

Writing in the advertising trade magazine *Campaign* in July 1986, the critic George Melly offered a brief review of a group of adverts (see Figure 5.1). In the review he pondered on the emergence of what he saw as a new use of 'sex' in the process of selling: the use, as he put it, of 'men as passive sex objects' (Melly, 1986, p. 41). Commenting on the television adverts for the jeans manufacturer Levi-Strauss's recently relaunched 501 jeans, Melly noted:

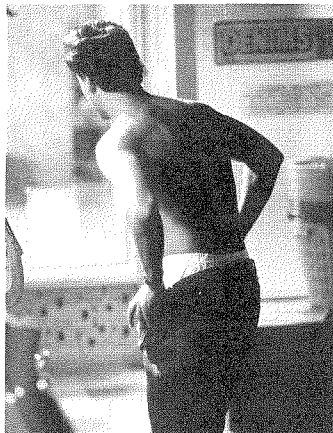
Jeans have always carried a heavy erotic charge, but the young man who gets up, slips into a pair and then slides into a bath (the water seeps over him in a most suggestive manner) is really pushing it... there is no question that this method of presenting beefcake is strongly voyeuristic.

(Melly, 1986, p. 41)

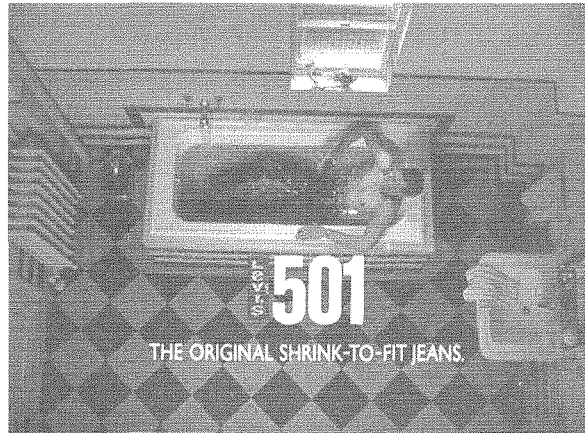
Writing from within academic cultural studies in 1988, Frank Mort was also struck by the visual presentation of the male body within the same Levis adverts. He emphasized what he saw as the sexualization of the male body produced through the presentation of the jeans, arguing:

... the sexual meanings in play [in the adverts] are less to do with macho images of strength and virility (though these are certainly still present) than with the fetishized and narcissistic display - a visual erotica. These are bodies to be looked at (by oneself and other men?) through fashion codes and the culture of style.

(Mort, 1988, p. 201)



(a) 'Launderette'



(b) 'Bath'

FIGURE 5.1 Television advertisements for Levi 501 jeans, 1985-6, Bartle Bogle Hegarty.

By **fetishizing**, he meant the intense focusing on objects like belt and button-fly as Nick Kamen and James Mar **die** (the models) undressed in **the** adverts. By narcissism, he meant the foregrounding of the pleasures associated with *the* dressing and grooming **of** the body.

It is these new visual codings of masculinity identified by Melly and Mort which this chapter sets out to explore. There is good reason for such an enquiry. The adverts these authors cite were not isolated images. Rather, the Levis adverts formed part of a phenomenon. From **the** mid-1980s there has been a proliferation of images of this sort, and 1986 was a particularly rich year in this process. Along **with the** broadcasting of the Levis adverts, the advertising agency Tony Hodges and Partners put together a press campaign for Sliulton GB's new prestige male fragrance 'Grey Flannel' in August. Appearing in 'style magazines' like *The Face*, the advert featured a three-quarter length, black-and-white photograph of a young man. He was posed alone, looking down and away *from* the viewers, and he was naked. The image was cropped just above his groin and moodily lit to shadow part of his body and reveal the outline of chest and arm muscles and the curve of his right hip (see Figure 5,2).

A foregrounding of similar physical characteristics (the developed arm and chest muscles), together with highly groomed hair and skin, also figured in the range of male pin-ups featured on posters, postcards and greetings cards sold by the Athena chain. The best-selling image from 1986 featured a young man cradling a small baby in his muscular arms. Again, reproduced in black and white, the image gave a close-up view of *the* surface of the male body (see Figure 5.3). The summer of 1986 also saw the launch of a press and poster campaign by Grey Advertising for **Beecham's** Brylcreem. The campaign featured a range of masculine images, all playing on the 'look' of early 1960s' neat and respectable masculinity (itself associated with Brylcreem adverts *from* this period). *The* images were subtly updated, however, displaying the highly groomed hair and skin of the models and - in the case of two of the images - their developed arm and upper-body muscles.

This explosion of new imagery had direct connections to changes in consumer markets. By far the biggest slice **of it** was associated **with** developments in three men's markets: menswear, grooming products and toiletries, and consumer magazines. In each of these markets, new products were produced (like new ranges of fragrances or new magazines) or the marketing of existing

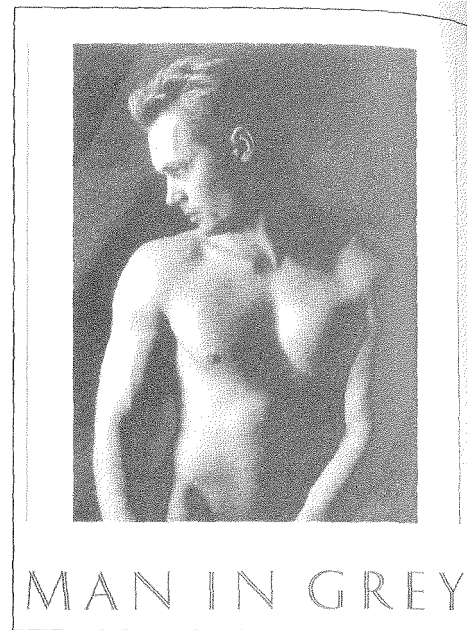


FIGURE 5.2
'Man in Grey',
magazine advert
1986-7, Tony
Hodges &
Partners agency.



products was reworked (through new packaging or advertising) so as to appeal to what producers and service-providers identified as new groups of male consumers. The emergence of new designs in menswear was particularly significant in this process. It was the innovations in menswear design - **for** example, broader shouldered suits, more flamboyant coloured ties, shirts and knitwear, figure-hugging sportswear lines - which established the key terms for the coding of the 'new man' as a distinctive new version of masculinity. It was through the presentation of these menswear designs in popular representations that the 'new man' was often coded. One important site where this presentation occurred was within menswear shops and I want to come back to these shops later (in section 6). In this chapter, then, I want to reflect on the cultural significance of the 'new man' images which were linked to these men's markets and consider the meaning of these images in relation to established notions of masculinity and masculine culture. In other words, I want to ask what do these images

mean? What do they tell us about the changing meaning of masculinity in the 1980s and 1990s? And what are the consequences of these shifts in the way masculinity is being represented **for** gender relations as a whole?

In setting about this task, I will focus on the images found in the fashion pages of men's 'style' and 'lifestyle' magazines. There are two reasons **for** privileging these magazines. First, it was within magazine fashion photography that these images initially emerged. Secondly, it was within this form that the images were most extensively elaborated. In developing a reading of these fashion images, I also want to advance a more general argument about the representation process itself, its centrality to the formation of cultural identities (**in this** case masculinities), and to reflect on the role of spectatorship and looking in this process. The aims of the chapter can be summarized as follows:

- To develop the argument **that** gender identities are not unitary and fixed, but rather are subject to social and historical variation.
- To analyse the role of systems of representation in shaping **the** attributes and characteristics of masculinity as they are lived by men.
- To develop the usefulness of Michel Foucault's conceptualization of discourse in analysing visual representations.

- To offer a reading of the significance of the versions of masculinity coded within the 'new man' imagery.
- ® To explore the debate between Foucauldian and psychoanalytically informed approaches to conceptualizing the impact of these visual representations on the consumers of them.
- To locate historically the forms of looking or spectatorship associated with the 'new man' imagery.

2 *Conceptualizing masculinity*

Getting to grips with the 'new man' imagery in ways which focus critically upon its relationship to masculinity and masculine culture requires a more general conceptualization of masculinity. In this section, I want to offer you what I think are some key precepts for this task by drawing upon an expanding body of literature on masculinity (much of it now written by men). The starting-point for this body of work remains the critique which feminists have advanced over the past twenty years. Central to these injunctions has been an analysis of men's power and from this a problematizing of the dominant and exclusive forms of masculinity which were seen to underpin it. What these injunctions have emphasized, then, has been the negative effects of dominant definitions of masculinity on women's relationships with men in both the public and private worlds.

This critique by feminists established the terms on which the early writing by men on masculinity attempted to piece together conceptually a picture of the attributes and characteristics which made up this problematic category of masculinity. The earliest of this work, influenced by the sexual politics of the 1970s, was strongly associated with the men's anti-sexist movement. This was a grouping of usually middle-class men living within urban centres (like Birmingham and London in the UK, San Francisco in the USA), generally associated with radical or communitarian politics and typically connected to feminism through partners and friends. The counter-culture and an interest in therapy were also recurrent influences on the men involved in the men's anti-sexist movement.

What emerged from this early writing was a particular account of masculinity. In books like *The Sexuality of Men* (Metcalf and Humphries, 1985), published in 1985 and representing the most nuanced strand of this body of writing on masculinity, the authors described a masculinity characterized by aggression, competitiveness, emotional ineptitude and coldness, and dependent upon an overriding and exclusive emphasis on penetrative sex. In addition, however, for the authors in *The Sexuality of Men*, what also emerged, as men began to reflect critically on masculinity, was a sense of the fears, anxieties and pain expressed by these men in relation to established scripts of masculinity: anxieties about sexual performance, estrangement from emotions, and poor relations with fathers.

A contradictory picture of masculinity was produced in books such as *The Sexuality of Men*. On the one hand, a singular or unitary conception of masculinity was advanced: one that was effectively seen as synonymous with men's dominance over women; while, on the other hand, the burden of masculinity for men was also emphasized.

2.1. Plural masculinities

It is both this unitary conception of masculinity and the confessional emphasis on the burden of masculinity for men which more recent work on masculinity has challenged. The central claim of this more recent work has been an insistence on the plural forms of masculinity against the reductive conception found in works like *The Sexuality of Men*. A concern to speak about masculinities in the plural has become an important starting-point for this recent work. Some historical writings have proved illuminating in this regard. Jeffrey Weeks has charted historically the formation of a range of (largely masculine) sexual identities from the late eighteenth century onwards. These accounts - particularly in *Sex, Politics and Society*, and *Sexuality and its Discontents* (Weeks, 1981, 1985) - emphasized the impact of what Weeks called the sexual tradition in setting the big terms for the shaping of contemporary sexualities. As Weeks shows, the interventions of the sexologists and medical men (discussed at length by Segal, 1997) in categorizing the sexually perverse - and especially homosexuality towards the end of the nineteenth century - were part and parcel of the general tightening of definitions and norms of masculinities during the Victorian period. In the process, any signs of homosexuality in men were assumed to preclude the full acquisition of a 'true' masculinity. Homosexuality placed its subject in a position of inversion and effeminacy or, at least, of belonging to a 'third sex'.

Weeks's accounts underline the need for historical specificity in conceptualizing masculinities. The best examples of contemporary work take this demonstration of specificity further, emphasizing not only the determinants of historical period and sexuality on shaping masculinity, but also those of class, 'race', ethnicity and generation. What emerges from this work is a conception of masculinities produced as the result of the articulation or interweaving of particular attributes of masculinity with other social variables. There is an emphasis, then, on the way in which the gendering of identity is always already interwoven with other factors. For example, Catherine Hall, in her essay 'Missionary stories: gender and ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s' (1992), makes a strong case for the way a particular kind of ethnicity and 'racial' characteristics - that of white Englishness - was central to the sense of manliness as it was lived by missionary men working in the Caribbean in the period after 1830. In Hall's view, it is impossible to isolate the elements which make up the masculinity of these men without recognizing their dependence upon ethnicity - Englishness - and 'race' - whiteness. Developing a sense of this articulation of masculinity with other social variables is important to the account of the 'new

man' which I advance later in this chapter. As you will see, what looms large is **the** neutrality of generation, ethnicity and 'race' to the distinctiveness of the kinds of masculinity that emerged around the figure of the 'new man' in the 1980s.

2.2. Thinking relationally

Insisting upon the differentiation between versions of masculinity does **not** in itself, however, produce an adequate conceptualization of masculinity. A second key strand of contemporary writing on masculinity is the insistence that particular versions **of masculinity** are not only constituted in their difference from other versions of masculinity but are also defined in relation to femininity. This suggests, then, **that** an adequate understanding of masculinity requires our locating it within the wider field of gender relations as a whole; that **is, in** relation to the contemporary formations **of** femininity. An example drawn from Davidoff and Hall's *Family Fortunes* (1987) demonstrates the importance of doing this.

Family Fortunes charts **the** formation of the English middle class from 1780 to 1850, largely through the personal writings of middle-class men and women. In the book, Davidoff and Hall emphasize not only the way emergent forms of middle-class masculinity in this period were defined against both working-class and aristocratic forms of masculinity, **but** also that a hardening of gender differences - the attributes and characteristics of men and women - within middle-class culture itself - was also central to middle-class men's specific sense of masculinity.

The **professionalization** of middle-class work that grew apace in the period they cover is important to the formation of middle-class masculinity in Davidoff and Hall's account. Middle-class men's involvement in production, design, building, accountancy and insurance involved **quite** specific forms of knowledge and skill. The mastery of these procedures - of assessing risk, of accountancy methods, of dealing with capital and investment - represented a set of practices and symbolic forms through which a middle-class manliness was staked **out**. These competences, as **quintessential** manly tasks and skills, were **counterposed**, not only to **the** repertoire of skills and competencies associated with aristocratic masculinity (such as the valuing of gambling, sport and sexual prowess) and to the craft skills of **artisanal** masculinity, **but** also **to** the characteristics of middle-class femininity.

Davidoff and Hall also argue that the competences of middle-class manhood were consolidated through a range of formal and informal institutions (such as scientific and professional societies, gatherings at men's clubs). These represented public spaces where the contours of middle-class masculinity were reaffirmed. The chapel was also an important public place where this masculinity was shaped. Practising Christianity, and the rituals associated with communion, forged these men's masculinity as a Christian manhood. As Davidoff and Hall suggest, religious observance shaped and dignified middle-

class work through its extension of established Protestant notions of the religious calling and 'doing God's duty in the world' (ibid., p. 111). Enterprise and business acumen were worldly solutions to the service of God.

Doing God's work in a broader sense - the work of winning souls for salvation. - also fostered what Davidoff and Hall call 'a stress on moral earnestness, the belief in the power of love and a sensitivity to the weak and the helpless' (ibid., p. 110). These moral dispositions and emotional languages amounted to a specific repertoire of conduct that set middle-class men apart from, again, aristocratic masculinity. The validation of piety and forms of manly emotion went together with an increasing sobriety of dress amongst middle-class men. These dress codes confirmed the different cultural space occupied by middle-class and aristocratic men, and set clear boundaries between masculine and feminine appearance amongst the middle class. The 'gorgeous plumage' of eighteenth-century men's attire fell foul of what J. C. Flugel called the 'great masculine renunciation': in came 'stiff, dark, heavy materials, shapeless nether garments, and narrow black ties ... the ubiquitous trousers and coat' (ibid., p. 142).

The creation **of** the middle-class home in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries formed another determinant of the attributes and characteristics of middle-class manliness. Davidoff and Hall devote a long chapter to the factors that shaped the development of a distinctive middle-class version of the household and 'home': the production of 'my own private fireside'. A central element in its production was the robust demarcation of the public and private worlds. The home became the site of the distinctive 'elementary community **of** which larger communities and ultimately the nation are constituted' (ibid., p. 321), and also a place removed from the world (particularly of work) - separated literally by gates, hedges, walls. The suburban villa stood as the epitome of this new middle-class 'home'; safely distanced from the urban context and its proximity of classes, and offering a flavour **of** the rustic. It was women, as Davidoff and Hall suggest, who were mainly responsible for creating and servicing the home. And in the demarcation of the public and private, a gendering of the two spheres was increasingly produced: acting in the world through business and social reform, middle-class men staked out key parts of their masculinity in a public sphere that was more and more associated with their masculinity; while the private, domestic realm became the limit of middle-class women's sphere **of** action. This domestic space, however, as Davidoff and Hall argue, played an important role in middle-class men's masculinity as they moved between the world **of** the home and the world of public life. These men operated with **a powerful** investment in domestic harmony as the reward for enterprise as well as the basis of public virtue (ibid., p. 18).

The centrality of being able to provide for a household of dependants - in particular a wife - manifested a fierce independence that was important to these middle-class men. This masculine independence was increasingly characterized from the 1830s, as Catherine Hall suggests, by the **way** it was

articulated through a specific English ethnicity. The authority of middle-class men was defined through their power over a range of dependants in the territories of Empire, as well as at home (Hall, 1992).

Always thinking relationally about masculinity - both in terms of the relations between masculinities and in terms of the relations between masculinity and femininity - forces us to consider the power relations operating in and through these relations. Clearly - as contemporary sexual politics has insisted - the field of gender relations is not a powerless universe. It is possible to see in Davidoff and Hall's work that middle-class men's masculinity was not only different from middle-class femininity but was also defined in a position of dominance over it. For some writers, the power relations which mediate gender relations - the relations between masculinity and femininity - point to a recognizable system of patriarchy (Alexander and Taylor, 1994; Walby, 1986). I do not want to explore the concept of patriarchy in this chapter, but I do want to signal a few problems with it as they relate to my arguments about the 'new man'. One central problem concerns the way in which it advances a universal model of the power relations between the genders - one that is weak on the historical specificity of the categories of gender and variations in the relations between them in different periods. In particular, the concept of patriarchy is weak at explaining the relations of power between different masculinities. I think that an adequate account of the field of gender relations, in addition to analysing the relations between masculinity and femininity, also needs to explore the relations of domination and subordination operating between different formations of masculinity. Rather than mobilize the concept of patriarchy, then, I want to suggest that we need to move away from a picture of the field of gender relations as always divided in the same way around the poles of **masculine** domination and feminine **subordination**. Rather, a more plural model of power relations is needed - one which grasps the multiple, lines of power which position different masculinities and femininities in relation to each other at different times. An important pay-off from this conceptualization is that it allows us to consider dominant, subordinate and oppositional forms of masculinity. This is important because, as John Tosh and Michael Roper (1992) have argued, the field of gender relations has historically included forms of resistance to (as well as collusion with) prevailing notions of gender, on the part of groups of men. Such a conception, of course, allows us to situate the groups of men associated with, for example, contemporary sexual politics; men (like those of the men's anti-sexist movement, with whom I begin this section) who form a part of the biggest contemporary challenge to the established alignment of gender relations.

2.3. Invented categories

I want to make a further point about conceptualizing masculinity, which draws this section to a close and leads us into the next one. Underpinning all these arguments about masculinity drawn from recent sociological, historical and cultural analysis is the assertion that masculinity is not a fixed and

unitary category. In other words, it is argued that there is no true essence of masculinity guaranteed by God or nature which we could appeal to in analysing men's gender identities. Rather, like all identities, masculinities are, to borrow Jeffrey Weeks's phrase, invented categories (Weeks, 1991). They are the product of the cultural meanings attached to certain attributes, capacities, dispositions and forms of conduct at given historical moments. Asserting their invented status, however, is not to diminish the force of these categories over us. To argue that masculinities are invented or constructed and therefore lack the guarantee of a foundation (which the idea of rooting masculinity in biology or divinity clearly offers) is **not** to argue that they are insubstantial. Quite the reverse. Identities are necessary constructions or *necessary fictions* (to deploy another phrase from Weeks). We need them to operate in the world, to locate ourselves in relation to *others* and to organize a *sense of who we are*. Emphasizing the invented character of identities, however, does direct us towards the processes through which identities are forged or fictioned. Such an enterprise leads us to the cultural or symbolic work involved in this process. It is my central contention that a large part of the symbolic work through which **the** meanings historically associated **with** masculinity are produced takes place within particular cultural languages. In other words, I am emphasizing the constitutive role of representation in the formation of the attributes and characteristics of masculinity through which real historical men come to live **out** their identities as gendered individuals. Cultural languages or systems **of** representation, then, are not a reflection of a pre-given masculinity fixed outside of representation. Rather, they actively construct the cultural meanings we give to masculinities. **It** is to how we might understand the dynamics of these images and the wider system of cultural languages of **which** they form a part that the next section is devoted. Before I do that, though, let me summarize the key implications of this section **for** our analysis of the 'new man' imagery.

2.4. Summary of section 2

- 1 **I have** argued that there is more than one version of masculinity, which means that we have to attend **to** the specificity of the 'new man' version of masculinity - **that** is, how the attributes and characteristics associated with it differ from other versions of masculinity which have existed at different periods.
- 2 I have insisted that relations of power operate both between masculinity and femininity and between different masculinities. This means that we need to consider how the 'new man' version of masculinity fits into the established ranking of masculinities. Does it reinforce dominant scripts of masculinity or does it disturb these dominant scripts?
- 3 I have argued for the need to locate particular versions of masculinity within the wider field of gender relations. This means being sensitive to the positioning of the 'new man' in relation to femininity. Does the 'new man' version of masculinity reproduce masculine privileges?

4. Visual codes of masculinity

I began this chapter by citing the television adverts for Levi-Strauss's 501 jeans. As we saw, for both George Melly and Frank Mort, these adverts threw up a distinctively new set of codings of masculinity within the domain of popular culture. In introducing the 'new man' imagery through these examples, we got a preliminary sense of the novelty of these codings. What stood out, as Melly and Mort suggested, was a new framing of the surface **of men's bodies**; one that emphasized not so much the assertive power **of** a muscular masculine physique as its passive **sexualization**. **In** Mort's phrase, these were men's bodies openly inviting a desiring look. In this section, I want to explore in more detail the novelty of the 'new man' codings and the forms of spectatorship associated with them; specifically, the forms of spectatorship staged between the men in the images and the groups of men at whom the images were principally targeted. In doing so I want to focus not on television adverts nor on the images deployed in menswear shops, but rather on the images of the 'new man' found within the fashion pages of 'style' and 'lifestyle' magazines for men.

As a way of organizing my reading of these images, I want to begin by delimiting the scope of what I have to say. One of the significant characteristics of the magazine fashion photography produced over the last decade is the range of new codings of masculinity. In other words, we do not find only one version of the 'new man' represented across these fashion images. This is an important finding in itself. It suggests that we need to think about a range of new codings which share a loose family resemblance. In part because of this range of codings, I want to focus on what I think are three important 'looks' produced across these 'new man' images. These are;

- 1 The 'street style' version.
- 2 The 'Italian-American' version.
- 3 The 'conservative Englishness' version.

I want to begin with the 'street style' version. This is because it was principally through these fashion images that a recognizable version of the 'new man' first emerged.

4.1. the street style version

Let us start with the code of casting (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5). This is a very important code in fashion photography. It relates to the selection of certain physical characteristics in the choice of the model, the connotations of his particular physical 'look'. In Figure 5.4, the model chosen is young, with strong, well-defined features. Together these elements produce a mixture of boyish softness - connoted through the clear skin (and re-connoted by the hat pushed back on his head) - and an assertive masculinity - connoted through the hard edge of his features and the facial tattoo. This combination of 'boyishness' and 'hardness' represents one of a number of contradictory elements of masculinity held together in images associated with 'street style' codings of this sort. This combination of 'soft and hard' is reinforced by the casting of a light-black model. This casting is important and is repeated in Figure 5.5 (in fact, it is the same model, Simon de Montford). In terms of the signification of masculinity, it brings into play two connotations: an equivalence of 'light-black' with sensuality, and of 'black masculinity' with hypermasculinity.

What do I mean by this? This use of black masculinity to signify hypermasculinity has a long history, shaped by a pathologizing of blackness, and has been the site historically of pronounced fantasies about black men's sexuality and physical prowess (Mercer and Julien, 1988; see also Chapter 4 of this volume, section 4.3). These connotations of black masculinity operate as an important trace within the signification of the light-black male; they impart to it the connotations of an assertive masculinity. However, 'light-black' has a partially separate set of connotations. The light-black model makes acceptable or sanctions this otherwise threatening black masculine sensuality. It does this through the indices of skin tone and features. The casting of the light-black model makes possible the playing off of 'soft' and 'hard'.

In the selection of the clothes, Figures 5.4 and 5.5 bring together elements of workwear (the white T-shirt worn under a shirt in Figure 5.4) and strong outerwear (the wool jacket and heavy-duty boots in Figure 5.5). In both figures, the styling of the 'look' is completed with the natty hats worn by the model. This both works to signify the highly stylized nature of the 'look' and draws strongly on the idioms of black street style. This connection to black style is clearly underlined by the title given to Figure 5.5 ('Yard Style Easy Skanking'). The selection and styling of these clothes are typical of the

FIGURE 5.4 'Hard are the looks', *The Face*, March 1985.

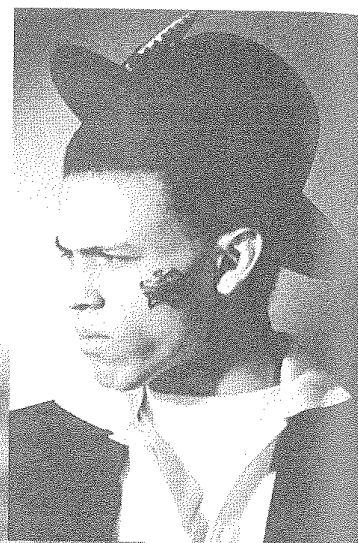
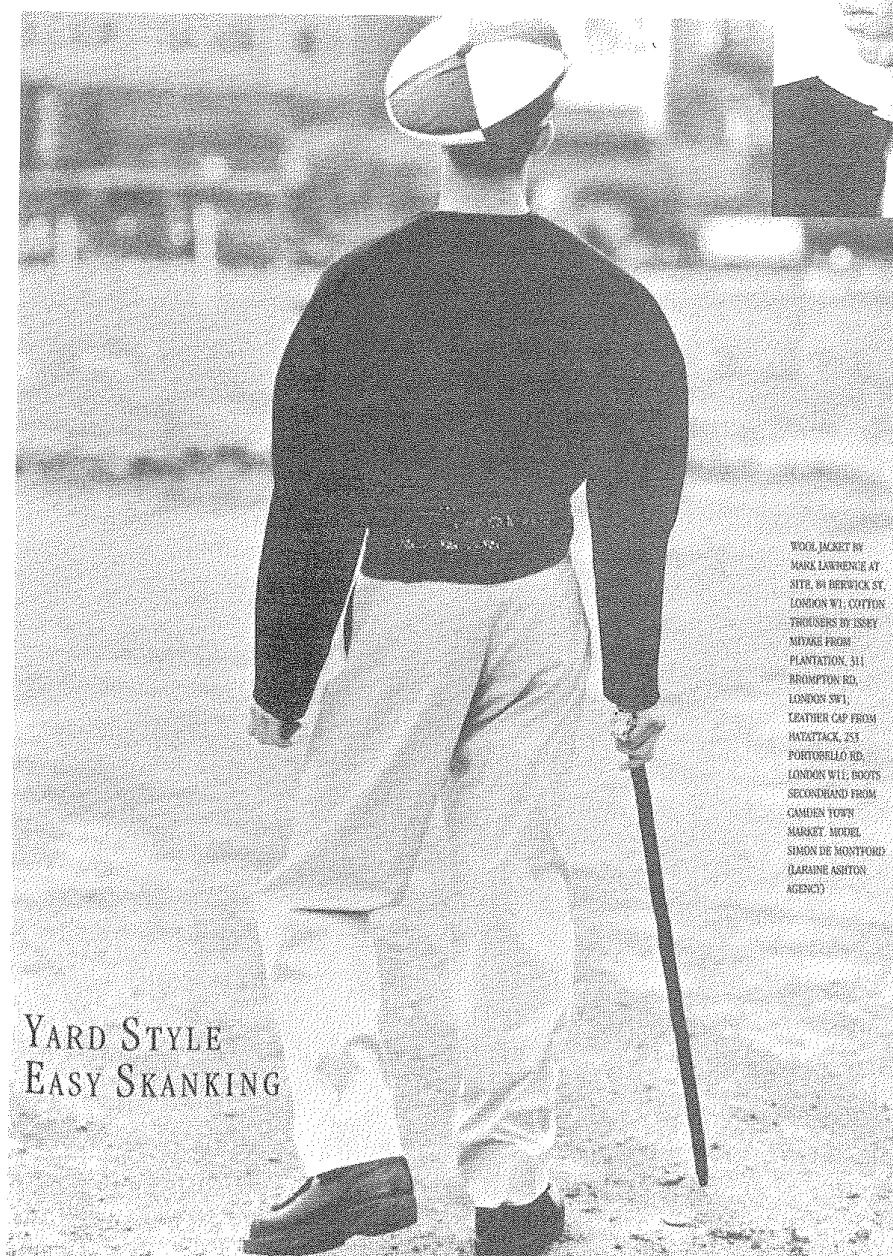


FIGURE 5.5 'Ragamuffin hand me down my walking cane', *Arena*, spring 1987.



WOOL JACKET BY
MARK LAWRENCE AT
SITE, 84 BEEBECK ST,
LONDON W1. COTTON
TROUSERS BY ISSEY
Miyake FROM
PLANTATION, 311
BROMPTON RD,
LONDON SW1.
LEATHER CAP FROM
HATATTACK, 255
PORTOBELLO RD,
LONDON W1. BOOTS
SECONDHAND FROM
CAMDEN TOWN
MARKET. MODEL
SIMON DE MONTFORT
(LAFARNE ASHTON
AGENCY)

YARD STYLE
EASY SKANKING

resolutely, stylishly masculine 'look' associated **with** 'street style' **in** the magazines. The urban connotations of 'street style' are underlined by the location setting in Figure 5.5: a piece of derelict wasteland within the city.

The posing and model's expressions are the next elements in this coding that I want to consider. In Figure 5.4, the conventions of modelling were knowingly drawn upon in order to attain the perfect pout and that moody stare. The use of these conventions of modelling was often particularly marked in stylings of this sort. Figure 5.5 exemplifies this in that the posing of the model plays on the distinctive stylized walk associated with particular forms of black subcultural masculinity (what the title of the whole fashion story calls 'ragamuffin'). The postures and forms of expression mobilized in these figures give a distinctive gloss to what I would call the romantic individuality of male youth. These are street-wise, pretty, hard boys. These romantic masculine identities offered resources for a 'tough', stylish masculinity - men who carried their **maleness** with a self-contained poise. A certain pre-permissive feel was important in accenting this masculine romanticism. By this I mean, the images draw on masculine codes which predate the shifts in masculinity associated with the late 1960s. This masculine romanticism is signified in Figure 5.4 by the selection of a seamless, glossy, black-and-white reproduction of the image. This alludes to the choice of film stock and lighting of 1940s' and 1950s' star portraits (**particularly** those associated with the Kobal collection).

Another coded feature of these images is the strongly narcissistic absorption or self-containment of the models. This is most clear in Figure 5.4. Posed alone, the gaze of the model is focused downwards and sideways out of frame, registering self-reflection and a hint of melancholy. Part of this relates to the way the image accents the codes of male romanticism and individualism that register the restrictions on young men in 1980s' 'hard times' culture (reduced life-chances, lack of money, the authoritarian shifts in social life) (Winship, 1986). More significantly, however, the conventions of posing and expression established in the spreads invite the viewer into complicity or identification with the model's narcissistic absorption in his 'look' or self-presentation; complicity with the ways in which he carries his 'looks' and appearance. This is underscored by the manner in which **the** photograph **is cut** or cropped and set on the page in Figure 5.4 which produces an intensity in the image: the model is brought close up to the viewer. What is important for my argument is **the** way this invited complicity between the viewer of the image and the model in relation to his (the model's) narcissism is focused upon men's bodies that are at once highly masculine and openly sensual. Two aspects are crucial here. First, the attention focused upon the model's appearance and the pleasures this establishes (**in the** quality and styling of the clothes, **in** his grooming, his 'looks', **in** the lighting and quality of the paper) are not directed towards an imagined feminine spectator who would mediate the relationship between the male model and the imagined male viewer. In other words, there is no woman in the representation or implicitly addressed by the image at whom these qualities might be addressed. The masculine-masculine look staged by this image is not coded within the norms of heterosexuality; his

'look' is **not** aimed at attracting an approving feminine look. Secondly, the choice **of** the model and some of the elements of clothing in **the** stylings allude to a tradition of representation **of** masculinity aimed at and taken up by gay men. What I mean here, specifically, is the valorizing of a 'tough' masculinity. In addition, Figure 5.4 draws upon an older tradition of representing male homosexuality associated **with** the beautiful, but melancholic young man (see Dyer, 1993).

I am not suggesting, however, that Figures 5.4 and 5.5 are gay male codings; or, rather, that they are straightforwardly that. There is a limited displaying of the surface of the body in the fashion spreads, and the choice of models breaks with the tighter generic figures of some more explicitly sexualized gay representations (such as the denim-clad boy or the cop). These images are instead strongly rooted in the stylistic community that they both invoked and simultaneously represented (London 'street style') and this was not strictly defined in terms of sexuality. What is pivotal, however, is the way the styling organizes a masculine-masculine look that draws upon a gay accent without either pathologizing that accent or re-inscribing a binary coding of gay or straight.

4.2 'Italian-American'

In commenting on Figures 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8, I want to draw attention to the role of ethnicity as a key element in the coding of these 'new man' versions of masculinity. By this I mean the way a signification of 'Italian-American-ness' is central to the coding of masculinity in these images. Casting is, again, a central code. It is through the casting of the models that 'Italian-American-ness' is principally signified. To make sure we get this message, Figure 5.8 belongs within a fashion story titled 'Wiseguys, goodfellas and godfathers show off their brand new suits'. A dark white skin tone, strong features and a marked sensuality (the lips, in particular, are pronounced) are prominent among the models chosen. As with the 'street style' images, these physical features signify both sensuality and hardness, or a mixture of both 'soft' and 'hard'. Thus, the sensuality connoted by the dark skin, eyes and full lips intersects with both strong chins and noses and the connotations of the bravado and swagger of an Italian-American 'macho'. The casting of these models, then, works to produce a set of connotations of masculinity similar to those signified by the casting of **light-black** models.

The location setting chosen in Figure 5.7 is also important in the signification of 'Italian-American-ness'. The backdrop of buildings and the general invocation of the public space of the city (New York?) grounds the 'look' of the models in this metropolitan landscape. These are men at home in this sophisticated milieu. Figure 5.7 also emphasizes the male camaraderie of being 'out on the town'. This is given greater resonance by the garments worn by the models (naval attire) and the explicit reference to shore leave given in the copy which accompanies the whole fashion story (the reference is to the 1949 movie, *On The Town*).

The selection and styling of garments, which draw upon naval apparel, helps to produce a strongly masculine 'look' through the codes of dress. The caps, wool jacket and heavy-duty canvas coats are resolutely masculine garments which emphasize - in the case of the coats - a solid masculine frame. This emphasis on a broad-shouldered look is equally clear in Figure 5.8 - through the cut of the suit. The accessories worn by the model in this image - the bracelet and the chunky ring - signify a brash, showy masculinity.

The selection of film stock and lighting is very important in these images. The grey-sepia tones signal a 1940s' America and, in a similar way to the glossy black-and-white film stock used in Figure 5.4, connote an era of more fixed and conservative gender identities (and, specifically, masculinities). In addition, the selection of this film stock and the glossy reproduction further emphasize the gloss of skin, eyes and hair, together with the texture of the clothing.

Finally, if we turn to the codes of posture and expression, Figure 5.6 mobilizes a similar code of expression to that deployed in Figure 5.4. Here the model's gaze is focused sideways and away from the imagined spectator and is accompanied by his melancholic expression. Again, this stages a sexually ambivalent masculine-masculine look. In Figure 5.8, the model looks moodily towards the camera, looking through the position of the spectator without engaging it.

4.3 'Conservative Englishness'

The casting of the models was key to producing the 'conservative Englishness look' (see Figures 5.9 and 5.10). The models both have pale white skin, with lighter hair and softer features than the Italian-American-looking models and the light-black model. The styling of the hair, however, is particularly important to the coding of the 'conservative Englishness look'. It is cropped at the sides and back, but left long enough on top to be pushed back. Although slightly dressed with hair-oil, the hair on top has been cut so that it can flop forward. This combines the romantic associations of long hair with the connotations of the masculine discipline and civilized neatness of the 'short back and sides'.

The repertoire of clothing worn is also key to signifying 'conservative Englishness'. In Figures 5.9 and 5.10, the models wear a version of classic-English menswear in the form of three-piece suits. The garments are made of cotton (the shirts) and a wool-mixture (the suits) - materials which signify quality and tradition. These values are also connoted in Figure 5.11, where we see a desk littered with the paraphernalia of the office: a Inlofax, leatherbound cases and fountain pens. The selection of these objects and their styling imprecisely evoke an inter-war England.

A sense of tradition, however, is not the only factor at play here in accenting the design codes of classic English menswear. Looming large in Figure 5.9 is the contemporary glossing of these codes of menswear by the addition of the

FIGURE 5.9
'Stitched up', GQ,
February/March
1989, photograph
by Tim Brett-Webb,
© The Conde Nast
Publications Ltd/GQ.



STITCHED UP

Three-piece suits are back in business, stylish trios with matching or contrasting waistcoats. See how things can be cut three ways – but remember that in the late eighties sharp tailoring and sharp practices often go together.

Above. Jacket, £305. Trousers, £151. Waistcoat, £155. All at Katharine Hamnett, 17 Clifford St and branches. Shirt, £32. Tie, £19. Both at Thomas Pink, 33 Dover St W1. Leather briefcase, £295, at Paul Smith, 41-44 Floral St WC2 and branches. Ray-Bans, from £45, Miller & Santhouse, 75 New Bond St W1. Forensic watch at Butler & Wilson, 20 South Molton St W1. Opposite, organizer by Coach Leatherware, £145, at Harrods. Gold pen by Dunhill, £145, 59 Duke St, St James SW1. Glasses, £20, at Red or Dead, 41 Noel St WC2. Poms, \$45. Bag, \$150. Writing case, £300. Cigar case, £50. All at Mansfield, 30-35 Drury Lane WC2. Tan writing portfolio, £135, by Coach Leatherware at Harrods.

bright tie and sunglasses. These contemporary elements work to signify the entrepreneurial codes of business indicated by the reference to 'sharp practices' in the written copy which accompanies the fashion story. The aggressive masculinity associated with these codes of business is reinforced by the posture and expression of the model in Figure 5.9: his pose and expression signify confident manliness and independence. In Figure 5.10, the posture and expression of the model are less aggressive, more open to the viewer. He openly solicits our look at him.

...Two's company, three's a deal



Above and opposite right. Puppy tooth check suit, £580. Waistcoat, £100. Blue striped shirt with white collar, £45. Paisley bow-tie, from £18. All at Polo Ralph Lauren, 143 New Bond St W1. Pocket chain, from £200, at Thomas Kettle, 55a Neal St WC2. Dark leather portfolio case with zipper by Coach Leatherware, £135, at Harrods. Meisterstück Mont Blanc pen, in pocket, £140, at Harrods; Selfridges; Liberty; W H Smith.

Opposite left. Windowpane check pure wool suit, £969. Self stripe cotton shirt, £150. Both at Gianni Versace, 22 Brompton Rd SW1; 18 New Bond St W1. Polka dot tie, £16, at Thomas Pink, 55 Dover St, W1.

'Stitched up', GQ, February/March 1989. photograph by Tim Brett-Webb, © The Conde Nast Publications Ltd/GQ.

The version of masculinity coded within Figures 5.9 and 5.10, then, is strongly marked by the interplay between, on the one hand, the assertive masculinity associated with a dominant version of Englishness and entrepreneurial codes of business and, on the other, the romantic connotations of narcissistic young manhood. These spreads code a spectatorial look in which identification with the models (especially in terms of the power of their imagined Englishness) sits alongside the sanctioning of visual pleasures in the cut of clothes, lighting and the 'look' of the models themselves.



FIGURE 5.11
'Stitched up', *GQ*
February/March
1989, photograph
by Tim Brett-Webb,
© The Conde Nast
Publications Ltd/*GQ*.

Let me take stock of what my reading of these three 'looks' has produced. I have argued that, across these three 'looks':

- 1 The casting of the models (especially in the 'street style' and 'Italian-American' images) codes an ambivalent masculinity which combines both boyish softness and a harder, assertive masculinity. This sanctions the display of masculine sensuality.

- 2 The clothes worn by the models are assertively masculine and often emphasize a broad-shouldered and solid body shape.
- 3 The models display highly masculine forms of posture and expression - notably, *connoting* masculine independence and assurance - as well as the coding of narcissistic self-absorption.
- 4 The choice of lighting and film stock emphasizes the surface qualities of skin, hair and eyes and the texture of clothing.
- 5 The cropping of the images works to produce an intensity in many of the images.

In addition, I suggested that these visual codes work to produce a spectatorial look for the imagined spectator. In my reading of the images, I invoked three aspects of this look. First, I commented upon **its** gendering and emphasized the way the imagined viewer of the images is assumed **to** be male. This establishes forms of masculine-masculine looking. Secondly, I reflected on **its** organization of identification; that is, on the way the images invite an imagined male viewer to invest himself in the 'look' being presented by the model. Thirdly, I referred to its organization of a pleasure in looking at an external object or 'other'. My attention to the gendering of the look was important. It directed us towards the way **the** visual pleasures coded in the representations are connected to wider gender scripts and sexual identities - in other words, who looks at whom and in what way. The coding of the look across the images as a masculine-masculine one frames the visual **pleasures** signified in the images. What figures prominently in this respect is the organization of identification in **the** look. It is clear that the imagined male spectator is literally invited to buy into the 'look' of the model; that is, to identify with his 'look'.

Visual pleasures associated with the display of menswear are also in play in the representations. In this sense, the images walk a fine line between inciting identification with the 'look' displayed and the marking of visual pleasures around the model so that he himself becomes the object of a desiring look. This interplay between identification with and pleasure in the models is strongly incited by the coding of masculine sensuality across the images and by the way some of the images draw on forms of looking which were historically the prerogative of gay men - without pathologizing that look. Emphasizing these visual pleasures and the forms of spectatorship or looking associated with them directs us towards a set of arguments about the impact of these images on their readers or viewers. In the next section, I want to open out some of the terms which have been introduced in this section and consider more explicitly how we might theorize the articulation of these images with the readers of them.