

The Performance of the Mesomorphic Homosexual Male

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With thanks to:
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1.0 Arbor/Rhizome

For the most part, the discourse surrounding male homosexuality in and around performance tends to be centred on the discourses of queer theory, drag, and camp, as well as the questioning of the notion of a fixed and binary gender. These discourses have proved to enlighten the minds of theorists, activists, and arts practitioners, yet seem to be, in a way, simplifying homosexuals. These discourses remain fixed upon male homosexuals as a whole or strident upon looking at the spectacle of the effeminate male and the mirage of those who bend the gender binary. I aim to, by dissecting the male homosexual subculture into constituent parts, look at one specific group within the homosexual community: the mesomorphic homosexual male. It is within the analysis of sub-cultures within the homosexual community that we may begin to understand the differences that accompany differing homosexual 'types' as well as look at the way dominant heterosexuality influences these sub-cultures differently.

Due to the specificity of my topic, I must leave some aspects of the homosexual male invisible. I will not be discussing the homosexual male in reference to his emotional or intellectual individualities to highlight the ideas; 1) that the body is the centre of his desires and 2) the presentation of himself as an object for inspection and consumption. Furthermore, I will be discussing homosexual men mainly in regards to their physical attributes and their libido. As suggested by the field of performance study, humans are constantly performing adopted behaviours. These behaviours develop through repetition and become our outward and inward expression and understanding of our identity. Therefore, identity and gender are performed

and act as key elements in the way we live. Accepting that the behaviours we carry out in life are performed actions, it is in an attempt to expand how the concepts of narcissism and self-objectification are perceived that I will look into the performance of the mesomorphic homosexual male.

I will look further into the myth of the mesomorphic homosexual male and how these men influence society by deviating from the heterosexual, patriarchal norm of the western world. My dissertation aims to expound the hegemonic structures that are in place both in the heterosexually dominated culture and in the homosexual sub-culture by illustrating how the mesomorphic homosexual male comes to find himself within these structures.

1.1 Object/Subject

To begin, it is necessary to come to an understanding of the object of this line of inquisition—the mesomorphic homosexual male. This term, ‘mesomorphic’ was introduced by American psychologist William Herbert Sheldon (Palmer 2003, p. 8). In the 1940s, Sheldon developed a theory in which he defined three basic somatotypes, or body types (Ibid.) He attempted to find correlations between the body, the corpse, and the personality—the ‘self’; I am mainly interested in his differentiation of the physiques (Ibid.). These three somatotypes are ectomorph, mesomorph, and endomorph:

Ectomorph: characterized by long and thin muscles/limbs and low fat storage; receding chin, usually referred to as slim;

Mesomorph: characterized by large bones, solid torso, low fat levels, wide shoulders with a narrow waist;

Endomorph: characterized by increased fat storage, a wide waist and a large bone structure.
(Palmer 2003, p. 8)

Due to the definition of the term 'mesomorph', the word can be synonymous with 'muscular'. I prefer the analytical connotation that arises from the use of 'mesomorph' in the first instance, as it highlights the objectification of the body within analysis. Later in the essay, I will refer to the same physical characteristic as 'muscular' as a way to differentiate 'muscular' from 'mesomorphic' to stress its use within common cultural ideology as a socially constructed ideal. In essence, the object of this study is the homosexual male who has a defined musculature, or—as stated later—views this mesomorphic physique as his intended ideal self.

Michael Andorka, in his graduate thesis entitled "Being Attractive Is All That Matters: Objectification Theory and Gay Men," speaks of the reliance of the homosexual male on his body image as the deciding factor in the attraction of a partner (2007, p. 4). In this vein, it is not merely an ideal, but an ideological necessity to have a 'naturally' fit body, in which both slender and muscularity are achieved simultaneously (Ibid.). This focus on the physical appearance of the body in regards to the attraction of potential partners can be seen as self-objectification in which the man turns "the objective eye of an observer on the self, and [sees himself] as only a body or 'sight' to be viewed by others" (Ibid.).

Though generated from within the self, self-objectification as a phenomenon is inherently derived from the cultural existence of objectification (Ibid.). The viewing of other men as sexually attractive objects creates in the self a desire to be an attractive object for

consumption or acquisition as well. Without the existence of the 'object of desire', there would be no desire to be an object; yet the fact of the matter is that objectification and self-objectification continually perpetuate and enable the others' reality.

As will be mentioned throughout this essay, this reflexive perpetuation of cause and effect are the driving forces behind the mesomorphic homosexual male's contemporary reality. Furthermore, I myself perpetuate objectification by looking at the mesomorphic homosexual male as an 'object' to be studied and not a 'subject' entitled to have individualised free-thought and nuanced experiences to build their personal identities. Still, it is upon this making *something* visible, while making other aspects invisible that the notion of scientific objectification is based (Ashworth, R in eds. Boumans & Beaulieu 2004, p. 106). Therefore, it is only in the interest of investigating the mesomorphic homosexual male as an observable culture phenomenon that I engage in this theoretical objectification.

In contemporary society, the drive for homosexual men to self-objectify and to focus substantially on body image can be attributed to two major factors. Firstly, studies have shown that men—regardless of the gender of their sexual partners—place a greater importance on the physical attributes of their potential partners than do females (Andorka 2007, pp. 3-4). Consequently, the male-male relations that define male homosexuality would infer that body image is more important for the homosexual male than the heterosexual male, as he engages more fully in the cyclic objectification/self-objectification. Secondly, the media—especially in reference to homosexual male pornography, magazines, strippers and

models—portray the commercially ideal, acceptable sexual partner as ‘naturally’ fit, slender, and/or muscular.

Due to the heightened awareness and consideration for body image by the mesomorphic homosexual male, this man can often be perceived as narcissistic. Most commonly, the received notion of narcissism lies in the simple definition of self-love or self-consumption. It carries with it a stigma, which deems these actions as egotistical, unhealthy, and generally unacceptable. It is this stigmatic definition that I would like to combat by discussing modestly the overwhelming topic of narcissistic love—in relation to homosexuals—in the field of psychoanalysis.

As with most psychoanalytical research, let us begin by defining narcissistic love according to Sigmund Freud. He states in his 1914 “On Narcissism”:

A person may love:

1. According to the narcissistic type:
 - a. what he is himself (actually himself)
 - b. what he once was
 - c. what he would like to be**
 - d. someone who was once apart of himself
2. According to the anaclitic type:
 - a. the woman who tends
 - b. the man who protects

And the succession of substitutes which take their place.

(cited in Bruhm, 2000, p. 83, emphasis added)

So, although narcissism is sometimes understood to mean simply self-love, Freud makes it clear that narcissism is not merely a fixation with the self but also a desire to engage with an object in which the man can find personal relation. Even in the case of loving what he himself is, narcissism should be looked at differently than auto-eroticism, where the person sexually fetishises a part of himself as an outside object to bring himself pleasure (Bredbeck in ed. Meyer 1996, p. 59).

Narcissism, in Freud's theorisation, is a love for an object outside oneself that reminds the man of his self, or of the self he would like to be or have been (Horne & Lewis 1996, p. 181). Narcissism does not imply that pleasure is not gained via an outside object; but it requires an object that has some fantasized relation/similarity to the self (Ibid.). Furthermore, Freud—in his earlier writings—stated that it could be supposed that homosexuals are innately narcissistic due to their rejection of their mother as their love-object in childhood, and henceforth, their adoption of themselves as their love-object (Bredbeck in ed. Meyer 2000, p. 61). While still associating with the mother, after her rejection as love-object, the homosexual, according to Freud, then desires to find another male to take care of as his mother took care of him (Ibid.)

Freud sets up the dichotomy of narcissistic/anaclitic love as an emphasis on the homosexual/heterosexual binary—respectively listed. There is no evidence to support the substantiality of this argument, nor does it stand up to his later declaration that all humans are born as bisexuals and that, in fact, there is a primary narcissism in everyone in early development (Bruhm 2000, p. 83; Dean 2001, pp. 125-126). Due to this Freud complicates what I aim to simplify. Regardless of absolute innate narcissism within homosexuals, I postulate that the mesomorphic homosexual male loves narcissistically, in as far as he desires men who reflect his ideal 'self.' Therefore, the man desires an 'other' with the mesomorphic physique that he himself wishes to obtain or has obtained.

In Reina Lewis' essay, "The Lesbian Gaze", she discusses the way in which a lesbian views another woman in the printed media. She develops Laura Mulvey's analysis that cinema is constructed to objectify women for the idealistic male spectator (Horne & Lewis 1996). It is appropriate to look at Lewis' theory as a means to explore how the homosexual spectator views a model (or henceforth a person) of the same sex. Laura Mulvey's theory is based very closely to the notion of *scopophilia*, in which pleasure is derived from the act of looking. This causes the woman to be sexually objectified in cinema by the male spectator's gaze (Horne & Lewis 1996, p. 181). It is through the male's scrutiny of the woman's body as an object for sexual gratification that perpetuates the male gaze as innately objectifying.

While Lewis does not deny the belief that a viewer can objectify a woman, she introduces a form of narcissism coming from within the lesbian viewers' feelings towards the female model. Using Freud as her focal point, Lewis states that Freudian narcissism "is not merely a desire for identification for the object of one's own desiring gaze, but also a desire to experience oneself being loved by others" (Horne & Lewis 1996, p. 182). In this thinking—appropriating it for the homosexual male gaze—a man viewing a male model in a magazine does not merely want to sexually engage with the model, but also wants to be the model. The homosexual male desires the male model physically; he also desires to become the object of desire for other homosexual men. This narcissistic loving becomes an insular fantasy in which the man simultaneously wishes to be subject and object of his affection.

It is due to this cyclic love that the mesomorphic homosexual male can be led to the conflict of self-influenced body shame. This arrives when one compares one's actual self to an ideal self and believes that between the two there are discrepancies (Andorka 2007, p. 5). These discrepancies create the desire/need to begin a course of body changes in order to achieve his ideal self—one found desirable by others.

1.2 Innate/Constructed

Before continuing to explain the ways in which the image of the mesomorphic homosexual male is a performance, it is necessary to discuss the field of performance studies and my reasoning for its engagement. Performance studies is an area of research, which in its essence defies exact definition. Perhaps it is more useful to mention it as a kind of enquiry into the world/society in which we exist. Performance study practitioners engage in a wide variety of fields of discourse, such as gender studies, psychoanalysis, queer theory, and linguistics. Furthermore, performance studies utilises 'participant observation' as a way of garnering 'criticism, irony, and personal commentary as well as sympathetic participation' (Schechner 2006, p. 2). 'Participant observation' is key to the understanding that any study done is subject to the beliefs, experiences, and social environment of the writer as much as that of the object of study.

The key to performance studies is not to find absolutes, but instead to encounter new ways to understand the actions and interactions of humans in the world. Performance studies accepts that anything can be viewed as performance, but I do not wish to overly reiterate this fact. Instead, I wish to

look at the ways in which the enacting of a specific role and image within western society is a performance.

Viewing the world—more specifically human action in the world—as performance can be traced far back in history. One of the most common examples is the concept of *theatrum mundi* from the Elizabethan Era, exemplified by William Shakespeare in his work *As You Like It*, “All the world’s a stage / And all the men and women merely players” (Schechner 2006, p. 14). When we view people as performers or ‘players’ in a ‘grand theatre’, we can view the actions and behaviours they display as having been trained or ‘rehearsed’ (Ibid.) These ‘rehearsed’ actions are received as natural or unrehearsed because their repetition creates a lexicon of behaviours, which can be performed as to achieve certain roles within the ‘stage’ of societal interaction.

Richard Schechner, a leading performance studies scholar refers to this rehearsal/training as the performance of ‘restored behaviours’, or ‘twice-behaved behaviours’ (Schechner 2006, p. 28). In my line of enquiry, I am most interested in engaging with this notion of restored behaviours in the performance of everyday life. It is clear that as a child we learn from what we experience around us, imitating the behaviours of our primary caregiver as a way of learning how to perform—in the sense of achievement—properly in life. These behaviours not only inform the physical actions that we enact throughout our lives, but also generate the construction of our identity and reasoning behind our actions (Schechner 2006, p. 167).

Gender theorist, Judith Butler, in her treatise on gender, not only implicitly derives her work from *theatrum mundi*, but also uses another explicit device of performance studies (Schechner 2006, p. 152). This is the utilization of the term *performativity* (referring to that which has the qualities of performance, 'performance-like') to debunk the ideology that gender expression is an innate/primal function (Ibid.). Butler states:

[The idea] That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notion of essential sex, a true or abiding masculinity or femininity, are also constituted as part of the strategy by which the performative aspect of gender is concealed.
(cited in Schechner 2006 p151)

Butler emphasises in her writing the concept of the individual as a performer who takes on a role, learns a script—written by a dominant ideology of the society—and performs his/her role (Ibid.). By understanding gender as a series of repetitive performed behaviours, one can begin to realise the possibility that, if a person's gender is constructed, there can be no absolute or correct performance of it (Ibid.).

Though Butler is quite clearly referring to the performance of the expression of Man and Woman, Masculine and Feminine, once we postulate that gender is merely a performance of social construction then sexuality, race, and identity all follow at its heels (Schechner 2006). In conclusion, performance studies enables us to interact with the world not as a given truth, but as a social construction in which we rehearse our individual identities/behaviours and enact our selves; body image becoming an outward performance of our own construction.

Continuing on with my enquiry into the mesomorphic homosexual male (now that there is hopefully an understanding of the basic ways in which he performs his own identity, constantly carrying out rehearsed actions and repetitive behaviours) I wish to look closer at his actions in relation to performance, narcissism, and body change. In *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Schechner places the infinitive “to perform” into four categories; “being,” “doing,” “showing doing” and “explaining ‘showing doing”” (Schechner 2006, p. 28). He goes on to state:

“Being” is existence itself. “Doing” is the activity of all that exists, from quarks to sentient beings to supergalactic strings. “Showing doing” is performing: pointing to, underlining, and displaying doing. “Explaining ‘showing doing”” is performance studies.
(Ibid.)

Using this as a model, the mesomorphic homosexual male is in a constant performance as he embraces the quality of “showing doing” perhaps more explicitly than others.

When walking down the street, the male – wanting to be the object of others’ desire – may wear certain clothes, which show off the musculature of his body. This is due to his belief that his ideal partner is a man who finds his musculature attractive. Following on from this, the presentation of his body not only is a show of doing—he performs masculinity and muscularity in his gait and behaviours—but he doubly engages in, what I will define as, *showing done* or a showing of past actions he has enacted. He is *showing done* because his image is performing the fact that he trains his body; he is performing not just an image of an ideal in that moment, but performs his past in the same instance.

I mention this performance of past, not because it is invalid for every other person, but because for the mesomorphic homosexual male the physical training of the body is a crucial factor in his presentation of acceptable body image. This physical training is one of the ways the male tries to deal with his sense of body shame, attempting to alter his body *into* his ideal and *for* his ideal. The notion of the desired partner also determines the males' actions as a performance, for as Schechner describes, "performances exist only as actions, interactions, and relationships" (2006, p. 30). In this sense, performance can only be seen in the "showing doing" because this "showing" implies directly that there be an observer.

For the mesomorphic homosexual male, the observer is his potential sexual partner(s). He is performing the role of muscular male—a role that has been developed by society and by the homosexual sub-culture—as a way of gaining the positive attention of his ideal man, who is, in fact, his ideal self. He takes on the behaviours of his ideal man—physical training and clothing, for example—and through mimesis (or mimicry) performs his role in the aforementioned insular fantasy. He performs in this specific way because he assumes that his spectator—the man he desires—acts upon the same narcissistic desires as himself. The training he undergoes to achieve his ideal body creates a paradox in the performance of himself within society. His past/training is written upon his body, yet contemporary culture relies upon the mesomorphic male to present himself as if this muscular corpse is 'natural'; in today's society it is within this 'natural' that we are told we shall find beauty, health, and longevity and as such we partake in the hierarchisation of *organic*, *free-range*, and *no-additives*. In

this way, the mesomorphic homosexual male does not simply perform his own identity but he is urged to perform a façade as well.

1.3 Natural/History

After having discussed the way in which the mesomorphic homosexual male performs himself, it is now useful to look at the way in which the myth of his body performs upon society. Roland Barthes, in his book *Mythologies*, describes the way in which the term 'myth' can be used out with its traditional meaning—a set of beliefs that are obviously false. Instead of this traditional use, he re-appropriates the term as a way to look at a sign system (Chandler 2008, n.p.). For Barthes, 'myth' is like an extended metaphor, comprised of an advanced sign system in which the objects signify an ideal or concept and in turn this concept reiterates itself within the objects that signify it (Ibid.).

Barthes refers to the 'myth' as a way in which society portrays cultural phenomena as 'natural' and self-evident, when in fact they are products of a cyclic reinforcement of the dominant ideology (Barthes 1993, p. 11). In this way, we can see that a 'myth' is not merely a false belief, but in fact performs in society through repetitive nuances as a way of constructing cultural norms and belief systems. The following passage is a look at the muscular male body as an object, which signifies ideal masculinity; therefore, in essence, the myth of muscle can also be seen as the idealisation of masculinity:

Muscular men have been around for hundreds of years, as can be seen through artefacts from Antiquity. These bodies were etched in marble and painted on urns as representations of fact as well as deification. It is within these muscles, this sculpted physique, that we can see the Gods of Antiquity. Muscular men, in contemporary society are on a kind of pilgrimage in which they mould their bodies through hard work and determination as a way to achieve a moment in the presence of these Gods—in the presence of each other, the presence of themselves, the presence of an ideal. It is not unlike the trials of Hercules—the rigorous training, the masochistic dietary restrictions and vigilance. Though, perhaps we should look at the bodies painted on the terracotta, for we must acknowledge their position as art in history, even if they are only a remaining glimpse into the past.

Art has a way of morphing its subjects—either for better or for worse. The art of the Greek and Romans could all be idealisations of Gods and Heroes. Without the ‘blind’ camera, it is hard to tell where the truth lies. If these bodies are myths or idealisations, then perhaps the physical equivalent in modern society is unbearably unachievable. Are men today caught up in a fantasy passed on by generations of the white male with a God-like physique? Looking at media documentation today of men and their musculature, one can see that these bodies of pulsing perfection are not just a fantasy, but an attainable reality.

Muscular men can be compared to Bulls. They are the epitome of strength and virility. Solid muscle mass gives the notion that the blood flows vigorously through the body, rippling the veins, accentuating the idea that

this blood will flow just as vigorously as it engorges the penis, creating a rock hard erection for breeding. It is not only a rock for breeding, but the solidity of the body that creates a sense of security behind which a loved one could take refuge. For the man's loved one, the muscular man is a haven for the meek, the timid, and the mild. For a foe, the muscle is a fortress with a defence system that knows no end. It will destroy—like an artillery tank—all that stands in its way. All of this is primal.

In contemporary society, the muscular man shows his dominance by the size of his biceps and pectorals. His difference to the slender woman is more than emphasised by the span of his shoulders, showing not just difference but a domination of her on a physical level. This muscularity is processed into masculinity, as we see in the musculature of the professional athletes in the media and the action heroes from the films. They speak to us about what men should look like, how men are meant to be. They taunt us with their achievement; they show us its naturalness and point to Antiquity for support. It comes from nostalgia—this jealousy turned into fear, disdain or indifference, from remembering the days as a young boy wanting to be bigger, faster, and stronger.

In our health conscious consumerism that is spreading like wildfire through the western world, these men become the beacon of healthy living, with little body fat and an active body. Their hearts are seen to beat twice as strong and we can only assume twice as long. These men are who we wish to father our children and be our protectors. These men are the ones to which we have become servile. It is the muscle that we begin to respect because of our increasing inability to keep up with their virile stability. Now,

we even want these men to be our governmental leaders, as Arnold Schwarzenegger can depict.

Furthermore, it can be stated that though these men become the epitome of the masculine, they have gone through a process of becoming themselves, which can only be connected with their desire to be something other than what they were before—a dissatisfaction that pervaded their youth or their early adult life in which they decided that they needed to gain greater control of their lives and the way in which they are received in society. The muscular man performs the role of chief executor in the body conscious contemporary society for no other reason than he has asserted himself as a God-like mortal 'fit' for the taking up of present authority.

Just as Roland Barthes states in his preface to *Mythologies*, I am in no way deeming the above as an absolute truth, nor as an objective gaze at the muscular man. Though, as Barthes questions, is there in fact such a clean-cut dichotomy between the fact of the scientist and fiction of the writer? (Barthes 1993, p. 12) I write using my own words and my own thoughts, though as a member of society my opinions and reception of the subject are fashioned by history and by the society in which I live. In that case, the words I write are not merely my own, but belong to a sign system much larger than myself. I wrote, as Barthes did, as a way to question what is *nature* and what is *history* (Barthes 1993, p. 11).

In contemporary society, there is too often the notion that what we view is 'natural', while it has, in fact, been rendered 'natural' by history and a long line of repetitive behaviour. It is an expanding of "what-goes-without-saying"

which is hidden in the naturalisation of such contrived occurrences (Barthes 1993, p. 11). While I posit that what I see in the myth of muscle is my truth, I cannot deny Barthes in the last line of his Preface, “What I claim is to live to the full the contradiction of my time, which may well make sarcasm the condition of truth” (Barthes, 1993, p. 12).

1.4 Heterosexual/Homosexual

The final performance I would like to discuss in this essay is the way in which the mesomorphic homosexual male performs deviantly in the heterosexual patriarchal society. This deviance can be seen mainly in the actions that threaten the ‘myth of muscle’—such as the governmental disapproval of drug-use—and, secondly, in the threat the male poses against normative heterosexuality.

Firstly, under the pressures of the male to achieve his ideal physique, body shame can lead the male to begin a series of methods used to augment his ‘present’ body. With the use of anabolic steroids (illegal in The United States), poor nutrition, and/or use of recreational drugs, some homosexual men attempt to achieve the ideal slim waist and large muscles, associated with the mesomorph (Andorka 2007, p. 4). In a study done in London in 2000, it was stated that one in seven homosexual men attending a gym had used anabolic steroids in the previous twelve months (Bolding, Sherr, et al. 2000, n.p.). If trends continued, then it can be assumed that the ratio has increased in the following nine years. Without research carried out on the use of steroids amongst homosexual men in The United States, it is difficult

to say the amount of men who are illegally augmenting their bodies through the use of anabolic steroids.

On this note, I wish to discuss the use of recreational drugs as a means to alter or modify the body. This type of drug use can have effects such as denying appetite and dehydrating the body, leading to the slimming of the body and the showing of muscle definition through the skin (Andorka 2007, p. 4). Under both the British and American governments, the use of narcotics is illegal. This illegal behaviour situates the users in a place of immoral deviance, as constructed by the hegemonic structures who declare dominant ideology.

Besides the illegal nature of drugs, there is also a deviance in the way this behaviour denies the idealisation of the muscular man. The mesomorphic man is supposed to be a healthy individual whose physique is natural. Far from aiding in male virility, anabolic steroid use has been proven to have side effects, such as the atrophy of testicles and depression during gaps in steroid cycles (Bolding, Sherr et al. 2000, n.p.). Furthermore, there is a trend among HIV+ homosexual men to use anabolic steroids to combat HIV deterioration (Bergeron 2000, n.p.). This act of building the body up to the 'healthy' ideal hides the fact that the body carries the HIV virus (Ibid.). Regardless of HIV status, the use of drugs creates a performance aimed at disguising the inner 'self' while eliciting the exterior as flawless.

Secondly, the mesomorphic homosexual male's' performance of physical masculinity poses a threat to the dominant heterosexual culture. In her writing, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitutions," Butler purports that

the contemporary western society endorses a normative heterosexuality in which the only 'natural' sexual relations are those that are between a Man and Woman, as this is the only route for the continuation of kinship as way to enforce the "phallogentric social order" (Schechner, 2006, p. 153). Due to this "compulsory heterosexuality", anyone outwith this normative process of childbirth is deemed as performing sexual deviance (Ibid.)

In addition, the unique case that we find with the mesomorphic homosexual male is his performance of the image of ideal masculinity. His body is seen as the signifier for masculinity and yet, in heterosexual society, he is deemed 'effeminate' – especially if he takes on a passive role in sexual intercourse, as this is the role reversed for the Woman in the phallogentric ideology (MacKinnon, 2003, p. 7). Due to his 'passivity,' he threatens homosocial relationships¹ that occur between heterosexual men.

It can be argued that heterosexual men are threatened by the thought that their camaraderie or close-friendship with another man could be misconstrued to be homosexual interest, as the mesomorphic homosexual male is not easily distinguished physically from the heterosexual masculine man (Burt 1995, p. 23). Due to this, one could state that it is less of a threat to heterosexual masculinity for homosexual men to perform the physical characteristics of Woman, for then there would be no ability to mistake his actions for homosexual interest. It is in this disruption of heterosexual social norms that we find the way in which the mesomorphic homosexual male performs interactively with society.

¹ Homosocial refers to social relationships which are between persons of the same sex out with a sexual relationship (Burt 1995, p. 23).

1.5 Open/Close

One topic that I have not yet discussed is the notion of what this 'mesomorphic ideal' actually depicts, *sans* sarcasm. In his book, *Representing Men*, Kenneth MacKinnon touches on the transparency in today's society of the body as "an object of social practice" (Messner in MacKinnon, 2003, p. 5). One could believe that the craze of healthy living and exercise has shown the world that it takes work to become muscular. Although the media may show it as an easily achievable goal, for many people it is not. MacKinnon also accentuates the transparency of the muscular body as he cites Murray Healey's example of Marky Mark as "hypermasculinity":

His macho dress codes, his gym-created body, his near-nakedness, are parts of the means by which the star declare his machismo. However, hypermasculinity exposes, rather than allays, anxiety about masculinity. There is clearly a contradiction in *trying* to be a real man, since this exposes the real man's reality as an achievement, not biological fact... 'the more he resorts to his body as proof of his virility, the more he 'unmans' himself, in effect admitting that his only asset is his body. (2003 p5-6)

With the goal of the mesomorphic homosexual male to perform physically this notion of hypermasculine through his musculature, we see that he perpetuates his body as his singular asset. By hiding his individual personality under the muscular exterior, the male presents himself as an object for sexual consumption, whether that be physical or scopophilic. The general definition of narcissism, perhaps has been overlooked in the analysis of this male and can arguably be present in his self-determination to become the epitome of physical masculinity. The problem with the general received notion of narcissism is that it stigmatises his behaviour while I avoid such negative accusation. This transparency of muscular body image also presents negativity as the mesomorphic homosexual male is seen to be compensating or covering up his inadequacy and body shame.

This essay attempts to examine the position of the mesomorphic homosexual male by looking at the ways he, his ideal, and his body perform within society. It is in no way conclusive or exhaustive, but it was not meant to be exact or wholly formed. I liken this type of exploration to a still life by an artist—painting is never unbiased or able to encapsulate a person in its entirety.

I would like to conclude though with a query as to why this mesomorphic homosexual male wants to epitomise masculinity. Does normative heterosexuality's repression of the homosexual make him want to be 'straight-acting'? Is this the homosexual defence against being immediately labelled as effeminate because of the sexual desire to be with another man? Homosexuals create their own hierarchies in which the ruling class could either be the 'straight-acting' man or the man with the largest penis. These arbitrary ideals could be an exemplification of the potentially destructive effect of male/male (objectifier/objectified) relations, in regards to self-esteem and self-objectification. As queer theory has attempted since its inception — with the realisation of the 'self' as an ever changing personal-social construction and the view that social norms are repeated and thus remain valid — this type of examination shows that there is fragility in the dominant ideology, meaning that it *is* possible to shift.

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