and proceed from, some self-consciously organised discourse of masculinity.

This still leaves the political problem of *doing* "masculinity" unresolved. Boone, like Vorlicky and other contributors to *Engendering Men*, points out that his engagements with "masculinity" proceed from some awareness of their "difference" within the category "men," or as Boone puts it, the experiencing of the "gap between 'me' and 'men' in me(n)" (Boone, 13). However, what prevents this difference from becoming "oppositional," and thus a space of contestation, is the mens' desire to remain within a prevailing feminist discourse of gender: afterall, feminism situates itself in this oppositional space. Consequently, the debates that take up the best part of *Men in Feminism* and *Engendering Men* centre around the question of how men can be both within and without feminism – to employ some of the rhetoric of *Men in Feminism* – both contestatory and culpable; guilty and innocent.

I would like to argue that if men are to develop their skills as "feminists," they not only have to work out how they can address feminism *as* men, but how *this* address can also be simultaneously engaged with a sexual politics of masculinities. Heath's pessimism about a "progressive political project" for men, framed sensibly by feminism, rules out the progressive sexual politics that might come out of men's engagement with

men, and which might (and should, more importantly) also cross-over with feminism's own collective political projects. The first thing we must do, I want to argue, is work out the terms of a male discourse of "masculinity" that is able to deal with the complexity that the enunciation "masculinity" entails in contemporary culture. Heath, in his parenthesising of "gay men's experience" in the quotation above, establishes a difference between "men" and "gay men" on the basis of "experience," but does not consider how this difference might itself be integral to the maintenance of heterosexist and masculinist hegemonies, or in what way "men" and "gay men" may share some common element of "masculinity." Nor does Heath's binary of "men" and "gay men" consider how "men" itself might be "internally" and conceptually fractured by the return of the (homo)sexual within (me)n. In short, to address the problem of men's lack of a "progressively political project," and to construct a space within the male-centred frame of reference of patriarchy from which to contest hegemonic masculinities, I argue that it is necessary first of all to interrogate the very terms upon which such a notion as "men" is constructed.

In his recent *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture*, Peter Middleton suggests that there are "many good reasons for men to reflect upon their gender" (Middleton, 3). Middleton argues that the reason men *don't* by and large reflect on their gender is not because they have a vested interest in remaining "silent," but because of the "lack of a language for such reflection" (Middleton, 3). Gender, Middleton argues, "deconstructs almost all the founding concepts on which...theories of language, culture and self are based" (Middleton, 159). The assumption that men can mend their "emotional illiteracy" through introspection is problematic because the forms which this introspection are likely to take are already

inscribed with an ideology of masculinity: "It can seem as if every claim, every strategy, every concept is yet more Ulyssean fantasy or addition to the ego bunker" (Middleton, 12). Like Home in "Five Visions," men only gaze "elsewhere." Even when they look "inwards," Middleton argues, all they see are their fantasies of idealised masculinity:

> Men...have written plenty about their subjectivity and power, but they have constantly universalised it at the same time, and assumed that the rationality of their approach was the sum total of rationality. Universalism and rationalism were built into these concepts to avoid such disturbing self-examination by men. (Middleton, 3)

Middleton's focus is on the ideologies of universality and rationalism which have dominated contemporary European thought, a relatively narrow focus which might well prompt a few objections. He writes from within the discourse of the men's movement (whose own purpose is to produce an "emancipatory men's discourse"), and his survey of masculinities is restricted to a very specific configuration of male subjectivity. The writers Middleton introduces are white, educated, middle-class, and, importantly, mostly heterosexual. What detracts from *The Inward Gaze*, though, is not so much this focus, but the presumption that these masculine identities are "fixed" in place and are not themselves open to contestation. That is, while Middleton's emphasis on particular hegemonic configurations of masculinity is important, it is not completely clear how these configurations fit with, or are constructed through, the marginalisation of other identities. The obvious elision of gay masculinity is significant here. Another significant elision is class. At one point Middleton asks:

> What does the real man read? What do men graduate to from comics and popular culture (if they do)? The real man would read the literary equivalent of the surrealist landscape, that is to say, men's modernist classics, for these help to define the well-read man. (Middleton, 52)

The slide from "real man" to "well-read man" is revealing in its elision of a thousand differences which constitute "real men" in various contexts. Middleton defines masculinity from the beginning as *a* particular thing (a number of personal anecdotes help to place him within this definition). The problem arises when this definition of masculinity loses any sense of specificity. As Bristow remarks wryly: "Superman really is Stephen Dedalus. Both, afterall, have mythical wings on which to soar" (Bristow, "Review of Middleton," 514).

To this extent Middleton's own discourse repeats the hegemonic (if not necessarily patriarchal) position. In this repetition, gender is defined as the primary site of inquiry. This has the effect, as Cora Kaplan argues, of "represent[ing] sexual difference as natural and fixed – constant, transhistorical femininity in libidinised struggle with an equally 'given' universal masculinity" (Kaplan, 27). Of course, these continuities are what Middleton is trying to disrupt. The limits of his articulation of masculinity, however, is not so much in his focus on hegemonic forms of masculinity, but in the failure to define or theorise the relation of these masculinities to others, to situate hegemonic masculinity within a wider and more discontinuous genealogy of gender, sexuality, class and race.

As Middleton demonstrates, it is assumed that when we are talking about masculinity, "gender" – that is men's difference from women – is the only axis along which "difference," identity and power can be tracked. This has the effect of minimising and excluding difference which cannot be reduced *to* gender difference. Within contemporary feminism, this singular focus on gender, particularly as a site from which to launch political action, is becoming increasingly fraught. Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* argues that the categories of gender – man and woman, male and

female, masculine and feminine – are "regulative fictions" which proscribe the articulation and "intelligibility" of identity in advance. She argues that the binary of "man" and "woman" is inhibiting for her, firstly, because of its heterosexist assumptions and, secondly, because it obscures the multiplicity of other differences (race, class, sexuality and so on) that constitute subjects (Butler, *Gender*, 3ff). This is a formidable and formative challenge. I will return in a moment to Butler's proposal that gender ought to be understood as "performative," "the repeated stylisation of the body" (Butler, *Gender*, 25). A caveat emerging from Butler's critique is that we must be careful not to re-inscribe a new gender hegemony in the place of an old one by marginalising and excluding differences which cannot be seen within the optic of gender analysis. This has always been the problem of sexual difference theory, and is particularly acute in Lacanian-influenced theories of masculinity (for example, Anthony Easthope's analysis of popular culture texts in *What a Man's Gotta Do*, which I discuss below).

In her critique of the efficacy of the category "woman" as a site of political and social identification, Butler argues that:

> If one "is" a woman that surely is not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pre-gendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (Butler, *Gender*, 3)

These various "cultural intersections" are formative of many recent feminist theories of the "subject of feminism." As much in response to the fracturing of feminism around the categories of class, race, ethnicity and sexuality, the category of "woman" is theorised as multiple, marked by inconsistencies and instabilities. The antagonism

between the categories of "woman" and "man," the antagonism around which feminist politics have traditionally mobilised, is repositioned inside the category of "women" itself. As Sally Robinson suggests, this repositioning strikes potentially at the very heart of feminism:

> With the fracturing of identity and the deconstruction of the 'essence' of gender feminist theorists have questioned some of the founding principles of feminist study: the authority of experience, the unity of sisterhood, the cross-cultural oppression of all women by a monolithic patriarchy. (Robinson, 1)

The dominant trope in the new discourse of feminist identity politics is "temporality," a notion of identity which has its most famous articulation in de Beauvoir's idea of "becoming woman" (Robinson, 9). Calling on Butler's theory of gender as performance, Robinson argues that if "gender is a 'doing' rather than a 'being'...then becoming a woman is a process that can resist naturalisation, because performances always threaten to exceed representations" (Robinson, 9). As Teresa de Lauretis and others have pointed out, however, how women become "subjects" is itself a process which is fraught with contradictions arising out of women's bifurcative positioning within hegemonic discourse. She writes: "only by knowingly enacting [these contradictions], by knowing us to be both woman and women, does a woman today become a subject" (de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't*, 186). "Woman," represented here somewhat derogatively as the "discursive figure most often constructed and mobilised according to the logic of male desire" (Robinson, 8), is caught in a perpetual circuit of self-elaboration with the category of "women": "women continue to become woman" (de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't*, 186). As for the political efficacy of the category of "women," Denise Riley argues that a politics of temporality which emphasises the fluidity and instability of "women" in relation to other categories, such as race and

class, might be able to avoid the vacuity often associated with post-structuralism's emphasis on representation and semiosis:

> "women" is historically, discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change; "women" is a volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned, so that the apparent continuity of the subject "women" isn't to be relied on; "women" is both synchronically and diachronically erratic as a collectivity, while for the individual, "being a woman" is also inconstant, and can't provide an ontological foundation. Yet it must be emphasised that these instabilities of the category are the *sine qua non* of feminism, which would otherwise be lost for an object, despoiled of a fight, and, in short, without much life. (Riley, 2)

Nevertheless, even providing for the inconstancy of "woman," feminist politics still demands some conception of "sexual difference." As de Lauretis shows, this conception of difference often runs in an opposite direction to the desire to maintain a distinction between gender and sexual difference. In her paper "The Technology of Gender," de Lauretis constructs a notion of "hegemonic discourse" through the unity of the "male" which displaces the instabilities and inconsistencies of masculinity, and which indicates the oblique, if necessary and strategic, essentialism, of feminist politics. Outlining her theory of the "subject of feminism," de Lauretis writes:

> Now, the movement in and out of gender as ideological representation, which I propose characterises the subject of feminism, is a movement back and forth between the representation of gender (and its male-centred frame of reference) and what that representation leaves out, or more pointedly, makes unrepresentable. (de Lauretis, *Technologies*, 26)

De Lauretis goes on to argue that the "subject of feminism" is identified by its negotiation of the positions made available by "hegemonic discourse," the "space-offs" in social and discursive formations produced by feminist practice, "in the interstices of institutions, in counter-practices, and new forms of community" (de Lauretis, *Technologies*, 26). In the last paragraph of this paper she refers to the "two spaces" of the master-narratives of hegemonic discourse, the spaces of "(man)kind and

hom(m)osexuality" and those feminism. But why only two? Making de Lauretis' theory of hegemonic discourse more problematic is the deployment of the Irigarayan neologism for patriarchy, hom(m)osexuality, a term which itself denies the kind of heterogeneity of the "male" and the "masculine" which her own discourse suggests they should have. The point of de Lauretis' paper is to mark out a space in which gender difference can be said to exceed the limits imposed by hegemonic conceptions (which also means feminist ones) of sexual difference. Thus, the "subject of feminism," for de Lauretis, is a

> subject constituted by gender, to be sure, though not by sexual difference alone, but rather across languages and cultural representations; a subject en-gendered in the experiencing of race and class, as well as, sexual relations; a subject, therefore, not unified but rather multiple, and not so much divided as contradicted. (de Lauretis, *Technologies*, 2)

I would like to maintain de Lauretis' idea of the subject as multiple rather than divided, while at the same time fracturing her notion of "hegemonic discourse" by connecting it not specifically to the "male," but to certain configurations of masculinity: hegemonic masculinity. In this configuration, the conflation of the "male," the "masculine" and "men" is thought of not only as normative, but as signifying a particular idea of what a "man" is. Additionally, this configuration signifies a particular relation between the binaries of masculine/feminine, male/female, and importantly, heterosexual/homosexual. The fracturing of the "masculine" is not intended to obscure the bases of "patriarchy," but to open spaces within it to observe the differences, inconsistencies, inequalities and absurdities that structure men's relations with each other, a structure whose antecedents are firmly inscribed into the internal dynamics of patriarchy itself.

The concept of "hegemonic masculinity" comes from one of the foundational statements about the study of masculinity, "Hard and Heavy: Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity" by Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, and John Lee. In this paper, Carrigan *et al.* argue that the revision of masculinity in the last three decades began coincidently with feminist *and* gay male challenges to the residual misogyny/homophobia of the patriarchal social formation, and place gay liberation at the centre of their re-conceptualisation of "masculinity" as a "structure of social relations":

> It is particular groups of men, not men in general, who are oppressed within patriarchal sexual relations, and whose situations are related in different ways to the overall logic of the subordination of women to men. A consideration of homosexuality thus provides the beginnings of a dynamic conception of masculinity as a structure of social relations. (Carrigan, *et al.*, 587)

Written sometime after the "first wave" of men's liberation, "Hard and Heavy" is pessimistic about the hopes for radical change, and instead argues for a more dynamic and focused approach to (re)constructing a sexual politics for men.

Throughout this thesis, I will use the word patriarchy to refer to the situation in which women are oppressed, as a class, by men. "Hegemonic masculinity," because it does not theorises "men" as an oppositional entity, allows us to see "masculinities" as identities structured by more than just sexual difference (though this is precisely how hegemonic masculinity constructs itself). The construction of hegemony, argue Carrigan *et al.*, "is not a matter of pushing and pulling between ready-formed groupings, but is partly a matter of the formation of those groupings" (Carrigan *et al.*, 594). As a structure of social (and discursive) relations, hegemonic masculinity is established in the suturing of the spaces of its own discursive disunity. The link between patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity is significant here, as certain versions of

masculinity are hegemonic precisely because they "embod[y] a successful strategy in relation to women" (Carrigan *et al.*, 592). The "positivity" of hegemonic masculinity, however, should also be viewed as being an *effect* of hegemonic discourse. In Butler's terms, hegemonic masculinity is performative to the extent that it is "constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, *Gender*, 25). Indeed, as Carrigan *et al.* argue, an important aspect of hegemonic masculinity is its power to articulate retrospectively *and* prospectively the ways gender, sex and sexuality, among other things, are to be understood:

> The ability to impose a particular definition on other kinds of masculinity is part of what mean by "hegemony." Hegemonic masculinity is far more complex than the accounts of essences in the masculinity books would suggest...It is, rather, a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance. (Carrigan, *et. al.*, 592)

If hegemonic masculinity is a "matter of the formation of...groupings," then the target of our analyses must be the *processes* and *practices* through which hegemony is formed. Similarly, in *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that if there is no identity behind the "expression of gender," then the object of analysis should be the practices and techniques (or "technologies," as de Lauretis argues) through which this regulative frame reproduces itself. As Ed Cohen glosses:

> This conceptualisation foregrounds the recognition that power relations are not monolithically imposed from "outside" but locally circulated everywhere, thereby opening the possibility for thinking change not as cataclysmic and hence (temporally) distant but rather as omnipresent and hence ongoing. (Cohen, 82)

The difficulties for those men most privileged by hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal social relations are, firstly, to locate themselves within these processes, and, secondly, to construct a discourse capable of writing against dominant discourses of masculinity. To continue the line of questioning I began earlier, if for women to articulate an

identity beyond the image of the "masculine" requires them to be simultaneously inside and outside gender (a movement between "women" and "Woman"), then for men the movement from "Man" to "men," must be a movement, initially at least, *within* and through "gender," and the politicisation of this movement.

The processes which produce gender and sexual identity are complex, since gender and sexual identity are not simply constituted in the binaries of a primary sexual difference, but within complex discursive relations. Thus, to take some examples from the chapters to follow, the "ideal" or normative subject of hegemonic masculinity in white Anglo culture is simultaneously a gendered, racial and sexual subject. Bob Connell points out in *Masculinities* that dominant ideas of masculinity in Western culture are marked by imperial, racial and nationalist ideologies (Connell, *Masculinities*, 185ff). As I argue in Chapter Two, these ideologies mark "difference" along a number of different axes at once, making the disarticulation of hegemonic masculinity simultaneously a process of unpacking not only the various ways gender, race and sexuality converge, but of, say, how gender comes to read through race, and race through gender. In Chapter Four, I deal with the most pervasive of all foreclosures, the one which produces the binaries of hetero/homosexual definition. This binary, however, is itself able to be read as being constitutive of, and by, other binaries, those of masculine/feminine and male/female.

The political problem for men is to locate themselves within these networks of "difference" and "sameness"; that is, men must be able to deconstruct the logic of hegemonic masculinity and its attendant social practice without fracturing the "masculine" completely (the effect of which would be to make "masculinity," as a problem, disappear altogether). The problematic I am referring to here is precisely of

locating a site of enunciation for men along the "homosocial continuum" (Bristow, "Men After Feminism," 64), which does not presume a collective "male experience" as a nodal-point of masculine identification, nor a male discourse of "masculinity" whose relationship to women and feminism repeats the all-too-familiar dynamics of male homosocial bonding. As Bristow argues, referring to Eve Kosofsky's analysis of male homosocial desire in *Between Men*, "we need to...develop a historical and political understanding of the process by which men acquire certain (different) positions across the very wide gamut of 'homo' (similar) interests in one another" (Bristow, "Men After Feminism," 65).

Some of this ground has been covered by Butler, who argues in *Gender Trouble* that the "agency" or "identity" of "identity" politics ought to be located in the (re)production of the conditions of the "political" itself (Butler, *Gender*, 142ff). For men, constructing a politics of masculinity means that they must at once assume a position along the homosocial continuum, while self-consciously reassessing the "grounds" of any articulation of identity; an acknowledgment of the contingency of "experience," and, most importantly, an awareness of the performativity of the subject-position "men," its productive role in the articulation, and totalisation, in advance, of the emergence of "new" me(n). What the politicisation of "men" must involve is precisely a movement between different levels of "articulation," between "me" and "men," in which the recognition of the constructedness of gender – through parody, or through an engagement with issues of social justice, for example – becomes itself the pre-condition for the emergence of different configurations of male subjectivity.

One particularly good example of the *re-inscription* of hegemonic masculinity through its deconstruction is contained in Anthony Easthope's *What a Man's Gotta*

Do. The constitutive image of masculinity in Western popular culture, Easthope quite appositely points out, is singular and essentialist. He argues that the myth of masculinity in our culture is that a "man must be one sex all the way through. [A man's] struggle to be masculine is the struggle to cope with his femininity" (Easthope, 6). Easthope argues that, consequently, the male ego is structured like a "castle":

> The castle of the ego is defined by its perimeter and the line drawn between what is inside and what outside. To maintain its identity it must not only repel external attack but suppress treason within. It will not be surprising in terms of the argument of this book if the enemy within the masculine individual turns out to be his own femininity. (Easthope, 40)

Yet Easthope does as much to repeat the myth of masculinity as the texts he analyses in his book. The myth of masculinity produced in hegemonic discourses of masculinity, as Thomas DiPiero argues, "works to conceal the deficiencies or discontinuities in its ideal subject" (DiPiero, "Patriarch," 104). In this way, it is irreducibly "phallic," to use the Lacanian term. To the extent that phallicism is defined against a dispersed, castrated femininity, the Lacanian twist to the "masculine myth" is itself a repetition of a patriarchal, and conventionally masculine, position. We see here the danger inherent in Lacanian discourse – which defines gender identity in terms of a plenitude/castration binary, hanging over which is the indomitable phallus. Despite all that has been written about the difference between the phallus and penis, the logic of the phallus seems to propose an original sexual difference, a sexual difference at the core of the Symbolic itself, and not one which has arisen, and which itself mutates, in the course of history.

In Lacanian discourse, it is generally understood that gender identity and sexuality are fundamentally unstable and mutable, but what psychoanalysis is unable to account for is how these things *come* to be stabilised, or of how a consensual, or

hegemonic, pressure comes to be exerted upon individuals to stabilise them. In addition, psychoanalysis must itself be "disciplined," that is, placed in a political and historical context. Lacanian discourse in general is not geared to an historical analysis of gender beyond the founding moments of a subject's entry into the Symbolic. Lacan's Symbolic is rigidly fixed (and fixated) on defining gender (and sexuality, more importantly, which is understood to be fundamentally heterosexual) through the binary signifier, the phallus. Taking for granted the allegorical story of gender assumption, Lacanian discourse does not conceive of the phallus, in whatever form it takes, as *itself* a misrecognition, an effect of hegemonic discourses of gender.[3]

The men who "refuse" the phallus, that is, the hegemonic position, in *What a Man's Gotta Do*, submit themselves to "castration." But what does "castration" mean? A giving up of power, a "feminine" identification, an eroticisation of the "hegemonic subject" itself? In fairness to Easthope, his critique is of the social fantasies contained in texts which sustain hegemonic masculinity, rather than of particular embodied identities. Yet the terms of reference of his analysis admit of no "outside" of masculinity, no other within the "masculine" which is not the "feminine" (and thus which does not appropriate Woman as a liminal space for the "unmanning" of men). Not only does this logic re-inscribe the binary signifier, the phallus, it also keeps to the "heterosexual matrix" of sexual identification which is inscribed historically into the very texture of psychoanalysis.

These shortcomings have repercussions for the articulation of a discourse of masculinit*ies*. To begin with, we cannot underestimate, as Carrigan *et al.* do not, the

---

[3] In addition, as Drucilla Cornell argues, even though Lacan might theorise women's subjugation under patriarchy as unnecessary, "he still sees change in the gender structure and in gender identity as well nigh impossible" (Cornell, 286).

differences that gay men are making to the re-signification of masculinity, and the trouble that the return of the homosexual male "other" causes for "our" traditional ideas about straight masculinity. The "crisis of masculinity" in contemporary culture, as many writers are pointing out, is precipitated exactly by the shattering of the hegemonic discourse of "masculinity" and along with it the interpretative, classifying gaze that straight men deploy to define their identities. The naming of the "homosexual" has always been a performative act: the act of naming is also an act of power; the bringing into being of the homosexual also sets the rules of the future articulation of his identity, and the identity of the man who "names" them both. But the "male gaze,"[4] a term which feminism has used to describe the conceptual/perceptual apparatus of patriarchy, can be turned on its head (again) by the "making visible" of the difference(s) inhering within the "male" of "male gaze," and the uncertainty produced by the gaze's unfixedness. Mark Simpson argues that the crisis of contemporary masculinity comes from this radical instability of the "look":

> Men's bodies are on display everywhere; but the grounds of men's anxiety is not just that they are being exposed and commodified but that their bodies are placed in such a way as to passively invite a gaze that is *undifferentiated*; it might be female *or* male, hetero *or* homo...Sexual difference no longer calls the shots, "active" no longer maps onto masculine, nor "passive" onto feminine. Traditional heterosexuality *cannot survive this reversal*, particularly because it brings masculinity into perilously close contact with that which it must always be disavowed: homosexuality. (Simpson, 4)

---

[4] One of the earliest theories of the male gaze is contained in Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In this essay she argues: "Woman...stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning" (Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 15). These are important points. What I will emphasise in the following paragraphs, however, is how the "male gaze," the determining, commanding discourse of intelligibility of male and female subjects, is split against itself along the axis of sexuality.

This is not to say that there is not a lot of work being undertaken by straight men *to* reassimilate the "look" into the "gaze," and suppress all over again the kind of desire, and anxiety which the homosexual or "queer" look generates. All the chapters of this thesis grapple in some way with the ramifications of men looking at men, and how this "looking" is both caught up in, and perpetuates, discourses of sexual difference, but also how, within the hetero-homo-sexual continuum, the gaze of the "other" puts the male subject on display.

If "sexual difference no longer calls the shots," it is still the case that the terms of inquiry into masculinity will differ for male and female subjects, and for the reason that "feminine" and "masculine" gender identifications will mean different things when performed by, or inscribed onto, male and female bodies. In her radical critique of the "sex/gender system" Butler argues:

> When the constructed status of gender is theorised as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one. (Butler, *Gender*, 6)

Quite so. In fact, the construction of male homosexuality within a binary division of gender, paradoxically, has made this non-coincidence of male bodies and masculine identities a primary pre-condition of the construction of hegemonic masculinities. Butler's critique, however, can itself be criticised for its displacement and suppression of the "materiality" of the body. In his gloss of her critique of gender categories, Cohen argues that Butler forecloses the possibilities which shared somatic experience engenders in political movements, the often inexplicable "(e)motions" coalescing in the concept of identity politics: "You see I *feel* there *is* something 'different' about the body: I *believe* feeling is the difference that bodies make, a difference that *moves*

people to action" (Cohen, 84). Although it is possible and sometimes necessary to insist on a radical separation of sex and gender, we must not, as Elizabeth Grosz argues, ignore the different significations of male and female bodies in gendered discourse, or indeed, in discourses of sexuality:

> Masculine and feminine are necessarily related to the structure of lived experience and meaning of *bodies*. As Gatens (1983) argues...masculinity and femininity mean different things according to whether they are lived out in and experienced by male or female bodies. Gender is an effect of the body's social morphology. What is mapped onto the body is not unaffected by the body onto which it is projected. (Grosz, "Inscriptions and Body Maps," 73-4)

As I have already mentioned, identity is not exhausted by gender categories, and there is more to the "body's social morphology" than masculinity and femininity. Bodies are experienced, and more importantly, addressed and *valued*, differently by men of different sexualities, class, race, age and so on, differences which cannot be subsumed within the binary frame of either gender or sexual difference. It is still the case, though, that what separates gay men from straight men in hegemonic discourses of masculinity, for example, is not the same as the differences subtending homo- and heterosexual men's relations with women, although hegemonic discourse continues to read gay/straight male relations through gender binaries. To the extent that the historical construction of male and female bodies differs within the orbit of gender difference, "sexual difference," that is, a notion, and politics, of "difference" evolving out of a recognition of the specificity of male and female bodies, matters. There is some political and social capital to be made for gay men who "dress up" as straight men, and who "pass" for straight men. At the same time, there is a difference between the effects of contestation, whether overtly political or not, of "masculine" and "feminine" drag. Although I do not want to pre-empt the aims of gay liberationist

politics, there might be a significant deconstructive edge to a "masculine" mimicry which is not wholly realised by the "usual" drag performance, with its occasionally implicit re-affirmation of feminine stereotypes and their attendant misogyny.

It is probably the case that feminist and gay male approaches to the question of "masculinity" have differed, and precisely because the gains of deconstructing or reconstructing masculinity have not necessarily been viewed as the same by both. Some gay men *do*, for example, gain some of the prerogatives of patriarchy's disproportionate distribution of power among male and female subjects. At the same time, it is the male body that is the target of gay men's political opposition to homophobic social practice. As Lee Edelman points out, it is precisely because of gay men's ability to "pass" unnoticed as the "same" (as heterosexual men) that discourses of homosexuality are required to mark them out *as* different (Edelman, 6). I am not suggesting that "gay masculinity" is any more efficacious as an expression of opposition to hegemonic masculinity than, say, camp, or that gay masculinity does not itself embody, literally, many of the repressive qualities of straight masculinity. What I *am* arguing is that gay masculinity problematises dominant constructions of masculinity precisely by challenging the terms of homo- and heterosexual difference from within a conception of sexual difference, and with an idea of the difference that gender makes to the signification, both culturally and politically, of male and female bodies.

Gay men's appropriation of the "masculine" is paradoxical: at once undermining the hegemonic idea of masculinity as essentially heterosexual, and at the same time affirming the legitimacy of the "masculine" *to* define male identity in this way. In *Sexual Dissidence* Jonathan Dollimore calls this "fearful connectedness" the "perverse dynamic," the discovery of the "outside" within the "inside," a mode of

discourse "whereby the antithetical inheres within, and is partly produced by, what it opposes" (Dollimore, 33). The usefulness of the "perverse dynamic," Dollimore argues, is that it is "enabled rather than thwarted by the knowledge that there is no freedom outside history, no freedom within deluded notions of autonomous selfhood" (Dollimore, 33). The "perverse dynamic" thus operates simultaneously within the sphere of homo- and heterosexual definition, as well as within the binary terms of gender construction. Closely related to the perverse dynamic is "transgressive reinscription," the "tracking back of the other into the same," an operation which the "perverse dynamic" itself makes possible (Dollimore, 33). Combined, the perverse dynamic and transgressive reinscription offer a way of disarticulating the binary oppositions constructing gender and sexuality in hegemonic culture by relocating the "other" within the "same," by discovering "proximities where there was difference" (Dollimore, 229).

Writing from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity, I am concerned with how the "perverse dynamic" might influence the siting of "male identity" and the reconstruction of "masculinity" from the position of the male. Certainly, this siting of identity must be simultaneously engaged in the reconstruction of "gender," as a category, along the lines de Lauretis mentions: of theorising the gendered "subject as multiple, rather than divided or unified." As a category, "gender" is inadequate to articulate the range of male identities it ostensibly speaks for; at the same time it is not possible to do without it. What a sexual politics of masculinity must address is the practices of inclusion and exclusion that make possible the articulation of a gender identity in the first place. In effect, this means that men must always be aware of the position from which they speak, and how the "speaking" of "identity" is itself the site

for the (re)production of the "order" or hierarchy of the elements of sex, sexuality, desire, class, race and so on, that go to make up the fiction of the seamless, coherent "self" of hegemonic masculinity.

I now want to turn to the question of sexual politics. A sexual politics of masculinity must not simply be about "male emancipation," a term redolent of the early days of the men's movement. The rhetoric of emancipatory discourse too often takes for granted the meaning of "men," and, from this embodied meaning, an idea of what men "lack," while often passing over what men have too much of. At no point can we move completely outside gender ideology. The assumption that men can make and remake their lives in any image is false. Yet it is nevertheless the case that men have more power over their images than women, and more control over their political visibility.

It is for this reason that men must be careful when they articulate an emancipatory agenda.[5] Indeed, in many "about men" books, the political agenda for the "emancipation" of men is taken for granted. In the introduction to a recent book of short stories written by men, *Men Love Sex*, Alan Close argues that what men need to do is develop a new "empowering language" through which to rearticulate their masculinity. Like Middleton, Close proceeds from the assumption that for men there is a fundamental antagonism between language and emotion: "Wittgenstein theorised that what you can't talk about doesn't exist. Because, as men, we can't speak our feelings they don't exist for us. So, until we learn to talk, we remain excluded from

---

[5] A good example of this necessity for men to theorise men's "emancipation" is provided by the controversy over the canvassing of the appoitment of a Men's Officer at a Deakin University Campus at Warnambool, Victoria, at the end of 1995. Predictably, many people, and the NUS, objected to the idea that there be an office on campus whose role should be the "celebration of the male gender[!]" (cited in Fisher, "Positions Vacant," 12). Fisher, in this article, expresses confusion about how a discourse of men's emancipation *should* be framed: "Is the crux of men's issues to support men or challenge them?" (Fisher, 12). It is a burning question.

ourselves. Language remains the first, crucial stage of empowerment" (Close, xvii). *Men Love Sex* marks a point of departure in the books-about-men genre, though not an unexpected one. This volume is among the first of the "new wave" to develop a kind of "masculine aesthetic," a field of writing expressly concerned with the excavation and representation of male identities. In this way, perhaps, this genre might parallel the work undertaken within feminism, whose excavations of a "feminist literature" and the discovery and nuturing of a canon of women's writing has been important in the (re)constitution of female subjectivity after patriarchy.

Close's introduction, however, steps around the political dimension of "men's writing," preferring instead to address the "fact" of men's gender confusion. Close assumes the feminist challenge to men, but does not address himself specifically to feminism. Of course, as Close points out, such a project as his would not have been possible without feminism, yet how, exactly, Close is responding to the feminist challenge is not clear (some women might quibble that men do not need a language of empowerment, but one of *dis*empowerment). Clearly, "emancipation" requires "empowerment," as feminism has always argued. But in what direction do men want to take their emancipation? If emancipation requires the empowerment of men, then it is a political problem. But of what kind? Emancipation can as easily be a (re)discovery of lost or occluded sites of power as a movement into undiscovered country toward some new sensibility.

In response to Close, I would like to argue that discourses of "emancipation" must be embraced by a discourse of sexual politics, and that the (re)articulation of masculinity must take place *through* them. Sexual politics cannot be partitioned off from the discourse of emancipation, just as "identity" itself can no longer be assumed

to be "there" from the start. However, as Connell points out, men cannot simply adopt *a* feminist stance on masculinity, since feminism itself is not some homogenous unit or movement expousing a single, non-contradictory idea of sexual politics: "To which feminism should men be auxiliary? – since feminists are divided on this issue, as on many others. How can a politics whose main theme is anger towards men serve to mobilise men broadly?" (Connell, *Masculinities*, 221). Connell's own response to these questions is that men and women must find a basis of "common principles," say, the pursuit of social justice, from which to pursue sexual politics. This means a number of different things at once: a degendering strategy aimed at hegemonic masculinity, and the re-embodiment of men, as well as an assertion of sexual difference.

The pursuit of a common interest, however, is itself fraught with contradictions, such as the one between equality and difference. For Connell:

> Social justice in gender relations is...a generalisable interest but not a demand for uniformity. Complex equality is precisely the condition needed for diversity as a real practice, for open-ended explorations of human possibility. (Connell, *Masculinities*, 230)

The framing of the question of social justice as a matter of equality or difference is itself bound to current, hegemonic discourses of subjectivity and representation. For women, gay men and other marginalised groups, it always comes down to articulating an identity through a hegemonic norm: to be equal means to be the same as white, heterosexual men, the men who frame the "law"; the assertion of difference, on the other hand, risks foresaking the political altogether, of moving outside power (and thus, staying firmly within it).[6] This is the reason de Lauretis

---

[6] Boris Frankel argues in *From the Prophets Deserts Come* that Australian feminists have by and large retreated from activist work and emancipatory struggles in the last decade to concentrate on more theoretical and utopian work. He attacks Grosz particularly for her illusions of "difference," arguing generally that post-structuralist theory fits very neatly with the deradicalising of Australian

emphasises that for women, the "subject of feminism" must be a process, a practice of engaging with ideologies of gender through a politics of identity and community.

Similarly, men also engage and negotiate with the discourses and ideologies that structure masculinity in contemporary culture. What men need to engage with critically is the very Symbolic articulation of their identity, the very terms of intelligibility through which they can perform "masculinity." The readings to follow attempt to flesh out, as it were, the various ways difference and sameness are articulated in the construction of masculinities in hegemonic con(texts). My aim in these readings is to analyse how difference and sameness are deployed in each text's representations of male identity, and how "masculinity," articulated through these vectors of difference and sameness, might be rearticulated.

Chapter One grapples with the problem of reading "as" a "man" within prevailing discourse(s) of sexual (in)difference. I read two texts, Rod Jones' novel *Julia Paradise* and David Brooks' short story "The Book of Sei," as allegories of reading "Woman" and "women," and argue that the disarticulation of patriarchy and the "masculine" in these texts is made visible in the confusion wrought for the male "reader" by the movement of the female characters in these texts between Woman and women, particularly in *Julia Paradise*. In this text, the relation between Woman as Text, and Man as Reader, is somewhat literalised in the relationship between the psychoanalyst, Ayres, and his patient, Julia. I argue that Julia's displacement of Ayres as the "subject supposed to know" also displaces the authority of the patriarchal subject, and thus, in a sense, dramatises the very deconstruction of the basis of masculinity by feminism which this thesis takes as its enabling condition. Reading

---

culture under successive right-wing governments (Frankel, *From the Prophets Deserts Come*, 212-222).

Brooks' "The Book of Sei" through a discourse of "male feminism," I argue that Brooks' short story can be read as a performance of the (re)siting of the "male reader" in the sphere of otherness that this discourse requires.

Chapter Two explores the alterity of the "hegemonic subject" of Australian culture, the white Anglo-Saxon male, across discourses of gender and race in Robert Drewe's *A Cry in the Jungle Bar*. In this chapter I argue that the performance of gender and racial difference is for Drewe's protagonist, Dick Cullen, a matter for the body, since it is there that the final signification, the ultimate referent, of identity can be found. Masculinity, race and ethnicity, to this extent, are inextricable, each one being read by Cullen through the other.

In Chapter Three I argue that Davey Meredith's "reading" of his brother in George Johnston's *My Brother Jack* is exemplary in its attempts to contain the trauma of "maimed" or "castrated" masculinity through the (re)construction of a patriarchal conception of sexual (in)difference. The text, as many critics point out, is knowingly ambivalent about its representation of Jack *qua* myth. This deconstruction of the myth of the "noble ocker," however, is itself framed by a phallic conception of masculinity, one which, I argue, devolves precisely from a disavowal of the kind of "lack" Jack, at the end, represents for Davey. In other words, Davey's own rejection of the myth of "Jack" depends very much on his identification *with* the very discourses of masculinity and sexual difference which hold the myth in place.

This text, along with *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* and Patrick White's *The Twyborn Affair*, all "kill-off" the castrated male, suggesting that the narratives of masculinity offered here do not imagine a masculinity outside the spaces of hegemonic, or phallic, identifications. In each text I attempt to find the points at which such alternative

identifications are possible (for the reader, at least), the points at which "masculinity" is imagined (if obliquely) as containing multiple sites of identification, and where these sites are foreclosed by hegemonic masculinity.

In hegemonic discourse, these alternative sites of identification (which I argue in *My Brother Jack* are themselves produced within the spectre of abjectivity, of meaning and meaning's "collapse") are at the border of homo/heterosexual definition. In Chapter Four, I analyse *The Twyborn Affair* specifically in terms of its representation of male homosexuality, and its antagonistic/integral role in the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. I also stress in this chapter the importance of sexual difference, as White's "homosexual aesthetics" might be interpreted as representing a desire to do away with such notions as "sexual difference" altogether. It is not my purpose in this chapter to subjugate the analytical, and deconstructive, axis of sexuality. Rather, I read White's novel as engaging with hegemonic discourses of gender and sexuality, and as disclosing the performativity of these discourses.

Chapter One

Masculinity and Sexual (In)Difference in Rod Jones' *Julia Paradise* and David Brooks' "The Book of Sei"

> The question of sexual difference admits of no outside position. The proclamation of a position outside, beyond, sexual difference is a luxury that only male arrogance allows. It is only men who can afford the belief that their perspective is an outside, disinterested, or objective position.
>
> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 191

> "Ladies and Gentlemen, –...Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity –...Nor will *you* have escaped worrying over this problem – those of you who are men; to those of you who are women this will not apply – you yourselves are the problem.
>
> Sigmund Freud, *Femininity*, 112

Freud's posing of the question, "what does woman want?" tacitly assigns to *women* a sex which is quite different from his own, namely that of men. Freud's question is performative to the extent that it not only inaugurates a discourse of sexual difference and determines the way it can be answered, but also works to conceal the very performativity, the contingency, of the position from which Freud himself is speaking. It is for this reason that Freud's answer to his own question, as Irigaray argues in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, is couched within a discourse of sexual *in*difference: his discourse is about sexual difference (women's difference from men), and yet the very form this discourse takes presumes a male-centred frame of reference. As Irigaray retorts:

> So it would be a case of you men speaking among yourselves about woman, who cannot be involved in hearing or producing a discourse that concerns the riddle, the logogriph she represents for you. The enigma that *is* woman will therefore constitute the *target*, the *object*, the *stake*, of a masculine discourse, of a debate among men, which would not consult her, would not concern her. (Irigaray, *Speculum*, 13)

Thus, in her analysis of Freud's "reduction" of the "little girl" to the "little man," Irigaray argues that "'Sexual difference' is a derivation of the problematics of sameness, it is, now and forever, determined within the project, the projection, the sphere of representation, of the same" (Irigaray, *Speculum*, 27). The performativity of the discourse of Freud's lecture on femininity, of course, exactly deflects the specificity of the very "gaze" which Irigaray's analysis reveals to be there: the gaze of a man looking at "women." If, as Freud suggests, women do not have to consider the problem of femininity because "you yourselves are the problem," then men also, presumably, are exempt from thinking about masculinity. The relationship between men/masculinity and women/femininity here, though, is not symmetrical, because men, constructed by patriarchy as the protagonists of culture – active, seeking, explaining – are already "known": the implication is not that men do not have a gender, but that it is one that we do not need to worry about. In other words, what Freud's discourse on "femininity" may be read to conceal is the problematic constitution of the "masculine" from which this discourse proceeds.

In this chapter I want to explore the fraught relationship between sexual (in)difference and masculinity: the problem of men looking at women, or of the "male gaze." Two questions I would like to address in this chapter are: if women's identity is always the product of a masculine desire, what happens when *a* women's desire begins to disrupt the authority of the male to represent, and speak for, her, for women? How can "Man," the seamless and authoritative articulator of sexual (in)difference, survive the return of this other within the same? The texts analysed in this chapter, Rod Jones' *Julia Paradise* and David Brooks' "The Book of Sei," I would like to argue, deconstruct the generic subject of patriarchy, Man, precisely

through their gendering of the "masculine," a gendering which occurs through the disarticulation of Woman and women, and the positing of a conception of sexual difference which is not reducible to a male paradigm of having/not having the phallus/penis. Implicit in my analysis *is* a notion of difference which can cut across the binaries of sexual difference, and which can accommodate differences within the categories of man/woman and masculine/feminine. For this reason, I do not want to suggest that either of the texts analysed in this chapter do much more than hint at the chiasma opening up between "man and himself," to use Irigaray's phrase, at the heart of patriarchal culture which feminism has been able to chart. Rather, I argue that these texts stage the contradiction that sexual difference must inevitably present to male and female subjects, a contradiction which men, particularly, need to work through as subjects whose performance or utterance of "I," a masculine identity, must always imply some idea *of* the feminine, Woman, and women.

In much recent male postmodernist theory, Woman is represented as a metaphor of liminality. Feminist criticism has rightly pointed out how these men refuse to equate Woman with *women*, making Woman rather "a carrier of man's fantasy...onto which he can unload the burdensome weight of his own void" (Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, 143). Woman, in this sense, is appropriated as a site from which men can explain themselves to one another, and, as in Derrida's reading of Nietzsche, of negotiating a textual relationship with another man who has already located himself at the site of Woman (Middleton, 221). In either case, Woman functions only as an object of exchange in the market place of male hom(m)osexual desire, and thus repeats the process whereby Woman is hypostatised as the essence of patriarchy itself. As Irigaray puts it: "Woman exists only as an occasion for

mediation, transaction, transference, between man and his fellow man, indeed between man and himself" (Irigaray, *This Sex*, 193).

Colleen Keane applies Irigaray's charge to some contemporary works of postmodernist fiction. Keane argues that "the representation of female sexuality, and its relation to narrative structure, strategies and interpretation, can provide an interesting test of definitions of radical experiment...and politics" (Keane, 196). Inevitably, Keane finds that the essentialist "construction[s] of Woman [in these texts] empower masculine and male interests at the expense of women and female readers, and undercut any serious claim to broad radicalism" (Keane, 196). It is certainly true that literary postmodernism has, by and large, attracted criticism for its representation of Woman. I would like to argue that in *Julia Paradise* and "The Book of Sei," however, the "transaction between man and himself" that Irigaray argues is inscribed into the Imaginary of patriarchy (and masculinity) can be read to be self-reflexively *en*gendering masculinity, and thus as offering a way of disarticulating the masculinity of *the* gaze through the proliferation of the "look."

The following discussion of the work of Jones and Brooks brackets postmodernism's putative radicalism by assuming from the beginning that these works are gendered; I read *Julia Paradise* and "The Book of Sei" *as* male fantasies about Woman. Both texts set up a bifurcated view of male and female subjectivity, in which each is constructed *by* the male gaze, but are is reducible to it. In *Julia Paradise* the process of bifurcation is generated through the textualising and gendering of the gaze of the psychoanalyst Ayres. In Ayres' act of reading Julia, it is the analyst's own subjectivity, and not just the patient's, which is revealed as a site of desire. In *Julia Paradise*, the "masculine" *qua* universal, or to use Irigaray's term, the "standard," is

not only problematised by the return of the feminine, but so are the male reader's own masculine identification, as the narrative's manipulation of point of view constantly places the implied male reader's (that is, Ayres') authority over the text (Julia) in question.

"The Book of Sei" is read by Keane as another male fantasy about women: "Imaginative games, textual and psychological, bizarre ideas and images that construct a highly inauthentic gender position, or pretend that a gendered position doesn't exist, involve only very slight departures from traditional humanism" (Keane, 197). I would like to read Brooks' text, however, as itself a performance of reading and writing the "feminine" from a position within an asymmetrical conception of sexual difference, a position from which men's constructions of femininity will always seem "inauthentic." I link this problem of the articulation of sexual difference to Brooks' own essay on male feminism, "'The Male Practice of Feminist Criticism,'" and suggest that "The Book of Sei" might be seen as fleshing out some of the issues contained within it. In this essay, Brooks argues that even though men probably cannot "authentically practise feminist criticism," nor should "women be the only ones who can or should object to patriarchy" (Brooks, *The Necessary Jungle*, 105). Brooks argues that men's engagement with the feminine should not be thought of as constituting a direct engagement with, or colonisation of, women, but rather should always only ever amount to an attempt to disarticulate dominant and oppressive masculinities. My general argument in this chapter is that what men need to recognise is that their negotiation with the feminine is, tacitly, a process of engendering, a performance of *their* gendered and sexual identity.

*

In *Julia Paradise* the hysteric's question to the Freudian analyst is not "who am I" but "what are *you*?" As Julia explains to Ayres, referring to his inadvertent killing of a girl-prostitute: "That first Tuesday I came to your bed, I wanted to know what kind of man could do that" (*JP*, 82). As well as a damning indictment of Ayres, this sentence is a declaration of agency, as a subjectivity is given back to the hysteric. Julia is figured as both Woman and woman, as an idea in Ayres' head, a figment of his imagination, and as someone existing outside the frame of his fantasy-space. Although she is an enigma for Ayres, Julia's perspective is nevertheless able to de-centre the dominant perspective of the text, the perspective of Ayres. We see Julia through Ayres' eyes but the traces of Ayres' desire are also clearly evident.

Julia Paradise is, as many readers have pointed out, written in the style of what Catherine Belsey calls "classic realism" (Belsey, 1). These narratives, Belsey explains:

> turn on the creation of enigma through the precipitation of disorder which throws into disarray the conventional cultural and signifying systems. Among the commonest sources of disorder at the level of plot in classic realism are murder, war, journey or love. (Belsey, 70)

The female hysteric is another source of disorder. The reader's perspective is aligned with Ayres', as Julia is positioned in the text as the object of the narrative's gaze. Ayres, in the classic psychoanalytic sense, is the "subject supposed to know," acting as a point of identification for the reader: "*You* might have come across him at the Shanghai Club...Or *you* might have found him upstairs, in one of the Club's deep leather armchairs" (*JP*, 1, emphasis added). Ayres performs the function of filtering the "vital" information provided by the narrator, of offering a judgement, a viewpoint. He is, in other words, our (the reader's) guarantee of the narrative's "truth." As in the psychoanalytic narrative, it is through Ayres as analyst and protagonist that the

transference of knowledge will take place. We can see in this juxtaposition of discourses the link between the technique of realist narrative and the psychoanalytic narrative. It is precisely the stability and verisimilitude of these narrative perspectives that Julia deconstructs.

Julia is first encountered through the gaze of Ayres: "Ayres looked across the hotel lobby at the calmly sleeping woman. She was a small, plain, nondescript, of indeterminate age, dressed in a black woollen suit" (*JP*, 5). At one level this description of her is disarmingly perfunctory. Julia, in fact, is a woman without "character" whatsoever, and is compared to the cardboard case Willy Paradise refuses to let go of (Julia is, after all, a "case" of one kind). As Willy remarks to Ayres, with a touch of prescience, "My wife's case has perplexed several physicians before yourself" (*JP*, 5). Ayres helpfully suggests that they "get a couple of boys to load her into a barrow and take her up in the luggage lift" (*JP*, 5).

But Julia's wider function as a narrative device is also hinted at here: she is a "case," in the psychoanalytic sense, or enigma in the narrative sense, to be explored and "solved." Another implicit connection is made between "woman" as a commodity of exchange (in male kinship relations), and "woman" as the source of narrative desire. In the psychoanalytic narrative, male desire is compressed into a desire to get at the "interior" of woman, to "externalise" her desire, and solve the enigma of femininity. Male desire is dispersed among the various scientific narratives which personify the seeking or questing subject *as* objective. Jessica Benjamin makes a connection between this supposed objectivity, "the impersonality of modern science," and the place of "active" subject in the sado-masochistic narrative:

> We may note that the image of the scientist as impersonal knower who "tears the veil from nature's body" is reminiscent of the master in the fantasy of erotic domination, and his quest for knowledge parallels the

> rational violation in which the subject is always in control. (Benjamin, 189-90)

Julia's more subversive function in the narrative perspective of *Julia Paradise* is to textualise male desire, to make, at a more thematic level, Ayres' gaze self-reflexive. In Benjamin's words, Julia's role is feminist to the extent that she "uncover[s] the masculine identity of the seemingly neutral universal individual of modern thought and society...that neutrality itself is the sign of masculinity, its alliance with rationality and objectivity" (Benjamin, 188). After an initial examination, Ayres diagnoses Julia as an hysteric, "an hypothesis in which the physician who had previously examined her apparently concurred" (*JP*, 10). Later in the evening, however, Ayres is troubled by an ill-defined sense of remorse:

> He felt a thought rise up in him then fade before he could recognise it. He felt that he was on the point of making a crucial confession to himself, but that he was holding himself back from such a irrevocable step as an admission of guilt: like a murderer might feel, for instance. (*JP*, 12-13)

What Ayres feels is the first effect of Julia's influence on him, the dredging of his consciousness for the residue of his desire. We soon discover what this desire comprises: "In the artist's rooms at night he always took them in the same position: from behind. All such girls were in his mental notation, 'Wendies,' with their wispy boy-like figures, unformed breasts, bony hips and slender arms" (*JP*, 13). As he is dragged by Julia through the "region of tenements where the sewage ran open in the streets...not his usual territory" (*JP*, 14- 5), Ayres is faced with the detritus of a repressed culpability. It is here that Julia, apparently hysterical ("looking at a fantastic creature rather than Ayres"), cries, "You killed her"(*JP*, 19).

In the tenements, Ayres is on Julia's ground, "at a disadvantage without his medical bag" (*JP*, 19). In the analytic situation, however, he is once more in control

of the gaze. For Ayres and the reader, Julia presents herself as a particularly rich source for scientific/narrative desire: "None of the ladies in Vienna whose case he had studied under the Master himself, had provided a subject whose other, 'hidden' self was so accessible through hypnosis, or so discernibly opposite to the face she presented to the world" (*JP*, 19). But as Ayres probes he is repeatedly stumped by Julia's recalcitrance, and fears that she "might become a constant living rebuke to science" (*JP*, 25). Here we have the placement of the reader's desire within the gaze of "science," as Julia is a "rebuke" to the curiosity of both. After some weeks, though, Julia quite mysteriously begins to improve: "The patient's spirits seemed suddenly to improve, her general health was better and her hallucinations troubled her less often" (*JP*, 25). Julia continues to externalise "and so render harmless" her hallucinations: "Now she began coldly and methodically to build up for him a picture of her father, Joachim Johannes" (*JP*, 26).

As an allegory of reading, *Julia Paradise* places the reader in the position of analyst, which is inscribed (though not unequivocally, as Julia's own reading position will show) as a male subject-position. The task for the reader and Ayres is to scour the narrative for markers which might yield some deeper meaning, and Julia's narrative is full of such markers. The rendering of Julia's "mad music" in the voice of the omniscient narrator is mis-leading, but this can only be discovered retrospectively. What this narrative voice both leads us to believe and later debunks is the connection between Ayres and narrative authority. Ayres is positioned by narrative gaze as yet another reader of Julia; like Ayres, the reader is required to interpret Julia's narrative in light of subsequent revelations. The narrative gaze itself, however, wanders. It is as

liable to belong to Ayres as it is to Julia, although "access" to it, and what can be represented in it, differs for each of the characters.

As the transference begins in earnest, the narrative of Julia's childhood is formed into a coherent discursive structure. The relationship of analyst to patient is not only literalised in the final passages of the first section, when Julia and Ayres begin a love affair, but also the counter-transference, the point at which the analyst's own desire begins to structure the patient's narrative. The narrative of Julia's childhood has all the elements of a clinical psycho-biography or case study: teleologically structured, with relations of causality (the primal scene, displacement, aphonia), ending with the patient's recognition of, in the classic Lacanian scenario, the lack in her own desire, and the resumption of Symbolic relations. The dreadful irony at the end of the narrative of this section, the symbol of the "good" Father, a picture of King George, representing violation rather benevolence, might suggest something about the relation of women to the hegemonic/patriarchal system of representation rendering the subjectivities of women: in sight of the Law and Language, women are the (sexual) objects of a male narrative of violence and oppression.

What Ayres and the reader discover is that Julia's story is an amalgam of elements taken from her own "real" life. A more bizarre irony, from Ayres' point of view, is that Julia's recalcitrance in the analytic situation has something to do with her not knowing enough about *him*. The fictional discourse of the hysteric exposes the "truth" of the lives of the people around her, and most importantly, the truth of Ayres' desire. Ayres himself, though, is in no doubt how Julia's message should be interpreted:

> He thought of Julia Paradise and the net she had cast with such casual accuracy across his path: the hints planted, her silky narrative woven to confound him, an entire childhood left hanging in the air. Lying on the bed

> in his shirtsleeves, Ayres was a dream, Julia's story was a dream: just a different kind of opium-eating. (*JP*, 63-4)

Ayres mis-reads Julia's message. Julia's story is not a dream, or an opium-induced delirium, but the "truth" of his desire. Even after her revelations, Julia is for Ayres "like a brilliantly-coloured jigsaw puzzle dismantled and spread across the floor of his mind" (*JP*, 83). He struggles with her "brutal pantomime" but for as long as he attempts to plumb the "exotic gardens of the mind" – persists in "reading" her as an "exotic" other – he is doomed not to "understand the import of Julia Paradise's gift to him" (*JP*, 83). Significantly, Ayres' only comes to "see" the force of his own desire through the desire of another man, a desire constructed, yet again, upon the damaged body of a woman:

> There is a message written clearly in the drooping languorous lines of her body, her lank blue-hair which hangs as though sodden with sweat, the tousle of the bed mat in the background...Morgan has captured there the sadness of a man's receding desire, a desire not entirely satisfied, and on the girl's face, the despair of repeated rape. (*JP*, 81)

The girl is in fact a symbol, a representation, of a "man's receding desire," in the same way that Julia's narrative, is also, but not *merely*, about masculinity and male power. In Ayres' interpretation of the prostitute's image we also have men's characteristic obfuscation of Woman and women. De Lauretis argues that "articulating the differences" between Woman and women is "difficult, if not impossible" (de Lauretis, *Technologies*, 2). In *Julia Paradise*, women continue to become Woman, but I would add that this text also articulates an opening within the discourse of gender, as it is conceived by patriarchal ideology, in which the conflation of Woman and women can be disarticulated. The role of Julia's own fantasy in this text is to problematise the linkages operating at the level of the male imaginary between power, narrative and male desire. This is not to say that Julia's own character in this text is also a fantasy,

or as in Lacanian discourse, a "symptom" of the man's failure to possess the phallus. As Jacqueline Rose explains, such a dismissal of Woman *qua* fantasy makes it impossible to conceive of women as desiring subjects: "The problem is that once the notion of 'woman' has been so relentlessly exposed as a fantasy, then any such question [of her own *jouissance*] becomes an impossible one to pose" (Mitchell & Rose, 51).

In *Julia Paradise*, Woman is a site of epistemological uncertainty, but the reader is made aware that this construction of her is itself a *particular* fantasy; indeed, a production of Woman in a discourse carried out between *at least* two men (Ayres and Freud, Ayres and Willie, the male reader/Freud and Ayres). Julia remains a figure of fantasy for Ayres, and a figure of fascination for the reader as well. Yet it is clear, particularly at the end of the text, that Julia, produced "textually" as a figure of narrative desire, is not herself reducible to this identity.[1] The reader's desire, like Ayres', is shown to be produced in the textualising and reifying of Julia as Woman, but her own identity (produced textually, of course, in her letters to Ayres) is also shown to be something else altogether; something, in fact, quite banal. In the end, Ayres' desire to make Julia into a figure of alterity is dependent on a particular rendering of her *as* textual, as something to be read and interpreted, which is itself a process of engendering – a site of the performance – of masculinity.

Julia problematises the gendering of the "reader" and the "text" in the patriarchal "plot," which psychoanalysis and male realist fiction, in this instance, are the exemplary exponents of. By obfuscating the binary relation of "subject" and

[1]The letters bear "no relation to that distant time when she drifted with Joachim through the raucous river birds, when ferns grew eyes and moved. But he continued to float in that boat, trapped in her experience" (*JP*, 97).

"object," reader and text, Julia dislocates the hegemonic "male gaze," the gaze of patriarchy, which posits itself as that which "looks," and Woman as that which is looked at. The male gaze here, as elsewhere in this thesis, is deconstructed by the return of the gaze of the "other," a return which manages precisely to disarticulate the fantasy subtending the "male gaze": the fantasy, and the power joined to it, of being able to "name" itself through the captation of the body of the (other) Woman.

*

> There is, that is to say, a sense not only in which the self the male finds here will be a self he could not have found without entering this territory, but also in which his activity here will become more and more consciously a search for a lost and abandoned identity. (David Brooks, "'The Male Practice of Feminist Criticism'" in *The Necessary Jungle*, 108)

"The Book of Sei" has largely been read as a typically postmodern deliberation on the limits of our (men's) grasp of the putative "real." As Ken Gelder writes: "Brooks' story is an attempt at possessing the apparently unpossessable, at expressing the apparently inexpressible" (Gelder, 50). But this kernel of inexpressibleness, as always, has an "expressible" correlate: Woman. The text, Gelder goes on, enacts a fantasy of possessing the maternal body, a fantasy of (the male subject) returning to a pre-Oedipal condition of oneness with the (m)other. This text (among others), Gelder argues, "excludes women – but excludes them only to desire them (or the wish to possess them) all the more fervently. Woman here is postmodernism's lost object; woman (the prefeminist woman? the unreconstructed woman?) is what their narratives are nostalgic for" (Gelder, 52). The conservative sexual politics of this postmodernism – "this embedded refusal to allow women to speak ... their own difference" (Gelder, 53) – undermines its radical textual experimentation, its radical status altogether.

Both Gelder and Keane object to "The Book of Sei" because of its implicit, and disingenuous, refusal to acknowledge the basis of its engagement with the patriarchal social formation. Insofar as the text professes a radical textuality, it can be deconstructed on the basis of its deployment of Woman. They argue that if the text foregrounds the irreducibility of the signifier, the chaos of desire, the impossibility of writing (possessing) The Truth, and the uncertainty of any interpretation of anything, then Woman functions as the "rock" against which all these liminalities are given their meanings. Woman remains the same in a dialectic of (male) self and his other.

As in *Julia Paradise*, the male gaze in "The Book of Sei" is self-consciously inscribed into the narrative of the text. Likewise, it is ultimately displaced onto the body of an elusive, enigmatic woman. Masculine desire, the desire of the male author, and the desire of the male protagonist (the desire of the implied male reader) are located in the body of the woman. Woman comes to represent male desire, narrative desire, and by extension the production of meaning in language. Gelder and Keane rightly re-place the male gaze, directing it back onto itself. However, in so doing they discover a conventional, Oedipal and regressive version of masculinity.

Gelder's psychoanalytic reading of "The Book of Sei" is instructive, and yet the reductiveness of the Oedipal scenario becomes itself a problem in the engendering of men and the gaze. I argue that, as in *Julia Paradise*, the textual performances and constructions of masculinity in and by the text's implied male gaze are pierced by an alternative (feminist) gaze. In this way, as we saw earlier, the performance of men's construction of Woman is shown to be a textual process. In this process men are simultaneously gendered and engendering (Woman). Woman, as de Lauretis points out, will always carry a signification, and cannot escape being, in one sense, a

metaphor *for* men. But in this text's construction of Woman we also see a rendering of masculinity, of a performance of Man (gendered) as man, and a deconstruction of this very synapse.

"The Book of Sei" begins with an invocation of narrative desire, the birth of the fantasy text through the apprehension of an absence, the "poorly mapped" country with its "maze of uncharted trails" ("BoS," 1). Fantasy sends desire in the right direction by giving it an object, which is here the enigmatic woman with her "faint penumbra" of "sad wisdom," an excess or surplus of knowledge (hinting at strange desires, exotic narratives, which, in patriarchal discourse, it is the man's duty to find the source of). Narrative desire is gendered as masculine; the desire of the text coincides with the desire of the man, and a male reader is assumed. The enigma of the woman is a structural effect of desire, without which desire could not reproduce itself. The woman, then, is the figure of narrative desire, the name given to the absence that unfolds the chain of (masculine) textual desire.

Typically, perhaps, the imagery through which this movement of masculine desire is articulated is sexual. Once the man has been given a bed for the night he is immediately seduced by the woman, and most of the rest of the text is divided into sections describing the various sexual positions attained by the couple. The sexual contract, however, is one the man cannot enter into easily. He must give something away, it seems, relinquish some part of his being, although it is unclear at this stage what that is: "*She* changed. He did not. He was a separate consciousness, immutable" ("BoS," 3). When the man changes it is like an "ash seed thrusting its tongue into the darkness skyward, breaking from a case of rock" ("BoS," 4). The imagery suggests that the "change" is a kind of birth, and later it appears as if the man

has gained a new kind of self-consciousness. This self-consciousness is the apprehension of his "maleness," and a sense of vulnerability, a feeling which has associated with it a kind of masochistic desire for the "sacrifice of himself" ("BoS," 6). What is clear is that his masculinity is being put on the line. In one section the narrator remarks: "Again, this is a form often feared, by her as by him, for its implications of subservience and vulnerability. The fears are false" ("BoS," 7). In the ecstasy of masochistic self-immolation the man reflects: "What was he, that is now purely male? A *man*, he thinks. *Which of the shapes was that*?" ("BoS," 6).

A breach opens up between his masculine gendered identity ("a man") and his sexed identity ("purely male"). This condition, a state perhaps *without* self-consciousness, is conceived of as existing in the interstices of language:

> Late at night, or late in an argument, when the talk has run its course and still "possession" – of the thing talked about, or of each other – has proved impossible; when language, or the will and energy to use it, has been exhausted and the weight of what it cannot carry seems heaviest; then, it may be, they turn to the physical expressions of desire, as if to seek, in their penetrations, their surrenderings, to go where language cannot, as if the desire they feel is not distinct from language, but a product, an inseparable part of it, and the need for physical satisfaction is in some way its extension. ("BoS," 8)

Sex is not a rival kind of language, but "another kind of speech," although it does not have the same limitations as language, since it can also become a "comment upon, and a mirror to, the outside world." The language of eroticism is untrammelled by the paradox of desire; it is a kind of lack in lack. Beyond language, though adjacent to the "outside world," retaining as it does a kind of mimetic relationship to it, the experience of the untrammelled body is unrepeatable, unrepresentable, precisely because the two lovers, "entering a place beyond words, can have no words with which to take what

they find there back into the world they must eventually re-enter." The two worlds remain apart, though linked, each with its "different language of desire" ("BoS," 8).

Eroticism functions here as a metaphor for the exploration of alterity, a way of entering into the discourse of the other, and in which subject/object distinctions are blurred. Thus, in the "The Fish" the lovers are:

> less creatures than place, less place than creatures containing it. They move as fish seen from the surface, the light's play and diffraction making them indistinct, beings that are and are not separable from their medium. Each can be a fish within a pool, a pool within a greater being, indeterminate within the wider waters of the night. ("BoS," 11)

Another image, the "baroque bowl," also conveys this desire to transcend subject/object distinctions. The bowl breaks down the crude and arbitrary boundaries of binary oppositions. The surface of the bowl, crammed with images of animals "attempting bizarre miscegenations," imitates the fluidity of nature. The narrator holds the bowl up to the reader's eyes for closer inspection. The structure of the bowl could be a kind of microcosm of the structure of the written text, or the structure of subjectivity. The "bizarre miscegenations" of the animals are the simulacra of the kind of hybridity which the man, at least, fantasises is available to him in the unchartered territory of the feminine. This territory is imagined as being beyond subject/object distinctions, and thus beyond hegemonic masculine/patriarchal systems of representation.

The logic of desire underpinning this fantasy, of course, is also masculine. In this logic, the woman's body is transformed by the man's gaze into the locus of his desire: "After love he grazes upon her body, the gully of her thighs, shoulders that in the moonlight are a silver field, her sweat not sweat now but a thin saccadic dew" ("BoS," 5). Her body functions somewhat like a screen onto which he can project his

fantasies: women dance naked on wind-whipped sand, "their limbs flashing with the platinum light of a descending star" ("BoS," 5). However, the same "laws" of desire which constitute his fantasy-space also prevent him from "fulfilling" his desire, and the littoral fantasy dissolves when he tries to approach it: "Like a wave [he is] pulled back by the laws of the moon and water. The wind drifts their cries to him in fragments" ("BoS," 5).

As in *Julia Paradise*, the woman is imagined as having a fantasy space of her own: "Where she goes, or what she sees, he can never know" ("BoS," 5). The unknowable, ineffable, obscure, part of the woman is the surplus, or from his point of view, the absence, which produces his desire in the first place. The "red meadow" and "blue horse" are "empty" signifiers, the marks or traces of the fantasy space from which he is excluded. In a sense it is her fantasy that he is trying to infiltrate, since it is there that he will locate the root of his desire. The woman is represented by the man's gaze, by his desire. But at the same time she is beyond his gaze, beyond representation, beyond signification in "his" language. This place beyond the man's gaze is precisely the counter-narrative of the woman's desire.

It is clear, as Gelder and Keane point out, that what we have in "The Book of Sei" is a construction of Woman as the "filler" of man's void. I would like to argue, however, that this text also dramatises and performs the factitiousness of this fantasy by staging it as a *particular* dialogue between a man and a woman, one in which the masculine/patriarchal habit of "speaking about woman by speaking for woman" (Halperin, 149) is displaced by the *différance* of woman's own desire. The man's fantasy, in this sense, is close to the one articulated in Brooks' essay, "'The Male Practice of Feminist Criticism.'" In this essay, Brooks attempts to articulate a relation

between masculinity, feminism and Woman which is not essentially, or mutually, appropriative. Brooks describes male feminist criticism "as an engagement with the other to discover the other [within]" (Brooks, *The Necessary Jungle*, 111). Brooks further writes of the necessarily "secondary manner" of the male's engagement with feminist criticism if he isn't to "[run] the risk of further fracturing, rather than recovering, his identity" (Brooks, *The Necessary Jungle*, 110). Male feminist criticism remains for Brooks a way for a man to enter a "shared, frontier territory," the "unchartered" spaces of the feminine, "through a disintegration of his encultured identity, towards the *male*,...[the] non-negotiable bedrock of the self" (Brooks, *The Necessary Jungle*, 111). Male and female identities flow into this same "non-negotiable bedrock of the self" (Brooks, *The Necessary Jungle*, 111). Men's engagement with the feminine can thus only be tremulous, as they must recognise its irreducible otherness. This is because sexual difference, whether it "be essential or culturally determined," is nevertheless anchored in the *experience* of the sexed body: "he *can not be* female, and any claims he makes toward feminism – any arguments he offers to or for it – must be constructed fundamentally upon heresay, upon experience that he can only imagine or have vicariously or by analogy" (Brooks, *The Necessary Jungle*, 110).

Brooks imagines a space of reciprocity, where the male can meet "the female," while acknowledging that such a space is utopian. Implicitly at least, Brooks argues that men can begin to move toward "the male" through a re-siting of the feminine, or Woman. In this siting, men's recovery of the other "may also or instead represent an attempt to further define what in him is *not* the feminine" (Brooks, *The Necessary Jungle*, 111). The province of eroticism, of course, is the imaginary, where

equivalence and difference are contained, and where the subject maintains a false relation of continuity with the existential world through its colonisation, or acquisition, of the image of the other. In "The Book of Sei," Brooks imagines a kind of interaction with the other at the level of a mutually discoverable imaginary, one which, however, he believes that "society at large is not yet equipped to offer us" (Brooks, *The Necessary Jungle*, 111).

Thus, at the end of "The Book of Sei," the man awakens to find the woman mysteriously gone. The complexity of the ramifications of her disappearance, and the effect it has on the man, requires the text to have two endings. In the first ending the man is woken from his sleep to find that he is alone but refreshed:

> Through all the metamorphoses of the night there had been a deeper change. His mind seemed now untried, his life before this a constricting skin now somewhere in the dark behind him. ("BoS," 15)

The woman has gone, but for the man the traces of her presence are everywhere. He imagines that she is watching him, "from the eyes of the cat, a swallow, one of the geese or lizards" ("BoS," 16). The man finally decides to leave the house and return to the "familiar commerce of the highway...beginning with difficulty a life in most appearances a resumption of the former" ("BoS," 17). The gaze of the other is benevolent, the man persisting in the belief that, though physically alone, he is being followed by the woman. In the forest he finds a strangely coloured bird, and then a white mare "who seemed to watch him," and which canters away when it catches his eyes, "as if its evanescence had been its very purpose" ("BoS," 17). The gaze of the other only begins to alienate the man when he can no longer "catch" it looking at him, when he cannot see it. The man hastens away as if in mortal danger.

This ending, the narrator comments, "is one of the endings, for some a more comfortable alternative to the wilderness of animals, imagos, that it otherwise becomes" ("BoS," 17). In the second ending, the man awakens to find the woman gone, but instead of leaving, feeling a sense of renewal as in the first, he trashes the house. When at last he leaves the house he once again comes across a horse, its coat "taking on a cold, lunar blueness":

> Carefully, as if premeditatedly, he gathered a handful of stones from the path and, straightening, began to throw them at it one by one, moving towards it, bending to gather larger stones, not wondering as it stood staring through their approaching rain, and only relieved, when at last it cantered off, to hear some of the largest and heaviest thwack loudly on its flank. Only relieved to hear sobbing as his knees sank into the wet earth. ("BoS," 21)

The man's relief comes, of course, with the release of aggression against the ineffable other, against the alienating gaze of the "hostile" other which reminds him of what he has lost. The two endings, as Brooks argues in his essay, "The Blood of Jose Arcadio," play off against each other in a dialectic of passivity and aggression as the two possible responses the man can have to his woman-less dilemma. It is a finale, as Brooks describes it, "structured emotionally, rather than by plot or argument – one that can be as much a finding as a registration of something that is already known" (Brooks, *The Necessary Jungle*, 141). The endings, which stand to each other as if in "perpetual debate," signify that the text has only a literal ending, that the text's closure can be found "somewhere between the two" (Brooks, *The Necessary Jungle*, 140). The vague, open-ended "ending" has its parallel in the ambivalent desire of the man who, denied the comfort of the flattering "imago" of the male Imaginary, must contend with the "unknown" of his body in the Symbolic:

> His body is a dark tree. Pruned, it will bring forth fruit that is ripe and without bitterness. Unanswered, it is a slow, wild growth, overreaching its boundaries, bowed with a small, sour fruit. This is not her concern. It is

> his desire; it will wither and be contained by seasons more ancient than either of them has known. ("BoS," 18)

This image of the male body post-woman is still strikingly phallomorphic. The question of who is going to "answer" his body, if not the woman, is left open. Nevertheless, the man's desire must be answered, described or articulated, in a language which itself splits him off from the knowledge of "pure maleness."

*

The woman's cottage is co-opted by the man as a site for the reproduction of both narrative and desire. The atmosphere of the cottage is swarming with images associated with the maternal body: visceral, glutinous, "alive with things swimming in strange schools" ("BoS," 3). This is an idealised space of female creativity (the woman is, after all, a weaver), the body and sex, but at the same time it is a space over which the man is not in control, just as he is not in control of his different metamorphoses. The man's desire, of course, is inextricably caught up in the production of Woman as other. Woman in patriarchal culture is always an image captured by man and contained within his gaze. The male gaze is itself empowered through its positing of a lack at the site of Woman. But here, woman is given another role. She is also a producer of images which the man cannot see. Woman, in fact, is overdetermined precisely by the man's determination to pin her down, to mark her out, and so, I have argued, re-situates the "lack" at the site of Woman within the "male gaze" itself.

What we see in "The Book of Sei," in other words, is the disarticulation of the "gaze" and "the look" which, Kaja Silverman argues, is analogous to the severing of the link that patriarchal discourse maintains between the penis and the phallus: "the former can stand in for the latter, but can never approximate it" (Silverman, *Male*

Subjectivity, 130). In Lacanian discourse, the "look" (or the "eye") is sometimes made to approximate the "gaze," but this approximation is always only a performative act. In this performance, what is covered over is the "void" that produces the desire *to* act. The gaze, in this sense, assumes the dimension of the *objet petit a*. As Lacan writes, the gaze is that which always slips, "always escapes the grasp of that form of vision that is satisfied with itself in imagining itself as consciousness" (Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 74). Thus, in the texts I have been looking at in this chapter, the object that slips away – the aspect of Woman we might call *woman* – is also the "object" that confirms the irreconcilability of the look and the gaze. The "point of ultimate gaze," argues Lacan, "is illusory" (Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 77). Once the omnipotence of the "subject of the gaze" is shown to be illusory, it is possible to see the male subject on the side of desire as an actor of his own ideal. From this point of view, men's desire to understand women – to mark them out, define them – is only ever a foregrounding of the enigma of masculinity itself – at least as it appears to men.

In both *Julia Paradise* and "The Book of Sei," a woman is represented as having a desire of her own, but she is also imagined as a kind of lost referent. In "The Book of Sei," the sexual relationship between the man and woman becomes, at least for the man, a way of establishing a different kind of relationship to his body. Inevitably, both of these relationships seem constrained by phallic definitions of sexuality and gender, not to mention sexual difference; the men in each of the texts can imagine "woman" only as *their* other. Nevertheless, I want to argue that these texts enact a politics of reading Man *qua* man, of reading the masculine not as universal and ungendered, but as specifically gendered, and moreover, dependent on *a* definition of

Woman. *Julia Paradise* and "The Book of Sei" both reflect a certain eschatology of Man and man, and to mark a point of departure for the discussion of masculinity as a representation of a particular specification of desire and subjectivity. The death of man, or the crisis of legitimation which some feminists have argued signifies the "death of man," does not suggest that men have come to a stage where they must "be silent." The men of these texts are, of course, represented as the universal subjects of history, but of a history that is itself history. However, these texts cannot be read as defining new masculinities, but rather as inaugurating a point of separation, of disarticulation, at which masculinity comes to be talked about and *read* differently, when Man becomes man, and certainly, as we will see, man progresses to become "men."

In the texts analysed in this chapter, sexual difference defines men's masculinity through the articulation of femininity and Woman. Woman, to use a Lacanian analogy, is a "mirror" for men, held up to reflect men's identity. But as patriarchy defines Woman as other in a hierarchical rendering of difference as identity (that is symmetrically), some feminist revisions construct sexual difference asymmetrically. Because these theories of sexual difference admit of no "Tiresian position," as Grosz argues, "then as mysterious as Woman must be for men, so too must men be for women (and indeed so too must Woman be for women, and Man for men" (Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 191).

Once it is established that there is no point outside sexual difference, no objective or neutral position from which sex, sexuality and gender can be analysed (the theme, as I read it, of *Julia Paradise*), it then becomes a matter of working out, firstly, how exchanges between the sexed positions of an asymmetrical conception of sexual difference can take place (the theme of "The Book of Sei"); and secondly, of how a

perspective of difference can be fragmented *by* difference without fracturing the bases of a collective, "masculine" identity altogether (the theme of Brooks' essay). The two questions are interrelated. The chapters to follow seek to analyse masculinity through the disarticulation of Man and Woman, but also through the disarticulation of the monolithic category of masculinity as it is represented in patriarchal/hegemonic discourse. I attempt to track a "split" in masculinity along several different lines, all of which cannot themselves be articulated except in relation to, and through, hegemonic masculinity; without, that is, a specific and embracing understanding of how power inflects the assumption, and representation, of identity.

Chapter Two

The "National Scrum of Mateship": Race and Gender in Robert Drewe's *A Cry in the Jungle Bar*

In this chapter I analyse a particular instance of the "becoming visible" of white masculinity. Richard Dyer observes in his essay "White" that when "whiteness *qua* whiteness [comes] into focus...it is often revealed as emptiness, absence, denial, or even a kind of death" (Dyer, 141). In discussing Anglo-Australian masculinity, I argue that "whiteness" in Robert Drewe's *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* is not only a contested and constructed category, but is one which, when revealed, has associated with it "a kind of death."

Among the questions I address in this analysis of "white masculinity" is the extent to which the two terms – "whiteness" and "masculinity" – should be read as being constitutive of each other.[1] That is, can or should we read hegemonic masculinity in the Australian-Anglo context as a simultaneous construction and valorisation of a racial as well as a sexual subject? Perhaps this reading of gender and race is what happens when, in a culture which many Australians still believe is predominantly Anglo-Celtic, "masculinity" is unconsciously defined around an Anglo-Celtic centre, or when conceptions of "race" are defined within discourses of sexual difference, as the "feminising" of Asia in colonial and orientalist discourse might suggest. What I argue is that the disarticulation of masculinity within hegemonic discourses of gender and sexuality might also involve, inextricably, a disarticulation of

[1]I do not mean "whiteness" in the epidermal sense. By "whiteness" I am referring to the cultural construction of "race," and its relation to the history of colonial and imperial domination in Australia. Cullen's problems are caused by the fact that "race" does not seem to have a fixed epidermal component.

a whole range of other discourses, of race, culture, history and nationality. The added questions of how such things as national identity are shaped by a conception of race, and how, in turn race and nation are gendered, are also very pertinent here.

Dyer points out that very little critical attention is paid to "whiteness" as a constructed category, or to the racially-inflected structure of hegemonic masculinity in predominantly white or Anglo cultures like Australia's (Dyer, 141). Looking at Australian history and its narratives of "national character," even with a cursory eye, it is impossible not to see a particular racial and gendered subject emerging. This subject is what I will call the "hegemonic subject" of Australian culture, to the extent that every identity in the national imaginary must in some way be constructed around it. As Kay Schaffer's analysis of "national types" in *Women and the Bush* shows, the hegemonic subject of Australian culture has traditionally been constructed around particular fantasies about masculinity, race and nationality within a largely urban and metropolitan culture for precisely this kind of readership (Schaffer, 12). In contrast, in the culture of (post)modernity, Australian national identity is increasingly structured around a tableau of heterogeneity, of culture, race and sex (though not, perhaps, of class). It is difficult in this environment to sustain the idea that a *particular* "character" (a shearer, digger, farmer or whatever) can represent Australians to themselves, yet the compulsion to single out a character to do so seems to be irresistible. In the next chapter on *My Brother Jack*, I examine how the proletarian hero Jack is constructed as a site of desire by Davey, and how this figure of a man shadows Davey's ideas about his own identity. In the current chapter the hegemonic subject is explored in the slightly different context of (neo)colonial constructions of racial and sexual difference.

Drewe's 1979 *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* is a putative exploration of cultural, national and racial differences in a time of decolonisation. Drewe foregrounds the continuum between imperialism and the masculine economy of sameness upon which patriarchal conceptions of sexual difference are based, and the concomitant centring and universalising of a particular male subject in discourses of nation and "empire." Cullen's place in Asia is contradictory: as a white man he is simultaneously the subject around which the sexual and racial economies of neocolonialism are structured; but as a "white" Australian man he is also a figure of alterity. Both views of Cullen are not incompatible, but nor are they completely reconcilable in this text. The irreconcilability of these two images of Cullen is generated by the discursive structure of race and gender organising Drewe's text, a structure whose miring in the history of European colonialism means that any articulation of racial, cultural (and gender) identity must be made through it. As Suvendrini Perera points out, the "post-colonial" Australian perspective, in relation to Asia particularly, is especially fraught by this history:

> Recent recognitions of – and celebratory explorations into – a newfound 'post-colonial' condition often pass over the problems posed by an older national self-image of Australia as a regional heir to the coloniser's discarded mantle. This history positions Australia in an unequal and uneasy triangle with Europe (and especially Britain) at one end, and 'Asia' on the other – a relationship perceived as a set of continuing hierarchical rearrangements based on conditions of military, economic and cultural (which also at times includes 'racial') superiority. (Perera, 17)

In Drewe's novel, the Australian bureaucrat Dick Cullen is likewise still possessed of this "older national self-image." Drewe satirises the experience of this archetypal Australian male, whose confrontation with Asia is determined at every level by Western myths of the orient (myths which, of course, many Asian governments encourage Westerners to indulge in). Cullen is tragically flawed, but the implication is

that Australians are, collectively, too culturally inept to cope with an environment that is, as Drewe writes, "by turns menacing, erotic, immoral and paradoxically, more moral than they have experienced" (Drewe, "Australians in Asia," 137).

In a review of some contemporary Australian novels set in Asia, Koh Tai Ann argues that what most of these novels have in common is a resistance to notions of cultural hybridity, of border crossing. She concludes: "The novels thus do raise the question of whether the Australian imagination can do without Asia as the exotic Other, and whether Australians can be Eurasian, thereby becoming as well, through hybridity, 'oriental.' I suspect not yet" (Koh Tai, 31). As Koh Tai explains, Asia is not only a backdrop against which Australians are obsessively marking out their identities, but a place where the very notion of *an* identity is constantly under threat. Koh Tai alludes to the racism of many of these works, but the implication she does not follow up is that "Australian" national identity is itself produced in the construction of these racial, and, as I will argue, gendered binaries, and that in the racial and gendered binaries which form the basis of the gender/sexual/racial economies of (neo)colonial discourse, "hybridity" is akin to psychosis.

Drewe remarks elsewhere on the shift between "colonial" and "postcolonial" Australian experiences of Asia, arguing that "this time [Australians] came [to Asia] as self-conscious equals from a smallish unsophisticated country with a history of provincial egalitarianism" (Drewe, "Australians in Asia," 135). But Drewe's characterisation of these Australians is disingenuous. It does suit many Australians to believe that their "history" has produced them as unsophisticated, provincial and egalitarian, but this self-image must be balanced against the internal contradictions threatening to tear it apart. For Cullen and his wife Margaret, their "self-

consciousness" devolves from their inability to secure "self-seeing," that is, to control the "look" of the racial other. Both, however, deal with this "alienating gaze" differently. Margaret internalises the gaze, punishing herself (through her body), while Cullen disavows it by containing it within a discourse of male homosociality. The different responses of Cullen and Margaret are themselves contained by discourses of sexual difference, presided over by a male sexual hegemony. This hegemony, though, does not necessarily benefit Cullen. His own "privileged" positioning within it is precisely what he valiantly and unsuccessfully tries to disrupt.

Hegemony, as Kaja Silverman argues, "hinges on identification; it comes into play when all the members of a collectivity see themselves within the same reflecting surface" (Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 24). For Cullen, the reflective surface is the ideology of colonialism, and his interpellation into it follows a trajectory of racial and sexual difference. What we will see in this chapter is the fracturing of the reflective surface through the gradual "othering" of Cullen as a site of identification. Cullen's "identity crisis" in Asia is a crisis of racial hegemony which, as I will argue, is also a crisis of sexual and gender identity. The "reading" of race and gender together is articulated by the dominant trope of identity in the text, Cullen's body. As a white man, Cullen's large white body is a signifier of his alterity in Asia. It is also the source and repository of most of his ideas about his masculinity, and so a crisis of national and racial identity is experienced as a crisis of gender. This conflation of race, nationality and gender, as Schaffer points out, is typical of hegemonic representations of the Australian national type. Cullen's "body" is represented as being the referent of his gender and racial identity, but it also generates significations, and interpretations, which exceed his control. It is precisely Cullen's lack of mastery over his body-image,

his losing control of the "gaze," that Drewe dramatises in *A Cry in the Jungle Bar*, and which clears a space for the writing of a "postcolonial" masculinity.

At the beginning of the text Cullen is lying on his bed "fantasising" about dismemberment:

> After drinking, despite his size and strength, he feared nocturnal stabbing and slashing. He needed the security of knowing that attempts could not easily be made on his bare, vulnerable back as he slept. His spine especially anticipated an evil little bone-handled knife which the girls used to slice calamansi fruit and papayas. In their deft brown fingers it cut, pared and quartered while they hummed sentimental pop songs and day-dreamed of marriage to blond American millionaire country and western singers. (*CJB*, 13)

These archetypal images of castration run through the text, along with a discourse of Freudian psychoanalysis which Cullen uses to interpret them. Within the textual economy, though, these fantasies must be read through Cullen's own somatic performance of his masculinity. In the history of the ego, Lacan argues, images of the dismembered body are reminders to the imperial self that his identity is only a temporary and imaginary construction (Lacan, *Ecrits*, 2ff). For Cullen, the image of the "body in pieces" signifies an anxiety about the redundancy of identity, and more particularly, the redundancy of his white, male body. Indeed, the fantasy articulated by Cullen here is of the failure of his body, his "size and strength," to guarantee him the privileges of the "imperial" subject.

In fact, both Cullen and his wife Margaret are obsessed with their bodies. Margaret has embarked on a "mucus-free diet" to rid her body of "poisons": "Every disease, no matter what name it is given by Medical Science, is CONSTIPATION: a clogging up of the entire pipe system of the human body by accumulated mucus caused by Protein and Starch," reads the spiel of Professor Flehret, her guru dietitian (*CJB*, 26). Cullen suspects that she is beginning to disappear, "lost in the folds" of her silk

kimono (*CJB*, 25), but it is clear that both Margaret and Cullen are constructing their identities within a patriarchal discourse of sexual difference. Margaret's body deteriorates in a somatic representation of a crisis of subjectivity, while the "threat" to Cullen's identity elicits a different response. Just as Lacan's ego shores itself against its ruins by projecting its internal chaos outwards, Cullen's body is cathected as a kind of psychic armour. The body, as a representation of the masculine ego, is territorialised as the site of resistance to psychical discomfit. Margaret's ego "expands" to accommodate the paternalistic gaze of Professor Flehret. Cullen, on the other hand, interprets any threat to his integrity, bodily or emotionally, as potentially explosive. Consequently, in his arguments with Margaret, Cullen prides himself on his ability to "switch-off":

> One of secrets of his sporting success had been an automatic detachment, an ability of the mind to switch into neutral while his body went through the various layered thresholds of fatigue and pain. (*CJB*, 19)

Cullen's "body" acts as a stand-in for his "emotions"; it is represented as the terrain upon which "displays" of emotional distress are both felt and marked. The pricking of his conscience by "strong sad urges to touch [women of his acquaintance] at parties; to cup a breast [or] knee" (*CJB*, 15), is measured by a "tic flutter[ing] in an eyelid" and his suspected moral degeneration is apprehended as a "hundred little recidivist itches all along his body" (*CJB*, 15).

For Cullen, the body is the site, or surface, of his interaction with Asia. It also has a performative dimension: the body, as metaphor, not only signifies a "natural" or essential identity, but also what is otherwise unrepresentable: racial and gender difference. "Performativity," as it is used here, is taken from Judith Butler's conception of gender identity as being constructed through the repetition or "citing" of

a set of practices which also work to conceal the "constitutive dimensions by which [identity] is mobilised" (Butler, *Bodies*, 227). That is to say, for Butler gender identity is performative to the extent that it is constituted by what it is "purported to be": "Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeal over time to present the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler, *Gender*, 33). Here, "performativity" refers to the way identity is constructed in the spaces of contingency as if it were "natural," and thus an essential and unchanging configuration of the body/subject. These spaces of contingency, of course, are produced by the failure of the "body" itself to secure the status of a "natural sort of being," which includes for the white Australian man racial as well as gendered identity. As a keen all-round sportsman, Cullen literally "performs" an identity in his sporting activity. A part of this performance is his daily exercise routine:

> In the front garden, on the sodden grass, he performed a vigorous exercise routine: sit-ups, toe-touching, side-bends; concentrating on his abdominals while the rain swept over him. Another exercise he'd done for twenty-five years: to toughen his shoulders for scrummaging and rucking, he approached the thick palm tree...packed down against it with his shoulder...grunting and heaving, body close to the ground, legs scuffling for territory, he pushed against it as if to drive it from the garden. (*CJB*, 23-24)

Cullen's performance is watched with casual disbelief by his driver, Jose: "The fighting of the tree was the part that [he] waited for each morning. He had mentioned it many times to his family" (*CJB*, 24). Jose's perspective is aligned with the reader's in this instance, as Cullen is seen from the place of the other, and himself becomes an other, a figure of satire or ridicule: a spectacle, in more than one sense. Throughout this chapter I want to emphasise this alterity of Cullen, but also to suggest that his very otherness is itself produced within the gaze of an imperial centre. Cullen himself

comes to "internalise" this gaze, to see himself as others see him. In this internalisation of the gaze of the other, I argue, a crisis of white, male hegemony is enacted.

Cullen's "performance" is more than the territorialisation of a personal space; his body also marks the spatial territorialising of gendered and racial discourse. Sport is the site of the construction of identity through the performance of these kinds of difference; in sport, as Drewe elsewhere remarks, British colonials enact their positioning within the oriental cultural imaginary, and so assert, in a transgenic fashion, a cultural hegemony.[2] If this assertion of hegemony is also the basis of men's pleasure, then it is not surprising that Cullen's "deepest contentment" comes from sporting activity:

> Even here, a heavy man in the tropics, swallowing salt tablets and nursing his old talent and wily injured body through sweltering contests against younger men, it was pleasurable. Playing the cruel game of experience and guile and laughing about it later. The boisterous nude democracy of the change-room. Munching hard-boiled eggs, downing a bottle or two of San Miguel at the bar after a game. Heavy-legged from spongy ground but serene in his exhaustion – this was when he harmonised with Asia. (*CJB*, 32)

Pleasure comes from conquering and merging with the object of desire – Asia – which, in the "cruel game of experience and guile," becomes itself the repository of the men's differences. The rugby field is divided into two spheres, the competitive sphere (where the "men" are separated from the "boys") and reparative spheres, the hierarchically-structured playing field and the "democracy of the changeroom," where nudity seems to signify not just equality but "sameness." In this performance of the "collective body" of masculinity, "Asia" is constructed as a feminised other. Homi Bhabha argues that the "construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial

---

[2]Drewe writes: "There is something mysterious about an equatorial posting that turns sedantry, suburban, middle-aged Australians into facsimiles of British public-school old-boys, feverish sportsmen and, and participants in games designed for cold weather" (Drewe, "Australians in Asia," 137).

power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference – racial and sexual" (Bhabha, 67). The passage above rehearses precisely this dual construction of difference. The articulation of "difference" is simultaneously a construction of the terms of racial and sexual hegemony which, in turn, are dependent on the marking and "fixing" of identity. Cullen's identification with the "imperial" subject is a territorialisation of his body through discourses of sex, sexuality and race against an image of the lacking, feminised other which, as we have already seen, is quite as easily mapped onto his own, hyperbolically-masculine, body, as any other.

Sport, of course, is also the site of the establishment of differences *among* men, and Cullen's fantasy of "sameness" is itself pierced by an anxiety about who, exactly the "other" is. For Cullen, the other is defined by sex and race, but even within the homosocial continuum, men's relationships with each other are fractured by class, national and generational differences. It is precisely this ambivalence – this difficulty of defining sameness and otherness, self and other – that Bhabha argues bites at the authority of colonial discourse to "represent" the other, and which opens the space for the other to construct counter-discursive strategies (Bhabha, 66).

For the Western man, this ambivalence is integral to the construction of the "oriental fantasmatic," the structure of fantasy and desire around which his pleasure, power and domination are constructed. Annette Hamilton argues that as the rise of feminism in Australia has altered relations of power between the sexes, men are turning to the "Asian woman (and boy) as a means through which another form of power can be discovered" (Hamilton, 26). In Asia, "sexuality itself is seen to be liberated by being in 'Asia,' and is associated with nakedness and 'nativeness,' which is in complete disjunction with the normal social codes of most Asian nations" (Hamilton, 26). This

argument mirrors Edward Said's in *Orientalism*, in which it is proposed that European constructions of the East were channelled through the sexual and moral codes of the *West*. Echoing Foucault, Said argues that the increasing *embourgeoisement* of sex in Europe was responsible for making the Orient, in contrast, seem like a haven of sexual licentiousness:

> Just as the various colonial possessions – quite apart from their economic benefit to metropolitan Europe – were useful as places to send wayward sons, superfluous populations of delinquents, poor people, and other undesirables, the Orient was a place one could look for sexual experiences unobtainable in Europe. (Said, 190)

The more recent constructions of the East as "feminine" tap into older Western imperialist notions of racial and cultural superiority. The East is not just a place to be discovered, it is a place to be conquered and colonised. It is for this reason that the East is also a place where men's own technical, moral and spiritual resources are always thought to be stretched to the limits.

In these discourses, for the Western men "Asia" is a "body" waiting to be inscribed with the marks of their presence, a condition which for Galash seems to mark "it" as hysterical: "Of course, this country is crazy. Who wouldn't be after three hundred years in a convent and forty in Hollywood" (*CJB*, 33). As if to validate this view, Gigi, Cullen's secretary, imagines the men in the UN building in the images of movie stars, a habit, though, she keeps only for her "Western bosses," not being able to find a "movie alias" for the Asian man, Z.M.: "He was not easily typecast, seemed not to represent any particular culture" (*CJB*, 31). In the gaze of "Hollywood" the Asian man is unrepresentable, while the Western men are homogenised, or typecast, as Americans.

The "gaze" of Hollywood, a euphemism for Western cultural imperialism, reproduces the "older" cultural imaginary of colonialism, but in a slightly altered form. The positions of "coloniser" and "colonised" are not simply constructed around discourses of race, but around the distribution of capital. Nevertheless, as Gigi's appropriation of the gaze indicates (in which the white men are seen as they would want to appear to themselves), the "gaze" of Hollywood is predisposed toward the representation of the white male as "complete" and desirable to women. Consequently, the gaze is represented as being an extension of a white male imaginary. Within this gaze, men construct their identities as predatory and powerful. As if to underline the contiguity of political power and the male body, Ted Orosa expresses awe at the President of the country's physical presence: "'the best athlete in the country. Steel in his wrists and shoulders like a boxer. A welterweight, you know?' He shook his head in wonderment and flexed his own narrow shoulders" (*CJB*, 53). Orosa uses the biological analogy to represent patriarchy as a natural response to the demands of the political culture of Asia: "...[H]e winked elaborately, man-to-man. 'We are all stallions, eh?' He seemed to draw good cheer from that idea, sighing blithely. 'The problems of being a man! The eternal contests'" (*CJB*, 54).

Similarly, the Bengal Tiger ("The Rare Pride of Our Country"), which is being fed the remains of the other animals, is not, as the Zoo keeper informs a mortified Cullen, "unusually reduced for want of food" (*CJB*, 108). Galash's theory of the role of the nightclub in Asia is also a combination of male sexual hegemony and specious biological analogy:

> "Look at the watering hole in the jungle. Open each night for two hours only. For that time all traditional animosities are suspended. Lion drinks with gnu. Leopard drinks with antelope. Come sunset all the shy little does will tiptoe down here for a quiet gin and tonic."

> "Sure. Then lion pounces on antelope and there goes your thesis. Anyway, the antelopes are camels here. You guys are wasting your time."
>
> Cullen was right. The absence of women in the general environment was, however, making its mark on him as well. (*CJB*, 124)

This "fixing" of the male gaze is not unchallenged, of course. The Jungle Bar is fitted out as *mis en scene* of male desire, where the waiter offers Cullen a "libido menu" of "real aphrodisiac food," and where the walls are decorated with the stuffed heads of game animals, whose simulations of "potential action" are the simulacra of a predatory male sexuality, although they reflect somewhat mockingly on the men, of course, in light of the *actual* "absence of women in the general environment." The Jungle Bar spatialises the discourse of male sexual hegemony underwriting the "male gaze" of patriarchy by *staging* the performativity of this gaze: the man looks, and the woman is looked at, while the "naturalistic" analogies work to naturalise the direction this gaze runs in. In this sense, the bar is also a *mis en scene* of the text's own staging of an orientalist fantasy, as narrative desire is structured through a discourse of male sexual fulfilment. The "absence of women" in the bar also drives the ostensible plot of the text: Cullen's desire to be "recognised," to fulfil the mandate given to him by history, represented in his "search for the exotic princess" (*CJB*, 227). Reversing this discourse, Cullen's desultory expeditions around the backblocks of Asia yield no discernible exotic princesses, only an obsession with an Asian cultural malaise. The narrative of *A Cry in the Jungle Bar*, in other words, revolves around Cullen's "lack" – of control over the gaze, his sexual lack. The narrative progression, however, is not toward the resolution, or "filling," of Cullen's lack, but toward the further exposing of it.

The model of masculine virility in the text is not Cullen, but Galash. As Cullen muses: "Only men persisted in the belief that physique was a turn-on – what did they

know? Vide Galash, thin as a string and the scourge of the tropics" (*CJB*, 166). Galash's masculinity is signified by his "surrender[ing] to all his appetites and never seem[ing] to suffer for it...He was a wooer of young girls, ageing grannies, women of every nationality" (*CJB*, 103). As a "walking, talking phallus," it is Galash's penis that most fascinates Cullen:

> Cullen had a vague schoolboy curiosity to see *it*, he'd heard so much about its multifarious adventures, but after tennis or at the club Galash always slid privately into his boxer shorts, eschewed the shower. (*CJB*, 103)

The penis fascinates precisely because it can not be seen. As in Lacan's theory of the phallus, the penis does its work as a signifier of power only when veiled. As Buchbinder argues: "Since no man's actual penis can ever compete with the splendour, majesty and power of the imaginary phallus, the penis is thus better suggested than actually depicted or revealed" (Buchbinder, *Masculinities*, 79). Cullen himself misrecognises the importance of "bulked-up" bodies, but the differences between Galash and Cullen are less significant here than what they have in common. The discourses of pleasure and desire in which Cullen and Galash are inscribed as subjects – and women as objects – is the same economy of desire which (re)produces their hegemony. The text, however, does not deconstruct the phallus as the signifier of masculinity. As we will see in the next chapter, the desire to locate phallic plenitude *somewhere*, on *some* male body, constitutes a performative disavowing of the signs of "lack" playing across every male body, and thus tacitly affirms the legitimacy of the phallus *to* determine sexual difference. The irony here is produced not merely by Galash's typically dubious avoidance of the gaze of the other men, but from Cullen's "school-boyish" leering, his coyness, which inscribes into the scene a homoerotic subtext.

Cullen's "lack" is produced not so much within these discourses of male homosociality, but through his racial interpellation. If Cullen resists Orosa's interpellation of him into his discourse of masculinity – winking elaborately "man-to-man" – by pointing out that "You bring it on yourselves," his next sentence immediately indicates his interpellation into a discourse of racial difference: "You should be more phlegmatic, like us Anglo-Saxons" (*CJB*, 55). Cullen's identity is inextricably caught up in, and dependent on, the identification and performance of racial difference. The repeated performance of this difference, as Bhabha argues, is necessary for the hegemonic subject because "it is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated: the phantasmatic space of possession that no one subject can singly or fixedly occupy, and therefore permits the dream of the inversion of roles" (Bhabha, 45). The contingency of identity is expressed in the hegemonic subject's paranoiac fantasy that the other is really the same, or alternatively, that the other is seeking, as Bhabha alludes, to usurp the place of the hegemonic subject, to reverse roles.

The game of squash between Cullen and the enigmatic Z.M. is framed in just this way: as a contest between the hulking, slow, but aggressive Anglo-Australian and the nimble Asian man. Cullen loses, but after the game, standing self-consciously by the side of the pool, he challenges Z.M. to a race in the water:

> In his voluminous shorts Cullen dived into the pool with a wide splash and swam several lengths, forcing his arms and legs to carry on for a final lap when he wished to stop. At the shallow end he stood up, snorted water from his nose, hitched up his shorts and hoisted himself from the pool. Z.M. had left for the dressing room. (*CJB*, 38)

Cullen is left wondering about Z.M.'s disappearance, but the implication is that Z.M. has somehow won another victory over him. In fact, Z.M. simply knows when to quit,

deferring to Cullen because, as Z.M. announces with ambiguity, "'You people are all-round sportsmen...You have an aquatic predilection'" (*CJB*, 38). For Z.M., Cullen is a figure of Asian alterity, embodying, literally, a stereotype of Australianness. As a small-bodied man, Z.M. himself might be said to "embody" a stereotype of Asianness, but it is only Cullen who makes their physical differences a point around which other differences – of race, nation – can be assigned and monitored.

It is at the seedy *barrio* nightclub, where Cullen sees the performance of a naked dancing girl – and in which we have an archetypal spatialisation of the male gaze – that he is delivered with the ultimate affront to his self-image. The girl's performance is not a traditional strip-tease, but what Galash, with a wry detachment, calls "'Gynaecology to music'" (*CJB*, 227). Cullen's own reaction to the performance is a mixture of shame and indignation:

> [His] throat ached with misery and dehydration. He poured the rest of the beer into his glass. How easy for his ego, his Anglo-Saxon naivety, to be betrayed. This suddenly amazed him: his ability to have regarded this girl as an amorous possibility. His search for the exotic princess never faltered, reaching into the farthest equatorial dungheap for its jewels. Why? Implicit in it was an unpleasant but, he was convinced, not untrue self-image: I am the biggest, strongest man in this room. I am white and have money and brains enough. This is irrefutable. Therefore, why don't you see this and act accordingly? Why don't you want me? Let me put it this way. Why aren't you flocking to give me the chance to consider your possibilities? Even to discard you? (*CJB*, 227)

The girl is whisked away by one of the local men, and Cullen is incensed by the "injustice" done to him. Importantly, what produces Cullen's indignation is a "not untrue self-image" of himself, in other words, his "irrefutable" belief in the leverage of his Anglo-European "looks," his race, class and build, all of which are regarded by him as "signs" of his inevitable pre-eminence. There is, consequently for Cullen, some preternatural motive for the girl's refusal to confirm his self-image, even though, as the

mens' guide points out, the performance is a sham: the local man is the girl's husband, and the performance is a "lure" for the men to hire prostitutes. Unlike the other men, though, Cullen mistakes the performance as "real," and feels betrayed by the failure of others to support his oriental fantasy.

Ironically, the girl's performance does "lure" Cullen into hiring a prostitute, and with his "trousers roaring" he is taken back to her hut. Once again, however, Cullen is presented with the "wrong images": "Where he had sought salacious beauty, jungle women, the exotica showered on sultans and caliphs, he was subjected to the mundane emotions of a household" (*CJB*, 234). The crying of the prostitute's baby finally sends him away, "moved by an urgency stronger than any of the evening" (*CJB*, 234). The disjunction between the structure of Cullen's fantasmatic and the "reality" of the *barrio* hut is suggested by the archaic language, in whose discourse Cullen is himself placed in a somewhat "archaic" position. Situated in an impossible relation of equivalence to the "ideal subject" of hegemonic masculinity, he instead becomes an anachronism. The sense of his "time" having passed pervades the text; the frequent analepses show Cullen appealing to an image of stout dependability: "Honourable. Prefect. Officer material. The team captain." (*CJB*, 20). In Asia, however, he seems to himself to be caught in circumstances he cannot control.

What is "out of control," of course, is Cullen's own racial and gendered identity. This is not to say that Cullen refuses to "identify" as a white Australian man, but that this identification is problematised during the text, and precisely because of his increasing internalisation of the gaze of the other. At the ubiquitous Jungle Bar, Cullen meets some Australian men who recognise him because of his rugby fame in Australia: "'One of the best second-rowers in the business, this feller...A real work-horse, always

had great control of the scrum'" (*CJB*, 183), one of the men tells Jenny Loh. The "scrum" figures here as a signifier of a kind masculine sociability, or mateship, but in the presence of a sleek Chinese woman Cullen feels oppressed by the little rituals and games around which mateship is organised:

> Gripped, pinned...He had forgotten how to slip free of these particular scrummages, forgotten, in fact, the emotional weight they supported. The containment, the holding action, the pincer movement. The national scrum of mateship. (*CJB*, 194)

Between the rumbustious "nude democracy of the changeroom" and the "national scrum of mateship" is Cullen's dim awareness of his place within these narratives of identity. Cullen's masculinity is structured by interconnecting narratives of "belonging," all of which converge in the "national scrum of mateship." His "Australianness" is also constructed within this dynamic of male intersubjective relations. In the following passage, this can be clearly seen in the slippage between discourses of mateship and nationality:

> On what date had he ceased being the most clubbable of men, a true sportsman for God's sake, pally to all and sundry? How and when had this changed? [W]hen had Dick Cullen become a *stateless* person? (*CJB*, 185, emphasis added)

For Cullen, the failure to identify constitutes a major threat to his self-identity, and it is significant that his sudden apprehension of his "statelessness" is registered somatically: "He had the impression that his eyes were starting from his head, that his face was inflamed, and that of all the customers he was by far the most graceless and formless, just an *amorphous mass*" (*CJB*, 194, emphasis added).

Cullen's body, here as elsewhere in the text, seems to mark the limits of his self-definition as a man, limits imposed by hegemonic discourses of masculinity. But Cullen's desire to distance himself from his gauche compatriots comes from his

internalisation of the gaze of the other, Jenny Loh: "At once he was struck by their meaty male odour: the rare smell of carnivorous Celts and Anglo-Saxons" (*CJB*, 192-3). But it is also in this gaze that Cullen becomes self-conscious of his own meatiness, his "whiteness," and his sense of the boundaries of his identity: "It was as if he were now inextricably linked to these countrymen of his, across seas, in different climatic zones, forever" (*CJB*, 185). "Fixed" in the gaze of the other as a figure of alterity, Cullen is assimilated into a discourse of "sameness," of eternal belonging, with the other Australian men. In this discourse of racial difference and sameness, Cullen is compressed into a space of abjectivity, hystericised by the very rigidity of the racial and gendered binaries through which he is enjoined to construct his identity as a white, Australian man.

Thomas DiPiero argues in "The Patriarch is not (just) a Man" that this "hysterical" position is the normative position of hegemonic subjects in patriarchal culture. DiPiero argues that because the hegemonic position, the "cultural ideal of masculinity," is a position no person can fill, the male subject must "consider his own femininity," an identification which is also culturally prohibited: "What results from this constant flux is hysteria, since the male subject can never fully identify with either of the gender positions culturally articulated" (DiPiero, "Patriarch," 119). Slavoj Zizek argues that hysteria, in the psychoanalytic context, may be stated as the failure of the subject to fulfil his or her "symbolic mandate" (Zizek, *The Sublime Object*, 113). This failure, of course, must itself be interpreted within the terms of hegemonic masculinity, a structure of identity which interpellates subjects through discourses of both gender and race. What Cullen's failure to identify constitutes, in this sense, is a

failure to perform, ultimately, an identity within the parameters of "intelligibility" set out by hegemonic masculinity.

Cullen, in this sense, is himself a "colonised" subject. In the signifying network of the text, Cullen's investment in his body is paralleled by his own professional investment in the hapless water buffalo. As a veterinarian working for the United Nations, Cullen is writing a book about the water buffalo, *The Poor Man's Tractor*, "a reference source for the veterinarian and production expert, a brief for the practical farmer and a textbook for the serious student, [a book which he] believed even the general reader could find interesting" (*CJB*, 28). Like the buffalo, which is constructed as a site of struggle between Western scientists and Muslim leaders, Cullen's body is itself textualised, othered, and made to wear the stamp of other people's authority. In his work, Cullen *over*invests the buffalo with significance: "He was anxious to stress the global *significance* of the beast, its importance in the scheme of things" (*CJB*, 28), and in this way we can see how it functions as a kind of metaphor for his limited self-consciousness. As the appositely named Mr Ram points out when responding to Cullen's apostrophising of the buffalo: "'The endless slow plodding in a circle seems more suited to the character of the animal'" (*CJB*, 76). Cullen is inevitably made to pay the price for his failures, which are, indeed, no more than is required by hegemonic masculinity itself, since the position he aspires to is empty – is, in fact, a position no actual person can hold. Cullen must live out his impossible relation of equivalence to the ideal of "frontier manliness" produced by hegemonic masculinity even as he realises, if dimly, that such ideals are limiting. It is finally as a figure of alterity, of *Asian* otherness, that Cullen is mistaken by *moro* guerillas for an American and shot,

making real all of his paranoiac fantasies of dismemberment, "a big negative reality, white as pork" (*CJB*, 15).

It is at this point, when Cullen himself is discarded in the space of "otherness," that we may see *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* coming close to foreclosing the critique of "white masculinity" that it is ostensibly opening up. Veronica Brady argues in a review that the text is a deeply Christian novel, registering "a sense of social, political and cultural malaise, a feeling that the resources of liberal and humane feeling on which our culture depended are now exhausted" (Brady, 62). Brady applauds Drewe for his attempt to represent "a totality of consciousness which modern man seems to have lost," and "for not handing over the right to one's life or opinions to any other authority or institution" (Brady, 74). The victory of the novel, Brady proclaims, is in its "discovering the limits [and] attempt[s] to rescue...traditional humane forms and values" (Brady, 72). No doubt, Cullen's death seems to represent the failure of a particular type of liberalism, and of a particular attitude toward Asia which Drewe notes could be characteristically "Australian," but which has its roots in colonialism. Cullen's death can also be read as a repetition of the inevitable climax of the European's fatal contact with the other, a theme resonating through Australian literature.

Brady reads a crisis of masculinity, race, nationality and class as a crisis of Man and Western and Liberal values. This reading is made entirely possible by the way Cullen's fate in this novel is predicated on the recognition, and essentialism, of sexual and racial difference. Drewe elsewhere reads approvingly from Brady's review of his novel, suggesting that her reading is the intended one (Drewe, "Australians in Asia," 157). More curious, though (and this is brought out well in Brady's reading) is how

the recognition of, at one and the same time, race, nationality, and masculinity, brings with it also "a [literal] kind of death." Perhaps in this binary-structured understanding of gender and race (not to mention, class, sexuality and nationality) we see the reparative strategies of a different hegemonic masculinity. "Asia," rather than deconstructing the various layers of race and gender that structure a particular form of masculinity, is made into liminal space which has meaning only in terms of Cullen's failure to conquer it – to resurrect a coherent, stable and reflexive self-consciousness within its borders. "Asia" (incorporating, of course, the structures of myth and fantasy producing it in the Western imaginary), is rendered as a space of undifferentiated otherness, and is thus uninhabitable, literally and figuratively. In the same discursive movement masculinity is likewise rendered differently; it comes to represent the very ideals which, as Brady implies, are (re)constructed and imagined as the basis of the dream of imperialism itself. In the place of the naive colonial subject, then, is positioned the idealised imperial subject, a subject without race, class or gender.

Despite not providing us with a space of hybridity or abjectivity beyond the disarticulation of masculinity, race and sexuality, we are nevertheless able to read Drewe's novel as inaugurating a discourse of radical masculinity. Cullen lacks the self-awareness to reconstruct his identity, but openings to do so are still made available in the spaces of abjectivity, as yet unexplored, which Cullen himself notices are manifested somatically, as negative realities. It is precisely this "negative reality" that must be made livable for male subjects. In contrast to his wife Margaret, who at the faith-healer undermines the strictures of the patriarchal gaze and shrugs off her paternal identifications, Cullen is not able to come to terms with his "new" body-image, lacking the emotional resources to construct an identity outside discourses of male

homosociality. Cullen's body, which is misrecognised by him as representing power and strength, but which is seen by everyone else to be somehow lacking (Cullen himself, of course, has fantasies of being castrated like a buffalo), is finally made obsolete. But rather than reading this obsolescence as signifying the death of the white liberal subject, it can be read as representing the prerequisite for the reconstruction of sexual difference around a different centre of power, a re-distribution of power, indeed, between the (white) male and female subjects of this text, between Cullen and Margaret.

Cullen's masculinity, produced in the intersection of race and gender, is not only limiting for him, but also for those around him. His body, territorialised by sport within a libidinal economy which produces in men a rough sadistic passion, is only ever able to signify as meaningful, for Cullen at least, when it is being pushed to the edge of exploding. Margaret herself, however, fantasises about Cullen's supine body, suggesting that masculinity can mean much more than hegemonic "models" allow:

> She dwelt on sentimental visions of Saturday night love-making: when the afternoon's game had taken the abrupt edge off his aggression, given him a tired and lingering grace and occasionally a rare passivity when she could slide over him administering healing kisses to bruised and curiously shy skin. (*CJB*, 42)

Cullen's abject, meaningless body, does not have to be read as a failure, or disruption, of masculinity; it can, however, signify the failure of *hegemonic* masculinity. There is certainly a marked contrast in the way Cullen views his body as "graceless" and "formless" when he demurs to join in the "national scrum of mateship," and Margaret's vision of his "lingering grace" in the passage above. This contrast is remarkable for its problematising of the male "gaze" as wholly determining, and thus, in its problematising of the ideology of hegemonic discourses of gender to render

subjectivity absolutely. Hegemony is formed in the sewing together of the elements of a heterogeneous social field into a smooth consistency. For men, such consistency rests on a certain kind of "belief" in the fantasy of a hegemonic subject – with their identification with a particular image, or idea, of masculinity, even if, as I will show in the next chapter, this identification is made negatively.

In *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* we see an ironic (re)iteration of white male identity in a (neo)colonial context. The irony comes from viewing Cullen as a man split from his own self-image, set loose, literally, in a bewildering jungle of difference and otherness, an archetypal setting for self-discovery. In the jungle Cullen begins to question the "subtle indirect influence on his life" of other people (*CJB*, 239). Acting by "nature's and man's laws" to defend himself against the nightclub pimp, Cullen decides that "if inevitable events had occurred, anything further, said sweet reason, was finally in his hands" (*CJB*, 238). Cullen acts instinctively, and flattens the pimp with a rugby tackle. We can see repeated here the discourse of the "survival of the fittest," which is not so much a subversion of Western modernity, but an ideology of it. "Asia," in this sense, rather than a subversive, deconstructive space, is the West's foil.

Nevertheless, this binary relation of West/East, Europe/Asia need not constitute the only way these terms can be thought about. Nor should we read Cullen's fate to signify a kind of emptying out of the self, or, as Brady reads it, the reverse. It would be better to see the text as opening up numerous sites of interpretation, or reading positions, as Cullen's own body – a kind of text – is interpreted differently by various characters, and is itself not reducible to any one of these interpretations. Throughout the text, Cullen feels his power ebbing from him, as the signs of race and gender, which are for him literally imprinted onto his body, are

read differently. His large European frame no longer represents power and strength, but rather, as the blood-pressure machine indicates to the petite Japanese at a Tokyo airport, the "giant European's imminent demise" (*CJB*, 56). Of course, such a giving up of power need not mean a blunt and glib dissolution of the self. The binaries of (neo)colonial discourse – the hegemonic discourses of race, gender and national identity – demand this to be the case. Yet in its negotiations of these discourses the text also enunciates spaces of cross-translation. If Cullen's body carries the message of the "giant European's imminent demise," then it is a message which portends the opening up of a space of hybridity, rather than death; a dissolution of "traditional" Western racial hegemonies rather than a dissolution of subjectivity altogether.

Chapter Three

"The Actor of his own Ideal": George Johnston's *My Brother Jack*, Abjectivity and Masculinity[1]

> A child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his flights of fancy, antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to the new ideas he has gained from unprescribed reading.
>
> Jerome Buckley, *Season of Youth*, 17

Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble* that "identity" cannot precede a discussion of gender "for the simple reason that 'persons' only become intelligible through becoming gendered" (Butler, *Gender*, 16). The "matrix of intelligibility" laid out by hegemonic masculinity is structured around the binaries of masculine/feminine, male/female, and heterosexual/homosexual. The exact organisation of these binaries of sex, gender and desire is represented by the positioning of the male body as the referent of masculinity, a referent which is both constituted performatively and guarded in hegemonic social practices through the heavy proscription of male homosexuality. The homosexual body, in this practice, is "feminised" and abjected through epistemological and physical violence.

I argued in Chapter Two, however, that the body can no more guarantee men "masculinity" than it can be the referent of racial or national identity; the body is itself produced in discourses of nation, gender and race as the "natural" bearer of such identities. As Thomas DiPiero argues, hegemonic masculinity naturalises its domination by reproducing images of itself as "pre-meaningful activity – that is, as the natural source of origin ostensibly preceding cultural construction" (DiPiero,

---

[1] Fredric Nietzsche: "What? A great man? I always see only the actor of his own ideal" (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 77).

"Patriarch," 114). Arguing from within a discourse of psychoanalysis, he contends that:

> hegemonic masculinity is responsible for the confusion of psychic and subjective alienation with physical castration because it fixes a biological and putatively natural human feature as the immutable avatar of masculinity. (DiPiero, "Patriarch," 114)

In this chapter I analyse the difficulties produced by the failure of the body to guarantee identity for male subjects in discourses of hegemonic masculinity. I argue that because of hegemonic masculinity's own construction of a relation of equivalence between physical and psychical castration, the maimed male body produces contradictions in discourses of masculinity which can only be sutured through a great amount of belief in the fantasy of a hegemonic subject. A major part of this work is achieved through the displacement of "lack" onto women, a displacement, I argue, that is at the very core of the Oedipal narrative itself – a narrative which I read *My Brother Jack* to be in complicity with, and whose structure also sustains the myth of "masculinity" as it is articulated in discourses of hegemonic masculinity.

It is striking how neatly *My Brother Jack* fulfils the prescription of narrative development (particularly as it tracks the development of male identity) in the *Bildungsroman.* For Buckley, the central conflict of this genre is a resoundingly Oedipal one. In this narrative, the male child's act of proving, marking and defining his difference from the father is not so much a disruption or revision of the father's position as a usurpation, and thus an affirmation, of it. But if in the Oedipal narrative masculinity never really becomes "known" until the boy has finally assumed the "place" of the father, then how is the boy's identity up until this point to be conceived? In *My Brother Jack*, Davey's engendering is a complex process; he constructs his identity through the images of masculinity represented by his brother. In the masculine

economy of sameness of Australian culture, he is a not-I, an "other." The sites of masculine identification are mapped out for Davey in hegemonic discourse through this binary scheme of "I" and "not-I," so that the apodictic moment of his "making it" at the end of the novel is signified by his recognition of his brother's "lack." Davey's is the triumph of the self-actualised man over the "the matey, egalitarian native son of the Democratic Nationalist tradition" (Schaffer, 78), but his deflation of the myth of masculinity – whose discourse of intelligibility is represented by Jack – also proscribes his own articulation of an "autonomous" male identity.

In a feminist revision of Buckley's position, Christine Van Boheemen in *The Novel and Family Romance* reads the male child's desire to take the "place" of the "father" in the genre of the "family romance" as a repetition of the Oedipal narrative, but places her emphasis on the role of the mother, rather than the father, as the "site" of desire. The search for The Name of the Father, using Lacan's lexicon, is produced in a dialectic of presence and absence, in which the desire to accede to the father's place is motivated by a desire to escape the harrowing hollowness of the (m)other. Repeating the Lacanian position, the "place" of the "father" is constructed as positive precisely in relation to the lacking or empty place of the (m)other. The boy's (and concomitantly, the reader's) task in the "family romance," and by extension the *Bildungsroman*, is to suture the absence of the (m)other through the construction of an ulterior "self" in language (Boheemen, 13ff).

What the narratives of the "family romance" genre have in common is their desire to repress the (m)other as a site of identification, and in this sense Van Boheemen's narrative of gender assumption repeats the dominant myth of masculinity in our culture. As Jonathan Rutherford explains in *Men's Silences*:

> Masculinity is defined in its dividing off of the elements it must disavow and projecting them into the subordinate term of femininity, filling it with the antithesis of its own identity. The female body in its very alienness is both idealised and loathed by men. It represents the good object men have lost and still long for, but it also mirrors and represents the bad, persecutory elements of the mother, which threaten to overwhelm men's boundaries of self. (Rutherford, 78)

Masculinity is a defensive position, but one that also needs to be *attained*, and fought for. But to what extent does Van Boheemen presume, *a priori*, a "lacking" femininity? Van Boheemen sees in the "family romance" genre an enactment of the boy's displacement of the mother as a site of identification *and* desire (in the pre-Oedipal "relation" between mother and child), a site now split, because of the Oedipus complex, between the poles of masculine and feminine. Not only is the Oedipus complex presumed to be foundational, and, to an extent, pre-cultural (that is, beyond ideology), but heterosexuality is thought of as being the "natural" configuration of desire (it certainly is the normative one, but that's another matter). The whole Oedipal narrative is posited as a cause rather than as an effect of hegemonic discourses of gender. Instead of arguing for a "primal castration," which only men do not accede to, we might rather see castration as an effect of hegemonic culture's linking of the "body," the penis, *to* power.

In a way, Van Boheemen simply reverses, rather than disrupts, Buckley's position. Where Buckley sees the attainment of a "positive" identity through the resolution of Oedipus, Van Boheemen sees the repression of the inter-dependency of the (masculine) self and the (feminine) other, upon which the Oedipal narrative is constructed. Although Van Boheemen's analysis allows us to see masculine identity as constructed, rather than as self-evident or natural, it does so at the cost of re-inscribing hegemonic discourse's construction of masculinity as a singular site of identification.

Implied in this is a disjunction between "masculinity" as a site of identification and "masculinity" as a site of desire. In this chapter and the next I will suggest that masculinity should be theorised as being both.

From the very beginning of *My Brother Jack* it is clear that Jack is the filler of Davey's fantasy space, fixed at different moments in a kind of *mis en scene* of masculine identification. At the end of the text, the structure of this fantasy is unveiled when Davey realises that *he* has become the embodiment of Jack's desire: "[Jack] had given up, and he limped, and he had invested all his brave pride and passion and purpose in me" (*MBJ*, 365). A standard reading of this is that Davey's realisation underlines the text's own deflation of the "male myth," which Jack is supposed to represent. It is clear that Davey has all along been aware of Jack's "mortality," and that he has invested too much in *him*. This reading seems fair, but what I would like to close in on is the way Jack's "unveiling" is signified as a bodily deficiency, a limp. By framing Jack's heroic masculinity and subsequent de-idealisation as a corporeal "lack," the text, rather than deconstructing the basis of hegemonic masculinity's literalisation of the link between Symbolic and biological castration, is reproducing it.

In Oedipal and hegemonic discourse, masculinity is constructed against an image of castration: the "missing" genitals of the mother/feminine. The fear of the male child is that his body will as well "lack" if he doesn't make the right identifications. All further (secondary identifications) are thus channelled through an image of lack, which is also an image of sexual difference. For Davey, this "lack," however, is inscribed onto male bodies:

> Jack and I must have spent a good part of our boyhood in the fixed belief that grown-up men who were complete were pretty rare beings – complete, that is, in that they had their sight or hearing or all their limbs. Well, we knew they existed, but they seldom came our way. (*MBJ*, 2)

The men become identified not only with their particular wound, but with the crutches and artificial limbs that are ostensibly making them "complete." But these images of lack only signify in relation to a model of masculinity which prizes the "complete" body: a lack which is thought to precede the acquisition of masculinity, and, indeed, to be the precondition for it. For Davey, the "lack" which these soldiers represent in hegemonic culture is also the "lack" necessitating narrative. In the early part of the text, images of fragmentation pervade the narrative, with the narrative act itself linked metonymically to the artificial limbs and crutches of the men:

> One recollects something of this later phase in a series of vivid little vignettes that are incomplete and scattered, but bright enough, *like* the fragments of spilt colour I remember strewn on the hall carpet all around the artificial limbs and crutches when the front door slammed in a gusty wind one day and shattered the decorative leadlight side panels of red and green and blue and amber glass. (*MBJ*, 3, my emphasis)

If the war is the incipience of narrative desire, it also supplies Davey with images of the sublime. In the early post-war years, he writes:

> There was a lot of mess to be cleaned up...the bodies of the dead to be located and the great cemeteries set up, and all those military hospitals in France and Flanders and Britain and Italy to be cleaned out of colonial troops so that there would be space in which to try to heal the indigenous maimed. (*MBJ*, 5-6)

The corpses and the bodies in pieces, the disabled men, return as the collective "other" of war, "leather-and-metal, stiff jointed legs and the claw-like appendages to the artificial arms propped in the corners of our hallway...(*MBJ*, 9). The artificial limbs and their "claw-like appendages," the props of maimed masculinity, are identified with cognitive failure, the gaps in discourse, the "vast, dark experience" (*MBJ*, 11-12).

These men can be read as the eruptions into Davey's universe of the "waste" and "mess" that Kristeva argues in *Powers of Horror* is connected to the maternal

body, a fear, that is, of the "castration" (death) that she represents to men in hegemonic discourses of masculinity.[2] Kristeva writes:

> When I am beset by abjection, the twisted braid of affects and thoughts I call by such a name does not have, properly speaking, a definable *object.* The abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine. Nor is it an ob-ject, an otherness ceaselessly fleeing in a systematic quest of desire. What is abject is not my correlative, which providing me with someone or something else as support, would allow me to be more or less detached and autonomous. The abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to *I*. If the object, however, through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which, as a matter of fact, makes me ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is *abject*, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses. (Kristeva, 2)

Kristeva locates the abject in a twilight zone outside the realm of a subject/object relation. The abject is opposed to "*I*," that is identity, the ego, subjectivity, in a way unlike an object, which can be assimilated by the subject, and indeed, is the very basis upon which subjectivity is constructed. The radicalness of abjectivity is in the non-dialectical relation it has to the subject. It occupies a place just out of reach of the subject, and yet it is constitutive of it, forming a gap or hole at its borders.

With the discovery of the war-time paraphernalia of newspapers and jingoistic propaganda, Davey begins to give form and shape to the "faraway experience" (*MBJ*, 12). Seeing the psychical and physical scars of the war veterans, Davey is initiated into a world of loss, fragmentation and dislocation that has no name, and which he is not able to incorporate into a cognitive framework. Davey rejects the Raemaker cartoons, which have "the substance of nightmare translated into printed truth" (*MBJ*, 13), and instead he turns to the *Illustrated War News*: "For these pictures were not imagined and drawn out of wrath and vindictive hatred; these were the *real* photographs of what

---

[2] Davey himself refers to these men as the "derelicts of war whom Mother brought home to stay" (*MBJ*, 5). Davey's use of "derelict" here links the men to the old ships used as coalhulks or barges. As with the war-veterans, Davey also builds a romantic narrative around the ships in his articles for the newspapers, to which he attaches his name "Stunsail."

had taken place" (*MBJ*, 13). After viewing the photographs of the wrecked landscapes of the Somme and Cambrai, "and gaunt men in tin helmets squatting in the mud," Davey is able to make the vital connections "with the things propped up in our hallway and with the shattered men who inhabited all of our house and half of my mind" (*MBJ*, 14).

The motif of the "prop" is linked to the post-war celebration of masculine and national identity. As supplements to the male body these props make the men "whole" again, but they also de-stabilise the ideal of a "self-evident" masculinity by uncovering its source of strength and regenerative power in discourse and fantasy. The post-war masculine body needs to be "propped up" – by a walking stick, an artificial limb, or a woman. The abject "reveals" itself in the spaces of the prop, where the phallic ideal breaks down, in

> Bert "snobbing" in the back yard and Gabby Dixon's face at the dark end of a room and the smell of chloroform in corridors and the bronchial cough of my father going off in the dawn light to the tramways depot. (*MBJ*, 14)

Davey sutures the gap between subjectivity, and the spaces of abjection which throw subjectivity into question, through representation. Putting a "frame around" half-felt inklings and the tentative and terrifying encounters with the sublime, and making connections between seemingly disparate elements of experience, are the ambitions of the artist. As Davey writes of his father's arrival on the *Ceramic*: "That for me was how the First World War ended. It was also, in a way, the beginning of my trying to *piece it together*" (*MBJ*, 5, my emphasis).

The war, and Davey's "trying to piece it together," are both framed by images of the male body, particularly the working class body, *in* pieces. The "working class" body in hegemonic culture is known and signified by what it does, the jobs it can

perform. Working class masculinity – historically and socially defined by physical labour and hard bodies – is reified through performance: this body must *act* its power. But the returned soldiers in Davey's house find themselves in traditionally "feminine" jobs: "Stubby had learnt to make string doilies, using his teeth and the leather-padded stumps of his forearms...Aleck endlessly knitted balaclavas" (*MBJ*, 8). As we will see, war defines masculinity through an image of the "ideal" male body, but the returned soldiers, "those shattered former comrades-in-arms" (*MBJ*, 37), redefine masculinity around the imagery of physical lack.

For Davey (and any subject), the "gaze" can never suture the spaces of abjection. In Davey's own narrative act, however, we see him repeating a patriarchal discourse of sexual difference. Davey's narrative is constructed through the hegemonic discourse of intelligibility constructing male identity, a discourse which, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, equates the loss of (white, heterosexual) male privilege, the disruption of patriarchal conceptions of sexual difference, *with* death, maiming, and dismemberment. The identification of men with *the* gaze is also, however, problematised in this text. Davey's coming across the photographs of dead servicemen, and the jiggling "second-hand glass eyes" which seem to "wink and glare at me," portends his own sense of "expatriation" at Caserta. More accurately, though, what we have in Davey's reaction to the gaze of the "other" coming from the shop window is the excess of the abject over the subject, the failure of what Peggy Phelan calls "mimetic correspondence" (Phelan, 5), the failure to elicit the reflection of a comforting self-image from the body of the (male) other. Davey's response, of course, is to run away, and from then on "when I went to the Phoebe for the serial matinees or

the Harold Lloyd comedies, I would always make a long detour to go the back way" (*MBJ*, 15).

The abject male body is both the "lack" necessitating discourse (as the lacking feminine/maternal body necessitates the narrative act in Van Boheemen's text) as well as being the "lack" that must be repressed and accounted for *in* narrative. In the narrative of *My Brother Jack*, and the Oedipal narrative in general, the abject signifies as both the "other" of bodily coherence, and as the other of masculinity. Masculinity is defined against abjectivity, against "abject" identifications, but also through the (re)territorialisation of "abjectivity" itself. What I would like to argue here is how, in the course of *My Brother Jack*, the abject male body is disavowed precisely through a displacement of the "otherness" or incoherence it represents onto the maternal/feminine body, a displacement which is at the core of the castration compulsion of the Oedipal narrative.

Rutherford argues that the abject appears as the result of the failure of "thirdness": "If the infant is unable to create adequate object relations with the father, the predicaments which form the abject (fear of fusion and loss of self) retain a significant effect within his subjectivity" (Rutherford, 160). To protect against the effects of the abject an "object representation of a third term" in the guise of a "good" or "bad" father is required. The paradox of the abject, though, is that it is only through the body of the mother that the "third term" of the father is actually reached. This explains the "uncanny" nature of the abject in discourse, and the male's constant need for narratives producing images of masculine empowerment and mastery over the feminine (Rutherford, 160-1).

A very curious move in Rutherford's theory of "thirdness" is its displacement of the feminine/mother as a site of identification. Here, the maternal is something the boy needs to be protected from – through identification with a "good" father. As a narrative of the acquisition of masculine subjectivity, Rutherford's theory seems to repeat the Oedipal scenario, with an important difference being that the boy's identification with the "good" father is supposed to break the binary circuit of desire/identification producing the mother as whore/witch/mother superior in the boy's imaginary. Rutherford explains how the mother's abjectivity can be assuaged through "thirdness," that is, through a further masculine identification with a "good father." If the "bad" father is the initial agent of castration (leaving the male child in an impossible position – required to defend himself against his mother, and at the same time not able to properly assume a masculine disposition in relation to his father) then the "good" father will provide him with a position (that is, a site of identification) from which to confront the threatening maternal object. But why need the maternal object be so despised and threatening in the first place?

It is clear at the beginning of *My Brother Jack*, in fact, that Davey does not desire protection from the "maternal" other as much as he does from his despotic father. Davey's fantasies of murdering his father, for example, are not motivated simply by a desire for mastery and appropriation, but by a fear of being left unprotected if his mother should leave: "The prospect of such a thing happening was so firmly established in the chamber of uncertainties that seemed to be the dominant area of my mind that I felt any desperation would be justified if this could be prevented" (*MBJ*, 40). Indeed, the place of the mother in Davey's imaginary here is as an aegis against the somewhat arbitrary (self)destructiveness of masculinity and male

intersubjective relations. It is his mother who steps in to assuage Davey's father's "system of punishments," and who later breaks up the organised fight between Davey and Snowy Bretherton (*MBJ*, 45).

Davey's earliest identifications are with strong women, such as his adventurous grandmother and later his mother. But these identifications are soon displaced. The figures orchestrating these displacements are men, and mainly Jack:

> Since I already had crazy ideas about everything which Jack regarded as normal and necessary, and because I was always reading books, my brother's dread was that this companionship [with my "sonky mates"] would turn me into a homosexual. It was entirely *his* dread. (*MBJ*, 56-57)

Davey has not internalised his brother's fear and "dread" of homosexuals, but the extent to which Davey – and this *Bildungsroman* narrative – follows a hegemonic trajectory is evident in the "shame and humiliation" that his mother's intrusion into the "ring," the masculine economy of violence, causes him. "Mother's" position in relation to the (re)production of masculinity and patriarchy has become by now an impossible one: she is, as in the Oedipal narrative, the object around which masculinity and the system of patriarchy producing it revolves; on the other hand, as "object" she is also unassimilable. In this sense, Davey's mother is herself a manifestation of the abject. She is, as in Rutherford's theory, always an "other."

Davey's attempts to escape the squalid mediocrity of his suburban milieu, "to invent what in reality did not exist" (*MBJ*, 29), are also bound up with attempts to scratch out an identity in opposition to his brother's. Davey is, nevertheless, constrained by the prohibitive nature of hegemonic forms of masculinity defined for him *by* his brother. Davey, according to his brother, is either a "'blood sawney little sonk'" (*MBJ*, 10), or later, a suspected "tonk" (*MBJ*, 56). Importantly, though, masculinity is defined by Jack and the misogynist culture in which they all live *against*

a denigrated, demonised (or, like Davey's mother, as "The Rose of No-Man's Land") sainted, femininity. The feminine is thus blocked as site of identification, and most importantly, as place from which to desire.

For Davey, then, the matrix of intelligibility of hegemonic masculinity both implores him to define himself through an identification with "Jack" at the same as it prohibits him from identifying with a feminine position. However, in the genealogy of the male history of his family, Davey is cast as something of an oddity: "My father's name also was Jack, simply because that had been *his* father's name. Jack – never John – was the name always given to the firstborn boy, and Dad had been the eldest boy among nineteen children" (*MBJ*, 18). The proper name "Jack" "fixes" him in a circuit of patrilineal desire which excludes and marginalises Davey. The signifier "Jack" carries a heavy symbolic burden, but what it symbolises most of all, according to Davey, is his own marginal place in the hierarchy of masculinities, his status as the "younger son of a tram driver" (*MBJ*, 17). The discourse of intelligibility through which identity can be constructed, as his construction of Jack shows, is a binary machine. Either you *are* (Jack) or you are not. While Davey desires to "side-step a world [he] didn't have the courage to face" (*MBJ*, 58), Jack "refuse[s] to side-step anything, even the baffing nature of his own brother" (*MBJ*, 58). But it is his "baffling nature," his "unknowness," that frightens Jack most; an "unknowness" which Gavin later estimates is the model of the intelligibility of his character, and which Davey shapes into the defining principle of his identity. In contrast, Jack's idenitity is defined precisely *by* his extravagant performance *of* his masculinity:

> As with his vocabulary, [Jack's] appearance was almost blatantly offered for public consumption. He was an upstanding, good-looking youth, but he would plaster his hair down with cheap brilliantine and part it in the middle, and sometimes he would favour sideburns and a hairline moustache, and he began to wear white ties with a black shirt, and pearl-grey Oxford bags, and

> ox-blood or two-tone shoes. Part of this sartorial masquerade, possibly, may well have been his calculated incitement to riot. (*MBJ*, 52)

Trapped in a space of contradiction, Davey must find a path between, on one side, the abject, rank and "feminine," and on the other, the masculinity of his father, and his brother's "alarming indoctrinations" (*MBJ*, 75). His epiphanic experiences at the wharf and his nascent awareness "of the existence of true beauty, of an opalescent world of infinite promise that had nothing whatever to do with the shabby suburbs that had engulfed me since my birth" (*MBJ*, 70), signify his identification with non-violent and non-hierarchal forms of masculine subjectivity, his becoming "like Adam in a *new* Eden" (*MBJ*, 70, emphasis added). However, as the themes of heroic masculinities emerging in his early writings suggest – revolving mainly around his brother as an ego-ideal (in the rather exaggerated, and completely unconvincing, accounts of Jack's heroism and adventurousness) – Davey is nevertheless forced to articulate an identity through hegemonic discourses of sexual difference. He develops the art of dissimulation, signing his name as "Stunsail" (*MBJ*, 74), yet his own "opposition" to his brother's version of masculinity is constrained by his interpellation as a male subject.

As "the younger son of a tram driver," Davey recognises himself in his father's gaze, "as some sort of furtive spineless weakling with that same taint in me that would take me down the drain with all the rest of them..." (*MBJ*, 91). Davey is positioned by his father on his mother's side of the family, with the abject: "Mother was the source of contamination. From her side of the family came all the rank seeds of rottenness and failure" (*MBJ*, 90). However, Davey is also aware of the internalisation of his father's tyranny, of his unconscious identification with the desire of "the father" in this masculine economy of sameness and violence:

> Even ten years or more later, when strong acids were eating at my own character, and when I behaved with as much violence and cruelty and injustice to my own wife, I still had not learned to understand it. (*MBJ*, 89)

In fact, what both Davey and his father must contend with are the contradictions of hegemonic masculinity, contradictions which Jack solves purely through the force of his personality. Davey recognises that his father's tyranny has everything to do with the souring of his plans, his inability to enact, as Davey sees Jack doing, his own (culture's own) ideal of masculinity.

This, of course, is what the contradiction of the "abject" signifies: the paradoxical relation of male subjects to the ideal that they are enjoined, literally, to embody, and the impossibility of ever doing so. Davey's relationship with his "own wife," Helen, fails precisely because of her attempts to identify *him* with a particular image of middle-class suburban respectability. In her dedication to the material perquisites of suburban life, Helen represents the opposite of Davey's own probing, exploratory excursions into the sublime. Davey compares her to one of E.M. Forster's "'vast armies of the benighted, who follow neither the heart nor the brain, and march to their destiny by catch-words'" (*MBJ*, 194). Helen's readiness to pigeon-hole knowledge "as if human understanding was a commodity that came in a package with instructions for serving" – an analogy that is intended to emphasise Helen's tendency to trivialise things, but which only trivialises Helen's status as a suburban housewife – contrasts with Davey's own tentative grasp of his "responsibility to try to understand...not necessarily to do something about, but just to try to understand" (*MBJ*, 192).

Davey's "masculinity" is never more fully assured than when the differences between masculine and feminine roles are so soundly demarcated by his wife, but it

takes another man, Gavin Turley, to tell Davey what his identity *really* is. At the Turley home Davey recognises for the first time the hollowness of Helen's *petit bourgeois* aspirations. Gavin's study, a room Davey imagines "no woman was ever allowed to tidy up," becomes the site of Davey's own transformation into a "proper" artist:

> "In a way, David, you are like some queer, strange savage who has journeyed a long way from his own tangled wilderness, and you look down on the palisades of the little settlement, and you wonder how you will pillage it and what trophies you will find. You can be sure of nothing, of course, because you carry with you no guarantees." (*MBJ*, 262)

Gavin constructs Davey in the image of a Romantic, an image Davey likes because of its suggestions of ineluctableness: "'David,' he said, 'shall I sum it all up for you in one crisp sentence? I am safe, and you are not'" (*MBJ*, 261). Once again, Davey identifies positively *against* any kind of identity at all. Davey goes home and sees for the first time "its imprisoning shamefulness," and plants a sugar gum tree in the front yard. Davey's rebellion signifies his identification with the shabby gentility of Gavin, represented by his slowly decaying colonial mansion with its suggestions of hidden and exotic treasures. But this identification is not a rebellion against middle-class mediocrity in favour of the working class mediocrity of his home at *Avalon*. Davey's longing for the environment of his bedroom at *Avalon*, its window likewise opening onto a "fernery and a tangle of dusky vegetation" and the Dollicus tree, is a desire for the narcissistic seclusion of his Stunsail days, his "groping for some identification with beauty and mystery and poetry" (*MBJ*, 266).

Davey himself does not recognise this new image of himself specifically in terms of a masculine identification. For him, the ideal, and only image, of masculinity is still represented by his brother. At boot camp, Davey, a Major in the army and

separated from Jack by rank, observes his older brother and notes with admiration how Jack had seemed to have achieved a state of "full subjectivity," a state signified, of course, by his body:

> In the open-neck shirt and shorts and the white gaiters and the white webbing belt, there was a look of absolute *rightness* about him – I had forgotten his strong, graceful boxer's legs, a deep brown now and dusted with a thick gold down of hair. What had changed about him, I began to realise, was both subtle and profound: it was almost as if he had been fined down to the "essential Jack," as if this was what my brother really *should* look like, as if all his growing and maturing had been working towards the presentation of this man in this exact appearance at this precise time. Even more than this, for I saw that this was not only that he looked as *Jack* should look, but he looked as a proper *man* should look. (*MBJ*, 290- 291)

Davey's identification of Jack with how a "proper *man* should look" is shared by other men in the camp. The war becomes not simply a preserve of masculinity but the site for its construction as a cultural ideal, and Jack, the "sunburnt Icarus...buoyant and soaring in his *own* air (*MBJ*, 294, my emphasis), is its representative image: "it was almost as if the whole baffling pattern of world events had been in conspiracy to fulfil it" (*MBJ*, 295). Unlike his "sartorial masquerade," Jack's "dressing up" here is aimed at denying the free-play of signification which this "masquerade" might otherwise demand. Yet it is only in relation to this stereotypical image of masculinity that Davey is able to recognise the "profound certainty there was about [Jack]" (*MBJ*, 295). Jack is not so much an object of identification for Davey, as a construction of his desire; a desire, that is, to confirm his own self-image as an outsider, an ineluctable "presence." The stereotype, as Bhabha points out, is "an arrested, fixated form of representation...that den[ies] the play of difference (that the negation through the other permits)" (Bhabha, 66), and which allows Davey to pose his alienation, his dissimulation, as a fixed and enduring part of his subjectivity even though it is constructed as a performative (re)iteration of the very ideal Jack himself aspires to.

We see here, as we saw in the previous chapter, a discourse of gender difference being marked out through a territorialisation and spatialisation of the male body. This spatialisation of the body marks other differences – men from women, of course, homo- and hetero-difference, and differences of class and race. For Davey, it also signifies his difference from the national culture. Looking into the "unreflective" black "mirror in the freezing room in the palace at Caserta," he sees a face not at all the "same as those faces under the broad-brimmed hats...not the same, for instance, as my brother Jack's face" (*MBJ*, 337). As the "not" in this passage suggests, Davey must construct his identity here negatively. He is a "not-I," an "other," in the masculine economy of sameness. His identification with the place of the "other," with bafflement and uncertainty, is not so much an identification with abjectivity, though, but rather against his *own* fantasy of what a man "should look like." This fantasy is staged precisely in the space of an otherwise unfillable breach, the space of abjectivity. Jack seems to inhabit a location in Davey's imaginary which Davey himself cannot assume, a position of stability, of "knowability," which defines the "proper man." Jack is in the position of the sign whose referent never strays, who has the ability to enunciate his own identity, and to direct the "reader" of his body in how it is to be read. If Jack dresses up to incite a riot, it will be a riot conducted on his terms. If Davey constructs Jack as a figure of "completeness," then it is only in order to displace chaos, to be the organising principle of his narrative "self." If Davey and Jack spend the first years of their lives in the "fixed belief that grown-up men who were complete were pretty rare beings," then Jack will become for Davey an assurance that they really do exist.

Van Boheemen frames the autobiographical narrative within an image of the abject female body, but it is the abject *male* body that appears for Davey to be the

object necessitating narrative, and which language, in its suturing role, is required to displace. For Davey, though, positioned at the border of meaning and meaning's collapse, language also becomes an arbiter of sexual difference. Davey throws himself narcissistically into the role of the artist, to "invent what in reality didn't exist," but this identity is constructed not so much in opposition to hegemonic discourses of masculinity, but through them. This is made quite clear in Davey's relationships with women, particularly Helen and Cressida, both of whom are represented to Davey through the gazes of *other* men. In this way, the narrative of *My Brother Jack* becomes a kind of homosocial discourse, within which a woman functions, firstly, as a signifier of Davey's heterosexual identifications, and secondly, as the mediator of his relationship with his brother. In the following passage, the staging of "woman" as the object of discourse is made quite evident with the narrator's address to an explicitly-stated male reader:

> [N]o matter how many women *we* may enjoy later nor how adept *we* become in the practices of sex, there is probably no other moment in life that ever repeats itself with such an excitingly exact mixture of alarm and ecstasy; fear and frenzy; doubt and intoxication; delight and dread. (*MBJ*, 183, my emphasis)

Similarly, when Davey meets Cressida and Gavin toward the end of the war, Cressida is positioned *between* them as a kind of mediator of male heterosexual desire. Gavin refers to Cressida as an "authentic savage," and Davey, once again beholden to another man to furnish him with his desire, agrees:

> It was perfectly and absolutely *right*, of course! It had to be – that was where her eyes came from, out of the ocean, out of the endless Pacific depths. And that was precisely what she was – a savage, a pagan, an authentic something that was quite different to anything else. (*MBJ*, 354)

But the some*thing*-ness in Cressida that defies description, that causes his language to melt into a series of elisions, also links her to Jack: "there was something about her,

some absolute and perfect directness that reminded me of my brother Jack...she was not the same sort of person as Jack, no, but she was the same sort of *thing*...That was it..." (*MBJ*, 354). The place of homosocial desire is the place of linguistic breakdown. Davey attempts to locate the boundaries of his identity by defining what these two "others" represent for him: sheer "authenticity" (as opposed to his inauthenticity). In this way, Cressida seems to act as a fixer of the male heterosexual gaze, as Jack also does, even though such a gaze is also shown not to have any ontological status at all. The text thus manages to perpetuate a hegemonic logic of sexual difference at the moment when it might be seen to be most disruptive of it. With Davey's recognition of his brother's "lack," Davey displaces the effects of abjectivity by locating it at the site of Woman, Cressida. In so doing, Davey also reveals his identification with the imagery of phallic masculinity his brother had previously been able to represent for him. Rather than opening up alternative sites of masculine identification – of fracturing the unity of the "male" – the text seems to be closing them down.

The male body (not, as is usually the case, the body of a woman, which drops in at the last moment) is the object (the abject) around which the text's entire narrative performance revolves. Here, this abjectivity is displaced belatedly onto the body of Cressida (which then becomes a kind of "way out"). Through this displacement, sexual difference is made the structuring principle of Davey's masculinity – through the othering of the female body (Cressida's body, which itself reminds Davey of Jack). In this economy, the construction of sexual difference is produced not only through the repression of the lacking feminine (male) body, but of the "feminine" as a site from which men *can* desire. Discursively speaking, the abject and ideal male body are identifiable, and constructed, performatively, as Butler argues, within the spectre of

their own destabilisation (Butler, *Bodies*, 116). The "other" is not "invisible" but present within the terms of the self's construction. What Davey's narrative displays most of all is the extent to which the abject and ideal body cannot be read as being wholly separable. If Davey attempts to reduce men's "lack" to physical deficiency, then it is not because male bodies which lack in this way are really "feminine," but because "lack" must be given a referent. The reader of *My Brother Jack* becomes aware of Davey's madness in this respect when Gavin's own missing limb is thought of as a reason for his unsuitableness for Cressida.

The central dilemma for Davey is that he must "always choose between inflicting pain or suffering it" (*MBJ*, 229). In a cogent discussion of *My Brother Jack*, Dirk Van Hartog argues that Davey's "self-flagellating urge to present a portrait of the artist as a young wimp" is expressive of a "tendency toward a false denial of personal difference, a quasi-chameleon-like self-levelling" (Hartog, 233). Hartog is right to link Davey's dismissal of his early Romanticism "as evasion" to his interpellation into the ideology of Australia-larrikin-Bohemianism, and his consequent fear of that part of the self which cannot be "reflected back by the noble larrikin" image of his brother (Hartog, 232). Here, of course, we have the kind of binary arrangement through which male identity must be organised in hegemonic discourses of masculinity. However, *My Brother Jack* itself "performs" an obfuscation of this self/other logic by allowing the reader to see within the claustrophobic arena of the hegemonic masculine a space of dispersal; a space produced by language but not reducible to it, in which the masculine/feminine binary is not so discretely marked across male and female bodies, and in which the slippage among the terms of homo- and hetero- sexual definition can constitute a disruption of the discourse which renders them as opposites.

In a curious meta-narrative of the very textual construction of his autobiographical identity in *My Brother Jack*, Davey's "confession" to Sam is virtually orgasmic in its cathartic effect, transgressing even as it invokes the prohibition against homosexuality set out within the heterosexual matrix of hegemonic masculinity, as the rhythm of the prose imitates the languid gaze of a man surveying his lover:

> [I]t was like the drawing of a bung from a charged barrel; the contents so long sealed up, poured out in a flow that couldn't be checked. He listened intently. He never questioned or interrupted. I don't think his eyes ever left my face. I can still see him, sitting there in his unbuttoned shirt watching me, his arms across the back of the chair, his little soft chin mounted on the back of his wrist. (*MBJ*, 94-5)

Sam in this passage is located in a traditionally "feminine" position in hegemonic discourse. The narrator's gaze moves from the subject of desire to its object, as the force of Davey's language seems to transform Sam into an object of erotic possibilities. Davey notices that his confession "gave [Sam] great pleasure...his eyes would glitter with satisfaction as I recounted each of my defections" (*MBJ*, 95). This entire scene, however, mediated by the presence of a pretty blonde, is qualified by the signifiers of heterosexual identification. The girl stands off-stage in this *mis en scene*, as a steady reminder of the heterosexual matrix, the focus and guarantee of Sam's hetero-sexuality, and hidden as she is, the undisclosed kernel of Davey's. The heterosexual matrix is transgressed by the desire which infuses Davey's speech even as it is being inscribed in the organisation of the scene. The injunction against homosexuality, which is the undisclosed "other" structuring the binary of the heterosexual matrix, is articulated by Jack, who after seeing Sam's apartment with its collection of icons displaying frank sexuality, wants to know if Sam is "'*another* of your bloomin' tonk friends...a poofter'" (*MBJ*, 99, my emphasis). The "invisibility" of Davey's sexuality feeds his brother's suspicion that he is indeed a "tonk," an indication

of Jack's insecurity about the "visibility" of his own heterosexuality. Sam quickly allays Jack's fears about his "normality" with an ironic re-iteration of the metaphor describing Davey's "uncorking": "'Does [Jack] know how to broach a niner and get the bung in, that's the point?' He waved at the nine gallon keg of beer, which had been propped up on the sofa" (*MBJ*, 103). The language of "confession" and transgression is transformed into a metaphor of penetration, of Jack's rapacious, resolute heterosexuality. As a signifier of both homosexual transgression and compulsory heterosexuality, the metaphor foregrounds the unstable and fundamentally ambiguous status of masculinity as it is registered in the Symbolic.

It is more than the duplicity of language, though, that makes it impossible to separate desire and identification here. The ideal of masculinity which Davey, at many points, mistakenly identifies with Jack (whose representation is his body, which seems to express all that a "*proper* man" should be) is also the ideal of representation itself. As a discourse in which the self-identity of the subject is constituted through the reconstruction of a life story, the narrative of autobiography is motivated by the experience of the abject, the lack in being which, in *My Brother Jack*, is configured around a phallic or monolithic conception of masculinity. This lack-in-being, the abject, is simultaneously a "place" outside normative subjectivity, and in Kristeva's, gendered sense, a space which is unlivable for men (afterall, there is no being "outside" ideology) and a space that demands to be filled, or transformed, by discourse. It would be simple to oppose the phallic and the abject. The abject, however, is not opposed to the phallic; rather, it is implied by it. The abject, as Rutherford argues, forms out of the site of a double, "the site of the formation of subjectivity and the site of its potential collapse" (Rutherford, 160). The abject for Davey is a space of the

sublime, an area of unknowness. This unknowness is gendered as feminine within the hegemonic economy of desire and identification. As a feminine and castrating space, the abject threatens Davey's identity as a man, but it is also, paradoxically, the locus of his creativity. As Davey's writing has a reparative function in his life, it becomes the site of his performance of masculinity. Masculinity, performed in the space of abjectivity, thus retains an uncanny aspect. The "uncanniness" of masculinity arises precisely because of its dependency on what it must disavow in order for it to signify in hegemonic discourse.

Disavowed, in the hegemonic economy of representation, is the feminine/maternal/abject. But I would like (as a prelude to the next chapter) to disarticulate this combination of "the disavowed," for not to do so is to repeat their othering in hegemonic discourse. In the next chapter, I want to argue that despite the linkage between the abject/feminine/maternal, it is not by any means inevitable. The very abjectivity of the abject comes from the fact that representation cannot completely reify it as any particular thing; it always remains in the margins or thereabouts. To set up a binary relation between abjectivity and hegemonic discourse would not only rob "the abject" of its deconstructive power, it would also be an implicit reification of hegemonic discourse itself. The same mechanisms of foreclosure which produce the male body as masculine (that is, heterosexual) and as a site of identification also produce it as abject, and for this reason, desirable.

In this chapter I have read *My Brother Jack* as being exemplary in its attempt to deconstruct the "ideal" of hegemonic masculinity, and to subvert the "belief" in what Silverman calls the "dominant fiction," the belief in the commensurability of the phallus and the penis, the male body and power (Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 15). Silverman

argues that this link underpins everything we come to "know" about what we call "reality," which is why when a male subject "fails to recognise 'himself' within its conjuration of masculine sufficiency our society suffers from a profound sense of 'ideological fatigue'" (Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 16). However, if Davey fetishises the female body in a conventional disavowing of "male lack," then it is also an act which compels the belief in the necessity and naturalness of the "complete" male body, and of what this body signifies: the inevitability of patriarchy. This might explain the text's reparative "phallicising" of Davey at the precise moment it "castrates" the "noble ocker" Jack, and the fetishising of Cressida as a signifier of heterosexual difference, even though this construction of her as an object of heterosexual desire springs from a homoerotic identification of her *with* Jack.

Chapter Four

"To enter, or to be entered: that surely was the question in most lives": Patrick White's *The Twyborn Affair*, Sexual Difference and Power

> *I'd like to say gay men are different. I'd like to say they've cracked the codes of masculinity and are more caring, more intimate, and more significant than straight men in their handling of love. Having had the fantasy that coming out as a gay man would provide not only the liberation of my sexuality but liberation from oppressive forms of masculine dominance, competition, power, and defensiveness; I'd have to say the reality was, and is, different.*
>
> Tim Edwards, *Erotics and Politics*, 110

Though the narratives of masculinity I have been constructing so far have emphasised a male heterosexual subject, these narratives imply and invoke a male homosexual subject. Such an invocation is always a repetition of the binaries constructing male hetero- and homosexual identity; that is, a performance of the discourse of intelligibility guarding the reading of the male body as "masculine" in the first instance. In this chapter I want to grapple with male subjectivity from the place of the "proximate," to call on Dollimore. That is to say, I want to read *The Twyborn Affair* as foregrounding the very performativity of gender and sexual identity.

Most readers of *The Twyborn Affair* have noted that the existential problems of E. Twyborn have something to do with "his" sexed being. Carolyn Bliss argues: "In part the anguish of Eudoxia Vatatzes/Eddie Twyborn/Eadith Trist stems from gender confusion. Eddie...is neither simply a transvestite nor a homosexual, but rather a fluctuating transsexual who is comfortable as neither male nor female" (Bliss, 168). Similarly, Susan Lever notes that "the problem of embodiment is not so much the bond to a material existence...but with the requirement that each body take the form of one sex or the other" (Lever, 294). While this emphasis on sex and embodiment may displace E.'s angst as a metaphysical problem, it does not deal with the historicity of

sexuality. E.'s cross-identifications do not solve any of his/her problems because both masculine and feminine identifications are produced by the same binary machine of gender difference as equally inhibiting. What we can see E. as disarticulating, however, is precisely the fixity of this discourse of intelligibility. I will be arguing later that despite the fact that E.'s identifications must always be with hegemonic gender positions, the very performance of his identifications can itself be read as a disruption of the fixity of these positions.

Gender and sexuality, in a sense, compete against each in *The Twyborn Affair* for epistemological and heuristic supremacy. In a well-known passage in *Flaws in the Glass*, White writes of sexual ambivalence as providing him with "insights into human nature, denied...to those who are unequivocally male or female" (White, *Flaws*, 154). For White, "sexual ambivalence" is synonymous with homosexuality, while sexuality itself flows from one's sexed identity. But there are many occasions in *Flaws* when White remarks that his sexuality and gender come to be interpreted – by him and those around him – as being separable. Perhaps the most significant instance is when, as a student at boarding school, White is scorned by the other boys, not, revealingly, because of his sexuality, "which they accepted and sometimes enjoyed, but for a 'feminine sensibility' which they despised because they mistrusted" (White, *Flaws*, 34). In other words, White's violation of gender codes does not, in this particular environment, ensue from his homosexual predilection, but from some other, equally arbitrary, personality trait, which the boys interpret as properly belonging to women. White compares the boys' mistrust of the feminine with "predominantly masculine" men's hate of women for the "subtleties the male lacks, while making use of their sexuality" (White, *Flaws*, 34). White identifies with women not so much against heterosexuality, but through it. In identifying himself sexually with women, White is

marking out an identity that has been produced for him by a hegemonic male culture which despises the "feminine," and so is constructing an identity in opposition to the "masculine" of hegemonic culture. In this identification, White is representing difference not so much along the axes of sex or sexuality, but of gender.

Hegemonic masculinity, in its proscription of White's "feminine sensibility" (an identification which is itself produced by hegemonic masculinity), exorcises male homosexuality even as it embraces and takes pleasure from it. The young White's femininity, we might say, is the public face of hegemonic masculinity's *own* homosexuality. White, in fact, identifies not against the boys' homosexual misogyny, but through it. Afterall, White also implies that male homosexuality may not *necessarily* be a violation of masculinity. It is for this reason that I would like to stress in the following analysis not just the importance of gender and sexual difference in the analysis of sexuality, but the limits of sexuality as a deconstructive trope, particularly its potential to transcend, or make meaningless, any notion of sexual difference altogether. In other words, I would like to temper the deconstructive possibilities of E.'s performances of identity by locating them firmly within a discourse of sexual difference.

I would like to enter this chapter's discussion of homosexual identity, and its relationship to hegemonic discourses of gender and sexuality, through a fairly conventional avenue, that is, through a literature review. In doing so, I want to draw attention to how homosexual identity, as a constructed category, becomes itself inscribed and reified in reading practices as a trope of something else: there is, in other words, a certain doubtfulness as to how homosexuality should be read, while nevertheless deploying hegemonic ideas about gender, sexuality and sex in its reading. Andrew Riemer, while acknowledging the text's manifest preoccupation with

sexuality, suspects that nevertheless "for all its chronicling of deviant sexuality, *The Twyborn Affair* consistently indicates that this material answers some other, quite mysterious end" (Riemer, 17). In a separate criticism, Riemer intuits a fundamental "disjunction" between "the narrative level of the novel and its thematic implications," which is "due largely to the virtual disappearance of the concept of the central character" (Riemer, 18). In reply to Riemer it could be argued that the "mysterious ends" of the narrative's "chronicling of deviant sexuality" are precisely to destroy the concept of the central character. The corrosive, and erosive, force of sexuality *is* the point of the narrative's chronicling of deviance. Looking for another narrative, firmer ground, to base his reading on, Riemer decides that the novel cannot be *about* deviance; in the end, homosexuality must always be interpreted, accounted for, and finally dispersed.

Noel Macainsh produces a reading which unconsciously links interpretation, hermeneutic desire, sexuality and entropy. After pointing out the ways in which psychoanalytic categories may be usefully employed to interpret the text's preoccupation with sexuality, Macainsh argues:

> But it would be going to far to rank *The Twyborn Affair* as a significant source of knowledge on transvestism, homosexuality, narcissism, depersonalisation and the like. The motifs which imply this knowledge are used here as elements in an aesthetic field...planted in the text, repeated, varied in the interest of establishing an aesthetic unity which functions to manipulate the reader's perspective on the events depicted. (Macainsh, 152)

Again, "homosexuality" is a device, a metaphor or symbol, providing the text with its aesthetic unity. Indeed, the text's "unity" is itself valued over what the elements themselves, transvestism, homosexuality and so on, might mean outside this "aesthetic" context. Macainsh argues that closure can be accomplished through the reader's identification "of himself [sic] with the author's mastery over Eddie's life" (Macainsh,

153). For Macainsh, a reader's, no doubt inadvertent, identification with Eddie makes "the need for saving integration all the more imperative" (Macainsh, 153). Macainsh assumes, of course, not only a male reader, but a heterosexual male reader; his comments are remarkable for their othering of readers who might enjoy identifying with Eddie, who might even *desire* him. Macainsh himself is aware of the seductiveness of Eddie as an object of *both* desire and identification. Speculating broadly about the White corpus, he wonders:

> [Is] it not possible that the reception of White's art is based to some, if not large, degree, on a concealed hatred of, and sadistic pleasure in the destruction of deviant individuals, that in these works, readers, under the guise of art and social criticism, have indulged a primitive tendency to project aspects of themselves on to representative scapegoats and rank them, out of an instinct for collective security? (Macainsh, 154)

The heterosexist assumptions of Macainsh's own reading might suggest an affirmative answer.

In an essay whose pretext is just this kind of classifying and dispersal of homosexuality, Michael Hurley argues that many readings of *The Twyborn Affair* are deeply infused with heterosexual and homophobic critical assumptions. These readings, he argues, are the products of the dominant reading community which maintains its hegemony through the dissimulation of "moral criticism" behind the familiar "elements of literary analysis" (character, subject, theme) and in the name of maintaining "literary standards" (Hurley, 168).[1] Hurley points out that what is important here is not so much the recognition of homosexuality as a theme in its "own right" (whatever that is), but *how* it is recognised, how it is defined, and how a reader positions him- or herself in relation to it. Referring to Leonie Kramer's notorious

[1] We may note, in passing, that David Tacey's criticism of White's later novels also invokes the red-herring of artistic virtuosity over "ideology," by which he means homosexuality: "No need to worry about the slipshod sentences, the barely discernible structure, the shoddy design, because White is parading the gay banner and that is in itself a worthy thing to do" (Tacey, "The End of Genius," 61).

review of the novel in *Quadrant*, Hurley argues that Kramer's reading is constructed as a more or less conscious resistance to the "text's preferred reading position," which "requires that the characters circulating under the name E. be understood by readers who are prepared to shift across several combinations of gender and sexuality, none of which is fixed" (Hurley, 169). The reluctance to read *The Twyborn Affair* in terms of sexuality, gender and the vicissitudes of identification and desire, is an automatic displacement of the themes of the text in an "upward" direction in an attempt to assimilate the novel according to the virtually accepted critical parameters of the White canon.

Appropriating *The Twyborn Affair* for homosexuality through a "queer" reading, Hurley suggests, is not such a difficult enterprise, since it is the text's "preferred reading." "Resisting" readings are those which try to "normalise" deviant sexuality by making it a part of a larger, broader discourse of the existential "failure" of identity. Pinning this ostensible failure of identity to the socially constructed and proscriptive categories of gender and sex, Hurley argues rather that the narrative of *The Twyborn Affair*

> estranges particular notions of permanently stable sexual identities. Like E., the reader who identifies with the narrative flow is continuously relocated. This has the effect of formally giving the male and female, heterosexual and homosexual reader equal access to the text in terms of identification. Access to fantasy is heavily structured. The narrative distinguishes between desire organised in terms of sexual object choice and the changeability of identities which open from desire via shifting identifications, through the operation of fantasy. *The Twyborn Affair* refuses to confine the psychic negotiation of identity to socially prescribed categories. (Hurley, 169)

Although Hurley's emphasis on the relativity of homo- and heterosexual reading positions may lose any sense of how power infuses the different positionings of male/female, homo-heterosexual subjects, I share with Hurley the view that *The*

Twyborn Affair does de-naturalise the irreversible connection between sex, gender and sexuality. What I would like to question (and what I would like to argue that White's text questions) is the very idea that the text has a "preferred reading." Does the assignment of a "preferred reading" (and a "resisting one") not simply reinscribe, in another form, exactly the kind of mastery over the work, over E., that Hurley is objecting to?

The function of homosexuality in relation to "socially prescribed categories" in *The Twyborn Affair* is deconstructive: "There is no easy point of social identification, except that of fluidity itself" (Hurley, 169). Homosexuality, in Dollimore's words (after Butler), is deployed to make "theoretical trouble for gender, to disarticulate its dominant terms, including those from which homosexuality have been fashioned" (Dollimore, 32). There is, however, no positive *re*-articulation of identity, *beyond* the disarticulation of gender's dominant terms. No doubt it is this latter "failure" (a plus for Hurley, of course) which has led many readers to conclude, as Macainsh does, that *The Twyborn Affair* is not a significant "source of knowledge on" homosexuality. The discursive organisation of *The Twyborn Affair*, I will argue, is "performative" to the extent that its "disarticulation" of gender categories does not represent a movement beyond them. Rather, as Butler explains:

> Performativity describes this relation of being implicated in what one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a "pure" opposition, a "transcendence" of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure. (Butler, *Bodies*, 241)

Of course, in *The Twyborn Affair*, as Lever points out above, it is precisely this tension between "transcendence" and "purity," and the "impurity" and inconsistency of gendered subjectivity, that is played out through the body of E. What I would like to

analyse in this chapter is how the text's performativity, its discursive production of sexual identity, is structured by discourses of sexual and gender difference, and particularly the places where "homosexual" difference is inscribed in a relation of difference and sameness to discourses of hegemonic masculinity. As I read it, in White's novel the scene of writing, as it were, is the body of E. Marked as it is by the discursive apparatus of heterosexual representation, this body is nevertheless a figuration of a kind of "homosexual aesthetic." In this aesthetic, homosexual identity is always (re)constructing itself around some conception of difference and sameness, but one which is entirely performative; in *this* homosexual aesthetic, gay identity is not reducible to a single, autonomous and unequivocal presence of being. That is to say, as a text, E.'s "body" resists being read as any one thing; it has no "preferred reading."

White constructs homosexual identity, for the most part, exclusively within a binary framework of sexual difference. Underlying this construction of difference, as Sedgwick argues,

> is the preservation of an essential *heterosexuality* within desire itself;...desire, in this view, by definition subsists in the current that runs between one male self and one female self, in whatever sex of bodies that these selves may be manifested. (Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 87)

To begin with, Eudoxia's relationship with Angelos is represented within this economy of heterosexual difference. Angelos idealises Eudoxia as a vision of feminine beauty, while Eudoxia appears to herself in his gaze as "consecutive, complete" (*TA*, 27). In this sense, their relationship reproduces the patriarchal/masculine standards of (self)representation, with Eudoxia, in the feminine and passive position, taking her desire and identity from Angelos. However, Eudoxia also "would like to appear less tentative, less receptive of the ruler and the rules" (*TA*, 39). Despite Angelos' somewhat imperious control over Eudoxia, her "self" is nevertheless not reducible to

the identity he is constructing for her. As she remarks, "For all his languages he could never understand the one I speak" (*TA*, 77).

The relationship between language, desire and sexual identity expressed here can be read in Lacanian terms. For Lacan, a subject's entry into language is also a territorialisation of its body, an assignment of its sexuality and gender, a process which is presided over by the phallus. As Jacqueline Rose argues, "the phallus relegates sexuality to a strictly other dimension – the order of the symbolic [that is, language] outside of which, for Lacan, sexuality cannot be understood" (Mitchell and Rose, 40). Sexuality, known only through its articulation in language, is from the beginning *gendered* masculine or feminine, with the latter, of course, itself defined negatively against the former. It is on the side of the "feminine" that Eudoxia and Angelos' relationship, as a Symbolic entity (in the Lacanian sense), is similarly located. The rocks and ferns, writes E., "more than inadequate words, are our comfort, the embodiment and expression of our love" (*TA*, 30). The feminine, defined negatively against language and masculinity, is nevertheless represented positively in relation to the "natural" world. As E. notes, "...the scents your skirt drags from the borders of a garden: the drag-net skirt is one of the advantages a man can never enjoy" (*TA*, 31).

The garden represents the space of feminine pleasure and desire, and it is here that Joanie comes across Eudoxia and the elderly Greek. Eudoxia's dress, "the carnation tones" of which were "dragging through, catching on, fusing with those same carnations which she reflected," is what Joanie remembers, while Angelos, in contrast, is a "stroke of black and yellow, ivory rather" (*TA*, 14). In this *mis en scene* of feminine desire, Angelos is "(anyway for Joanie Golson)" "dispensible" (*TA*, 14). But the "masculine," far from wished away, *is* the structuring principle of Joanie's fantasy. Masculinity is not simply what intrudes into her fantasy space, it is what structures it

from the beginning. Joanie's letter to Eadie, as an attempt to signify her desire, is cursed for this reason:

> She knew she would not bring herself to write, however accusatory that stylish comma on which her will power had fizzled out. What could she have said? Subtle she might aspire to be, but her intuitions had often let her down. (*TA*, 43)

The subject of Joanie's letter is the ethereal Eudoxia, but the fantasy underlying her vision of this woman is itself somewhat inexplicable. Joanie's comma, a sign which seems both to implore and prohibit the textualisation of her desire, stands in some relation to the signifier structuring sexual identity in the heterosexual economy of representation, that is, the phallus. In this economy, the phallus (which also structures the representation of desire in fantasy) is to be found on the side of the masculine. Thus, in her fantasies, Joanie's "Eudoxia" cannot fully represent her desire; fantasy itself is unable to stage the reciprocity of what is not admitted by the (masculine) Symbolic to exist, lesbian desire:

> Language was what she could not sort out: perhaps it was the language of silence as the young woman turned her noble head towards her, the invited guest holding in her whiter, plumper fingers a strong terracotta hand, but from which, in spite of its warmth, she experienced no response, little enough illumination from the white smile in a terracotta face. (*TA*, 22)

The only form in which this desire *can* be represented is constructed around a fetish of masculinity, Eadie's corked on moustache. Lesbian desire finds its most salient representation in the parodying – and parading – of the phallus, in the performance of a masquerade in which the women's desire is only ever a faint, and unconvincing, mimicry of the "real" thing. At the end of the first part, frustrated with the "poetry of rebellion," of being "never...able to conclude, never live out the promises" (*TA*, 59), Joanie settles for the "strength" of her husband, the safety of a domestic milieu. But like Joanie's torn-up letter, perverse desire becomes

parenthetical (represented in the text typographically), a kind of subterfuge, but always ready to return, as Joanie fears her letter might "return to shame her before...the end of the week" (*TA*, 130).

As Joanie's letter might suggest, it is also this economy of representation that, as Rose points out, sexuality is able to deconstruct. Rose, explaining Lacan again, argues that even in Lacan's seemingly deterministic Symbolic order (the order of language and representation) sexuality is "that which constantly fails":

> Lacan's statements on language need to be taken in two directions – towards the fixing of meaning itself (that which is enjoined on the subject), and away from that very fixing to the point of its constant slippage, the risk or vanishing-point which it always contains (the unconscious). Sexuality is placed on both these dimensions at once. The difficulty is to hold these two emphases together – sexuality in the Symbolic (an ordering), sexuality as that which constantly fails. (Mitchell and Rose, 44)

Adding a qualifier here, we can say that it is not just feminine sexuality that always "fails" – as it is for Lacan or Rose. In White's novel, masculinity, the pivotal point of representation, is also a "masquerade." All gendered spaces in *The Twyborn Affair* are constituted performatively. As E. notes meaningfully: "My rented garden. Nothing is mine except the coaxing I've put into it" (*TA*, 79).

For E., the body is a "stereoscopic object" (*TA*, 79), signifiable as masculine and feminine. Both significations, as Butler suggests, are entirely fantasmatic: "always already a cultural sign, the body sets limits to the imaginary meanings that it occasions, but is never free of an imaginary construction" (Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 71). In this sense, E.'s experience of his/her body as a "stereoscopic object" is the result of competing cultural fantasies about the "real" and the "literal" body, the gendered and sexed body. E. realises that his/her identity is constructed not merely through the gaze of the other, but that this gaze is itself a fantasmatic projection: "For that matter, nothing of me is mine, not even the body I was given to inhabit, nor the disguises

chosen for it...The real E. has not yet been discovered, and perhaps never will be" (*TA*, 79).

When E. claims that he/she is a "stereoscopic object" we see how his/her body functions as a conduit of desire for other characters, and, of course, the reader. We also see how it might deconstruct the polarisation of masculine and feminine subjects as they are subjected to, and subjectified, by the male gaze. E. does not misrecognise his/her identity for the "real thing," but rather interprets the assumption of gender identities as "masks." Identity, insofar as it is produced by the suturing of signifiers to bodies, needs to be repeatedly re-asserted against the contingency of desire. We should also recognise, though, that the masks or disguises of E. are not in themselves arbitrarily conceived fictional constructs. Rebelling against the Symbolic injunction to "name" his/her body as either masculine or feminine, E. assumes one gendered identity after another, but these identities are nevertheless *proscribed* within a logic of sexual difference which precedes and engulfs him/her.

Tramping the decks of the ship in an attempt to exorcise himself "not only of a past war, but the past," Eddie knows that all is "repetition" (*TA*, 133). For Eddie, "the expatriate masochist and crypto-queen" (*TA*, 143), repetition, or mimicry, is what governs the assumption of identity, because, as the bifurcated, "stereoscopic object," Eddie's gendered identity is constantly undermined by a "rebellious body" (*TA*, 150) and a "largely irrational nature" (*TA*, 160). For E., identity is ephemeral. Seeing his reflection in the mirror, and surprised to "find himself look[ing] as convincing as he did," he is nevertheless "faced, as always, with an impersonation of reality" (*TA*, 171-172). Eddie refers to his sojourn to "Bogong" as a search for the "reality of permanence" (*TA*, 179), "escaping from himself into a landscape" (*TA*, 161), all of which amounts to a desire to "escape" from identity itself. As he almost replies to his

father's inquiry: "You could hardly answer, Nothing; surely being is enough? looking, smelling, listening, touching" (*TA*, 160).

But Eddie's view of his subjectivity is disingenuous, to say the least. At "Bogong," seized of the fundamental necessity to take on an identity, Eddie becomes a "man," achieved through mimicry and repetition. His "masculinity" is produced by a re-territorialisation of his body; his performance of masculinity linked to his ability "to live in accordance with appearances" (*TA*, 201). His arms become, "if not muscular" then "lithe and sinewy" (*TA*, 201). The other men regard the exhibition of his half-naked body, "if not respectfully," then "without too much disapproval" (*TA*, 201). As time wears on, Eddie is able "to convince himself of an existence which most others seemed to take for granted" (*TA*, 212). Eddie's "performance" of his masculinity, in other words, eventually takes on the substance of "truth." But it is with hegemonic ideas of masculinity that Eddie identifies, with a fantasy structure that forcefully displaces the ambivalence of male desire onto the feminine, abject body.

Of course, Eddie's interpellation into this "masculine" fantasy is not complete; he cannot "believe wholly in his own positive attributes – if what is masculine is also necessarily positive" (*TA*, 212). While his identification with the desire of hegemonic masculinity provides him with the opportunity to resolve the dilemma of his sexuality, Eddie's desire for the object of masculine desire (the "raw scallop," Marcia) is also a desire for, an eroticisation of, hegemonic masculinity itself:

> *Don.* Only rarely had he addressed Prowse by his first name, and it entered his thoughts just as rarely. It had the same brashness, brassiness of tone, as the man himself, not without appeal. *Marcia* on the other hand conveyed the opulent ripple of soft, creamy flesh, the penetrating scent of an exotic flower. (*TA*, 212)

Eddie's eroticisation of Don's "manliness," like his more conventional heterosexual eroticisation of Marcia's femininity, is defined by hegemonic discourses of sexual

difference. To this extent, Eddie's affair with Marcia is "an attempt to establish his own masculine identity" (*TA*, 223), where "masculine identity" is commensurable with heterosexuality. Marcia's own appeal to Eddie, however, is not to this "masculine self," but to his "fineness": "'Men can be so brutal. And you are not. That's why I'm attracted to you'" (*TA*, 222). Marcia's interpretation of Eddie's masculinity is able to break the limits imposed by hegemonic discourse, but in Eddie's gaze Marcia's body still assumes the shape of "the classic monument to woman's betrayal by callous man" (*TA*, 222), suggesting that Eddie himself does not perceive heterosexual maleness as anything other than a variation of hegemonic masculinity.

What Eddie desires is a relationship with Marcia that might break the defining limits of sexual difference altogether. This desire, however, is itself couched within a discourse of *hetero*sexual difference. Seduced into bed by Marcia, Eddie is "won over by a voice wooing him back into childhood, the pervasive warmth of a no longer sexual, but protective body" (*TA*, 222). What is important here is how this desire for a "no longer sexual...body" is conceptualised through a discourse of difference. As he admits, "he was only enjoying the perks of love and the re-discovered womb" (*TA*, 240). Marcia may offer Eddie a way out the dilemma of sexuality and gender, but it is an escape structured by masculine/male fantasies of the maternal body.

The defining limits of Eddie's masculine and feminine identifications are produced, in other words, by the phallic logic of the binary signifier, even if, as it is very clear, none of the identifications it makes available are wholly binding for Eddie. Eddie's identity is provisional, ephemeral, but the range of identifications open to him is nevertheless limited. Moreover, Eddie's identifications with masculinity and femininity are equally fraught, yet it is possible for him, as a man, to enjoy the "perks of love," as he calls them, in a way that he cannot enjoy them as a "woman" (and vice

versa), suggesting that there is something more to gender assumption than merely "dressing up" in men's or women's clothing. Seduced by Marcia's "empty garments," Eddie enters the "labyrinth of gold thread and sable," storming the dressing table, "roughing up his hair, dabbling with the beige puff in armpits...then working on the mouth till it glistened like the pale, coral trap of some great tremulous sea anemone" (*TA*, 282). Hearing the footsteps of "a male assurance which had been his own until recently...Eudoxia Vatatzes [lies] palpitating, if contradictorily erect, awaiting the ravishment of male thighs" (*TA*, 282). For Eddie, to be a "woman," to make a feminine identification, means displacing "male assurance"; to be a "woman," for Eddie, is to be passive, receptive. What Eddie repeats in his dressing-up as a woman, of course, is the siting of the homosexual man in the position *of* woman in patriarchal culture. Additionally, in his male heterosexual role, he is repulsed by Marcia's "coarse femininity," while assuming a coarsely masculine position toward her: "He deliberately thought of it as *fucking*" (*TA*, 281), and utters the word to himself as he heads toward the homestead in search of Marcia.

Rather than ravished by Greg Lushington, Eddie is raped by Prowse. If the alternatives in the phallic economy of masculinity are to be the phallus (femininity) or to have the phallus (masculinity) then there is little room to negotiate different subjectivities, and different ways of constructing pleasure and desire. Prowse's rape of Eddie and Eddie's rape of Prowse are premised on the "othering," phallic logic of the hegemonic masculine. As Prowse sobs, "tearing at all that had ever offended him in life," sex becomes the expression "of all that he had never confessed" (*TA*, 284). Similarly, Eddie's penetration of Prowse is a missed opportunity to "resuscitate two human beings from drowning," his "tenderness...less lust than a desire for male revenge" (*TA*, 296). Within the phallic economy, both Eddie and Prowse identify with

positions of power and mastery over the feminised other, and precisely because, as we saw in the previous chapter, the "masculine" in hegemonic discourse is always defined as a singular site of identification. Prowse's declaration that he was able to tell that Eddie was a "fuckun queen" the "day you jumped in – into the river – and started flashing yer tail at us" (*TA*, 284) is a singular instance of this "marking out" of the terrain of the masculine, of closing off the proximity of the "same" and rendering it as "other"; a marking which seems to require Eddie himself to see his "masculine" identity as a "disguise which didn't disguise," and for Prowse to displace his lust onto the supine body of his victim: "You asked for it – you fuckun asked..." (*TA*, 285).

In this marking out of "sexual" difference, Prowse also asserts the authority of the "male gaze" to "name" what it sees. If Eddie performs his "masculinity," then it is a performance for the other, the gaze of Prowse. In this performance, Eddie also confirms the "truth" of the other man's masculinity. But if the performance of "masculinity" relies on the other to "name it," then its own denotative power, the same power that calls into being the very prohibitions which hold it in place, will be called into question when the other, as Dollimore argues, is found to be the same: that is, when the other moves into the position of a "proximate" (Dollimore, 33). The "male gaze" is thus always "reversible," always itself liable to be looked at *differently*. As Lee Edelman argues:

> If the fantasy of masculinity (and I would want that genitive to be read with the full force of its double meaning) is the fantasy of a non-self-conscious selfhood endowed with absolute control of a gaze whose directionality is irreversible, the enacted – or "self-conscious" "manhood,"...is itself a performance *for the gaze of the Other* [and] it is destined therefore to be always the paradoxical *display* of a masculinity that defines itself through its capacity to put *others* on display while resisting the bodily captation involved in being put on display itself. (Edelman, 50-51)

Eddie's "enacted manhood" puts others on display, while Prowse himself in this gaze accedes to the position of the "looked at."

After the initial rape, Eddie and Prowse go back to using "only the words required," and give thanks to the furniture of everyday life (*TA*, 285). Once again "language," convention, history, fail the men. On the way to the station, Eddie lights on the utilitarian affair of Prowse's wrist-watch, and speculates whether this could be a symbol of his desire: "Had he been a child instead of this pseudo-man-cum-crypto-woman, he might have put out a finger and touched it, to the consolation of them both" (*TA*, 298). As a consolation, Eddie picks out the memory of a moment in "which he had embraced not so much a lustful male, as a human being exposed in its frailty and tenderness" (*TA*, 298). Such a moment is, nevertheless, salient only when "masculinity" itself is effaced. As "queered lovers," Eddie and Prowse are moored to the inexpugnable memories of events which, like the notes of the small birds the men hear as they drive across the flats, "evad[e] expression in human terms" (*TA*, 299).

In the phallic economy, differences across and between male bodies are made readable only in terms of the differences between male and female bodies, and male and female desire. As a "pseudo-man-cum-crypto-woman," Eddie/Eudoxia embodies the contradictions of hegemonic masculinity. In this discourse male same-sex desire is the unnameable; its only rigorous assertion is in the form of a mutually exploitive hierarchy of self and other. Eddie's memories of his father's nocturnal visits can be read in this context as constituting the primal fantasies of an also inarticulable desire, the symbol of which is his father's drooping moustache, which hangs in his memory like a big friendly spider. Such memories allegorise a pre-Oedipal relationship with the father, one existing outside the binary relations of the phallus. This is a relationship which,

however, as Eadith Trist notes of her relationship with Gravenor it would be "overstepping the limits set by fantasy" to realise (*TA*, 322).

Eddie's identifications oscillate between the polar oppositions of male and female, but it is from the privileged site of in-difference, of what many readers have called an "androgynous" subject-position, that Eddie is able to make pronouncements about masculinity and femininity: "Any frail male could only cower and try to assemble an acceptable identity, any female, because tougher, more fibrous, consolidate her position inside the cloak of darkness" (*TA*, 295). Both men and women, according to E., form their identities through a process of dissimulation; masculinity and femininity are masquerades, "difference" is itself a dissimulation of "sameness." As E. remarks aphoristically, "the difference between the sexes is no worse than their appalling similarity" (*TA*, 63). But the "androgynous" reading position is also a dissimulation. The vantage point of sexual ambivalence (which White, in the passage from *Flaws* argues, is attributable to his homosexuality), as Grosz noted in the first chapter, is by no means a position of sexual *in*difference.

The final section of the novel has often been criticised for its "staginess," but what White "stages" here is the very process of dissimulation through which gender identity is constructed. The sign of fantasy hangs over the entire novel, but in the last section the structuring role of fantasy in the production of fiction, as well as in subjectivity, becomes the manifest theme. As Bliss observes of the transition between parts two and three of the text:

> When we next meet the protagonist, now whoremistress Eadith Trist, the real world has been replaced by that of the 'novellete she enjoyed living.' In other words, Eadith has accepted herself as a fiction, which like her make-up and dress, is poetic rather than naturalistic. (Bliss, 175)

The brothel and the women working in it are for Eadith the "props" of a narcissistic fantasy, where (hetero)sexual difference is unequivocally marked. For Eadith, her identification with femininity is, of course, an identification with a hegemonic construction of femininity. In fact, Eadith's great success comes from knowing exactly what men want: "The flowers for her hothouse Mrs Trist took time to acquire, intending them to be as exquisite, as diverse, as unexpected as satiated man might desire" (*TA*, 323). As the "inspired bawd," Eadith combines the qualities of an artist and an abbess, Mother Superior and Sergeant Major, reflecting the extremes, and the limits, of her identification with Oedipalised male desire, in which femininity is simultaneously debased and overvalued.

This identification is not wholly binding either, of course. Eadith's "peep-holes," which represent her own psychological (that is, narcissistic) detachment from the people around her, also stage the cross-translation of identification and desire in the production of subjectivity. Her peep-holes function like screens, through which she is able to find representations for her own somewhat eccentric desire:

> She could not have explained how a common peep-hole becomes an omniscient eye, how it illuminated for her the secret hopes and frustrations struggling to escape through the brutality, the thrust and recoil, the acts of self-immolation, the vicious spinsterly refinements which shape the depravity of men – her own included. (*TA*, 329)

Eadith's "place" in this *mis en scene* of desire is not wholly certain, as she identifies both with the women whose desire is struggling for recognition, and with the "depravity of men." The thematic development of this part of the novel, similarly, is toward some other, less definitive, conception of sexual identity, "conception" being the operative word. In part two the unproductive womb of Marcia Lushington presides over the failure of Eddie Twyborn's masculine self (represented, of course, by the three little graves of Marcia's dead sons). In the final section, Eadith dreams of a

"radiant child," with a "little blonde comma neatly placed between the thighs" (*TA*, 353). The latent content of these dreams becomes clear for Eadith: "Eddie Twyborn was pestering his sibling" (*TA*, 375). Eadith's dreams at "Wardrobes" feature homosexual fantasies in which the figure of the other man is the blended images of Gravenor and Edward Twyborn. In this fantasy, E.'s gendered identity is swallowed by the vagaries of sexuality. In his dream, his own body is penetrated, despite (or because of?) the protective body of Gravenor. Spilling from his wound, however, is not blood, but sperm: "He looked down at his fingers and saw that the blood wasn't red but white" (*TA*, 377). The "Wardrobes" visit culminates in an "invisible bird, throbbing and spilling like blood or sperm" bringing "Eddie Twyborn to the surface" (*TA*, 391).

Joan Kirkby argues that it is *as* Eddie, as a "man," that E. rushes to meet his mother, signifying his assumption of the abjectivity previously displaced onto the bodies of women: "No longer is the male experiencing abjection vicariously as a female, he is the male experiencing abjection as a male" (Kirkby, 159). While Kirkby rightly points out that Eddie's last identification with "maleness" is made from within sexual difference, her analysis stays within the binaries invoked by hegemonic masculinity – which make masculinity/male/man singular sites of identification for male subjects. The image "Eddie" presents to the reader is ambiguous, as he realises, belatedly, that he is wearing Eadith's make-up: "The great magenta mouth was still flowering in a chalk face shaded with violet, the eyes overflowing mascara banks, those of a distressed woman, professional whore, or hopeful amateur lover" (*TA*, 428). The "excess" of signifieds here is precisely what makes Eddie's final "performance" so suggestive of "drag," perhaps for the first time in the novel. More than this, though, it is an indication of Eddie's inability to control the signification of his body, to assert a

masculine or feminine signification absolutely. In Butler's words, E. has yielded "the right to the ownership" of "his" body (Butler, *Bodies*, 241). We might read this ambivalence as mocking the desire to mark sexual difference unequivocally; as Eddie's parading of gender signs suggests, the scopic field defining his identity is finally overdetermined.

We also, though, might read this "mocking" of difference as signifying the *refusal* of the sexed "body" to yield itself unequivocally to the assigning gaze of the other. The gay body, as Edelman points out, is constructed in hegemonic discourses of masculinity as a place upon which masculine identity can be, sometimes literally and brutally, inscribed. The gay body is othered precisely because of what it is *not* able to signify in conventional discourses of sexual difference, that is, its difference from the heterosexual male body:

> Once sexuality becomes so closely bound up with a strict ideology of gender binarism, and once male sexuality in particular becomes susceptible to (mis)reading in relation to radically and discontinuous heterosexual and homosexual identities, it becomes both possible and necessary to posit the marker of 'homosexual difference' in terms of visual representation – in precisely those terms that psychoanalysis defines as central to the process whereby anatomical distinctions register and so become meaningful in the symbolic order of sexuality. (Edelman, 11)

The making "real," the putting it into writing of the homosexual body, also puts it into the realm of *différance*; difference must be secured, textualised, by the signifier, but it is the very irreducibility of desire as it runs through the signifier that prevents this difference from itself becoming the "real." In the final third of *The Twyborn Affair*, E.'s "closeting" of his sexed identity requires him also to suppress his sexuality, and particularly his desire for Gravenor. He does, however, discover a fellow traveller, Gravenor's nephew Philip. Philip and the ageing homosexual E. are bound together by the "secret" they share, but also, of course, by their abjectivity:

> The tremulous mirror he was offering her must have reflected the sympathy she felt for this boy. More than that: they were shown standing together at the end of a long corridor or hall of mirrors, which memory becomes, and in which they were portrayed stereoscopically, refracted, duplicated, melted into the one image, and by moments shamefully distorted into lepers or Velasquez dwarfs.
>
> The tatters of diseased skin and hydrocephalic deformities were in the end what brought them closest. (*TA*, 400)

It is tempting to read the "long corridor or hall of mirrors" as representing the history of the discursive construction of homosexuality, the men portrayed "stereoscopically, refracted, duplicated, melted into one the image," their identity constantly manipulated by the gaze of *scientia sexualis*. Here, though, what the "tremulous mirror" represents is what the other men, Gravenor particularly, occlude in their pursuit of vigorous heterosexuality at the brothel. The mirror is "tremulous" precisely because what it represents for the homosexual men is the ambivalence of being "marked" as "different" within the heterosexual gaze.

But even as the homosexual body is made legible, readable, as "homosexual" through the inscription of the signs of difference, the meanings of the "signs" themselves remain highly overdetermined. Gravenor is afterwards irritated "at the sight of his nephew's skin coarsening under the girlish down" (*TA*, 401). The sentence which immediately follows this, "So he imagined, or so it was," casts Gravenor's observations into the realm of the speculative, of fantasy. The signs of "lust," "sin" and "transgression" are produced by Gravenor's own desire working itself out through Philip's body. The spectacle of ambivalence that Philip presents to Gravenor also represents the ambivalence at the heart of hegemonic masculinity itself, in which the "natural and self-evident" legibility of hegemonic masculinity is made indistinguishable from the "derivative" masculinity of the homosexual man, and which also evades the reification and "naturalisation" of homosexual identity.

The heterosexual male reader's role in *The Twyborn Affair* may be compared to Gravenor's role in the drama of misrecognition carried on above. It becomes a matter of sorting out the "signs," removing ambiguity, and most importantly, as it becomes for Gravenor, of resolving the mystery of "Mrs Trist's" sexual identity. Gravenor is sympathetically treated in this text, but the irony here is clearly at his expense. For the Gravenor, the "straight, male reader," homosexuality is both clearly "in view" but at the same time not totally accessible to his gaze. By refusing to allow the reification of homosexual identity, *The Twyborn Affair* negates the stability, and hence, the power of the heterosexual male gaze to "fix" the identity of the other.

In *The Twyborn Affair*, White constructs sexuality through hegemonic notions of masculinity (and femininity), and from this point of view Eddie's own masculinity (in its hegemonic manifestation) can not be anything other than restrictive. Joanie and Eadie's gender identities necessarily constrain them likewise. But the binary machine that proscribes and directs the construction of gender and sexual identity, is itself open to rearticulation. Gender, defined by this binary machine, constructs sex and sexuality as a choice between two equally inhibiting models of subjectivity: masculinity and femininity can only ever be "singular" subject positions, and can never be simultaneously sites of desire and identification. The text also, however, suggests that the relationship between hegemonic gender constructions and the models of subjectivity which hegemony makes abject is flexible and self-reflexive. In Eddie's final parading of gender signs on his own male body a different version of masculinity also emerges, one constructed *ad hoc* from the signs of cross gender-identification. In his relationship with Prowse, importantly, the men also enter a zone of abjectivity, marked out by hegemonic discourse but not reducible to it, that the men can, at least, begin to explore. If for Joanie Golson and Eudoxia, Prowse and Eddie, "words" can

only contain the most perfunctory of "visions," then it is not because language *always* fails in its articulation of identity and relationships – as in Lacanian existentialism – but because such a language has not yet been made available. Such a new "language" can only evolve out of an "old" one, out of existing discourses of difference, and this means that subjects must confront the binary machine of gender assumption, *and* make spurious any position of sexual *in*difference.

E.'s masculine/feminine male body also problematises, and extends, the Symbolic articulation of "identity" by deconstructing the binaries of "depth" and "surface" structuring the intelligibility of identity. If this "intelligibility" is organised through language, then for E. language must fail desire; desire always exceeds a subject's gender identifications. But what E.'s masculine/feminine body articulates at the end of the text is exactly the malleability of the Symbolic through his performance of gender incoherence. If E.'s "real self" can find no expression in language, the Symbolic, then it is not because the Symbolic is rigidly fixed by *a* primary sexual difference. Rather than performing an essential "sex" or "gender" identity, E.'s identifications show how gender is produced on the "surface," in the performance and articulation *of* identity. Eddie's assumption of masculinity is not "some dormant instinct he could summon up in self-defence," but a "disguise" pulled on in order to get him by in a "man's world" (*TA*, 193). This emphasis on the performativity of identity, and I would argue, on the performativity of language, allows for the transformation and reinterpretation of prevailing structures of gender identity, those structures which devalue the "feminine" in men and women and define heterosexuality as the norm. As Butler points out, "language is not an *exterior medium or instrument* into which I pour a self and from which I glean a reflection of that self" (Butler, *Gender*, 143-4). If E.'s previous identifications kept to gender binaries, and thus, even with his violation of

Prowse, affirmed the gaze of hegemonic masculinity to determine homosexual identity, then E.'s final parading of gender incoherence displays how the readibility of identity depends very much on the binaries of gender identity remaining in place. Identity, for E., is not only something that is taken up, it is itself transformed in this assumption, and along with it, the terms in which this identity can be read.

I would like to end this chapter with a consideration of the relationship between sexual difference and power. Riemer is correct when he argues that "a dualist frame of mind cannot but find the world absurd and bathetic, discontinuous and deceptive" (Riemer, 26), but he is nevertheless adamant that dualism is inescapable: "[White] has fashioned a self-sufficient, complete world in which recondite 'meanings' are absorbed into a complex but harmonious web of counterpoint" (Riemer, 28). So it is that Riemer finds the novelist affirming the Bogomils' conviction that "the soul cannot sanctify the flesh, nor can the flesh be a source (no matter how slight) of satisfaction or fulfilment for the soul – the soul is trapped within the prison of the worthless body, yearning to escape" (Riemer, 19). The sexual life of E. can also be seen to move in the direction of the "lust-free embrace"; for E. "redemption" may be found in the "conquering" of passion:

> [Eadith] would have liked to believe that, even if it did not purify, lust might burn itself out, and at the same time cauterise that infected part of the self which, from her own experience, persists like the core of a permanent boil. (*TA*, 329)

But what E. is objecting to here is not just sex, but power. In his essay "Is the Rectum a Grave?" Leo Bersani argues that sex is predominantly constructed in culture upon the denigration of the position of "powerlessness":

> Phallocentricism is exactly that: not primarily the denial of power to women (although it has obviously also led to that, everywhere and at all times), but above all the denial of the *value* of powerlessness in both men and women. (Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" 217)

Bersani goes on to argue not for the value of gentleness and passivity, since both are dependent on the same polarity elevating powerfulness, but rather "for a more radical disintegration and humiliation of the self" (Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" 217). For Bersani, the point of reception of the penis is always feminised, no matter whether it is situated on the male or female body. For E., of course, receiving is always submission. What E. considers to be true of every "attempt at love is" is also the truth about the relationship between sex, power and gender: "To enter, or to be entered: that surely was the question in most lives" (*TA*, 374). Not only, as Silverman glosses, does this polarity equate the anus/vagina with passivity/powerlessness, but the penis with power (Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 350).

The penis, of course, cannot *a priori* be equated with power. In E.'s case, power and powerlessness do not mysteriously flow from the possession, or lack, of anatomical appendages. The crucial question for E. and Bersani is how bodies, in whatever form they take, come to be territorialised by gender, and simultaneously, by a conception of power/lessness. Bersani's argument stems precisely from a concern with the marking out of masculinity. But implicitly, the attempt to discover a masculine (that is empowered) subject position for the receiving or entered man may also rest on the denigration of a feminine identification. We are once again on dangerous ground, as masculinity seems to be defined here *against* femininity (where femininity is associated with passivity). As Bersani suggests, and as E. seems to realise, a re-examination of the intersection of the categories of sex, gender and sexuality is not entirely possible if a new conception of power – particularly as it relates to the empowering of the different positions open to subjects along the vectors of sexual difference – is not also made available. A deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity by gay men may well follow from the positioning of homosexuality *within*

masculinity – one of the advantages of which is that gender has the potential to become a problem. However, gender can only ever become a problem for men when it is no longer a problem for women; that is, when the category of "masculinity" is no longer predicated on, and given meaning in relation to, a denigrated "femininity."

Conclusion

> Sometime when my own body began to change and I discovered the first signs of manhood upon me, the child left and did not reappear, though I dreamt of him often enough in those years, and have done since.
>
> David Malouf, *An Imaginary Life*, 10

In his Afterword to *An Imaginary Life*, David Malouf explains that in his novel he wanted Ovid to "live out in reality" what had been previously the "occasion for dazzling literary display" (*IL*, 154). Malouf writes that his point in this text is to embroider Ovid's belief by making him "live out" his own work. This desire to make Life Art is thematised in Ovid's exploratory excursions into the natural world, his crossing the borders of culture, nature, language and "being," to claim the authority to represent the real, and to reach a point of perfect stasis. Thus we may see in Ovid's attempts to "bring" The Child into "language" a desire to find a signifier for the sublime, the unrepresentable. But what is the unrepresentable? Toward the end of the text, as Ovid endeavours to frame a discourse of intelligibility for The Child, he wonders if at the time when an ordinary child might be "about to burst into manhood and into his perfect limits as a man," The Child is not "straining toward" his own "nature as a god[?]" (*IL*, 150).

This fantasy is compelling for Ovid, and he soon imagines that he himself has achieved some degree of fluidity in time: "I am three years old. I am sixty. I am six" (*IL*, 152). Through his identification with what The Child represents – fluidity, transience – Ovid imagines himself crossing the "limits" of language and subjectivity. Nevertheless, he is not himself free from the limits of binary thinking. His relationship with The Child at the end of the text – when Ovid is as dependent on The Child for his food and care *as* a child – takes him to "the place I dreamed of so often back there in

Tomis, but could never find in all my wanderings in sleep – the point on the earth's surface where I disappear" (*IL*, 150). The place where Ovid disappears, where his "wanderings" cease, is a place outside desire. Ironically, Ovid's identification of The Child with "freedom" comes from "fixing" him into a metaphor *of* desire: "He is walking on the water's light. And as I watch, he takes the first step off it, moving slowly away now, into the deepest distance, above the earth, above the water, on air" (*IL*, 152).

Ovid's final declaration, "I am there," arrives with his displacement of desire, and, I would like to argue, a displacement of gender. If "masculinity" emerges in the imposition of "limits," then, I want to conclude, the transformation of "masculinity" must be thought of in some relation to these limits. The aim of this thesis has been to lay bare some of these limits, and to articulate through them an idea of how discourses of masculinity can be constructed differently.

A comparison can be made between *An Imaginary Life* and *The Twyborn Affair* on the basis of their uses of fantasy, and their representation of the relationship between fantasy and "social reality." In both texts, fantasy is articulated in relation to the proscription of "identity" through discourses of gender. In *An Imaginary Life*, Ovid's "disappearing" is articulated as a fantasy of crossing between "manhood" and "childhood." To be *the* "child" is to live your life from one moment to the next, to be "bodiless," sexless. For Ovid, the sexlessness of childhood means not having to take up a subject position in language. Language, as Ovid discovers, is not necessary in his relationship with The Child. E. Twyborn's fantasies in *The Twyborn Affair* are also those of merging and crossing, the staging of a return to a primal "wholeness" through the re-possession of some lost piece of the self: "Eadie said I must not fail Eadith now

that I have found her Eadith Eddie no matter which this fragment of my self which I lost is now returned where it belongs" (*TA*, 432).

However, where *The Twyborn Affair* heavily overdetermines the relationship between fantasy and reality, *An Imaginary Life* lets them remain discrete, allows them to sit side by side as alternative solutions to the same problems of subjectivity. Although neither text proposes the existence of the subject outside language – thus placing the construction of subjectivity within the Symbolic – my criticism of *An Imaginary Life* is that it nevertheless offers as a solution to this problematic the sidestepping of the Symbolic altogether, even though, as Ovid's authorising gaze shows, the "gaze" of the subject is always anchored at some point within a Symbolic or discursive space. *The Twyborn Affair*, on the other hand, both articulates a fantasy of the gaze, but does not unhook this gaze from desire. Rather than presenting subjectivity as fully articulable, knowable and self-identical, *The Twyborn Affair* is concerned with the social, cultural and political practices which make "identity" *present*, (in)articulable and (un)livable.

Ovid's "I am there" is paradoxical precisely because the "closure" that it suggests is a kind of resignation to flux, change, rather than self-identity; a temporal rather than spatial siting of identity. This recognition does not cast in doubt the position from which such articulations can be made, and, indeed, forecloses the kind of critique of identity which I read White's text to be making, so deeply mired, as it is, in the politics of sexual difference. Declaring that there is no ultimate subject position is no more efficacious than declaring that there *is*, if it is not accompanied by a volley of qualifications detailing from what location in discourse such a declaration is made.

From this point of view, Ovid's "I am there" is not so much a crossing of the binary relations of the Symbolic, but a repudiation of them. His return to his siteless, sexless body tacitly disavows the power of his imperialising gaze, while still exercising this gaze, and, indeed, as Malouf's Afterword states, works within the cultural imaginary of the metropole despite Ovid's exile from it. The Child is not so much an other, but *the* other, the unconscious, of metropolitan culture itself. Thus, the othering of The Child reconfirms the culture/nature binary of metropolitan discourse.

Moreover, in the marking out of the "perfect limits" of manhood, from which The Child is excluded, this discourse also reconfirms one of the most malicious and formidable distinctions made by hegemonic masculinity: that between masculinity and abjectivity, the men and the boys. If Ovid crosses the divide, it is only to assume a different position within the binary. Opposition to hegemonic masculinity is expressed here as a kind of romantic withdrawal, a strategy which does not, as Butler argues in *Bodies That Matter*, do anything to disrupt the authority of hegemonic discourse, or alter the way identities are themselves signified in the Symbolic (Butler, *Bodies*, 111). The reconstruction of male identity, consequently, must involve an engagement with the Symbolic's rendering of the sites of identity and desire for male subjects. Men such as Ovid must systematically work through the Symbolic's articulation of "identity," which means they must also "site" themselves within this articulation. This, of course, is not an easy thing to do since, as Butler points out, "the subject cannot reflect on the entire process of its formation" (Butler, *Bodies*, 113). For men, saying "I am there" is a performative act. The performativity of this act for Ovid, as I read it, is not so much a declaration of identity, or subject-position, as a denial of one. To be "there," however, must not involve either the displacing of the desire of the gaze of the subject,

or the releasing of the subject into an endless play of signification. For men wanting to reconstruct hegemonic ideologies of gender, a declaration of "there" must always be accompanied by one of "here"; a relativising of their position of enunciation, and a laying open of this position to the pressure of the cajoling, prompting gaze of the other.

Masculinity, in other words, can only be reconstructed through the re-articulation of the terms of men's (self)representation. I have argued in the readings that men's (self)representation is contained by an ideology of hegemonic masculinity, in which male identity is defined as "positive" or intelligible only through a very specific organisation of discourses of sex, sexuality, race (sometimes class). All men and women are interpellated as subjects through these discourses. However, because ideology is something that people "live" in their day to day lives, the terms of their interpellation into it can also be negotiated. To be sure, these terms are restricted, yet room is nevertheless there for subjects to protest against dominant, oppressive ideologies, and perhaps even to rework the intelligibility of subjectivity altogether.

The degendering of hegemonic masculinity is being carried out in many different places, but there is much anxiety and confusion as to how, exactly, dominant structures of masculinity should change, and what a new masculinity should look like. Indeed, the aims of the various men's movements are themselves often in conflict with each other. Conflict, as feminism has shown, may not mean the end of a progressive politics of masculinity; rather, it might simply be an indication that it is coming of age.

This thesis has attempted to approach the subject of "masculinity" from another angle. Rather than rediscovering a masculinity and then explaining it, I have set about trying to work through the discourses which make men "masculine" in the first place.

Masculinity is thus seen as an identification which subjects can make, and which, in the dominant discourse of masculinity, makes men "subjects" from the beginning. This thesis has also attempted an intervention in hegemonic discourses of gender – which have historically been dominated by feminism. My suggestion is that men must move into this area, not as self-conscious "feminists," but as men aware of the deeply complicitous relation between masculinity and the reading practices that they have, perhaps, been brought up to believe were ungendered. A "reading practice" defines a discipline; it brings into being the objects it seeks to describe. A reading practice is also suffused with ideology; with ambition, desire, fantasy. Traditionally, reading practices were shaped by the passions of (dead) white male academics, and its aims were largely to uncover what were thought to be the "eternal truths" of a select group of texts. Feminist revisions of these reading practices have shown that the "eternal truths" they sought were only so in a particular and very rarified way, that the views of these men and these texts reflected a particular subjective experience of race (white), gender (masculine), class (middle) and sexuality (heterosexual).

The endless numbers of reading positions and reading practices which have emerged in the last few decades is a reaction to the "traditional" methods of textual criticism. These practices have not, however, attempted to dig out other "truths," to make a counter-claim to "reality." Rather, feminist, lesbian, gay, and post-colonial (to name a few) reading practices attempt to work against the very presumption of an "eternal truth" and emphasise how the point of view and subjectivity of the reader/writer effect the production, transmission and reception of knowledge, how power and ideology infuse every utterance and every discourse. If feminism has deconstructed the "masculinity" of the "natural," "neutral" reading position, then men

must begin to articulate what this means for them. If masculinity, as *the* arbiter of subjectivity in culture, has now been thoroughly deconstructed by feminism, it is now up to men to write their subjectivities and reading positions over again from a different, perhaps more precarious, location in a field of sexual difference(s).

Works Consulted

Aldrich, R. & G. Wotherspoon, eds. *Gay Perspectives: Essays in Australian Gay Culture*. Sydney: Department of Economic History, University of Sydney, 1992.

Allen, J. & P. Patton, eds. *Beyond Marxism? Interventions After Marx*. Sydney: Intervention, 1983

Althusser, L. *Lenin and Philosophy*. (1971) Trans. B. Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1971.

Altman, D. *The Comfort of Men*. Melbourne: Heinemann, 1993.

Belsey, C. *Critical Practice*. London & New York: Routledge, 1981.

Benjamin, J. *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination*. New York: Pantheon, 1988.

Bersani, L. *Homos*. Cambridge & London: Harvard UP, 1995.

—— "Is the Rectum a Grave?" *October*. 43 (1987): 197-222.

Bliss, C. *Patrick White's Fiction: The Paradox of Fortunate Failure*. London: Macmillan, 1986

Bly, R. *Iron John: A Book about Men*. Longmead: Element, 1989.

Bhabha, H. *The Location of Culture*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

Boheemen, C. Van. *The Novel as Family Romance: Language, Gender and Authority From Fielding to Joyce*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987.

Boone, J. & M. Cadden, eds. *Engendering Men: The Question of Male Feminist Criticism*. London & New York: Routledge, 1990.

—— "Of Me(n) and Feminism: Who(se) is the Sex That Writes." in Boone & Cadden, eds.

Brady, V. "Making Connections: Art, Life, and some Recent Novels." *Westerly*. 2 (1980): 61-75.

Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*. Trans. E. Guild. Oxford: Polity, 1991.

Bristow, J. "Men After Feminism: Sexual Politics Twenty Years On." in Porter, ed.

—— Rev. of *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture* by Peter Middleton. *Textual Practice.* 7. 3 (1993): 512-514.

Brooks, D. "The Book of Sei." *The Book Of Sei.* Boston & London: Faber & Faber, 1985.

—— *The Necessary Jungle: Literature and Excess.* Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1990.

Buchbinder, D. *Masculinities and Identities.* Melbourne: Melbourne, UP: 1994.

—— "Mateship, *Gallipoli* and the Eternal Masculine." in Fuery, ed.

Buckley, J. *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman From Dickens to Golding.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1974.

Butler, J. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* London & New York: Routledge, 1990.

—— & J.W. Scott, eds. *Feminists Theorise the Political.* London & New York: Routledge, 1992.

—— "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism.'" in Butler & Scott, eds.

—— *Bodies That Matter*: *On the Discursive Limits of Sex.* London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

Carrigan, T., B. Connell & J. Lee. "Hard and Heavy: Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity." *Theory and Society.* 14.5 (1985): 551-604.

Claridge, L. & E. Langland, eds. *Out of Bounds: Male Writers and Gender(ed) Criticism.* Amherst: U of Massachussetts P, 1990.

Close, A., ed. *Men Love Sex.* Sydney: Vintage, 1995.

Chapman, R. & J. Rutherford, eds. *Male Order*: *Unwrapping Masculinity.* London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988.

Cohen, E. "Who are 'We'? Gay 'Identity' as Political (E)motion (A Theoretical Rumination)." in Fuss, ed. *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories.*

Connell, R. W. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987.

—— *Masculinities.* Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995.

Cornell, D. "Gender, Sex and Equivalent Rights." in Butler & Scott, eds.

Cornwall, A. & N. Lindisfarne, eds. *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

Cranny-Francis, A. *Engendered Fictions: Analysing Gender in the Production and Reception of Texts*. Sydney: NSW UP, 1992.

—— *The Body in the Text*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1995.

Culler, J. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982.

Dawson, G. *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

De Lauretis, T. *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.

—— *Technologies of Gender*. London: Macmillan, 1987.

DiPiero, T. "The Patriarch is Not (Just) a Man." *Camera Obscura*. 26 (1991): 101-124.

—— "White Men Aren't." *Camera Obscura*. 30 (1992): 113-137.

Dixon, R. *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875-1914*. Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 1995.

Dollimore, J. *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.

Drewe, R. *A Cry in the Jungle Bar*. Sydney: Picador, 1979.

—— "*A Cry in the Jungle Bar*: Australians in Asia." *Meridian*. 5 (1986): 175-81.

Dyer, R. *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation*. London & New York: Routledge, 1993.

Easthope, A. *What a Man's Gotta Do: The Masculine Myth in Popular Culture*. London: Grafton, 1986.

Edelman, L. *Homographesis: Essays in Gay, Literary and Cultural Theory*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

Edwards, T. "Beyond Sex and Gender: Masculinity, Homosexuality and Social Theory." in Hearn & Morgan, eds.

—— *Erotics and Politics: Gay Male Sexuality, Masculinity and Feminism*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

Elam, D. *Feminism and Deconstruction: Ms. en abyme.* London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

Felski, R. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics.* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard UP, 1989.

Fisher, S. "Positions Vacant: Don't Tread on Toes." *XY: Men, Sex, Politics.* 5. 4 (1995/6): 12-13.

Foucault, M. *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* Trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. London: Tavistock, 1972.

—— *The History of Sexuality. Volume One.* (1976) Trans. R. Hurley. London: Penguin, 1978.

—— "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." in P. Rabinow, ed. *The Foucault Reader.* London: Penguin, 1991.

Frankel, B. *From the Prophets Deserts Come: The Struggle to Reshape Australian Political Culture.* Melbourne: Arena, 1992.

Freud, S. "Femininity" in *New Lectures on Psycho-analysis.* Trans. J. Strachey. in Strachey, J., ed., XXII, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* London: Penguin, 1991.

Frosh, S. *Sexual Difference, Masculinity and Psychoanalysis.* London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

Frow, J. & M. Morris, eds. *Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader.* Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993.

Fuery, P., ed. *Representation, Discourse and Desire: Contemporary Australian Culture and Critical Theory.* Melbourne: Longman Chesire, 1994.

Fuss, D. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference.* London & New York: Routledge, 1990.

——, ed. *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories.* London & New York: Routledge, 1991.

Gallop, J. *The Daughter's Seduction.*

Garber, M. *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety.* London & New York: Routledge, 1992.

Gatens, M. "A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction." in Allen & Patton, eds.

Gelder, K. "Postmodernism's 'Lost Objects': Desire in The Recent Fiction of Murnane, Brooks, Henshaw and Jones." *Island Magazine.* 41 (1989): 49-53.

Grosz, E. "Inscriptions and Body-Maps: Representations and the Corporeal." in Threadgold & Cranny-Francis, eds.

—— *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism.* Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994.

Hamilton, A. "Fear and Desire: Aborigines, Asians and the National Imaginary." *Australian Cultural History.* 9 (1989): 14-35.

Halperin, D. *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality.* New York & London: Routledge, 1990.

Hartog, D. Den. "Self-Levelling Tall Poppies: The Authorial Self in (Male) Australian Literature." *Australian Cultural History.* S.L. Goldberg & F.B Smith, eds. Sydney: Cambridge UP, 1988.

Hearn, J. & D. Morgan, eds. *Men, Masculinities and Social Theory.* London: Unwin Hyman, 1990.

Heath, S. "Male Feminism." in Jardine & Smith, eds.

—— "Difference." in *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality.* London & New York: Routledge, 1992.

Hickey, B. Rev. of *Julia Paradise* by Rod Jones. *SPAN.* 26 (1988): 112-116.

Hurley, Michael. "Homosexualities: Fiction, Reading and Moral Training." in Threadgold & Cranny-Francis, eds.

Irigaray, L. *Speculum of the Other Woman.* (1974) Trans. G. C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985

—— *This Sex Which is Not One.* (1977) Trans. C. Porter. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

Jardine, A. *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

—— & P. Smith, eds. *Men in Feminism.* London & New York: Methuen, 1987.

Johnston, G. *My Brother Jack.* (1964) Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1990.

Jones, R. *Julia Paradise.* Melbourne: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1986

Kabbani, R. *Europe's Myths of the Orient.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986.

Kaplan, C. *Sea Changes. Culture and Feminism.* London: Verso, 1989.

Kaplan, E. A. "Is the Gaze Male?" in Snitow *et al.*, eds.

Kauffman, M., ed. *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power and Change*. New York & Toronto: Oxford UP, 1987.

Keane, C. "New Fictions, Old Fictions: Postmodernism and Gender in Some Recent Australian Fiction." *Meanjin*. 52.1 (1993): 195-206.

Kirkby, J. "The Lure of Abjection: Kristeva's Borderliner and Australian Masculinity in Hal Porter, A.D. Hope and Patrick White." in Fuery, ed.

Koh Tai, A. "'Crossing That Little Bridge into Asia, with the Ghost of Empire About Us': Australian Fiction set in South East Asia." *Westerly*. 38.4 (1993): 20-32.

Kristeva, J. *Powers of Horror*. (1980) Trans. L. S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.

Lacan, J. *Ecrits: A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock, 1977.

—— *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*. (1973) Trans. A. Sheridan. Ed. J.-A. Miller. London & New York: Norton, 1981.

Laclau, E. & M. Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso, 1985.

Lever, S. "Beyond 'The Human Hierarchy of Men and Women.'" *Australian Literary Studies*. 16.3 (1994): 289-96.

Low, G. Ching-Liang. "His Stories? Narratives and Images of Imperialism." *New Formations*. 12 (1990): 83-103.

Macdonnell, D. *Theories of Discourse: An Introduction*. London: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Macainsh, N. "A Queer Unity: Patrick White's *The Twyborn Affair*." *Southerly*. 43. 2 (1983): 143-54

Malouf, D. *An Imaginary Life*. Sydney: Picador, 1978

McClintock, A. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*. London & New York: Routledge, 1995.

Metcalf, A. & M. Humphries, eds. *The Sexuality of Men*. London: Pluto Press, 1990.

Middleton, P. *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture*. London & New York: Routledge, 1992.

Miller, N. *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts*. London & New York: Routledge, 1991.

Mitchell, J. & J. Rose, eds. *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the* Ecole Freudian. Trans. J. Rose. London: Macmillan 1986.

Modleski, T. *Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a Postfeminist Age*. London & New York: Routledge, 1991.

Moore, S. "Getting a Bit of the Other – the Pimps of Postmodernism." in Chapman & Rutherford, eds.

Mulvey, L. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. London: Macmillan, 1989.

Nietzsche, F. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1984.

Owens, C. "Outlaws: Gay Men in Feminism." in Jardine & Smith, eds.

Perera, S. "Representation Wars: Malaysia, *Embassy*, and Australia's *Corps Diplomatique*. in Frow & Morris, eds.

Phelan, P. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London & New York: Routledge, 1993.

Porter, D., ed. *Between Men and Feminism*. London & New York: Routledge, 1992.

Pronger, B. *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, homosexuality and the Meaning of Sex*. London: GMP, 1990.

Reiter, R. R., ed. *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975.

Riemer, A.P. "Eddie and the Bogomils – Some Observations on *The Twyborn Affair*." *Southerly*. 40.1 (1980): 12-29.

Riley, D. *"Am I That Name": Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989.

Robinson, S. *Engendering the Subject: Gender and Self-Representation in Contemporary Women's Fiction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

Rubin, G. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." in Reiter, ed.

Rutherford, J. *Men's Silences: Predicaments in Masculinity*. London & New York: Routledge, 1992.

Said, E. *Orientalism*. (1978) Melbourne: Penguin, 1991.

Schaffer, K. *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition*. Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 1988.

Scholes, R. "Reading Like a Man" in Jardine & Smith, eds.

Sedgwick, E. K. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.

—— *Epistemology of the Closet*. London: Penguin, 1994.

Segal, L. *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*. London: Virago, 1990.

Seidler, V. "Men, Feminism and Power." in Hearn & Morgan, eds.

Silverman, K. *The Subject of Semiotics*. New York: Oxford UP, 1983.

—— *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*. London & New York: Routledge, 1992.

Simpson, M. *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

Slessor, K. "Five Visions of Captain Cook." *Poems*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1964.

Snitow, A., C. Stansell & S. Thompson, eds. *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*. New York: Monthly Review Books, 1983.

Snow, E. "Theorising the Male Gaze: Some Problems. *Representations*. 25 (1989): 30-41.

Suleiman, S. *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avante-Garde*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1990.

Tacey, D. Rev. of *Memoirs of Many in One*, by Patrick White. *Meridian*. 5 (May, 1986): 89-91.

Taylor, A. *Reading Australian Poetry*. St. Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1987.

Theweleit, K. *Male Fantasies I: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*. Trans. S. Conway, E. Carter & C. Turner. Oxford: Polity Press, 1985.

Threadgold, T. & A. Cranny-Francis, eds. *Feminine/Masculine and Representation*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990.

Vorlicky, R. "(In)visible Alliances: Conflicting 'Chronicles' of Feminism." in Boone and Cadden, eds.

White, P. *The Twyborn Affair*. Melbourne: Penguin, 1979.

—— *Flaws in the Glass*. (1981) Melbourne: Penguin, 1985.

White, R. *Inventing Australia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981.

Young, R. J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London & New York: Routledge, 1995.

Zizek, S. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso, 1989.

—— *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacque Lacan*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.