Picturing an Epidemic: An Analysis of Representations of AIDS in British Media Culture

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Abstract

By considering examples of representations of AIDS from across the cultural spectrum, the thesis addresses the processes by which a popular understanding of the condition in this country has been constructed. Whilst many of the representations do not originate in the UK, the increasing level of communicative interaction of global culture mean that there is a constant exchange across national boundaries, as there is across many other discourses, but which at particular moments have a local impact which can be considered in itself. In the light of this, the thesis considers representations circulating within the realms of: advertising and photography centred on the photograph of David Kirby taken by Therese Frare, newspaper coverage of the death of Freddie Mercury, Hollywood film including *Philadelphia,* health education advertisements, and art through a series of paintings by Derek Jarman. The starting point for this process in each chapter is the analysis of specific iconic images positioned within particular discursive frames. AIDS, as a socially significant locus of meaning around issues of disease and sexuality rather than just a strictly medical syndrome of opportunistic diseases, has so far been largely confined to the mediated realm of representation for many people in this country. Because the constituency most affected in this country is that of gay men these representations have been continuously shaped by broader ideological concerns relating to issues of power, sexuality and legitimacy. To develop a useful sense of the implications of this across the cultural spectrum and to offer a contribution to the field of knowledge, the thesis addresses the primary sites of media culture that people engage with on a regular basis to offer a reading not confined to one discursive order. From such an analysis an assessment is made of those factors that can be seen to articulate an understanding of the condition beyond the limits of any one cultural formation working within the matrix of the dominant cultural order.

Contents

> An anxiety about contagion is abroad. Where once there seemed order, there is now a pervasive fear, not so much of disorder as of formlessness: an amorphous vista of murky and uncertain waters and a reshaped landscape which we must learn to navigate without reliable maps. This is the metaphorical landscape on which the struggle over values is being fought.
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> Jeffrey Weeks (1995) (4)

This thesis intends to analyse a number of representations of AIDS in media culture that have worked to construct a popular understanding of the condition. The term 'AIDS' itself is illustrative of the way in which the condition has become overdetermined by a variety of concerns but, primarily, by those relating to disease, sexuality and gender. AIDS - Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome - strictly only refers to the later symptomatic stages of HIV infection, but it has a wider meaning as the socially constructed and contested point of reference for this epidemic. Through an examination of specific representations, the thesis will attempt to identify some of the ideas and beliefs that have informed the production, reception and dissemination across the cultural spectrum of such images and the way in which they are framed. The PhD seeks to provide a critical overview of those images of HIV/ AIDS that have played a central role in informing, constructing and defining the experience of the condition in this country since its identification in America in 1981, and to place these within the broader matrix of representations that define our knowledge of it.

Simon Watney wrote in 1987 that: 'Aids is not only a medical crisis on an unparalleled scale, it involves a crisis of representation itself, a crisis over the

entire framing of knowledge about the human body and its capacities for sexual pleasure.' (9) The aim of the thesis has been to develop a method of identifying and analysing those representations that have reflected and mediated such a crisis. It was in 1981 that a range of opportunistic diseases were first identified as part of a condition later to be called Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome. Since then, much has been written of the condition, its associated metaphors, and the political and ideological motives that have structured and defined its medical and social meanings. What has become apparent is that much of what passes as being 'about AIDS' is in fact more a reflection of how AIDS can serve as a site or screen for the projection of contemporary fears and anxieties. Within any number of discourses, AIDS serves as part of a moment to attempt to stabilise particular identities acting as the negative element of the equation of identity - I am what I am because I am not the 'other'. In this sense, the thesis doesn't deal with aspects of what it actually means to be HIV+ or living with AIDS or any of the many important issues around health concerns, access rights, treatments, discrimination, or civil rights relating to it. The subject of the thesis is positioned within media culture - the realm of representation and images that surround us, inform us and even serve to allow us to construct our 'imaginary' self. Within each of the media examined what is obvious is that AIDS is a 'crisis site' where representations are taken up and mobilised not to address the vitally important issues needed in relation HIV/AIDS but to shore up and reinforce pre-existing positions and agendas. From this perspective what can be said about the representations is that, to extend the point made by Ernst

Gombrich about the process of depiction, they are more like previous representations than about any real or existing condition.

In the course of this analysis I have tried to address the primary sites of media culture that the majority of people engage and negotiate with in relation to the subject of HIV/AIDS, with the exception of television. That is: advertising and photography; newspapers, especially the tabloid press; Hollywood film; health education. Central to the approach adopted in examining each of these sites is the belief that as they struggle to deal with this completely new phenomenon their immediate resource is an already existing structure of beliefs, ideas and representations. So, because AIDS came to attention first amongst gay men, the agenda was one of 'deviant behaviour' because for dominant culture that is where homosexuality is positioned. Similarly, it was possibly sexually transmitted therefore the agenda adopted was that associated with older venereal diseases.

With regard to the condition itself, by 1991 Jeffrey Weeks (1991) argued that there were three distinct phases in the social response to AIDS: 1981-2, a period he refers to as 'the dawning crisis' where a growing sense of anxiety was matched by systematic indifference on the part of governments to the lives of those most affected; 1982-5 as a period of moral panic that saw the escalation of the media's vitriolic treatment of gay men and the perpetuation of the attitude that the condition was self-inflicted in a period in which gay organisations worked to develop safer-sex education strategies; 1985 to the

present (1991) defined by 'crisis management' as governments at last made some efforts to address what was now recognised to be a potential general risk (116-122). Of course, there are alternative periodizations but Weeks' formulation is as good as any and provides a useful starting point for analysis throughout the thesis.

By 1992 AIDS as a subject for media scrutiny was starting to wane and by 1995/6 the cataclysmic predictions of the projected rates of infection to the population in general had not been borne out, to the extent that it was argued that a 're-gaying' of the condition was needed to redirect the emphasis to those still most affected by it.[1] In general, the thesis, because it is concerned with how dominant institutions mediated and constructed the social meaning of AIDS, focuses on the period after 1985, the year in which Rock Hudson died from AIDS-related illness. As the medical historian Virginia Berridge (1991b) has observed, it can be argued that AIDS now has its own history rather than just borrowing from the more distant past with associations of syphilis and plague.

One of the most powerful qualities of such a newly identified condition such as AIDS was its ability to permeate and affect the entire spectrum of representation centred on the body. AIDS acted as a locus for the unleashing of waves of anxiety about every aspect of the body, its desires and functions

[1] This debate began to emerge in May/June 1992 from those such as Edward King writing in the *Pink Paper*.

and so, rather than limit the analysis to one discourse, I have examined representations from across the cultural spectrum. By ranging across the boundaries of representation it is hoped to bring to light some of the silences and contradictions that would otherwise not be apparent. The way in which AIDS has been visually constructed within the field of representation is the primary concern of the thesis.

The five chapters of the thesis examine representations as they are positioned within particular discursive formations. A discursive formation, with its rules, values and structures, determines the primary level of meaning with which the reader engages a representation. In a general sense, the discourse acts as a mediating body (with the materiality that this implies)[2] between the representation and its meaning that is constantly subject to negotiation (which it resists) and acts as, what Alan Sekula (1982) calls, 'an arena of information exchange' (84). The discourse provides limits on the possibility for meaning, as Sekula states:

> A discourse... can be defined in rather formal terms as the set of relations governing the rhetoric of related utterances. The discourse is, in the most general sense, the context of the utterance, the conditions that constrain and support its meaning, that determine its semantic target. (85)

Further, this field of meaning, whilst shaped in a broad sense by the discursive

[2] I am thinking here of Foucault (1972) writing in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* of how the discursive formation *forms* the objects of which it speaks, such as psychiatric discourse, that acts to organise, classify and characterize the relations between institutions, social forms etc. In this sense, it is not the case that the discourse is merely the coincidence of reality and a language but a group of rules that orders the objects that are given shape by the practices of the discourse itself that :'constitute the conditions of their historical appearance'. (48) For discussion of this see Mills (1997), pp.48-76.

boundaries, is always subject to a plurality of readings and moments of contestation. This is important because it avoids the tendency to consider the discursive analysis in an abstract way and instead views the meanings as socially negotiated, something referred to by Valentin Volosinov (1986) when he wrote:

> Every sign ... is a construct between socially organized persons in the process of their interaction. Therefore, the forms of the sign are conditioned above all by the social organization of the participants involved and also by the immediate conditions of their interaction. (21)

One aspect of the notion of a discourse acting to provide limits to the potential chaos of unlimited meaning in a moment of closure, is to see this operation as effecting a 'forgetting' on the part of subject.[3] The subject forgets that they are functioning within the discursive and ideological formation in a process similar to Lacan's notion of 'misrecognition' where the subject identifies with a mirror image or other form and misrecognises itself as a unified subject rather than that which is divided so as to allow for identity to

[3] See Pecheux, M (1982) *Language, Semantics and Ideology* for a more substantial definition of this process. The possibility of a 'dis-identification' needs to exist for the potential for social transformation to happen.

be established.[4] Precisely because this takes place within the realm of images with which we make identifications, such a formulation is seen as useful in this analysis. [5]

This imaginary assertion of coherence premised on a notion of boundaries between self and other is evident at the level of the individual psyche to that of the nation state.[6] This formative principle has two elements to it - to make sense of the world around us and to regulate it. Jonathan Dollimore (1991) defines this operation:

> To reiterate: what we call social order is not just a system typically privileging one or more groups or classes at the expense of others; nor just a system that legitimates itself through the demonizing of others, but an almost permanent condition of dislocation stemming from its own contradictions or logic. This dislocation (chaos) is

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[4] Lacan (1977) see The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience' in *Ecrits: A Selection*. This forgetting in the way I use it is not predicated on a single moment of knowing prior to repression which can potentially return under conditions of trauma. Rather, it seems to me, one of the primary operations of ideology is the need to continuously reassert the 'naturalness' of particular cultural formations that works to sustain ruling-class hegemony through the mechanisms of structuring forms of consciousness based on aspects of the everyday life experiences of people and popular cultural discursive forms. People go to the cinema to watch a film (a constructed fantasy world) that assumes the 'suspension of disbelief and the taking of the product at face value that subsequently is not directly taken as real by the viewer but which begins to become part of a visualisation of their world view in a partial, complex process of mediation. James Kavanagh's formulation of ideology, in Lentricchia, F. and McLaughlin, T. (1990) *Critical Terms for Literary Study* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, describes this effect well: 'Ideology designates a rich "system of representation," worked up in specific material practices, which help form individuals into social subjects who "freely" internalize an appropriate "picture" of their social world and their place in it. Ideology offers the social subject not a set of narrowly "political" ideas but a fundamental framework of assumptions that defines the parameters of the real and the self; it constitutes what Althusser calls the social subject's " 'lived' relation to the real". (310)

[5] Freud draws a distinction between 'Thing-Presentation' which is essentially visual and 'Word-Presentation' which is derived from words. He writes in The Unconscious' (1915): The conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone.' (2b), quoted in Laplance, J. and Pontalis, J-B. (1973) *The Language of Psychoanalysis* London: Karnac Books, p.448. It is not the mirror image itself that is crucial rather that the process can be seen to be a metaphor for all social and external reflection of the self, (see Williamson, J. (1978) *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* London and New York: Marion Boyars (63))

[6] See Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities* London: Verso; Franco, J. The Nation as Imagined Community' in Veeser, H. (ed) (1989) *The New Historicism* London and New York: Routledge.

> typically displaced, ideologically re-presented as an effect of society's enemies, external and internal, protection from whom is the society's rationale (order). (221)

HIV, the agent of infection that is taken to be responsible for the later condition of AIDS if it develops, was from the beginning conceptualised as invasive or transgressive: at the microscopic level with viruses crossing cellular borders, and at a rhetorical level with the emergence of the condition explained by the crossing of the borders from nature to culture. One consequence of this was to draw attention to the inherent instability of these oppositions and therefore the potential for their disintegration and reconfiguration. Given, as stated above, that the discourse of HIV/AIDS was primarily determined by ideas around disease, sexuality, and gender, it is easy to see why one reaction to it was an anxious attempt to reimpose the boundaries that were seen to have been challenged. Consequently we saw the argument for the physical containment and isolation of those HIV+ and living with AIDS, a demonization of bisexual men as the carriers of the virus from homosexual ghetto to mainstream heterosexual society, and attempts to reassert a masculinist order as the primary locus of social coherence premised on the inherent infectability of the bodies of women and gay men. This is referred to by Catherine Waldby (1996):

> The adoption of certain boundary formations is a crucial part of sexed subjectification, in the sense that body boundaries help to organise both the significance of sexual identity and the modes of relationships between sexes and sexualities. Quite different protocols of permeability, limit and potential for relational confusion set the terms of sexual difference and naturalise certain kinds of power relationships between masculinity and femininity, and heterosexuality and homosexuality. (46)

In the first four of the five chapters of the thesis AIDS is seen as mobilising concerns and anxieties about the transgression of boundaries at the literal and figurative level and therefore perceived as dangerous to the dominant order. The particular examples analysed within each chapter can all be seen to be problematic examples of the attempt to impose a regulatory norm on the respective discursive orders. Transgressing social and cultural boundaries begins to question existing conventions but it also provides the basis for the anxious reconstitution of new limits in the face of the fear of disintegration.

The visual representations, taken as positioned within the specificities of the discursive frame, are then analysed on the basis of how they can be seen to signify concerns and beliefs relating to HIV/AIDS in a wider sense than just themselves. Each example is what I would refer to as iconic, that is they represent a broader 'type' of representation relating to the issue at hand. Through taking these examples as the starting point for discussion in relation to subsidiary representations it is hoped that the analysis will provide a deeper critique of these issues than that produced by a survey type approach. The representations considered have a deep cultural resonance based on an ability by readers in general to decipher, to varying degrees, the informing codes and symbols present within these popular visual formations. Umberto Eco (1987) refers to such a quality described in relation to certain photographic images that defines them as 'epoch-making' in that they have become a myth, acting as a point of condensation for numerous discourses and transcending the individual circumstances that produced it. Such

representations are unique but have a quality that sees them resonate with the suggestion of preceding images and can be seen in subsequent representations (216). What the thesis does, then, is subject these images of HIV/AIDS to a process of examination that engages with all that Eco refers to.

Such an image is viewed as an example of a sign or utterance, to use the term defined by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), whose work is taken as a major theoretical resource throughout the thesis, and who addresses the dialogic nature of social discourse.[7] He states:

> The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all, the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as rejoinder to it - it does not approach the object from the sidelines. (277)

In this context, I define the examples of representations taken in the thesis as iconic in that they describe a historical and cultural moment when social anxieties, fears and desires are captured and seemingly fixed. Whilst it is not claimed that they give access to any fundamental 'truth' they seem rooted in a realm of experience that transcends the particular. It is around these

[7] Holquist (1981) defines Dialogism as the'... characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole - there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Which will affect the other, how it will do so and in what degree is what is actually settled at the moment of utterance. This dialogic imperative, mandated by the pre-existence of the language world relative to any of its current inhabitants, insures that there can be no actual monologue.' (426) Hirschkop (1986) writes of the social nature of discourse in Bakhtin's formulation: 'In terms of speech act theory, discourse is performative rather than constative in nature, meaningful as a social action rather than as that which conveys a signified or referent. Our analysis must accordingly focus on those concrete tasks of social life which discourse is called upon to fulfil, and our attention be turned from the linguistic unit, the sentence, to the utterance, the unit of social interaction within discourse.' (97)

icons that social understanding of illness and disease revolves. Whilst the representation of someone points to a 'real' existence in time and space, it circulates on the basis of its iconic character that perceives it as being characteristic of the condition in a general sense. As medicine, science and the media struggled to make sense of this new condition it would be defined in relation to pre-exisiting discourses and iconographic representations of illness and disease. These representations, of course, are renegotiated within the specific coordinates of contemporary society, they might rely on long established stereotypes but not unproblematically so.[8] This element of specificity is considered throughout the thesis.[9]

Any notion that there is an unproblematic relationship between the body, as somehow an irreducible physical entity existing prior to an ideological overlay, and its representations, fails to take into account the predetermining nature of those representations. The impulse to define our subjectivity through the gradual organization of libidinal drives which had originally circulated polymorphously[10] from the infant as Freud describes it, entails the psychic

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[8] This formulation is derived from a reading of the theory of signs as described by C.S. Pierce which is seen as providing a more effective analysis of visual culture than that of Saussure. Alex Potts (1996) describes how the tripartite schema of sign-object-interpretant defined by Pierce anchors the process of semiosis by the reference to an object which is positioned in this process as a 'dynamic object' that is being constantly reconstituted at each stage of signification (19).

[9] It is the need to address both aspects of any representation: the specifics and particularities of the form and its social context. Eagleton (1982) sees Bakhtin's work as providing such an approach: 'Bakhtin ... produces what could genuinely be termed, with equal stress on both words, a materialist poetics. It is not a question of choosing between semiosis and social conditions: to analyze the ideological force of an utterance is, inseparably, to interpret its precise rhythm, inflection, intonality, and to refer it to its determining social context. (80)

[10] That is that the drives were unattached to any specific object and not motivated in any single direction.

construction of boundaries as a limiting phenomenon. Sander Gilman (1989) describes this process in the introduction to his excellent account of the representations of the sexual across history, *Sexuality: An Illustrated History:*

> The contradictions between our physical selves and our need to see ourselves as rational beings absolutely in control of our bodies and their attendant forces leads us to the construction of boundaries that encompass and control aspects of ourselves that we wish to distance and regulate. Our ego (that mechanism that creates the cultural images of the self) in establishing the boundaries for the self generates the illusion that we know the body's contours, its boundaries, indeed, its anatomy. But our knowledge is always mediated by the images that we draw from the thought-collective to express our sense of the boundaries of the self. (2)

The representations that follow, it is argued, mediate and define the condition in the terms of each specific discursive field. As Douglas Kellner (1995) observes, the specular realms of media culture, television and film provide the models of what it is to be male or female, powerful or powerless and which permeate everyday life, providing the basis on which people shape their identities whether of class, race or sexuality, that ultimately reduces to 'us' and 'them' (1). The analysis that follows is, therefore, confined to this realm, or register of media communication as opposed to the register of everyday social interaction which is, of course, intrinsically linked but arguably distinct.

Such a formulation raises the question of the relationship between representations and some notion of the 'real'. There is no doubt that the media saturated world which we all occupy defines in a profound sense what we 'know' and what we make of this. Any simplistic idea of the real does not address the complex relationship between it and the field of representation or

discursive formation. However, to deny the existence of some qualified relationship between the two seems to me to close down on the importance for the need to contest how things are represented and to relate this to a wider debate on the need or otherwise for fundamental change in the social organisation of society.[11] As Terry Eagleton (1991) so succinctly put it: 'We have seen that a particular brand of Semiotics or discourse theory was the vital relay by which a whole sector of the political left shifted its political ground from revolutionism to reformism.' (218). This is of course outside the specific concerns of the thesis but it is an important qualification to the following analysis.

The indexical nature of the photographic process and the parallel field of contemporary photographic theory bring together the questions of representation and meaning.[12] It is taken as given throughout the thesis that the meaning of the image resides not in any universal system of signs and symbols but in the relationship between the image and the discourse within which it is positioned. That which offers a sense of closure is the textual anchor that delimits the range of readings available to the reader and simultaneously becomes implicated in the play of meaning (the absence of a title itself has a

[11] For instance, in the guide for students, *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies*, edited by O'Sullivan et al (1994) under the entry for 'reality' it reads: 'the sense or product of discourse' (259) which has implications for any political project. Mulvey (1996) suggests that the representations that construct history can be read as symptoms, providing clues to the struggle within particular sites of social contest, that need to be deciphered politically and psychoanalytically. (11)

[12] Rosalind Krauss (1986), an editor of the journal *October* and a key writer in the field of visual culture, writes of this founding ontological status of the photograph as providing a powerful realm of identification in modes associated with the Imaginary. (203). Price and Wells (1997) write that it's indexical status is the source of the authority of the image and of theoretical debates relating to realism and 'truth'. (51)

meaning implying that the image gives an illusion of speaking 'for itself').[13] This is not limited to a single text as various textual meanings invade the image space to become available for the viewer to pick up on. This shifts the emphasis from the intentional producer to the active consumer as the locus of meaning. It is important within this framework to maintain an acknowledgment of the potential for the visual image to serve as a disjunctive moment in the ideological operation that offers a space of contestation between it and its framing discourse. This is something of particular interest in relation to representations of HIV/AIDS and will be taken as an important element in the following analysis. To place the emphasis purely on the discursive site without an awareness of the potential effectivity of the visual image itself misses the opportunity to identify slippages in hegemonic constructions around the issues under discussion. David Hevey (1992) in his book on images of disability draws attention to the weakness of a position such as this as advocated by Victor Burgin, one of its foremost proponents:

> In the final analysis, Burgin absents the relevance of the actual plastic photographic image altogether. If its meaning is solely located in the discourses which surround it, then the image itself cannot interrupt or challenge its discursive environment. The black hole in the deconstructive photographic universe of Burgin is that he fails to name precisely what effect the physical existence of the plastic image has on its discursive (social, political, ideological, psychological or whatever) environment. (96)

Consequently, the analysis that follows seeks to pay as much attention to the

[13] Barthes (1977) defines this as 'anchorage' which is a way of fixing the floating chain of signifieds to, as he puts it, ' counter the terror of uncertain signs' (39).

'actuality' of the image as the textual anchor and framing discourse.

If it is the case that fears and anxieties are never erased from popular memory but are merely displaced onto other representations, in a fashion described by Freud in relation to dreams, how such anxieties are transcoded from one set of coded representations to another is an aim of the thesis.[14] Whilst the thesis does not seek to attempt to produce a comprehensive account of all representations related to the issues of HIV/AIDS it does attempt to present an account that usefully traces certain important formations of knowledge, power and representation across social discourse. The five chapters, then, are not united within one overarching disciplinary perspective mixing as they do theory, film, advertising, art, and mass culture. This might be reflective of certain critical approaches to cultural theory that have long called for a loosening of disciplinary boundaries (e.g the shift from the study of 'Art History' to that of 'Visual Culture'[15]) but it is also determined by an awareness that 'AIDS' as a social condition, apart from any notional medical condition, acted as a focal point for wider social anxieties and political agendas that used whatever medium at hand to enact its programme and which did not have much respect for anything, including disciplinary boundaries.

The approach I have tried to take throughout the thesis is to acknowledge

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[14] Freud, S. (1976) *The Interpretation of Dreams* V.4The Penguin Freud Library, London: Penguin. I am thinking specifically of the notion of 'Dream Work' pp.381-628.

[15] *October* 77, Summer 1996 published a series of responses to a questionnaire sent to a range of art and architecture historians, film theorists, literary critics and artists on the issues that inter-disciplinarity raises, pp.25-70.

the determining nature of the macro and micro-political in relation those issues around HIV/AIDS. It seems essential to balance any analysis of the psychic forces of subject formation with a simultaneous analysis of the broader cultural, political and economic forces that act to subjugate our bodies. What is offered is not a 'universal' system or method but a negotiation and renegotiation of all these issues throughout the course of the thesis. In this country, like the USA, AIDS was taken up as part of a wider political (and economic) agenda of reaction that sought to reimpose a mythical order of posterity and social cohesion premised upon the systematic reversal of policies of social equality for workers, blacks and 'queers' achieved through the sixties and seventies. Central keystone to society's well being.[16] As Watney (1987) states:

> In this respect Aids has been used quite cynically to shore up the fabric of the ideology of patriotic heterosexuality. Whilst Reagan and Thatcher wage real wars on imaginary external aggressors (Nicaragua, the Malvinas islands, Grenada, Outer Space), another ideological spearhead is being launched against an enemy within. Not a virus which can and must be conquered but rather those who suffer from it, premised as the sexually promiscuous, and with them, by extension, all other enemies of "the family", the sacred and largely imaginary locus of neo-conservativism in all its variant forms and voices.(15-16)

Familial ideology and the 'heterosexual matrix' as Judith Butler (1993) describes it can be seen as an attempt to secure identificatory compliance but one that is never able to accept the diversity of even what comes under

[16] Jonathan Neale (1991) puts the attitude of the Reagan government towards AIDS in the context of a sustained attack by the American right that instigated a widespread project of disempowerment from attacking organised labour, the abandonment of the welfare state, and attacking the movements and ideologies from the sixties especially those of sexual liberation and sexuality. (7-8)

the heading of masculine heterosexuality.[17] To fetishize particular representations of masculinity is also to draw attention to the fact that the fetish points to the anxiety generated by the very absence of that which it is meant to reinforce. As Laura Mulvey (1993) writes in an essay on theories of fetishism and culture:

> Fetishism, broadly speaking, involves the attribution of self-sufficiency and autonomous powers to a manifestly "man" derived object. It is therefore dependent on the ability to disavow what is known and replace it with belief and the suspension of disbelief. The fetish, however, is always haunted by the fragility of the mechanisms that sustain it. (7)

Photography as a practice can be seen as one of the primary mechanisms by which a desire to access that which has gone is acted out; it constantly seeks to restore that which it has fixed in a moment of pastness, it acts to constitute subjectivity yet is also a waning of that very process. Photographic representation in this way is mobilized to constantly reinforce an attempt to shore up a subjectivity that is perceived as chaotic and unstable in comparison to a moment of stability in the past, it fulfils a desire that immediately resolves into want. Barthes (1982) describes something of this process:

> In terms of image-repertoire, the Photograph (the one I *intend*) represents that very subtle moment when, to tell the truth, I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death (of parenthesis): I am truly becoming a specter. (13-14)

The mass media representations of AIDS, therefore, circulate and are

[17] What I have in mind is the public health category of 'Men Who Have Sex With Men' who refuse to align sexual identity with sexual practice. Waldby (1996) describes the introduction of this category as an attempt to maintain the cleanliness of the category of heterosexuality.

consumed as part of a process of identification and othering.

The images looked at here are not about any 'reality' of HIV/AIDS but about the attempt by dominant culture to maintain the hegemonic position of its sense and account of the world and subjectivity. This is also fundamentally underpinned by the fact that the vast majority of people in this country have not knowingly had contact with someone living with HIV or AIDS and therefore their knowledge of it has been mediated by these media representations and which in this sense define the social *meaning* of the condition. Primarily, this has been defined as something which doesn't happen to 'us', the general population (an imaginary concept of course) but rather to marginal and deviant groups within society. The narratives which have framed the subject of AIDS have therefore tended to rely on any number of combinations of myths, fictions and facts to produce heavily over-determined accounts that resonate with deep cultural fears, represented, for example, by contemporary urban myths of vengeful transmitters of HIV who seek out, seduce, infect and then reveal to their victims their condition in a moment of terror.[18]

It would be useful at this point to consider an example of an AIDS narrative to see precisely how such effects become manifest: Randy Shilts' 1988 book *And*

[18] The revenge narrative is one that has featured heavily in media accounts of the condition that as far as I know has never been actually verified. Jenny Kitzinger (1993) in her account of audience reception analysis of issues relating to HIV/AIDS writes: 'In some cases the revenge theme seemed to have the status of an urban myth. It wasn't just a case they had read about but this had actually happened to a 'friend of a friend': 'I know of somebody who started having a little holiday affair and later got a card saying "Welcome to the AIDS club"'...' (291)

the Band Played On, considered the definitive account of the emergence of AIDS in America. Shilts' account is relevant to the thesis as a whole given its documentary style and authorial claims for objective reporting unsullied by any comparison to fiction, as he states at the end of the book in a section titled 'Notes on Sources':

> This book is a work of journalism. There has been no fictionalization. For purposes of narrative flow, I reconstruct scenes, recount conversations and occasionally attribute observations to people with ouch phrases as "he thought" or "she felt". Such references are drawn from either interviews I conducted for the book or from research conducted during my years covering the AIDS epidemic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. (623)

Ironically, what such a defence draws attention to is the level of fictionalisation that, on the contrary, *does* underpin the representations of HIV/AIDS that circulate within dominant culture. It is precisely that these representations are, actually, a mixture of facts (carefully chosen), a visual or narrative structure (so familiar as to be largely invisible), and then all the elements of myth, fiction and ideology that have defined the treatment of the condition. What is denied by Shilts is his reconstruction of events that he claims simply to record within his narrative and mimetic structure. This can be compared to what Hayden White (1973) refers to in his critique of nineteenth century historical consciousness where he describes how the historian is perceived as 'finding' or 'uncovering' the stories that lie buried, and that the distinction between history and fiction is that the former is discovered and the latter invented. As he points out, such a view fails to address precisely how much the historian actually relies on 'invention' to produce their account (6-7).

This is reflected by the sheer force of textual strategies that Shilts' employs to maintain the illusion of his role as 'just reporting'. Primarily, he relies on prefacing each episode in his account of the developing discovery of illnesses and the virus by foregrounding the authenticating coordinates around which the events are viewed to reassure the reader of the mimetic function of the text. On the first page of the narrative proper there are two separate sequences:

July 4, 1976 New York Harbor

Christmas Eve, 1976
Kinshasa, Zaire ...

Later as the intertwining narrative threads become more complex, by page 38:

October 1

Davies Medical

Center,San Francisco

This foregrounds four defining axes for the construction of the narrative and which are common to many of the representations considered throughout

the thesis, these are:

(i) calendar time, linear and chronological:

(ii) the site of activity, usually institutional;

(iii) the geographical coordinate of the event;

(iv) an account in the first person.

Consider each of these elements in turn. The temporal sequence of events is of defining importance in any narrative of AIDS. AIDS itself as a medical condition is, as Susan Sontag (1988) says, dependent on the construction of a temporal sequence of stages (108). Calendar time,which as Paul Ricouer points out is defined in relation to cosmological time, has the appearance of a founding universal category, an ontology, against which it is possible to plot events mediated by a notion of lived temporality, a phenemonology of 'the now'.[19] Peter Osborne (1995), from Ricouer, describes the importance of calendarization of the cosmological time for a historiographical continuum:

> Three features are taken to be common to all calendars, and hence constitutive of chronicle time: (1) a founding event, axial moment, or zero-point in relation to which every other event can be dated; (2) a temporal direction defined with reference to this zero-point; and (3) a unit of measurement, derived by astronomy from the observation of cosmic intervals: most fundamentally, the day, the month, the year. Calendar time provides historical time with the 'framework of an institution based on astronomy'. (67)

Shilts can foreground the seeming objectiveness of calendar time in each subheading but what is then detailed is individual action given significance by being assigned meaning purely because of its position within the narrative

[19] See Ricouer, P. (1988) *Time and Narrative* Volume 3, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, section 2, part 4: 'Between Lived Time and Universal Time: Historical Time'

structure that adheres to the formal coherence of beginning, middle and end. What is denied or disguised, therefore, is the process of selection of particular moments over others to establish a hierarchy of significance that is presented as neutral. Narratives may appear to be merely the ordering of events present in the real world and reflected in a text, but this disguises not just the selection and ordering process of these events from real life or memory but also that the events themselves only assert a relevance and a meaning in the light of the overall narrative. To use Propp's term, the events need to be *constituted* in relation to the narrative as a whole. Shifts' 'zero-point' from which the narrative is generated is the bicentennial celebrations of the founding of the American state. At this deeply symbolic moment celebrating the mythology of nationhood the virus is brought in and begins its unnoticed infiltration, Shilts writes: This was the part the epidemiologists would later note, when they stayed up late at night and the conversation drifted toward where it had all started and when.' (3).

This aspect of time is of course always intrinsically linked to its relational category of space. Shilts always presents these two together as a realistic device that is stylistically familiar to the reader. Throughout the account he switches between two opposing symbolic spatial zones, one of disease and one of science, or put another way, one of disorder and one of order.[20] The institutional spaces of medical science, then, act as the primary site for

[20] This was defined by Bakhtin as a 'chronotope' described by Morris (1994) as: '...the spatio-temporal matrix which shapes any narrative text. Specific chronotopes correspond to particular genres, which themselves represent particular world views. To this extent, chronotope is a cognitive concept as much as a narrative feature of texts.' (246)

establishing meaning in the face of chaos. Within this space, Shilts' designates various individuals to serve as figures of dedicated scientific endeavour who seek out and establish the links between various instances of disease and unexplainable events. As Dr Jacques Leibowitch (1985) states in his account of the discovery of HIV:

> To disentangle, to decipher, to classify, to give meaning to all this chaos, the first requirement is to understand what is happening. Medicine hastily must know, and reveal what it knows. Where, how, who, why, since when, and, as fast as possible, through whom does the evil come? (3)

Central to this process is the development of, what Gilman (1989) calls, a 'geography' of AIDS, the establishing of the origin of the virus as distant from the social body and its later introduction into it. This is why the geographic coordinate of each section of the narrative is foregrounded. Borders and origins appear and reappear throughout dominant narratives of HIV/AIDS and have been the primary concern of governments in their desire to impose systems of exclusion.[21] Shilts (like many others it must be said) sets out this geography at the very beginning of his narrative: under the heading of New York (above) he writes, 'Tall sails scraped the deep purple night as rockets burst, flared, and flourished red, white, and blue over the stoic statute of Liberty'; and under that of Kinshasa, ' The hot African sky turned black and sultry; it wasn't like Christmas at all'. Self-consciously echoing the opening from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* it compares the luminosity of the West with the brooding darkness of Africa and connects the two spaces similarly via the

[21] The Guardian , 5 April 1997; 'Russian Aids law seals borders to 'dirty foreign bodies': Tapping a rich seam of political xenophobia, and against the advice of its medical experts, the Russian State Duma passed a bill yesterday requiring all foreigners to undergo compulsory Aids tests or face deportation. (14)

nautical route. This is continuously reinforced in the opening section:

> With modern roads and jet travel, no corner of the earth was very remote anymore; never again could diseases linger undetected for centuries among a distant people without finding some route to fan out across the planet.
>
> The battle between humans and disease was nowhere more bitterly fought than here in the fetid equatorial climate, where heat and humidity fuel the generation of new life forms. One historian has suggested that humans, who first evolved in Africa eons ago, migrated north to Asia and Europe simply to get to climates that were less hospitable to the deadly microbes the tropics so efficiently bred. (5)

This signals the underside of modernity[22] where the West is portrayed as under threat from 'outside', and alludes to the hierarchy of nations that maintains the global political economy where AIDS can be seen, to use a term used by John O'Neill (1990) amongst others, as a 'globalizing panic' where it must be considered as one of a number of panics to which the global order responds with various strategies. Whether of a political, economic or so called 'natural' panics, the globalizing impulse is a reflection of the incessant reduction of cultural diversity to the generics of commodity production and fashion, overseas aid budgets and their intrinsic link to military defence concerns.

Throughout the thesis it is possible to see how the discourse of HIV/AIDS is continuously posed in terms of an anxiety ridden attempt to maintain notions

[22] There are of course two sides to modernity: firstly, industrialization, massive migration of populations, faster means of transport etc that make the spread of infection something far more efficient than before; but secondly, through information technology, transfer of knowledge,expertise and resources, the potential for a global response that can effectively control and resolve the epidemic. Berman (1983) in his account of the experience of modernity writes: To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world - and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.' (15)

of the integrity of spatial categories. Sontag (1988) describes how AIDS was conceptualised through metaphoric references to war, invasion and military language. This was given further spin by the association from the beginning with the sexual transmission of the virus between gay men. As many commentators have observed, the ruling order was unconcerned when the condition seemed to affecting only gay men and intravenous drug users and only really began to address the public health issues when there was the possibility of it seemingly crossing the boundaries into the heterosexual population.[23] What is seen to emerge, then, are fears directed at those who might be seen to occupy the point of crossover such as bisexual men and sex workers and the attribution of characteristics of vengeance, destruction and purposeful transmission. These narratives become extremely popular in the press because they allow for the individualization of a condition that actually needs to be addressed in broader societal terms. This has been seen before in relation to previous venereal diseases where representations of 'loose women' in league with the enemy used during World War Two were posed in terms of the threat to the family of the returning soldier.[24] Bryan Turner (1996) writes of how this formulation portrays those already infected as dangerous and subversive:

> Venereal disease is popularly conceptualized as an invasion of the body by alien germs, but the mechanism which, so to speak, opens the sluice- gates permitting nature to invade culture is the deviance of the human population from morality. Since there is concern that

[23] For a forthright and angry denunciation of government inaction during the first seven or eight years of the epidemic see Kramer, L. (1990) *Reports From the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist* London: Penguin Books.

[24] see Brandt (1987)

> the effectivity of antibiotics is in decline, the sluice-gates can be closed by protecting the moral core of society. The sluice-gates are to be controlled by rituals of inclusion and exclusion, because the diseased are not so much Victims' as 'agents' of a biological disaster. (210)

This characterisation, then, is evident in Shilts' book where the zero-point is, in fact, 'Patient Zero' the Canadian airline steward. In mathematical terms 'origin' refers to the fixed point from which coordinates are measured and in spatial terms this is usually designated as point zero. It is of extreme importance in the dominant epistemology that this become established to provide the basis for an explanation as to the point of invasion of the society threatening agency. Dugas was identified by epidemiologists as being linked with a number of identified cases of gay men suffering from Kaposi's Sarcoma and helped establish (through his cooperation and honest detailing of his sexual history) that the syndrome was sexually transmitted. What Shilts does, however, is to produce a portrayal that is a summation of the mass media's hysterical fantasy of someone promiscuous, vain, and pathologically knowingly spreading the virus.[25] He is seen by the mainstream media as the source of the HIV virus becoming introduced into the country, as it must, by definition, come from outside.

The strategies employed by Shilts serve to illustrate a wider issue which relates to the thesis: the appeal to an objectivity and documentary account

[25] John Greyson wrote and directed the film *Zero Patience* (1995) (the title a pun of the label given to Gaetan Dugas) that through the format of a musical and a fantastical relationship between Sir Richard Burton, the 19th century explorer, and Dugas subjects the notion of objective science to damning examination. Throughout his book Shilts contrasts what he sees as the sheer *excess* of Dugas' sexual behaviour with the cool rationality of individual scientific endeavour which cannot help, but ultimately seeks to control the excesses.

premised on a supposed straightforward rendition of truth, visual or otherwise. What is in fact present in Shilts' account are what Crimp (1988), in a forthright examination of the book, refers to as aspects of bourgeois writing out of place in any account which seeks to separate fact from fiction (244). This can be seen if we compare the fictional disclaimer of Shilts with another similar disclaimer, this time from one clearly a fictional account but one that historically is struggling with similar issues: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.[26] Elaine Showalter (1992) describes the novel as being about the blurring of the boundaries of the sexual, psychological, and scientific, with the thrill and the terror that this invokes. The position of Dracula in Transylvania is a place that is not just a crossing point from one state to the next but points to the place in between, not just either living or dead but also potentially undead, not just either masculine or feminine but potentially bisexual. (179)

Like Shilts, Stoker presents his narrative as structured by temporal and spatial coordinates that create spaces of order - Victorian Britain, and of disorder - the East, but we can also see the similar appeal to truth and objectivity on the part of the author who absents himself from the narrative:

> How these papers have been placed in sequence will be made manifest in the reading of them. All needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of later-day belief may stand forth as simple fact.
> There is throughout no statement of past things wherein memory may err, for all the records chosen are exactly contemporary, given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them. (Preface)

[26] Ellis Hanson (1991) in his essay 'Undead' also explores the parallels between Shilts' book and Stoker's fictional narrative drawing the conclusion that the former's account is: 'rife with vampire imagery.' (331)

As in Shilts' meticulous detailing of interviews and conversations with people described in his narrative, Stoker presents each section as an excerpt from a diary, that is a contemporaneous recording of events almost as soon as they occur. In his 'Notes on Sources', Shilts writes:

> In this particular book, where chronology played such an essential part, I was aided by the fact that scientists routinely keep journals noting specific dates of insights and conversations with other researchers. (623)

The reference to diaries and testimonials as the source for the narrative, acts as what Roland Barthes (1986) refers to as *shifters*: This shifter therefore designates all mention of sources, of testimony, all reference to a *listening* of the historian, collecting an *elsewhere* of his discourse and speaking it.' (128) Shilts, by suppressing all signs of himself in the narrative, tries to maintain a notion of 'objective' history in which he has not intervened, something Barthes calls the 'referential illusion', an image-repertoire where the author claims to let the referent speak for itself (132).

How the narrative of AIDS and nation is structured in Shilts' account of the progression of the virus in the United States can be seen to parallel the development of narrative within the history of its visual representation. What can be identified in the following chapters is at key moments how images which are positioned to give an appearance of 'speaking for themselves' are in fact informed by codes and narratives that actually work to construct the meaning that is foregrounded. The 'reality effect' that Barthes describes is evident in the practices and strategies of the mass media. Judith Williamson

(1989) argues that the two genres most frequently relied upon in narratives around AIDS are horror and melodrama: 'Horror in films is closely linked to the Gothic in novels, that genre which was so popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where demons and monsters threaten the innocent, and nature - including human nature - is constantly fearsome.' (71). This aspect of gothic horror is one that can be seen to completely permeate the mass media discourse of HIV/AIDS that is at once a source of terror and a source of fascination that gives a voyeuristic thrill.[27] What is evident in the representations of HIV/AIDS since the early 1980s is a rearticulation of fears and concerns around the body and the self and the potential loss of ego in the disintegrating chaos of boundary transgression, symptomatic of a deeper cultural malaise. The horror genre becomes the space for displaced anxieties where its conventions become fetishised substitutes of sexual panic. So the myth of the vengeful transmitter of the HIV virus seen in the heading from the *Daily Mirror* of the 23 June 1992: 'Sex Bomb - AIDS man infects 4 women in revenge rampage' or the case of an American man charged in Helsinki with manslaughter for engaging in 'unprotected sex with more than 100 women' (*The Guardian* 17 April 1997,G:2) is firmly established as a central AIDS narrative. Rosemary Jackson (1991) describes the particular operation of this mythology:

> Fear originates in a source external to the subject: the self suffers an attack of some sort which makes it part of the other. This is the type of appropriation of the subject found in *Dracula* and tales of vampirism: it is a sequence of invasion, metamorphosis and fusion, in

[27] It is from this perspective that I see the government's first mass media campaign in 1986 on HIV/ AIDS consisting of tombstones.

> which an external force enters the subject, changes it irreversibly and usually gives it power to initiate similar transformations. (59)

Such a conceptualisation of someone HIV+ therefore positions them as not only a potential source of infection but also as actively seeking to infect others in a way that has the effect of making them beyond sympathy and care but also reduces a complex issue of responsibility, education and sexual health down to individual pathological behaviour.[28] Fred Botting (1996) defines the ambivalent nature of Gothic fiction that is not one or the other of the opposing terms, light on dark, rationality on unreason, but both at the same time, he writes:

> Through its presentations of supernatural, sensational and terrifying incidents, imagined or not, Gothic produced emotional effects on its readers rather than developing a rational or properly cultivated response. Exciting rather than informing, it chilled their blood, delighted their superstitious fancies and fed uncultivated appetites for marvellous and strange events, instead of instructing readers with moral lessons that inculcated decent and tasteful attitudes to literature and life. Gothic excesses transgressed the proper limits of aesthetic as well as social order in the overflow of emotions that undermined boundaries of life and fiction, fantasy and reality. (4)

Throughout the thesis what is examined are particular representations of HIV/ AIDS seen in the critical context of the above. Chapter one is concerned with tracking the picture of David Kirby at the moment of his death from AIDS related illness as it shifts from the discourse of documentary photography to advertising. A picture that has become emblematic of someone with AIDS it is taken at the moment in which this young man has died, passing from life to

[28] An example that fulfils this stereotype can be found once more from the *Guardian* of 15 July 1993 sourced as from the Reuters news agency and tucked away in the 'International' sectionunder the heading of 'HIV "vampires" wreak revenge' it refers to how a group of HIV+ 'homosexuals and prostitutes' have been deliberately 'contaminating' local residents and have been described by the local police as ' the "vampires of death" '.(11), see chapter four for further discussion of this.

death, in an image resonant with religious iconography and secular angst over the visibility of death. The position of the image within specific discursive frames is what is explored and how, in different ways, each seeks to foreground something other than the death of David Kirby.

Chapter two looks at the death of a 'star' from AIDS, Freddie Mercury. The death of stars of Hollywood, the arts or music from HIV illness has, unsurprisingly, been the primary point of interest for the media and has allowed them to take up the subject in a largely unthreatening way at the same time as maintaining a notion of distance between the condition and the reader. The image on which the chapter is focussed is one that is not, perhaps, typical and so serves as an illustration of the potential for slippage within any hegemonic formation.

Chapter three examines how the Health Education Authority, a government sponsored body, sought to represent the condition at a moment of what has been called 'normalisation' i.e. when it was feared that it might shift from the marginal (homosexual) to the mainstream (heterosexual). Central to the adverts discussed is a particular structure of temporality that, it is argued, seeks to present a closure on the condition in the public realm. Public health education has to attempt to deal with the paradox of imparting information in a seemingly straightforward way to allow for the public to make informed decisions about their lifestyle yet is always having to do this in a way that adheres to the ideological project of the government in power and other

vested interests such as the medical profession. Enormous amounts of money are spent on commissioning commercial advertising agencies, whose expertise lies in perpetuating a culture of commodity consumption, to produce persuasive copy that will seek to educate, inform and ultimately change people's behaviour. A small number of images are considered to examine some of the values and ideologies that lie within them.

Chapter four considers the epidemic and its emergence in the early nineteen eighties from the perspective of Hollywood film. As a cultural product that is singularly driven by the economic imperative it is argued that it is possible to identify, within particular examples, the emergence of fears and anxieties around the body, its desires and excesses, that can be associated with HIV/ AIDS. Fear of invasion, transformation and the menace, not of 'reds', but of bodily fluids and agents of infection is foregrounded within a number of films. This includes the only Hollywood film to date to deal explicitly with AIDS, *Philadelphia*.

Finally, the thesis looks at an example of what might be called a dissident reading of the discourse of HIV/AIDS. Taking a series of paintings by Derek Jarman first shown at Manchester City Art Gallery in 1992 under the title *Queer* it discusses the strategies he adopts to negotiate his own personal view of the epidemic and its coverage in the mass media. The three moments of production with which he engages: photocopying the front pages of tabloid newspapers that refer to AIDS onto the canvas over which he then paints in

an expressionists style to finally inscribing single words or phrases in the wet paint, can be seen as a sophisticated comment on the values of high cultural production and the social meaning of AIDS.

The thesis concludes with a brief summary of the issues raised throughout to offer a reading of the representations of HIV/AIDS.

Chapter One

From Documentary to Advertising: The Picture of David Kirby

> The photographic take is immediate and definitive, like death and like the constitution of the fetish in the unconscious, fixed by a glance in childhood, unchanged and always active later. Photography is a cut inside the referent, it cuts off a piece of it, a fragment, a part object, for a long immobile travel of no return.
>
> Christian Metz, 'Photography and Fetish'[29]

This opening chapter of the thesis will consider an image that was widely circulated throughout the western world, the photograph of David Kirby at the moment of his death from HIV illness, a form of which was used in an advertising campaign by the multi-national textile company Benetton in the Spring/Summer of 1992. It is useful to start here as, firstly, this is an image with which many people are familiar and so has become emblematic of someone with AIDS, and secondly, it brings together many of the key issues around notions of representational truth and the meanings generated by the specifics of discursive framing.

Part of a campaign that consisted of seven images that pictured moments of 'human tragedy' (Fig. 1.1), the image of David Kirby on his deathbed swept onto the public arena as the media generated a clamour of moral outrage.[30] This chapter will track this image as it shifted from the discourse of photojournalism to the discourse of advertising to analyse aspects of its construction, reception and dissemination. By considering the image as framed at different moments it is possible to deal with the particular meanings

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[29] in Squiers (1990), p.158.

[30] 'Benetton rapped over three ads: The Advertising Standards Authority lost no time last week in upholding complaints against three advertisements in the controversial Benetton campaign...' *The British Journal of Photography*, 26 March 1992, p.5

produced by the discursive site of address.[31] As Amy Schlegel (1995), wrote in an article that adopted such an approach to the famous Ron Haeberle photograph of the My Lai massacre by American soldiers in Vietnam:

> If, generally speaking, meaning is mobile, then we must take into account how the different framings of the same image are structured differently at different moments in order to understand how these frames address different audiences, each of which has a particular set of interests at stake. (48)

The original picture of David Kirby was taken by an American freelance photographer, Therese Frare, in May 1990 and was first published in *Life* magazine later going on to win the World Press Photo award for that year (Fig. 1.2). At this first moment of framing, the picture circulated as a black and white documentary photograph. Subsequently, it has been described as an 'icon of an age', in that it is considered to speak of an assumed universal condition.[32] The photographer explains the cultural resonance of the image in terms of the similarity of David Kirby at this moment to representations of Christ such as in the tradition of the Pieta.[33] The picture, with a young man dead or on the point of death, his face reduced almost to the outline of his skull, a grieving family looking on in bewilderment, certainly has a relation to such

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[31] Jonathan Culler (1988) defines this approach : 'Since the phenomena criticism deals with are signs, forms with socially-constituted meanings, one might try to think not of context but of the framing of signs: how are signs constituted (framed) by various discursive practices, institutional arrangements, systems of value, semiotic mechanisms?' (xiv). Thompson (1995) uses the term 'space-time distanciation' to describe the way in which technical media allows for the detachment of a symbolic form from one context and its re-embedment in another and is essentially inherent in its very form.

[32] It was one of six images described as 'timeless' in Mayes,S (1996) pointing to the assumption that certain images can transcend their specific context and 'speak' of timeless human values and experiences.

[33] To my question 'Why do you think this picture became such an icon?', Frare replied:'Many people have said that David looks like Jesus, so I think that is certainly part of it.' (interview with the author via e-mail 28.11.96)

images and gives it an immediate mythical quality that engages the viewer. From this point of initial reading, however, it becomes clear that its entrance into History is defined by contemporary concerns of premature, male death. In this sense the symbolic death resolves into dominant accounts of AIDS and meaning as part of the discourse generated in previous years: here is not someone 'living with AIDS' but unquestionably *dying* of the condition surrounded by a grieving family. Undoubtedly, it is a moving picture and one which is seen to challenge the accepted boundaries of visual media, even if not necessarily challenging of conventional representations of those living with HIV/AIDS. The outrage it garnered was of a feeling that it reduced an image of immense suffering to a commercial strategy for selling something inconsequential and trivial when it was used as an advertisement for Benetton.[34]

The starting point for the circulation of the image was as a picture taken by a freelance photographer. As a freelance worker presumably what dictates the agenda is the *potential* sale of an image.[35] There is not, necessarily, a predetermined audience for the final product. In this sense the potential activation of the photograph is something suspended within the image but as yet unfulfilled.[36] However, its status as a photograph taken by a public

[34] 'Nick Partridge of the Terence Higgins Trust said that to use the distressing depiction of any form of serious illness or deathbed scene to sell clothing for commercial profit is not only offensive "but leaves me wondering what Benetton is trying to communicate to the general public". He accused the company of trying to cash in on the plight of millions dying from AIDS' Macmillan New Media 1993.

[35] Frare states that she does not make any money from her documentary work (e-mail 28.11.96)

[36] see Hall, S. (1972) The Determinations of Newsphotographs'

photographer positions it in a discourse that sees it inscribed with certain values before it is even read and at this point this should be considered.[37]

In America there is a long established tradition of documentary photography associated with, for instance, the government sponsored Farm Security Administration agency represented by work such as that of Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans that uses a strong emotional language. In Europe, the Magnum Photographic Agency has been central to the organization and production of a range of international photographers and their work. Fundamentally the discourse of documentary revolves around the centrality of the truth of the image where, as Graham Clark (1997) describes, the term document means evidence, a quasi legal term that has the authority of the law behind it to sanction its truth claims and which frames the genre of documentary photography (145).

The figure of the photojournalist has played a particular role during the seventies and eighties as perpetuated most often in accounts of war, especially Vietnam. In this the photographer has been produced as a mythical individual premised on the prototype of the war photographer

[37] The term 'public photography' is taken to include documentary photography and photojournalism to be able to address the way in which the photograph can be used in different contexts, sometimes as part of a textual account of events but could subsequently be displayed without any supporting material. For discussion of this and the wider issues of representing the Other see Edwards, Susan E. 'Photography and the representation of the Other: A discussion inspired by the work of Sebastiao Salgado' *ThirdText* n.16/17 Autumn/Winter 1991, pp.157-172 and for a defence of Salgado see Stallabrass, J. 'Sebastiao Salgado and fine art photojournalism' *New Left Review* n.223, May/June 1997, pp. 131-160, illustrations.

Robert Capa, a founding member of the Magnum agency.[38] Seen as risk taking and unconcerned for his (and to a lesser extent her) own safety in the pursuit of the truth, the photographer is prepared to venture into the zones of danger and death for the sake of getting the images to the outside world.[39] This is evidenced in a number of fictional narratives of American involvement in South American and South-East Asian conflicts, analysed by James Aulich (1991) who points to the moment in the Oliver Stone film *Salvador* (1985) when the photojournalists discuss the famous Capa photo of the moment of death of a Loyalist soldier, seemingly taken at the very moment he is shot with the impact of the bullet throwing his arms out and his knees buckling, and one says to the other: "You got to get close... to get the truth, you get too close, you die." (99). Andy Grundberg (1991) of the *New York Times* would write in 1989 that:

> Photojournalism, as it has been defined by its most ambitious practitioners and mythologised by their admirers, is an activity that combines aspects of social reform, individual heroism, and emotional compassion. It also aspires to be received as art. (191).

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[38] For further information see: Whelan, R (1985) *Robert Capa: A Biography,* Faber and Faber, London, where Capa's political sympathies with the Communist Party is discussed, and Mayo.G.E 'The Magnum photographic group' *Apollo* n.130 September 1989, pp.151-4.

[39] Dennis Hackett in the *Guardian* describes photojoumalists as: '...dedicated, courageous - often to a near suicidal degree - skilled and necessarily persevering...' 'Shot from both sides' Saturday 25 October 1991, p.6.

Such a formulation is potentially problematic in that what can be foregrounded is the mythology of the process rather than the social and political coordinates of the event represented. At the moment of both production and consumption in this instance what is privileged is individualism that works to elide the social contexts of both. This fits with the aestheticization of the images that seeks to abstract and universalise the social by an equivalence of individual struggle (the producer) with individual moral choice (the consumer).

Howard Chapnick (1996) writes: 'the photojournalists of the last forty years have unselfconsciously chosen to build a tradition of proactive, socially-driven, idealistic press photography that attempts to change the world.' (11). The implication is that the very presentation of photo-documentary images will effect an active response in the viewer, as Orvell (1995) writes in relation to the photographer Sebastio Salgado, where there is the assumption that documentary will lead to action (100).

The status of such photography has been much critiqued over recent years on the grounds that it can act to reassure the western, bourgeois subject of their

place in the world as opposed to horror of the Other.[40] Martha Rosler (1989) in her acutely observed essay, 'In, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)' suggests that: 'Documentary photography has come to represent the social conscience of liberal sensibility presented in visual imagery'(303). The effect of an image being positioned in the discourse of public photography is usually to position the picture as distant from the viewer in a realm of voyeuristic spectatorship of the exotic, thrilling or disturbing. Within this mythology what the photojournalist does is to venture beyond the boundaries of the mainstream into the space of the Other and to bring back the evidence in the form of the pictures to unsettle the viewer but framed in such a way as not to fundamentally challenge ruling assumptions.[41] An earlier tradition of documentary photography had already laid the ground for this, for as John Tagg (1988) writes:

> ...in its mode of address, documentary transformed the flat rhetoric of evidence into an emotionalised drama of experience that worked to effect an imaginary identification of viewer and image,

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[40] see for instance Kember, S.' "the shadow of the object": photography and realism' *Textual Practiced* (1), 1996, pp. 145-163. Similarly Solomon-Godeau, A. (1991) *Photography in the Dock* asks: '...whether the *place* of the documentary subject as it is constructed for the more powerful spectator is not always, in some sense, given in advance. We must ask, in other words, whether the documentary act does not involve a double act of subjugation: first, in the social world that has produced its victims; and second, in the regime of the image produced within and for the same system that engenders the conditions it then re-presents. (176)

[41] Rosler (1992) writes: 'documentary photography has been much more comfortable in the company of moralism than wedded to a rhetoric or program of revolutionary politics. ...yet the force of documentary surely derives in part from the fact that the images might be more decisively unsettling than the arguments enveloping them. Arguments for reform - threatening to the social order as they might be to the unconvinced - must have come as a relief from the *potential* arguments embedded in the images: with the manifold possibilities for radical demands that photos of poverty and degradation suggest, any argument for reform is ultimately both polite and negotiable. ' (305-6). From this I take it that Rosier is arguing that there is a potential within such photography for a much more radical and fundamentally challenging practice. Ten years after the first publication of the above quoted essay she writes in a footnote: 'Although an essay of mine on the institutionalization of documentary photography ... has been taken to support the idea that 'documentary is dead,' I believe on the contrary, that documentary is alive - if those who do it exercise responsibility in their decisions relating to the production, dissemination, and marketing of their images.' 'Image simulations, computer manipulations: some considerations' *Ten.8* Autumn 1991 v.2n.2, p.53 (1).

> reader and representation, which would suppress difference and seal them into the paternalistic relations of domination and subordination on which documentary's truth effects depended. (12)

This disguises the fact that there will always be an unequal relationship between the photographer (and from this the viewer) and the photographed.

The photographer can make the subject become the object of their lens because there is always an imbalance in the relationship between them, one is mute the other has the ability to speak if they so wish. This is not to dismiss the potentially critical function of these photographic images that can play a central role in the public contest between hegemonic and resistant forces but to acknowledge that the relationship does exist. AIDS, therefore, became a subject for photojournalistic/documentary interest because it had been positioned as something Other in dominant terms.[42]

During the eighties, galleries and museums freely exhibited photographers work, which is not to argue that photography and art are exclusive terms but to draw attention to the increase in spaces for exhibiting photography in terms of high art discourse at this time. One such example was the exhibition of Nicholas Nixon's portraits of people with AIDS at MOM A in the Autumn of 1988. ACT-UP staged a protest in the gallery, handing out a flyer with the heading 'No More Pictures Without Context' part of which said:

[42] Vicki Goldberg (1994) writes, 'Though documentary photographers rarely addressed AIDS before 1985 and artists seldom before 1988, by 1991 it was estimated that AIDS was central to the work of as many as 500 professional artists in the United States, and photographers and artists were looking at the subject from multiple angles and in a variety of forms and styles.'Lopes.S. (1994) (5)

> In portraying PWAs as people to be pitied or feared, as people alone and lonely, we believe that this show perpetuates general misconceptions about AIDS without addressing the realities of those living every day with this crisis as PWAs and people who love PWA's. (Grover, 1992, 40).

Two Pictures from Nixon's series illustrate the point made by such critics. The first shows the man lying in a bed in a hospital in a pose that is the archetype of someone with AIDS, echoes of which we can see in the picture of David Kirby (Fig. 1.3). In Nixon's picture the man is shown alone, even in a seemingly large room, and clearly positioned as a victim of the disease for, as Watney (1990) says: 'The correct site of AIDS thus emerges as the hospital or hospice, which join the prison as the just and proper latitude for the perverse.' (182). This is the motif widely accepted as the convention for the AIDS patient, as Jenny Kitzinger of the Glasgow University Media Group has shown.[43] Such an image has a long history in relation to the patient as subject of medical treatment, as Gilman (1988) shows but, as he argues, it is also a rearticulation of the moral reprobation associated with the iconography of syphilis where the subject is both not only the sufferer but the source of his own contamination. The second picture (Fig 1.4) shows the subject in silhouette in an image that presents him almost as non-human, as an alien, that emphasises Nixon's project of capturing the otherness of PWA's.[44] What is

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[43] One respondent when asked what images they associated with AIDS replied, 'A person lying in a bed that's obviously got the AIDS virus. Someone white and skeletal[1] in Kitzinger, J. 'Understanding AIDS: Researching audience perceptions of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome' in Eldridge, J. (285)

[44] Richard Goldstein (1991) writes:'The grotesquerie of the disease is evident in Nixon's work, almost as if its real subject were the process of physical deterioration. Nixon's use of eerie light and stark framing accentuates this sense of separation from the world.'(34) From The Implicated and the Immune: Responses to AIDS in the Arts and Popular Culture' in Nelkin, D. (1991)

being emphasised here is the role of the photographer as the explorer of the dangerous and exotic. As Jan Zita Grover (1992) observes, such photographers are actually foregrounding their own experience, not that of the subject, and the viewer sees the pictures as 'photographs-as-mirrors-of-the-artist's-soul' (41). The photographs are now about the emotional cost to the intrepid and brave cultural explorer who finds his subjects to be intelligent articulate people which increases the difficulty of his project.

The response to images such as Nixon's is to describe them in terms of their appeal to universal values of human suffering or 'the human condition' which has the effect, once again, of emptying them of reference to specific historical and cultural co-ordinates.[45] Grundberg, in a review for the *New York Times*, wrote:

> The photographs, taken over a period of months, chronicle both the visible signs of the progress of the disease and the inner torment it creates. The result is overwhelming, since one sees not only the wasting away of the flesh (in photographs, emaciation has become emblematic of AIDS), but also the gradual dimming of the subjects' ability to compose themselves for the camera. What in each series begins as a conventional effort to pose for a picture ends in a kind of abandon; as the subjects' self-consciousness disappears, the camera seems to become invisible, and consequently there is almost no boundary between the image and ourselves. (208)

[45] Jonathan Dollimore (1991) refers to such a process as the function of ideology: 'Ideology typically fixes meaning, naturalising or eternalizing its prevailing forms by putting them beyond question, and thereby also effacing the contradictions and conflicts of the social domain. Materialist cultural critique aims to contest ideology in this sense, and via several strategies. First, by restoring meanings to their histories, it tries to show how meaning is powerfully controlled; Marx's formulation of how ruling classes also rule ideas remains a valid point of departure. At the same time this critique shows the historical contingency of meaning but in a way which does not then imply the arbitrariness of meaning, if by that it is meant that it can be simply, subjectively, or unilaterally altered.' (86). See Eagleton, T *Ideology: An Introduction* (1991) for fuller discussion of this.

The subject is effaced, becoming the condition rather than an individual with a history of living up to and beyond that point. The black and white imagery that signals the tradition of documentary photography, with isolated, ill looking subjects, strips them of any power to signal resistance either to the discourse of medicine or photography.[46] As Watney (1994) points out: 'By being repeatedly individualised, AIDS is subtly and efficiently de-politicized.' (73). Such representations focus on the personal circumstances of those represented and so are able to avoid or even acknowledge the existence of a public dimension to the AIDS crisis, of how it came to be what it is. Crimp (1992) writes of how by keeping PWA's safely within the confines of their private circumstances all of the important questions about the fundamentally *political* nature of AIDS, questions of funding, of competitive and secret rather than cooperative and public drug research, and of preventative education campaigns, are completely ignored.

What such images also do is to position the subjects of the photographs as safely distant from the viewer in the comfortable consumerist space of the gallery. The form of the images is ritualized enough for the viewer to be able to read them unproblematically yet they also contain enough that is different to provide the necessary frisson of fear and anxiety. AIDS needs to be given a face to give shape to the urge to control that seen as destabilising. As Rosler (1989) says: 'Documentary is a little like horror movies, putting a face on fear

[46] The graininess of black and white prints has come to signify 'reality'. This goes back to when black and white film was faster than colour and so was used in outdoor situations with natural light as opposed to the staged and artificial lighting of the studio where colour was preferred. Colour was therefore associated with the imaginary and fantasy.

and transforming threat into fantasy, into imagery. One can handle imagery by leaving it behind.' (306)

If some people question and criticize images such as Nixon's on the basis not of their 'truth' value, after all it *is* a picture of someone suffering from an AIDS related illness, but of the partial, constructed and distanced manner of its presentation then what is the implication for documentary photography as a practice that can potentially offer some contestatory force? Allan Sekula (1984) addresses one crucial aspect of this in his essay from 1976 'Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)' in which commenting on the fetishistic promotion of the humanity of the artist over that of their subject he criticises the way in which the process of negotiation between photographer and subject is one of mystification (59).

One attempt to overcome this problem that maintained an avowedly photodocumentary approach was the 1993 exhibition and book *Positive Lives,* the result of a collaboration between the photographic agency Network Photographers and the Terence Higgins Trust. Each section in the exhibition, which toured the UK and in South Africa in a slightly different form, and corresponding chapter in the book was taken by a different agency photographer working with a different theme. Central to each is the foregrounding of the dialogue between the photographer and the subjects of the pictures. In comparison to the approach of someone like Nixon there is

something other than silence and acquiescence on the part of the photographer's subject. This can be understood as an example of the monologic/dialogic nature of representation and the tension between them, defined by Bakhtin, where typically the AIDS patient positioned within the hospital as the subject of power/knowledge is able to be objectified in comparison to the relative lack of control for the photographer outside this space. As Steve Edwards (1990) writes of this process in relation to 19th century studio practice:

> What I want to argue is that the studio constitutes a monological site; for the photographer it operates as a space in which to assert mastery over the object of fascination, for repressing the uncontrolled, the accidental and the contradictory. Those deviant objects of bourgeois fear and dread are brought into the studio so that they might become their opposite.
>
> The colonial subject or the naked woman here come to figure as ciphers of the photographer's imaginaire. The flux of juxtaposition and opposition that goes on outside of the studio, on the other hand, remains recalcitrant to the photographic look.
>
> Transitory and unpredictable, the space beyond the studio render the patternings of desire and power problematic; unlike the studio mannequin the subjects here answer back. (64)

For *Positive Lives*, rather than there being a focus on the single subject of Nixon's pictures, there is an attempt to address the complexity and diversity of living with the condition in this country. Whether a Scottish housing estate, the daily lives of two young gay men, prison or an AIDS ward, people are shown in context and as active participants, to varying degrees, in the process of constructing the different narratives (Fig. 1.5). As Edmund White writes in the Foreword to the book: 'Memories of adventures past are invoked but so are the erotic present and the fearful future.' (7)

What this approach shows is that the tradition of documentary photography can be reconfigured to produce a socially-conscious practice, aware of the critical analysis of photographic theory of the last twenty years or so. The actual process of photography and reification that *any* documentary account is, is not of course absented, but there is a crucial distinction between a strategy that makes the body a subject with a voice rather than a silent object. This strategy points to the importance of some notion of relating the representation to a history rather than seeking to position it in a transcendental realm of being that somehow serves to illustrate the 'human condition' or some such abstraction or to see it subsumed under the weight of mass media strategies of de-contextualised imagery. A.D. Coleman (1986) writes of how a contemporary documentary mode would acknowledge the essential relationship of textual framing to any public photographic work. Calling for what he sees as a return to an earlier tradition of documentary photography that integrated first-person testimony, historical background or whatever, such a strategy would therefore work to empower the human subjects of the camera (9).

The effect of this on the *Positive Lives* project is that none of the images can be easily assimilated into dominant notions of transcendence that strip them of their ability to stimulate the viewer to question the particular forces at work that produce its moment.[47] The idea attributed to much public photography, that it is somehow illustrative of a 'human condition', is the assertion of a

[47] The 1989 camerawork exhibition and catalogue *Bodies of Experience: Stories About Living with HIV* also adopts such a strategy. Such a position is of course a contingent one, there is nothing that intrinsically cannot be appropriated, other than presumably the destruction of the very system itself.

bourgeois humanism, the mythology of a world community that is underpinned ultimately by a Christian notion of Godly omnipotence from which to look down on all this. Barthes (1972) in his essay from *Mythologies* on the *Family of Man* photographic exhibition in Paris clearly articulates the objections to such a notion:

> This myth functions in two stages: first the difference between human morphologies is asserted, exoticism is insistently stressed, the infinite variations of the species, the diversity in skins, skulls and customs are made manifest, the image of Babel is complacently projected over that of the world. Then, from this pluralism, a type of unity is magically produced:man is born, works, laughs and dies everywhere the same way; and if there still remains in these actions some ethnic peculiarity, at least one hints that there is underlying each one an identical 'nature', that their diversity is only formal and does not belie the existence of a common mould. (107)

What *Positive Lives* points to is a diversity and celebration of difference that ultimately knows no bounds and doesn't suggest one. Rather than the subject of AIDS somehow seeing to be contained within either an institutional discourse of the hospital, or of morbidity and loss, it constantly goes beyond all of these things to point to its presence across the cultural spectrum. The photographs present an image of the body, visible in its materiality, corporeality and selfhood with its desires, demands and diversity via the mediating medium of photography that openly declares itself as such. For some, the best of documentary photography is able to achieve both. Defined by Orvell (1995) as: 'a twofold character inherent in the very nature of its representation: it can be record of horror, yet a "beautiful" record; and it can be a record of a particular moment in time, yet a "timeless"

moment.' (99). Rosler (1992) critiques such a formulation well when she writes that this notion of an aesthetic moment is ahistorical in its rejection of any attention to the specifics of historical meaning yet its currency is precisely that it has an awareness of the pastness of the moment of the image. The aestheticisation of images is to effect the waning of historical reference and a severing of the dialectical relationship between historical and formal meaning, in a process of reification (317).

This is not to argue that an approach such as that adopted by *Positive Lives* can somehow produce a unique 'truth' around AIDS that captures either an essence or a universal experience of living with HIV/AIDS. It is not possible to photograph 'AIDS' no matter what the particular strategy employed whether trying to address the 'human' cost of the condition or the political and ideological aspects of it even as the mass media attempt to reduce such conditions down to a single iconic moment, as in the picture of David Kirby.

Positive Lives goes some way to addressing this by including a range of contributors instead of privileging a single viewpoint. It draws attention to the diversity that exists within all those affected by the condition and that this diversity itself has no limit or end. As a report of work-in-progress of the project for the Terence Higgins Trust (1992) makes clear, this is part of the brief:

> The objective is to progress beyond the representation of illness to demonstrate the enormous response required to the Human Immune Virus in Society as well as in the individual.

> [...] Work is divided among a number of photographers, each tackling a particular subject. These chapters will cohere within an overall planned narrative, unified by the stylistic structure of the Network agency, though each will be distinguished by its subject matter and the photographers' individual creative approaches. It is key to the success of the project that the varying styles of photography will spin off each other to create a group dynamic that will be greater than any individual's vision. Limited but effective use of text will be integral to the work. (5)

Subsequent to the Positive *Lives* project the Terence Higgins Trust adopted the work of one of the photographers involved, Gideon Mendel, for their 1996 advertising campaign to promote safer sex amongst gay and bisexual men titled the 'Reality Campaign'. It consisted of six black and white photographs of HIV+ gay men (Fig 1.6), and is an attempt to present something other than 'safe but sexy' images using models which were so much part of earlier campaigns (Fig 1.7).[48] The Terence Higgins Trust press release outlined the case for the campaign: 'using a series of black and white photographs the campaign challenges stereotypes of gay men living with HIV, and examines the complexity and difficulty involved in negotiating safer sex.'.[49] In the *Pink*

[48] This approach of using people living with the condition in advertising related to it was adopted in 1995 by an American advertising agency, the Morgan Agency, that used HIV+ models for products targeted at those HIV+ such as nutrition supplements. Tessa Souter wrote in the *Guardian,* Wednesday June 21 1995: 'Obviously, the campaign's primary purpose is to get people to buy the product, but, intentional or not, these ads do more for Aids awareness than a hundred scary pictures of the skeletal or disfigured. These are real people, unusual only by virtue of being rather more beautiful than the rest of us.' (9). Presumably the models would not be used if they developed any physical signs of illness.

[49] Press Release, 10.30am, 1 July 1996.

Paper of the 12 July 1996 David Northmore observed that the Trust was taking a bold step in featuring HIV+ men in their campaign as opposed to models. Using as examples men of varying ages and also including men of colour all engaged, not in wild scenes of clubbing or partying, but in more humdrum tasks such as shopping, travelling by bus, going to the doctors.

In the light of this there seems to be, therefore, a socially effective and engaged practice of public photography open to be mobilised within an emancipatory discourse. On the other hand, the image saturated world of today's mass media epitomised by Benetton's advertising practice, assimilates such pictures as Frare's and attempts to reduce the complexity of the issues it represents to generalized moral abstraction easily available for consumption.[50] Susan Sontag (1979) argued that the principle effect of photography is to present every subject as something available for consumption no matter what the moral claims used to underpin it and which sees it cultivated for aesthetic appreciation (110). This is certainly the case in many instances and is what the above has argued, but, such positions seem to foreclose on the contestatory *potential* of public photography. Whilst the sort of trite emotions applied to a reading of Frares' picture can be seen to articulate the viewpoint of liberal humanism where difference is occluded under a claim to transcendental unity, there is another way of reading,

[50] Colin Jacobson writes of the increasing use by advertisers of photographs taken originally within the discourse of documentary such as the work of Sebastiao Salgado: 'As less and less reportage photography is published in magazines and books, it is generally accepted that photojournalism is in crisis. At the same time the advertising industry finds documentary images increasingly attractive' ' Magnum farce' *Art Review* July/August 1996, p.58.

against such formulations, that seeks to mobilise and circulate representations against ruling orthodoxies. It is precisely the potential power of photography to contest images and their dissemination that the dominant order seeks to control and inhibit. Any cursory examination of the activity of state bodies in relation to the taking of pictures during military conflicts, such as the Falklands and Gulf Wars, and the continuous censorship of photographic representations displayed in local galleries under the threat of Clause 28, shows how seriously the issue is taken.[51]

In this context I want to return to Frare's picture of David Kirby. Therese Frare spent 6 months working with David Kirby and his family documenting his life and work as an AIDS activist. Steve Mayes (1992) provides some background to Kirby, revealing that he was, in fact, a founder member of the Stafford, Ohio AIDS Foundation which was established to work for the rights of those with living with AIDS and to educate people about AIDS prevention (27). According to Mayes, Frare declined to be at his death-bed but on the insistence of his family returned and took the picture. This is the history that has been denied when this image is reproduced and circulated, rather it becomes an icon, a type of image that is seen to transcend the specific into

[51] In relation to access for photographers to military conflicts John Taylor (1992) writes of the concerns of a government inquiry into news reporting of the Falklands war, The Committee's interest in realism, however, stemmed from a simple belief in the authority of television and photographic images in themselves. The danger was not only the journalists' use of imagery in the context of news organisations, but that mass communication produces direct action. ...They were afraid that the realism of pictures could overwhelm the still-censored stories.' (14). Clause 28 was the justification for the censoring of the *Ecstatic Antibodies* exhibition by Salford City Council in 1989. See Lynch, J. 'AIDS, Art and Activism', undergraduate thesis at Manchester Polytechnic for discussion of the exhibition and the events surrounding the cancellation of the exhibition.

the general, and is presented as a symbol of the human condition.[52] Marcel Marceau (1996) in *The Critical Mirror* describes his choice of 'Icons of an age' which includes Frare's picture: 'The eyes of these photographers, one might equally say reporters, have captured the essence of our solitude. The eyes of the reporter-photographer interpret the spirit of the universe; man is its hero, its victim, the fleeting witness and yet the eternal historian. These pictures speak for themselves.' (122)

Such platitudes close down on the potential of the image to enter any 'universal' space, even if that were possible, because it empties the image of the historical coordinates that define it. It is precisely that the vast majority of people in the West have had no contact with AIDS that means such an image can so easily become abstract. To have a lover, son, brother or whoever die from AIDS is not a universal experience, it is the opposite. AIDS is not some natural disaster it is a man-made disaster, a disaster that was allowed to happen.[53] Many people will know the image of David Kirby as the 'Benetton' picture which is a reflection of the commodification and

[52] This would define it as an 'icon', in the semiotic framework of C.S. Pierce (1931), where he asserts that an icon can only represent general classes of things and not individuals. This is illustrated by the *Guardian* using the picture of Kirby to accompany an article by Callum Murray on the death of friend from HIVillness, Saturday, September 12, 1992, 11:30-31.

[53] In the wider sense of how images are presented, Robert Danin the editorial director of Magnum in New York is quoted as saying, 'My main gripe is that news pictures are presented to us as a string of images. There's no order to them. Events are reported in pictures and words - without any historical context. One day we hear thousands are dying in Ethiopia. The next day, we hear thousands are being wiped out in Bangladesh. But nobody tries to show the connection, if any, between the two ... without context, news pictures may merely trivialise the important while celebrating the insignificant', quoted in Welch (1989) (24-25).

reification of the photographic image in consumer society.[54]

At this point I want to consider this second moment of the image (Fig. 1.8). The shift of the photograph from the discourse of photojournalism to the discourse advertising, a practice used increasingly in recent years, raises a number of issues.[55] One of Benetton's promoters, Tibor Kalman (1994), editor of the magazine *Colors* voiced his observations of its role as a global media manipulator:

> It's the same with that AIDS picture. It was just a dumb picture in *Life* magazine; became a Benetton ad; and was on the front cover of every newspaper in the world. No matter what anyone does, you can't take away the power from those pictures. (33)[56]

What Kalman means by 'dumb' is probably the colloquial use of the term but it does raise the question of how meaning is mobilized in relation to photographic images in respect of whether they 'speak' in different ways in different contexts. As I have shown above, the discourse of documentary

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[54] The description offered by Lukacs (1971) from the opening section of his essay 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat' seems applicable here: The essence of commodity - structure has often been pointed out. Its basis is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a "phantom objectivity", an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people.' (83)

[55] Loren Bliss observes the increasing interest in the photojournalist 'style' by advertisers, 'Whether for a contemporary fashion promotion or a no-frills corporate pitch, a growing number of art directors have begun to rediscover the usefulness of what old-time, cigar-chomping newspaper editors call "human interest pix." You know the type: black-and-white photos, usually somewhat grainy and invariably stark, shot with Speed graphics, Rolleflexes and M-Leicas loaded with Tri-X, the film souped in hot developer and pushed to some astronomical ASA like 2400, the subject invariably some aspect, often heartbreaking and bizarre, of the human condition.'(43). Saigado himself has been commissioned for advertising images and there has been much debate as to the Magnum agency selling on pictures from its collection. Of more relevance has been cases where documentary photographs, such as one by Saigado of Brazilian goldminers, have been sold onto advertisers who have reused them and added their own slogans, in the case of the Saigado picture the caption 'If only the crane hadn't broken down' see *British Journal of Photography* 27 July 1996, p.5.

[56] Tuck,A. 'Wooly Politics' *TimeOut* April 27, 1994, London.

photography positions the image in a specific way, as part of a specific tradition with its own values, one possible effect of which is to close off any really difficult questions being asked. To shift it into the discourse of advertising mobilizes a different set of readings. Consider, first, the difference in the picture itself and then its new position in the discourse of advertising.

When Benetton used the picture they used a hand-coloured version. This is significant because it immediately signals a shift from the paradigmatic black-and-white print of public photography. The motive for this might be purely fashion, Robert Leedham writing in the *Guardian* observes how Athena, the poster-shop chain, in 1992 shifted the design of their product to an increasing number of colour-tinted images with pastel shades because the market for black-and-white prints is saturated.[57] The effect of the colouring is to give the picture a softer painterly quality. Like all the other images chosen, the picture of David Kirby is not given any context and being a double page spread in a magazine no other elements intrude on the picture space. Olivero Toscani, creative director of the campaign, does this, he says, because: 'they are more universal by not being described.'[58] Elsewhere he describes how he chose the images to use:

> I leafed through newspapers and magazines from all over the world, examining thousands of photographs. Gradually I eliminated those pictures which, albeit significant, were too closely identified with a specificevent or time or recognisable place ... This filtering process has

[57] Robert Leedham, 'Bestsellers: The poster' *Guardian* 12 October, 1992, G2:8.

[58] Clothes' *Creative Review* April 1992, p.31.

> resulted in selecting seven photographs which, over and above their specific subjects and locations, express powerful human and universal themes. Placed in the context of the Benetton advertising, they take on an added value, in my opinion: the ability to present to a worldwide audience the searing and contradictory elements of our common existential experience. (22)

What is happening here is what Barthes (1972) talks of in his essay 'Myth Today' in terms of bourgeois ideology, which is to see the historical and contingent appear natural and as an unproblematic image of essences. For Barthes, the purpose of myth is not to hide things but to talk about them, but in such a way as to strip them of detail such as history and whence to make them appear natural and therefore with a veneer of simplicity and common sense fact that effectively has no explanation (156). Such an operation is precisely what is going on with the series of images reproduced by Benetton. Scenes of distress, dislocation and disaster are emptied of any social meaning and merely presented as examples of a human condition.[59] They close down on the potential for the raising of questions that would disturb the corporate values that the company is based on. Like any advertising the picture is there to do a number of things including to sell a product but also to distract attention away from the fact that the product is the result of a labour process that works to

[59] David Brittain writes of the 'post-Benetton condition' in relation to the World Press Photo exhibition:'It seems to me that the world's photojournalists owe more to Benetton than they care to admit. Not just because their ads provide a platform for contentious images that may never otherwise get exposure, but because the campaign defends all the moral arguments that were ever made on behalf of photojournalism. Like the editor of a good magazine, Toscani says he uses press photography to focus attention on serious social issues (not to sell jumpers). Benetton's strategy - whatever its motives - tends to lend a lot of credibility to an (essentially dubious) event such as WPP, by underwriting the utopian mission of reportage and celebrating the role of the 'concerned' photographer.' *Creative Camera* , August/September 1992 (49)

make and distribute it. It therefore progresses through a series of abstractions away from its material context. Whilst the Kirby image is presented without any caption or explanation, what acts as an anchor for meaning in the absence of all else is the little green logo and words 'United Colors of Benetton' in the bottom right hand corner. In the top left-hand corner printed vertically in tiny letters that would go unnoticed by almost everybody is the name Therese Frare. By being labelled a 'UCB' image the reader will view it from the perspective of Benetton's much proclaimed liberal caring corporate image, an image that has been hugely successful for many capitalist ventures such as the Body Shop. But the image was not seen in any 'innocent' way because of the level of publicity prior to the publication of the picture at national and international level. If we Consider the response of two British magazines sent the picture for publication, *The Face* and *Elle a* number of issues emerge.

In *The Face* of March 1992 an interesting triptych is set up between the cover, the editorial and the advert. On the cover three key words in bold exclaim 'Sex', 'Drugs' and 'Rock'N'Roll' which sets up a frame for the image of someone dying from AIDS within the magazine (Fig. 1.9). The editorial prepares the reader and at the same time distances the magazine from any ethical complaints over its use:

> The advertisement on p98 caused more debate in the FACE office than any ad we have ever received, since it uses an image of a man dying of Aids to sell clothing.
> The question we all faced was: should we let it appear in print?... That's why we decided to run the ad - you'll already have seen it in the

> newspapers anyway - and let you make up your own mind. Meanwhile the money we receive from it will go to two organisations nominated by a friend who is living with the illness... (3)

The effect of this is to make the image available for consumption but to keep the subject of AIDS distant from the identity of the magazine. It gives the subject space but in a cordoned off domain of difference. The magazine could have stated a position of not having a problem with running an image of someone dying of AIDS, a subject that needs more representation not less, and then distance themselves from the ethically questionable tactic of Benetton. Instead, this frisson of voyeuristic fascination is reinforced when the reader turns the page of the magazine from the Benetton advert to a full page picture of a monster from the Cronenberg film of William Burroughs novel *The Naked Lunch,* which is part of an article headed 'Junkie business' (Fig. 1.10). Once again we are in the realm of horror and fantasy which has been an intrinsic part of mass media representations of AIDS. The quote from the article in indented bold which states, "It was all very prophetic: instantly addicting drugs, obsessions with plastic surgeries, venereal diseases that attack homosexuals which are incurable. It's all there in *Naked Lunch*." (104) extinguish any contemplative thoughts in the mind of the reader on the subject of AIDS as they are overwhelmed by the pictures of biomorphic monsters and body horror.

That the picture appears in *The Face* can be seen as a reinforcement of its

profile as, according to Dick Hebdige (1988), a Baudrillardian bricolage machine that has sought to subvert distinctions and oppositions of false/real, style/substance, representation/simulacra and to celebrate the marginal and transitory. *The Face* was one of the first popular publications in this country to run a transmission electron micrograph photograph of the HIV virus which it described as 'the spectre of the decade'.[60] Hebdige writes of the space occupied by the magazine :

> ...Do you remember John Berger speaking from the heart... in the television version of *Ways of Seeing* in 1974 as he flicked through a copy of the *Sunday Times* Colour Supplement moving from portraits of starving Bangla Deshi refugees to an advertisement for Badedas bath salts? "Between these images," he said ...''there is such a gap, such a fissure that we can only say that the culture that produced these images is insane." *The Face* is composed precisely on this fissure. It is the place of the nutty conjunction. (169)

The fact that there is a disclaimer at the very beginning of the magazine and the readers journey through the 'depthless' world of semiographic irony and ambiguity acts as a moment that disturbs the hermeticism of style and consumption that is the magazine.

In contrast the fashion magazine *Elle* adopted a different position to

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[60] 'Panic' May 1985, v.l n.61. Watney (1989) writes of the magazine: 'Whilst *The Face*'s public profile is invariably liberal to left of centre on questions of race and governmental politics, it has nonetheless sustained a low level but persistent tenor of homophobia since its inception, in its early years providing a regular platform for arch-homophobic journalist Julie Burchill to spout her particular brand of suburban-chic prejudice. (80) In April 1992 a jury awarded Jason Donovan the sum of £200 000 pounds against *The Face* for defamation after they reproduced an altered 'outing' poster of him wearing a T-shirt with the words 'Absolutely Queer' on the front. Gay protesters demonstrated outside of the court objecting to the principle that being called 'queer' was a defamation, whilst Donovan tried to maintain that what was at stake was the principle of his honesty rather than being about homosexuality.

that of *The Face*. The reader turns to page 90-91 of the March issue to find two blank white pages and a statement printed in the middle of the right hand side:

WHY THESE PAGES ARE BLANK

This space was reserved for a double page advertisement, but after discussion between the editorial and advertising departments we feei that the image supplied by the advertiser is too distasteful to run. For ethical reasons we have never run fur, cosmetic surgery or cigarette advertising in ELLE and all ads are carefully vetted before appearing. In this case, the debate rests on whether images of some real- life subjects are too personal and upsetting to be hijacked for advertising purposes. A line of decency has to be drawn between of journalistic reportage and purely promotional intentions. Rather than risk offending our readers we have taken the decision to leave these pages blank. ...

Maggie Alderson Editor (Fig. 1.11)

A number of observations can be made about this statement. To say that the image is 'distasteful to run' points to probably the bigger

motive for the exclusion of the picture: not upsetting the sensibilities of the consumers who don't want anything as 'real' as AIDS disturbing the fantasy space of their magazine. These two pages represent one aspect of the dominant thinking about AIDS and the bodies of those affected by it - blank, silent, absence. Alderson, in an interview in 1993, said: 'The British public, the American public, the European public are all cruelly aware of these issues. We read newspapers, we watch the news, we don't need a fashion company to tell us what to care about'.[61] This indicates that she sees AIDS as something which belongs in the domain of 'news' but not in a magazine that deals with the body as desirable object. Yet this might be precisely the place where it is most challenging of stereotypes, interrupting the flow of perfectly proportioned bodies paraded as objects for consumption. The transgressive body can be accommodated within the magazine, such as an article on drag, but only when it accepts the terms of the discourse and not when it undermines the values which it celebrates. Within the same issue there is an article on breast cancer, signalled on the front cover: 'Dying Shame, Britain's Breast Cancer Scandal' that mentions American activist organisations fighting for better treatment: 7 Me, Can Act and Komen are following the example of the AIDS activists such as ACT-UP and are determined to make breast cancer a high-profile issue.' (64). This is illustrated by a conventional and

[61] Interviewed in a Channel 4 programme , part of the 'High Interest' series titled 'Unravelling Benetton' transmitted 18.4.93.

unchallenging image of a woman's body. How much more empowering it might have been if in the spirit of health activism they had used an image such as the self-portrait of Matuschka.[62] Similarly the picture of David Kirby might have caused a reaction of beginning to question the issues of health, disease and representation rather than censoring that which is disturbing.

The issue of representation in sites such as *Elle* touch on the fundamental problem associated with the Frare picture, that is the maintenance of strict demarcation lines between 'real' life, or more precisely some mediated and structured representation of it, and the world of advertising with its images of commodities offered for consumption with the never quite completed promise of satisfying desire. What are the implications if this demarcation is not maintained? The central problem for critics of Benetton's strategy was that the use of documentary images went to the heart of western representations of the real, that such images provided the basis for truth values within dominant media production. They could not therefore be attacked for *what* they represented but *how* and this then drew attention to the way in which all such 'real' pictures circulated within the currency of western

[62] 'Beauty and the breast' *Guardian* October 3 1995, II. p. 14. 'We were all struck by the power of a riveting image - it was very straightforward and honest. As a society we do not confront this kind of maiming. We hide it away.' art director of *The New York Times Magazine* that commissioned the picture.

culture.[63] As Les Back and Vai Quaade (1993) observe in their essay on imaging race in Benetton advertising:

> Benetton's use of documentary images makes perfect sense because both the photodocumentary and the traditional advertising image share an emphasis on *gratification*. The documentary photograph serves to redefine the superordinate position from which the white European sees the world. We refer to this as the *catastrophe fetish,* and we suggest that this is the central theme in European news production. Equally, the advertising shot focuses on the commodification of fantasy, and sells the pleasure of consumption. Thus both forms exploit the enjoyment engendered by spectacle. (78)

Whilst the images, therefore, do not in any way represent a product what they represent is a moral claim, of truth and social concern, that is to be now also associated with an individual, Toscani, at the head of a multinational textile company. As Barthes (1972) shows, the coding of advertising operates not merely at a denotative level but also at a connotative level; Hall (1993) describes this well: 'Every visual sign in advertising connotes a quality, situation, value or inference, which is present as an implication or implied meaning, depending on the connotational positioning.'(97). The advertising strategy adopted by Toscani is understood by the audience because there has to be a pre-existing cultural resonance with which it can fit, as Williamson (1978) says, '...all signs depend for their signifying process on the existence of specific, concrete receivers, people *for* whom and in whose systems of belief, they have a meaning.'(40). The approach taken by Benetton can be seen as

[63] David Brittain offers the view that the world's photojournalists are closer to Toscani than they care to admit, he writes that this is: 'Not just because their ads provide a platform for contentious images that may never otherwise get exposure, but because the campaign defends all the moral arguments that were ever made on behalf of photojournalism.' (49) *op. cit.*

part of a broader shift within advertising during the 1980s towards a more self reflexive style tied into a greater sense of the viewers everydayness. As Goldman and Papson (1994) have suggested, this type of advertising admits that what is normally sold is an illusion so what is offered instead is a knowing comment on the process itself that seeks a legitimacy from the subject's everyday life.[64] Hwever, Toscani does not use pictures of 'everyday' people or events but, as Back and Quaade point out, catastrophes, and catastrophes are a staple element of a media culture today that continues to reinforce the sense that such things occur *elsewhere* or to marginal groups within society who in one or another refuse to accept the dominant systems of belief and behaviour. The blurring of the distinction between the discourses of advertising and realist imagery, celebrated no doubt within a Baudrillardian world of hyperreality, must surely undermine the ability of a contestatory and politically emancipatory narrative to position itself in opposition to the dominant order

[64] Giroux (1994) writes of this process with respect to Benetton's strategy: 'In the case of the AIDS ad, the use of the Benetton logo juxtaposes human suffering and promotional culture so as to invite the viewer to position him- or herself between the playfulness of commodification and an image of apocalypse rendering social change either ironic or unimaginable.' (19) This idea of seeing the 'flattening out' of the realm of image production as part of a profound cultural shift is enthusiastically described by Ernst Sternberg (1996) in his essay on The Economy of Icons': The industries producing iconic goods, sanctuaries, pilgrimage sites, and personas depend on what has become the most dynamic driving force in advanced capitalism: a conglomeration of movie and video studios, video-game designers, television and cable programmers, theme parks and advertising firms, sports and music entrepreneurs, and news-reporting services, along with several segments of high culture, such as art museums and theaters. These industries share the ability to generate the story-lines and the images that entice the consuming public. They also share a finite phantasmagoric inventory, which can accommodate only a limited rate of innovation. In this intensely competitive cultural environment, the core image-making complex generates the imaginative stock that secondary industries draw upon for commercially successful icon production.'(80) in Anderson, W.T. (1996) *The Fontana Postmodern Reader* London: Fontana Press.

and is thus disabling rather than enabling.[65]

For some cultural commentators the attraction of Benetton's strategy was precisely its use of differing systems of knowledge to produce a sense of cultural relativism. Nicolas Bourriaud (1992) wrote in the art journal *Flash Art*.

> *We* are talking about Benetton because their campaign shares certain values with contemporary art: repetition of the image, references to collective identity, calculated impersonality, communication stated in terms of violence. Discussing Toscani in an art magazine is tantamount to admitting that so-called advertising images spring from the same regime as artistic images, thereby stating that art no longer constitutes an autonomous domain...Here, advertising is not being judged in terms of rules but in terms of communication, information, and, last but not least, aesthetics. (147)

This approach to the image in terms of aesthetics is something that Toscani strove for from the beginning, as Rosen (1993) comments: Toscani refers to the power of the image in terms of the formal iconographic discourse of Italian Renaissance art history, calling the image a "modern Pieta'" (23). This sort of traditional approach would probably not be most people's reaction to the picture even after Benetton's attempt to heighten the sense of the image being a painting by having the black-and-white print hand coloured. As Crimp (1992) says in relation to the photographs by Rosalind Solomon of PWA's: 'most of us will not seek to place them within art historical categories. Nor will we be struck by their formal or compositional interest. Rather, many of

[65] For instance Klaus Ottoman (1987)writes: 'In hyperreality the question of reality or fiction no longer exists. Instead the merging of our life reality with media and advertisement into one hyperreality is taking place which is characterized by simulation: a reality that is always reproduced, in which the real and the copy become identical, a world without originals.j...] Advertisement and media no longer produce fictional dream worlds but have become the mediated forms of all social relations.'(90-91)

us will see in these images, once again...the very representations we have grown accustomed to in the mass media.' (121). What is interesting in this manoeuvre is how Toscani seeks to validate the popular cultural format of the photograph by trying to establish a relationship to high culture.[66] The purpose of this is, once again, to seek to displace the image from its historical and contingent moment by placing it in another form of abstraction, this time aesthetic.

It is possible to view the picture of David Kirby as part of a series of Benetton adverts that take HIV and AIDS as their subject matter. The first is an image of brightly coloured condoms that was part of the phase of Toscani's images of multi-racial harmony(Fig. 1.12). These usually turned around black/white children or adults but also included a Jew and an Arab as a simple binary code easily understood by the consumer and shifted into a transcendental plane by the ubiquitous UCB slogan of unity. The multi-coloured condoms spoke of similarly utopian aspirations of the unproblematic celebration of difference and sexuality. Benetton placed this image in the context of what they claimed as a 'Civil commitment against sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS'[67]

[66] The Benetton magazine *Colors* (1993)pub!ished an extract from an article by Giovanni Agosti originally from *II Manifesto,* published 16.2.92, titled 'the Toscani frescoes'that not surprisingly reads the strategy in high art terms: '(...)as time passed it was easy to see that advertising photography was being progressively emptied by Toscani's work. (..^Already last year the white of the photo studio's back curtain was raised a couple of times to show, outside, a handful of autumn leaves splashed in a puddle and the crosses of a vast cemetery in a green filed, just at the time of Iraq's invasion. (...) in this 1992 campaign, which I think Pasolini would have liked, Toscani has gone even further: like a true modern classic he has foregone his own lens and used the photo's of others, of agencies (Magnum and Sygma), like those authors and musicians who have created fine new work in our century reusing already existing material, from inventory: and there is no lack of comparisons (...)' unpaginated.

[67] Quoted in Back and Quaade, p.73.

By the time of the picture of David Kirby the utopian symbols of the artificially staged studio images was to be replaced with much harder fetishised images of human catastrophe. Benetton posed this shift in terms of a response to the accusations of idealism and illusionary unity levelled at the previous campaign and which caused them to begin to question the values of advertising with its emphasis on fantasies of consumption and social relationships. However, they still remain in a representational space that is dehistoricized and fixed by the green UCB logo.

The third moment of Benetton HIV/AIDS advertising was a series of images from 1993 that showed three parts of the body stamped with 'H.I.V. POSITIVE': an upper-arm, abdomen and buttocks (Figs. 1.13, 1.14, 1.15). The response of many to this series was even more furious than that of the picture of David Kirby.[68] Whilst the charge to both was one of exploitation of a terrible situation for commercial gain, what the last series did was to reinforce an extremely repressive argument over those seropositive. In 1987 a group within the newly founded ACT-UP had produced a display for the window of an art gallery titled *Let the Record Show...* part of which consisted of life size silhouetted photographs of what they considered 'AIDS criminals' in front of which were

[68] 'Benetton sued over HIV adverts', 'Clothing giant Benetton is being sued over its controversial advertisements portraying a man dying of AIDS and a body branded with an HIV-postive tattoo. The news has surprised the business world and has been welcomed by AIDS organisations and gay groups who have battled with the corporation in the past. ...Since 1992, when Benetton used an advert showing Nick [sic] Kirby, a young man dying of AIDS, surrounded by his family, the company has faced strong condemnation and opposition from both HIV and AIDS organisations, A demonstration outside Benetton's UK headquarters in London in September 1992 resulted in the arrest of nine Outrage and ACT UP members.', headline and frontpage story from *The Pink Paper* 27 January 1995.

the words that had condemned them set in concrete. One of these went as follows (Crimp, 1988):

> Everyone detected with AIDS should be tattooed in the upper forearm, to protect common needle users, and on the buttocks to prevent victimisation of other homosexuals.
> - William F. Buckley, columnist (8)

It is this, finally, that shows how abstract and removed Toscani is from the reality of the struggle around AIDS. The tattoo pictures fit an authoritarian and oppressive discourse around those seropositive.[69] The flip side of abstract utopianism is social repression and this couldn't be better illustrated than the different moments of the Benetton campaigns. Whilst the images might challenge accepted conventions within advertising they reinforce dominant social attitudes towards those directly affected by the condition.

There is a third moment in the history of the image of David Kirby, a third frame. This is the work produced by ACT-UP in response to the furore over the Benetton use of the image (Fig. 1.16). As has been mentioned, ACT-UP took a strongly critical view of Benetton's motives and commercial gain from what they saw as exploitative use of Kirby's death from AIDS and as part of this response produced an advert that was published in *The Pink Paper* on the 8th March 1992. According to Simon Garfield (1994), ACT-UP worked with an advertising agency WCRS who had a number of high profile clients including BMW, to produce an advert that would go up on one hundred sites that they

[69] A respondent to a questionnaire wrote: 'I read somewhere that people who died of the plague had to be buried with a big 'P' on the coffin. Well, AIDS is like a modern day plague and I think I read somewhere that they did want 'HIV' printed on the coffin, or an ' A' for AIDS if they weren't going to be cremated.' Couple, 16-19, Swansea, referred to in Cragg,A (et al) (1992) (27)

donated (271-2). Underneath a photograph of the magazine double page spread it reads 'There's only one pullover this photograph should be used to sell' followed by a picture of a condom and finally 'Silence =Death. ACT UP'. Coloured by a sardonic humour the advert is also an ironic and self-conscious use of the very advert produced by Benetton. The actual power of the image is now appropriated and reframed in the context of safer sex and AIDS activism. Whilst the 'Silence = Death' slogan (Fig. 1.17) is one that originates in America and has become almost a motto for ACT UP precisely because it is so metaphorically suggestive, we can read it as a comment on the Frare picture itself as used by Benetton.[70] The silence imposed by Toscani does equal a death, the death of the history of the struggle over AIDS by those such as David Kirby. ACT UP re-appropriate such a history that has been silenced and mobilise the image as part of an activist aesthetic.

It is worth at this point going back to look at the motives of the photographer and David Kirby's family in agreeing to Benetton's use of the picture. Mayes (1992) wrote:

> When approached by Benetton for use of the photograph, Frare deferred the decision to those most closely involved - the family, who proceeded with an astute analysis of the potential. They recognised that the campaign would create headlines, not just advertising slogans...The actual advertisement is only a tool to achieve something that Kirby had fought for and spent all his

[70] 'The simple graphic emblem - SILENCE = DEATH printed in white Gill sanserif type underneath a pink triangle on a black background - has come to signify AIDS activism to an entire community of people confronting the epidemic... Our emblem's significance depends on foreknowledge of the use of the pink triangle as the marker of gay men in Nazi concentration camps, its appropriation by the gay movement to remember a suppressed history of our oppression, and, now, an inversion of its positioning (men in the death camps wore triangles that pointed down;SILENCE =DEATH's points up).' Crimp,D. and Rolston.A. (1990) (14)

> money pursuing: some glimmer of concern from society that has at best ignored and at worst suppressed any realistic expression of the true human cost of the epidemic. (27)

The ACT UP advertisement is part of the continuously contested field of representation around the Frare picture and around AIDS in general. It is not an original meaning that is to be privileged somehow over later meanings but merely another discursive moment of meaning production, even if one that, crucially, seeks to challenge the values and authority of dominant ideology.

Other ACT UP groups have used this style of appropriating the mythical language of advertising to produce political statements on the subject of sexuality and AIDS. *Gran Fury, a* collective associated with ACT UP (New York) actually appropriated the Benetton advertising 'style' to produce a challenging message of safer sex that was produced as a poster and displayed on the sides of buses (Fig. 1.18) as part of a country wide safer sex campaign organised by the American Foundation for AIDS Research (AMFAR). Rather than foreground the activist nature of the work by giving it a style associated with such campaigns of freehand, woodcut or stencilled imagery, the graphic is produced *as* an advertising image that assumes the appearance of a typical advert and it competes with all other the consumer messages. With the slogan 'Kissing Doesn't Kill: Greed and Indifference do' and pictures of three couples kissing, one black man and white woman, two men and two women, it looks like a Benetton advert and so subverts the

dehistoricising and abstract function of their advertising strategy(Fig. 1.19).[71] The text in small letters at the bottom which reads, 'Corporate greed, Government inaction, and public indifference make AIDS a political crisis.' gives the whole thing a dissident message, refusing to perpetuate the dominant representations of those living with HIV/AIDS. As one of the collective members states: There was no way we were going to make victim photography' or continue with 'the dominant representation of AIDS as pathetic images of people dying in hospital beds'.[72] Similarly, Leeds Postcards, produced an image of a reworked billboard which has tagged a Benetton advert with the claim,''lesbian mothers are everywhere". (Fig 1.20) which indicates the continued subversion of the 'knowingly semiotic' Benetton style.

A single image can never provide a universally valid account of the epidemic and its effects. As the image of David Kirby shifted from one discourse to another it did not significantly change. What did change was the matrix of values and social readings in which it was positioned. In different ways, at different times both discourses can work to strip such images of any significant historical and political impetus. In 1972 John Berger commented on the

[71] Crimp (1990) writes of this appropriative action:'Questions of identity, authorship, and audience - and the ways in which ail three are constructed through representation - have been central to postmodernist art, theory and criticism. The significance of so-called appropriation art, in which the artist forgoes the claim to original creation by appropriating already-existing images and objects, has been to show that the 'unique individual' is a kind of fiction, that our very selves are socially and historically determined through preexisting images, discourses, and events.'(18)

[72] Quoted in Meyer (1995) who writes of this poster: 'Since its initial appearance in 1989, Kissing Doesn't Kill has become something of an activist classic, widely reproduced in both the mainstream and alternative presses, reprinted several thousand times as a poster, even restaged as a music video and broadcast on European MTV and American public television.' (53)

reproduction of images from the Vietnam war, images of immense suffering and brutality seemingly out of place in the dominant newspaper media:

> ...the issue of the war which has caused that moment [of the photograph] is effectively depoliticised. The picture becomes evidence of the general human condition. It accuses nobody and everybody.
> Confrontation with a photographed moment of agony can mask a far more extensive and urgent confrontation. Usually the wars which we are shown are being fought directly or indirectly in "our" name. What we see horrifies us. The next step should be for us to confront our own lack of political freedom ... Yet the double violence of the photographed moment actually works against this realisation. That is why they can be published with impunity. (40)

The publication of the picture of David Kirby was a seemingly genuine attempt by himself, his family and the photographer to, for a brief moment in the spectrum of media production, bring the subject of AIDS and its terrible cost on the lives of so many into the public domain, a domain that has seen the subject overburdened with many issues other than the lives of those directly affected by it. What the case of the Kirby picture shows is that the various discourses in which the image was located set the parameters of the questions to be asked and therefore the answers that can be elicited.

In the next chapter, after a consideration of how the newspaper media have covered deaths of stars from HIV illness, I want to consider a moment, arguably, of slippage in the dominant representations of AIDS by analysing the coverage of one person, Freddie Mercury, which raises the question of how such representations are possibly never as complete as may be first assumed.

Chapter 2

The Death of Freddie Mercury and the *Sun*: AIDS, Sexuality, and Nationalism

The production and media dissemination of single iconic images such as of David Kirby discussed in the last chapter is an example of the seemingly powerful impetus to produce such representations at moments of crisis or to address intense public sentiment. The death of a 'star' from AIDS was bound, therefore, to produce an image mobilized in a similar fashion. In this chapter I want to consider a picture which took up, almost entirely, the front page of a mass circulation tabloid newspaper - a colour photograph of the singer Freddie Mercury - that was used to announce his death from HIV illness. Firstly, however, this needs to placed within the context of the discourse of the popular press and its treatment of the subject of AIDS.

Within the discourse of newspaper media, the subject of HIV/AIDS has been largely produced as a source of sensationalization, trivialization and marginalization of those affected by the condition. The fact that in the West AIDS has so far predominately affected gay men has meant that as a subject for newspapers it has been framed, almost exclusively, by the dominant ideas around homosexuality. As Terry Sanderson (1995) observes in his account of media treatment of homosexuality throughout the eighties based on his column in *Gay Times*: 'The wave of anti-gay revulsion which AIDS released during the 1980s was frightening and depressing. ...Right from the beginning, the newspapers had grabbed the opportunity to express the unbridled homophobia that AIDS provided'. (205-206) From the beginning AIDS was proposed as an act of retribution towards gay men for their 'promiscuity' and 'immorality' that at times reached incredible levels of what can only be

described as hysteria, which portrayed gay men living with HIV/AIDS not as victims but as guilty parties. Watney (1989b) discusses the general attitude of the press during the eighties towards those directly affected as one that sought constantly to stress the deeply 'alien' nature of them against the mythic and stable identity of the 'general public'. (84) A number of studies of press and media treatment of the subject have been written including Wellings (1988), who wrote of the relentless use of the term 'gay plague' in both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers and the differentiation of those affected into 'innocent' and 'guilty' victims, and from the perspective of the Glasgow University Media Group: Miller and Williams (1993), Beharrell (1993) and Kitzinger (1993). The intention in this chapter is to consider some of the coverage of the death of Freddie Mercury from AIDS related illness on the 25 November 1991. This fits into one category of newspaper coverage of the pandemic: the reporting of stars or celebrity's living with or dying from the condition, and from this to consider one image that condenses a number of these arguments but which is also open to a reading against that preferred by the dominant media.

Traditionally, homosexuality in the newspaper media has been treated with a mixture of opprobrium and denigration and has revolved around oppressive stereotypes of deviant psychotics. Frank Pearce (1980) describes the general approach of newspapers during the nineteen fifties to the nineteen seventies as one that saw the moral order of society endangered by the unnatural anomaly of men finding other men attractive going against, as it does, the

'naturalness' of being sexually attracted to women if possessing a penis. Such a picture of men having sex with men opened up a disparity between the image of fixed and proper desire and the reality of disparate and variable experiences. (305) As the social world continued to change during the nineteen seventies including the visible rise of gay liberation and advances in sexual and gender issues, newspapers , along with all other forms of media, adapted even if still ultimately defined by dominant attitudes towards homosexuality.

Since the advent of AIDS in the early eighties the tabloid press has justifiably earned the enduring enmity of all those who work in the field of HIV and AIDS because of the structural homophobia that defines it and its treatment of the issues and individuals involved. Margaret Jay who was director of the National AIDS Trust sees a clear distinction between the broadsheets and the tabloids and whilst the former have appreciated the seriousness of the issues and been helpful in raising them in the public arena, the latter has not and she considers 'the *Star* and the *Sun* the worst'.[73] Yet coverage of the deaths of particular people from AIDS cannot be said to be presented in a completely

[73] Quoted in Snoddy, R. (1992) *The Good, The Bad and The Unacceptable: The Hard News About the British Press* London and Boston: Faber and Faber, p.65. In chapter 4 of the book, ' "It's a queer old world, isn't it?" False Information and the Press', where he discusses the Killbracken affair in the *Sun* he writes: 'Margaret Jay grants that AIDS is a difficult issue for newspapers to cover. "I equate the difficulty of covering AIDS properly with the difficulty of covering the iran-lraq war or Northern Ireland properly. The thing goes on and on and there is no simple solution."' Many of the victims prefer anonymity, so there is also a scarcity of of the sympathetic human-interest stories that might help to dispel prejudice.' (67) Sanderson (1995) details the homophobia of the broadsheets as a response to the argument that they are inherently better than, rather than just different from, the tabloids.

uniform way, either negative or positive, across the media or even within one publication. Tessa Stratford (1992) writes of the anomaly of the rabid homophobia perpetuated by the media yet at the same time the sympathy sometimes felt in relation to those who have died:

> Indeed, AIDS has added a new and dramatic angle to reportage of homosexuality. While permitting right-wing conservatives to put their homophobic ideas into print, it has also created an anomaly of sympathy, which the case of Freddie Mercury illustrates very well: Mr Mercury's lifestyle was of the type which meets with popular disapproval, yet his passing has been mourned to such an extent that the BBC and ITV featured commemorative programmes of him, and all the national daily papers included obituaries of him. (134)

It is the central argument of this chapter that precisely this contradiction can be seen in the newspaper coverage of Freddie Mercury's death. This is best illustrated by the front page of the *Sun* on the announcement of the death of Freddie Mercury on the 25 November 1991 which consisted of a full page photograph of Mercury, draped in a Union Jack and taken during a flamboyant stage performance (Fig. 2.1). The image brings together three central issues that relate to this thesis: the representation of a gay man, AIDS, and nationalism. What makes this particular image of greater interest is that it is a representation that seems to be celebratory rather than condemnatory and so is not merely a straightforward example of the negative way in which Gay men and AIDS have been represented throughout the epidemic. The ways in which this operates in and around the picture is what the chapter will explore in depth. How this anomaly is expressed in relation to this image is that which is under consideration and whether it is, in this sense, a moment of slippage in the hegemonic representation of someone who has died of

AIDS.[74]

Mass media texts such as newspapers have played an extremely important part in the framing of the issues around AIDS in the mind of the public. Their effect cannot be underestimated given that they have effectively set the parameters of understanding of AIDS for millions of people who have no had 'real' contact with the condition.[75] As Deborah Lupton (1994) rightly points out:

> In the case of AIDS, the popular media, especially the news media, have played an extremely important role in drawing upon preestablished knowledge and belief systems to create this new disease as a meaningful phenomenon, particularly in regions dominated by the mass media such as westernised countries. From the time that the symptoms of AIDS were first recorded, in the absence of other sources of easily accessible information, the news media have defined AIDS issues, and influenced key decisions of policy makers. (4)

What is presented in relation to AIDS in newspapers is the attempt to map AIDS and its implications onto existing discursive formations that then allow the reader to somehow make sense of its unfamiliar and potentially threatening

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[74] Eagleton (1991) writes of this sort of ideological moment: 'if they [ideologies] strive to homogenize, they are rarely homogenous. Ideologies are usually internally complex, differentiated formations, with conflicts between their various elements which need to be continually renegotiated and resolved.'(45); and also with respect to dominant ideological formations: ' A successful ruling ideology ... must engage significantly with genuine wants, needs and desires; but this is also its achilles heel, forcing it to recognize an 'other' to itself and inscribing this otherness as a potentially disruptive force within its own forms.' (45).

[75] In the view of some health promoters such as Naidoo and Wills (1994) *Health Promotion: Foundations for Practice* London: Balliere Tindall, the focussing of the tabloid newspapers, which have a lower class readership, on personalities and other sensationalist stories at the expense of informative health coverage constitutes another health inequality in society. (273)

effects.[76] The news presented in the media cannot be purely fiction because then it would lose its authority, its ideological power; alongside this it has in some way to conform to the values and belief systems of its readers.[77] For that reason a tabloid newspaper whose audience might be largely working class and therefore intrinsically linked, however tenuously, with trade unions has to be seen at times to support those values.[78] But what newspapers do, as is the case for any discourse, is to edit, frame and contextualise the story to make it appear seamless and plausible to the reader. As Lupton, again, states, 'While news is not fiction, it is not reality, but a selective and edited storyabout reality'(27). So it has been central to the tabloid coverage of AIDS to be able to position its effects as distant and within the constituency of gay men, to allow it to fully exploit the oppressive and homophobic qualities of its own ideological familial agenda. By the 1990's when the impact of the disease was, so far, not that which had been predicted for heterosexuals, newspapers would latch on to this 'fact' and make it the starting point for a diatribe of how

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[76] Fowler (1991) relates this process to the use of stereotypes in the news media as a means for the viewers potential to make sense of what is presented: 'News values, then, are to be regarded as intersubjective mental categories. In determining the significance of events, the papers and their readers make reference, explicit or more usually implicit, to what are variously called in cognitive psychology and in semantics, 'frames', 'paradigms', 'stereotypes', schemata' and 'general propositions'. In loose terms, this principle means that people work with tacit mental categories for the sorting of experience: let us call these stereotypes for the moment. A stereotype is a socially-constructed mental pigeon-hole into which events and individuals can be sorted, thereby making such events and individuals comprehensible...' (17)

[77] Moments when stories have consciously been fabricated as in the bogus interview with the widow of a victim of Falklands war, Marica McKay, published in the *Sun* (November 1982) have caused immense amounts of bad publicity and censure from the Press Council. Rival newspapers such as the *Daily Mirror* who had bought exclusive rights to the woman's story vociferously attacked the paper for its mendacity.

[78] For analysis of the changing nature of coverage of behaviour relating to masculinity see Mary M. Talbot ' "Randy Fish Boss Branded Stinker": Coherence and the Construction of Masculinities in a British Tabloid Newspaper' in Johnson, S. and Meinhof, U.H (1997) *Language and Masculinity* Oxford: Blackwell

AIDS is what they said at the beginning: a 'gay disease' and that heterosexuals had nothing to fear from 'normal' sexual intercourse.[79] They could then to go back on the attack against gay organisations for whipping up a panic for their own self-interest.[80]

However, the concern of all the newspapers is ultimately a commercial one, to make a profit, and so it is that which determines their approach. As I have already suggested in the introduction (23-24), newspapers have used AIDS as a source for voyeuristic thrill, with its subject matter of sex, morality and death. What is evident in the image of Mercury under discussion, is the visibility of the picture space being used as a place for various discourses to contest the meaning within it: the discourse of AIDS struggles with the discourse of 'stars', struggles with the discourse of nationalism. This contest that permeates all discourse has been defined by Bakhtin (1981):

> Any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist - or, on the contrary, by the "light" of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with

[79] For instance, in 1985 the Royal College of Nursing predicted that by 1991 there would be one million cases in Britain alone. See Wellings (1988) pp.93-96 for discussion of the variance in predictions, global and national, of AIDS cases.

[80] Sanderson (1995) observes that: 'A conspiracy theory arose that gay activists had been manipulating the Government into 'massaging' the statistics and deliberately feeding the public 'disinformation' that AIDS was an equal threat to the whole community when, indeed, it really was a 'gay plague'. (208) This view was given immense publicity in November 1989 when Lord Kilbracken was at the centre of claims that the statistics on HIV/AIDS 'proved' that it was not a threat to heterosexuals. Headlines such as that of the *Sun*: 'STRAIGHT SEX CANNOT GIVE YOU AIDS' (17 November 1989) followed by their resident doctor's view of 'AIDS- THE HOAX OF THE CENTURY...' (18 November 1989) were ultimately condemned by the Press Council who instructed the paper to publish a retraction which they duly did *(Sun* 12 July 1990).

shared thoughts, points of view, alien judgments and accents. (276)

One strategy adopted by the news media in reporting his death (in an at least partially sympathetic fashion), was to portray Mercury as positioned as distant from the public sphere by virtue of his star status. This particular formulation of the social effect of the condition is the combination of a number of themes. Firstly, Hollywood and pop world stars are a staple of the tabloid press, they allow a vicarious pleasure for the reader in the excesses, whether of behaviour or financial reward, of those portrayed. They also serve a more fundamentally ideological role in that by continuously focussing on the lives of individuals the narrative is never raised above a level of singular reference to, or in any sense to foreground, a wider historical perspective. As was argued earlier (37) such representations individualise the condition and close off once more the public aspect of the dimension. At a time when state bodies such as the HEA were arguing the dangers to everyone from HIV infection, the *Sun* continued to perpetuate the 'exotic' nature of those living with AIDS. Newspapers, therefore, can position AIDS in the way that the excesses of stars lives are positioned - as a source of voyeuristic fascination. So in the issue of the *Sun* that announces his death on the front cover, over pages 14-15 (Fig. 2.2) Mercury is placed in the rarefied context of the 'Tragic Toll of the Showbiz Plague', which safely defuses the potential conflict of allowing AIDS to seen to be part of the narrowly defined version of 'our' society Watney refers to. Rock Hudson, Liberace and 'Magic' Johnson are among 12 stars who have made public their HIV+ status or who have died from AIDS and who make up the list. A similar operation is evident in a

Newsweek special on 'AIDS and the Arts' from January 18,1993. With a Picture of Nureyev (Fig. 2.3) on the cover he is an icon for 'A Lost Generation'. A double page spread over pages 42-43 (Fig. 2.4) of the magazine offers a list of those who have died in a style of a memorial including 94 names and 14 pictures, each one defined by their art or moment of fame. Listed alphabetically, any sense of historical progression is lost, yet the age and date of their deaths are listed: 'Gary Abrahams, 48, November 5, 1992. Cofounder of Filmex, Los Angeles's first film festival, in 1971', ... 'Michel Foucault, 57, June 25, 1984. The postmodernist and antiauthoritarian French philosopher.'. Such use of dates is a staple of journalistic discourse that presents the reader with a sense of order as opposed to meaningless chaos. But a value system *is* being presented here, as in the *Sun,* a value system that is fundamentally concerned with elites and their uncritical acceptance: 'All lives are irreplaceable, but the death of an artist leaves a void that echoes beyond the circle of loved ones. There is art work that will never be made.' (36) and further, 'Or think of the paintings that you will never see in museums. ...How many rooms of empty frames would have to be filled to create a museum of unpainted art? Or shelves built for unwritten books?' (38). At one point the writers refer to the fact that there are many' janitors and lawyers, accountants and school teachers', who die in silence, meaning presumably 'media' silence, and that people in the arts are concerned that the media presentation of the pandemic gives the message that the readers need not be concerned for themselves because, 'We're not artsy, we're not gay, this can't happen to us middle-class folks.' (38-39). Such articles and graphic

presentations of the 'cost' of AIDS reinforce precisely this message and the contradictory statement within the piece points rather to the multi-authored nature of the article.[81]In relation to the *Sun,* its presentation of the events reported is structured precisely along the lines of discursive categories that acts as a shorthand, given the limited space available, for the reader. Alongside the article on Mercury we can read of 'Cops', 'Bosses', 'Workers', 'road crash victim', School dinner chiefs', 'Beefy rugby players', 'thief and beside this, then, 'Stars'. The categories established by the paper, becoming familiar with the reader over a period of time, are positioned overall by the simple binary of good or bad. Under the editorship of Kelvin MacKenzie this was effected by what has been described as the 'scum agenda', as Chippindale and Horrie (1990) define it:

> Although each group which could be labelled as scum represented a small minority, they added up to a large swathe of the population, including prisoners, criminals, drug-takers, football hooligans, most blacks, homosexuals, militant trade unionists, muggers, students, peace campers, demonstrators, hippies, dossers, tramps, beggars, Social Security scroungers..., squatters, terrorists and especially the IRA, vandals, graffiti artists, prostitutes, gipsies, winos, various foreign groups en masse and all deviants particularly sex offenders. (177)

It would be easy in the light of this to perceive the treatment of AIDS in the press, especially the tabloids as one of unremitting hatred and hostility. However, such a uniform view of the discourse of the press would not acknowledge the level of contradiction inherent within any such ideological formation. Whilst it might be the case *in general* that such attitudes

[81] The piece is credited to: 'David Arisen with Donna Foote in Los Angeles and Katrine Ames, Jack Kroll, Abigail Kuflik and Peter Plagens in New York.

predominate, the consequences of which are unarguably violent and repressive, it is inherently more contradictory than at first glance. Stars such as Mercury provided something of a conundrum for papers like the *Sun* in that stars, when not on the wane, are actually very popular with their readers. So, whilst Mercury came within one of MacKenzie's 'scum' categories, the papers experience a few years before of attacking Elton John on spurious grounds of using rent boys and staging drug and gay sex orgies made them careful in their coverage of his lifestyle.[82] Further, whilst rock music is not a cultural sphere renowned for the visibility of gay artists, by virtue of his star status it is not too problematic to allude to Mercury's sexuality.[83] As Crimp (1988) notes the 'shibboleth about "homosexuals" being "the lifeblood of show business and the arts"... implies that gay people "redeem" themselves by being artists, and therefore that the deaths of other gay people are less tragic. The message is that art, because it is timeless and universal, transcends individual lives, which are time-bound and contingent.'(4). Mercury, as a star, by definition transcends the ordinary into a separate state of being, he is a different kind of person anyway.[84] As Richard Dyer (1979) observes of one view of the

[82] The *Sun* paid Elton John an out of court settlement of £1 million pounds in December 1988 for the stories they published which were extremely unpopular with the readers, causing a flood of protest letters and according to Chippindale and Horrie (1990) a drop in sales of up to 200 000 copies each time they lead with an Elton story. (268)

[83] There is, of course, a tradition of seventies rock that included David Bowie as Ziggie Stardust and the New York Dolls that alluded to sexual ambiguity but the homophobia and misogyny of the genre in general is well known and best exemplified by a group such as Skid Row who thought it 'funny' to produce a publicity picture of the lead singer wearing a t-shirt bearing the words 'Aids kills faggots dead' See Denski and Sholle (1992) for discussion of this and other examples.

[84] Cragg et al (1992) report that: '...numerous references were made to HIV and AIDS among celebrities, most notably Freddie Mercury but also Magic Johnson, Arthur Ashe and Elizabeth Glaser. In general these cases had done little to enhance risk perceptions or create a more positive image of people with HIV/AIDS.... Freddie Mercury tended to be singled out for criticism both because he had been bisexual, and thus could be seen as a channel for transmission from the gay to heterosexual communities, and because he and apparently been highly promiscuous.

phenomena of stars:

> Stars are always the most-something-or-other in the world - the most beautiful, the most expensive, the most sexy. But because stars are 'dissolved' into this superlative, are indistinguishable from it, they become superlative, hence they seem to be of a different order of being, a different 'ontological category'. Their image becomes gradually generalised, so that from being, say, the most beautiful they become simply 'the greatest'. (49).

If we examine the coverage over the course of the week of Mercury's death in one paper, the *Daily Mirror,* how the contradiction is negotiated becomes evident. The front page on Monday, 25 November 1991 (Fig. 2.5) announces that 'ROCK STAR FREDDIE IS DEAD: He loses his brave fight against AIDS'. It then continues with a fairly straightforward account of the details of his death, the time and place for instance, and also the fact that his parents were at his side. Part of the account also states that 'Freddie shamed his family through the gay exploits which finally struck him down with AIDS' and so conforms to the dominant thinking on AIDS linking it intrinsically to homosexuality and promiscuity and foregrounding the tragic cost to the 'family'. Yet above the headline on Mercury there is a banner flagging a centre page feature on 'DEADLY SINS OF MARRIAGE' that seeks to offer advice on common problems of married couples, albeit in a titillating way that, it can be argued, points to the unsustainability of the illusion of the social institution of marriage as somehow a defence against a constantly changing world. Over pages 4-5 the paper continues this mixture of tribute and moral judgment and uses the apparent relationship with a woman, Mary Austin, to point to the moment at which Mercury left the 'safe' world of heterosexual union to pursue

homosexual lovers: 'Girlfriend stayed loyal as tragic Queen singer went looking for thrills'. In one insert Mercury is categorized as part of the 'STARS' DEATH TOLL', in a similar way to that already described, and warning: 'A showbiz expert said last night: "A lot of stars are gay, bisexual or promiscuous. This is the tip of an iceberg likely to get bigger by the month."', an image that harks back to the original government AIDS campaigns. On page 15, the 'pop music' page, the columnist pays tribute to Mercury the pop legend under the heading 'A kind of Magic'. Mercury's excessive behaviour and persona is once again recounted including a quote attributed to him: 'Excess is part of my nature - I need danger', to make clear the link between his behaviour and his death.

On Tuesday the paper continues to lead with Mercury's death: 'FREDDIE: THE LAST MOMENTS'. Inside over pages 2-3 the main angle on the story to be adopted by the paper is now clearly highlighted as his relationship to Mary Austin: 'I kissed him on the cheek, held his hand, and said "I love you very much" In a concerted effort to play down Mercury's gay sexuality as somehow a 'mistake' the article continues:

> The only woman to share Freddie Mercury's life told yesterday how she said her last farewell with a tender kiss as the rock star lay close to death.
>
> Mary Austin, 38, sobbed: "I kissed him on the cheek' held his hand and told him I loved him very much and how brave I thought he had been.
>
> The AIDS-stricken singer - pencil thin, virtually blind and unable to speak - could not respond. And Mary, who for 21 years regarded herself as Freddie's "wife" despite his string of gay lovers, was so

> upset that she had to leave his £4 million mansion in Kensington, West London.
>
> Clutching her three-year-old son Richard - Freddie's godchild - she said: "It was so sad. The suffering I witnessed from Freddie is something I never want to see again. It was awful. …

On the facing page the main part is taken over by two photographs: one of Mercury with his arms encircling Mary Austin, both of them laughing: the other of Mary Austin looking very sad only hours after his death, with the byline 'Gone was the laughter which lit up her eyes in the 21 fun-filled years they spent as devoted friends'. Pages 16-17 are given over to accounts of fans upset at his death and the tributes from those leaving fiowers at his house including one who is said to have flown in from Japan especially.

By Thursday, 28 November, 1991 the contradictions inherent in the coverage of Mercury's death had become visibly extreme. The front page leads on coverage of the funeral of the previous day and a picture of Elton John with the words 'FREDDIE, I'LL LOVE YOU ALWAYS', and reference to the sadness of many of the stars that attended continued in a double page spread over 24-25. But the (out of context) reference to the love of one gay man to another on the front page is in stark contrast to the opinion offered by the columnist Joe Haines on page 20 who writes of the 'Dark side of Freddie',

> In print and on the air, Mercury has been variously described as brave, flamboyant and wild - a term of admiration, not disapproval - and a hero to the young.
>
> In fact, he was sheer poison, a man bent - the apt word in the

> circumstances - on abnormal sexual pleasures, corrupt, corrupting and a drug taker.
>
> It might have been brave to announce he had AIDS the moment it was diagnosed. It wasn't brave to conceal it until his last few hours. There was nothing flamboyant about catching AIDS, spreading it to others. Nothing admirable about touring the streets seeking rent boys to bugger and share drugs with.
>
> Mercury died from a disease whose main victims in the Western world are homosexuals. For his kind AIDS is a form of suicide.

Such an extreme attitude of literally hate in a newspaper that had so far generally been sympathetic to the subject, even if as shown above attempting to put a particular spin on the story, seems incongruous but highlights precisely the point that within even one publication a number of perspectives will, at times, be evident. Peter Beharreli (1993) argues just this point in relation to the subject of AIDS in the British press: These apparent contradictions are partly a function of the different rules and requirements which may operate in different parts of a newspaper. We must recognize that there are potentially different forms of writing or formats.'(232). Within this the 'column' seems to be the space where least constraints are applied. But even in this issue of the *Daily Mirror* another columnist, Simon Bates, argues that the death of Freddie Mercury should be a lesson to everyone of the tragic nature of this disease and how homosexuals and heterosexuals are affected by it. The following day on the letters page, page 27, the paper published a letter condemning Haines' column from 'B.White and Nalgo staff of Camden, London' who saw it as: '... as displaying blatant prejudice and [we] condemn the Editor of the *Daily Mirror*, a supposedly progressive newspaper which supports the labour movement, for allowing this column to

appear. The article was reactionary and lowered the credibility of the newspaper…'.

Almost all the papers on the Monday made reference to Mercury's relationship with Mary Austin including the *Daily Telegraph* : 'His longest love affair was with blonde haired Mary Austin which ended after seven years, although they remained close friends' (3); the *Times*: 'Mercury enjoyed the company of women as well as men and his strongest relationship was with Mary Austin' (3); the *Daily Mail*: 'Ironically, there was a woman in Freddie Mercury's life' and again a repeat of the quote from Mercury of Austin being his 'common-law wife' (17). The following day the *Daily Mail* made reference to another former 'female friend' who is quoted as saying: "Freddie could handle his bisexuality but this was something different. From the very first time he heard about AIDS he was scared." (17). In a typical move the *Daily Mail* couples this report on Mercury's death with a report on the intention of OutRage! to distribute leaflets outside schools bearing the message 'It's OK to be gay'. In the layout of the page this report is almost seen as a footnote to the one above and bears no separate byline. Again it seems to highlight the contradictory nature of media production with the main article a tribute and supporting piece on Mercury yet below it a report on parents anger over homosexuals leafleting their school: 'Schools aren't the place where they should be trying to get access to young people'. The *Daily Star* of the 25 November 1991 takes similar care to treat Mercury's death with an appearance of sympathy although it starts its account by clearly making his

death the result of 'the tragic price for a hell raising life of sex, drugs and rock and roll', and Mercury described as a 'Hell-raising, bedhopping, bisexual'(2). But what is evident elsewhere in the paper is an example of what John Taylor (1992) refers to as 'twinning' of news stories, where one story is mirrored by another: 'Twinning is crucial, since the world of the press is Manichaean: the strength of one is checked only by the power of the other, good news heralding consumption, with bad news casting a shadow over all delights, threatening the withdrawal of pleasure for ever.'(94) Over pages (12-25)[85] in the middle of the paper the reader hears of how some HIV+ parents will eventually leave their children orphans, this, we are told, is 'The real tragedy of the killer plague' (12) (Fig. 2.6).

The previous chapter explored how the dominant pictorial representation of someone with AIDS was as isolated, emaciated and overwhelmed by the physical effects of the disease. What is so unusual about the picture of Freddie Mercury, used to announce his death on the front page of the *Sun,* is the fact that it signals the complete opposite of these conventions for depicting someone with AIDS. If the picture is considered from the perspective of the manifestation of a concrete utterance, to use Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) formulation, then it serves to illustrate the continuous struggle over language and meaning in the public sphere in general and specifically in relation to AIDS. The forces trying to stabilise and universalise meaning at

[85] The pagination is explained by a pull-out TV guide.

the centre are undermined by the forces at the margins that subvert it, what Bakhtin refers to as 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal'. He says of this process of centralisation and unification and corresponding decentralisation and disunification:

> Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralisation and decentralisation, of unification and disunification, intersect at the utterance; the utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualized embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of heteroglossia as well; it is fact an active participant in such speech diversity. (272)

Such a formulation serves to move the analysis on from any crude and relatively unproductive notion of positive or negative images of PWA's but opens it up to questions of social and discursive positioning and the attempt to fix a unitary, transcendental meaning over other readings. The *Sun* had been at the forefront of perpetuating the stereotype of a 'victim' of AIDS as emaciated and thin. Chippindale and Horrie (1990) comment on the paper's approach to AIDS:

> MacKenzie [the editor] honed theSun's coverage of the deaths by concentrating on one of the most terrifying aspects of the disease - the way sufferers' bodies wasted away before they died. The paper developed a style of reporting the stories by emphasising terminal body weight. 'ROCK IS DEAD -AIDS VICTIM HUDSON DIES WEIGHING 7 STONE' the splash screamed on 3 October 1985 besides a ghastly picture of the emaciated star. MacKenzie just laughed at the left's outrage at these excesses. (182)

In contradistinction to this, the picture of Mercury later published portrays him as confident, healthy, and in a pose suggestive of macho nationalism. This would not be unusual for a publication such as the *Sun,* given its reputation as

one of the most xenophobic and nationalistic of the tabloid press, were it not for the fact that Mercury projected an over-the-top campiness, a gay style with his 'clone' look of cropped hair and moustache.[86] Mercury never openly declared his sexuality to the mainstream press and was astute enough to realise that he could get away with excessive behaviour, if it was firmly kept within the confines of the stage and rock world extravagance, and so maintained a line between this image and his personal life.[87] In this way the campiness which was his trademark and the suggestive name 'Queen' was accommodated as rock music exuberance along with Mercury and the band dressing in drag for a music video. In this sense he was never a gay icon and his audience seemed to be fairly straight, white and unaware or largely unconcerned of the gay symbols he assumed.

His diagnosis with AIDS and subsequent death clearly revealed the aspects of his life that the media had until then largely ignored. Newspapers each have their own political and economic agenda's, with the tabloids defining a 'downmarket' approach and an emphasis on entertainment rather than

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[86] Chippindale and Horrie (1990) write of the papers nationalistic rhetoric: 'Mindless patriotic fervour and flag waving jingoism had always been the trademark of popular newspapers, and the *Sun*, taking over the mantle of chief John Bull tub-thumper from the *Express*, simply reflected changing circulation patterns. (110)

[87] John Marshall wrote in Gay *Times* (January 1992) of Freddie Mercury: 'On the one hand he was usually depicted as a "private person", not prone to revealing the inner secrets of his personal life and not willing to publicly flaunt his sexual orientation. Reluctant to give serious interviews, he never emerged as a political spokesman for the lesbian and gay community and his sexual life was frequently cloaked under the ambiguous veil of "bisexuality". On the other hand, however, he was possibly the most blatant, outrageous and exciting exponent of a particular sort of gayness that the pop world has ever seen.' (9)

analysis.[88] They use a number of mechanisms to convert 'hard news' into a popular format. Like Rock Hudson, representations of whose death are referred to in Chapter five, Freddie Mercury is positioned within the news story category of 'human interest'. This category is a deeply ideological and mystificatory formation that presents a view of the world as an imaginary realm of unity and naturalised opportunity or loss, available or affective to 'us' all. It plays a significant part in translating the material of everyday news into an easily consumable form which has been stripped of anything which might unsettle the narrative, and is intended to effect a purely emotional response. As Taylor (1992) writes:

> Human interest stories are the most widely read in both the tabloids and broadsheets. Their appeal carries across the differences between men and women, young and old, middle- and working-class. Stories written from within this framework can transform overtly political news. As a result, awkward questions about the (historical) social relations of power remain unasked, and history is replaced by whatever can be felt, such as 'natural revulsion' or 'common sense[1]. (18)

AIDS, as a subject for newspaper reportage, has been positioned as distant from people's lives within a realm of voyeuristic difference and exoticism that parallels the lives of the 'stars'. What is maintained by this operation is the stability of what Stuart Hall (1988) refers to as the 'imaginary community' of a

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[88] This is not to argue that the tabloids such as the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* (now the *Mirror*) are somehow crude compared to the sophistication ot the broadsheets such as the *Guardian* or the *Times*, but rather that their approach and styles vary from the discursive and verbose to the graphic and forthright. John Murray (1991) describes the difference between papers at different ends of the 'quality' spectrum as relating to the particular paper's negotiation of the public and private spheres. So the *Sun,* for instance, constructs its content around the private sphere of consumption and pleasure, especially sex, and within this framework the public realm of politics and unions etc. is perceived as a threat to the private world and everyday pleasure of 'ordinary folk'. (44) In contrast in the quality press the discussion of AIDS is figured around the public world of conferences, surveys, government and institutional activity and the reporting of the 'objective' and 'neutral' pronouncements of experts. (46)

white, patriarchal general public centred on the fantasy image of 'the family' which in turn constitute the nation of shared values and beliefs. The reading public is persuaded to recognise itself as part of this fixed system of core values, values which are endlessly seen as threatened by the perverse and deviant.[89] This agenda defines the British press because as Watney (1989b) writes:

> These fixed categories of gender, race, class, sexuality and national identity, and all their myriad derivations, are orchestrated together in order to protect readers from the actual diversity of social and sexual life, which it is also the business of the press to stridently denounce as immoral, indecent and unnatural. (84-85)

In this sense Mercury the person is obliterated under Mercury "the screen", onto which fantasies are projected.[90] The very distance between Mercury and the audience acts to keep him alluringly apart and simultaneously permanently available in an imaginary form. Quite possibly the sheer scale of the popularity of someone like Mercury is actually the way he acts out the subverted fantasies of the male, heterosexual audience in an unironic way that poses no threat to their own identity. As Roger Horrocks (1995) observes,

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[89] Silverman (1992) writes of this process with Althusser's notion of interpellation in mind and which (from Jacques Ranciere) she refers to as the 'dominant fiction' which: 'consists of the images and stories through which a society figures consensus; images and stories which cinema, fiction, popular culture, and other forms of mass representation presumably both draw upon and help to shape.' (30) Interestingly Silverman insists on the validity and simultaneous but distinct categories of the symbolic order and of the mode of production to account for subjectivity and the social formation (33) and in her formulation the dominant fiction:'might be said to negotiate between the symbolic order and the mode of production - to be that which permits two very different forms of determination to be lived simultaneously' (42) Whether this can in fact work is in my opinion debatable.

[90] Dawson (1994) writes of this process of narrative imagining of masculinity: 'Being subjectively entered-into and 'inhabited' through identification, the cultural forms of masculinity enable a sense of one's self as 'a man' to be imagined and recognized by others. Since the imagining and recognition of identities is a process shot through with wish-fulfilling fantasies, these cultural forms often figure ideal and desirable masculinities, in which both self and others make investments. Men may wish and strive to become the man they would like to imagine themselves to be. They may also be compelled to identify with particular forms out of their need for recognition of others. ' (23)

the space that is the realm of pop music allows men to be able to experiment with the terms of their own identity. Popular music, although a patriarchal institution that has perpetuated many masculinist representations, has encouraged transgression. It has provided a safe place for homoerotic and feminine fantasies to exist and provided the means for deeply submerged desires to surface. (145) Mercury's stage 'performance' allows the audience to briefly accept the reality of their own performance of sexual identity and gender roles.[91] Denski and Sholle (1992) observe of this facet of rock music, described by various categories of style:

> Heavily marked with feminine elements, glam metal in particular is increasingly attracting a female audience through its emphasis on more nurturing and romantic themes in the context of ballad like composition and performance. This makes heavy metal an interesting contradictory phenomenon in terms of its representation of masculinity, and it allows us to examine a number of multilayered relationships in popular culture's play with gender identity. (44)
>
> This ... points to a number of contradictions in the representations of sexual identity that surface in heavy metal style. While male band members take up styles that imply female or homosexual identity, they are identified by most audiences as masculine/macho. (45)

Mercury's camp style allows the audience to indulge in the fleeting fluidity of non-categorical identity, where the performativity of masculine/feminine social roles can be freely engaged without fear of stigma. Mercury, whether excessively masculine when adopting the clone style of gay culture or blurring into feminine when assuming camp theatrics, is at a safe distance away from

[91] Judith Butler (1991) refers to this notion: 'Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. If this is true, it seems, there is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself.' (20)

the young, male and heterosexual audience and who can, therefore, view him as non-threatening to their own sense of identity whilst enjoying the thrill of excessive gender behaviour.[92] Dyer (1979) draws attention to the fact that camp focusses on outward appearance and therefore highlights that roles in general and sex roles in particular are a matter of style. By finding stars camp is not to ridicule them but to attempt to disestablish the gamut of sexed identifications that society maintains to oppress women and repress men. (44)

The popularity of Mercury meant that for the tabloids his death from AIDS had to be handled with a modicum of civility, at least initially anyway. This image from the *Sun* is on the cusp of the 'old' Mercury of ambiguous sexuality and the now unambiguously gay Mercury. Richard Smith (1993) in *Gay Times* would write of the 'gay-ification' of the singer in the year after his death and why the tabloids have had to tread carefully: 'After the Elton John debacle five years ago the tabloids learnt that turning a much loved celeb into a hate figure is never easy, and kicking a man when he's down - even if he's a "poof" - ioses sales quicker than you can say "Hillsborough".' (61).

If at this point the image itself is considered then it is possible to decode the discursive markers evident of its construction. In the picture (Fig 3.01), taken on

[92] Compare the relatively tame following of someone like Boy George, when in the band Culture Club, who effected a softly sensual and non-threatening pose described at the time as 'genderbending'. Someone like Robert Smith (a straight man) of the Cure also has had a similar following very distinct from that such as Queen. Within Heavy Metal the sheer level of excessive masculine behaviour is a reflection of the insecurities of its majority audience - young males between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. Richard Smith (1992) observes of this: 'Stuck in the painfully slow transition stage from boyhood to manhood, they're left wanting to be something desperately they're not. Heavy Metal appears to offer a way out of their state of flux. For them being a Heavy Metal fan means being more manly. To them its twisted notion of what being a man means is totally convincing, sadly for the rest of us it's just a ridiculously transparent pantomime.' (Jan 92 (33).)

the 1986 tour of the band by Denis O'Regan, Mercury is standing in a triumphant pose, arms outstretched crucifix like but also reminiscent of football supporters pose of macho defiance. The flag surrounds him but, ironically, all the lines of the flag point to his groin as the centre of this representation. It clearly fits the nationalistic perspective of the newspaper to be able to put the Union Jack on the cover but it is surprising to have Mercury, stripped to the waist and by now openly referred to as a gay man, at the centre of it. At the top the simple epitaph, 'Freddie is Dead' elevates him to someone of stature easily recognised by the reader.[93] At the bottom the two calendar dates, '1946', '1991' reinforce this effect. In a more profound way what the dates do is to give a feeling of a monumental aspect to Mercury's death. The dates position him in a universal space of linear temporality that simultaneously elevates his death to that of the transhistorical so avoiding any problematic questions of his life and death, such as his sexuality. They point to something above the human, to something that imposes on the subject at the same time giving an objective air of disinterested scientific observation as evidenced above in the *Newsweek* feature. Lupton refers to this when she states numbers: 'also serve a rhetorical purpose, enhancing the news value of a story and adding drama.' (26)

The contingency of life, birth and death, beginning and end, is contrasted

[93] Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen in their chapter on the layout of front pages of newspapers maintain that in a format such as this with two relatively polarized elements, the one at the top tends towards the 'Ideal', the generalized essence of the information and which is ideologically salient, whereas the lower part tends to the 'Real' and documentary evidence such as photographs. Kress, G. and Leeuwen, T. 'Front Pages: (The Critical) Analyses of Newspaper Layout' in Bell, A and Garrett, P. (1998) *Approaches to Media Discourses* Oxford: Blackwell.

with the supposed transcendental existence of the nation represented by the flag. The flag as a symbol seeks to close down on the meanings that would otherwise flood into the discursive space generated by the visual representation. As Paul de Man (1983) writes in relation to the rise of romanticism in the eighteenth century: This appeal to the infinity of a totality constitutes the main attraction of the symbol as opposed to allegory, a sign that refers to one specific meaning and thus exhausts its suggestive potentialities once it has been deciphered.'(188). The aestheticization of the figure of Mercury on this image, privileges such a closure around the stability of the contending categories. Thomas Yingling (1994), talking of other media figures such as Magic Johnson and Kimberly Bergalis, observes 'their entry into AIDS discourses has always bordered on the specular... making AIDS "real" by circulating images that refer not to the complex interdiscursive challenges of the disease but to other, familiar images...'(98) By using an image from the past the reference is to a moment prior to Mercury's identification with the condition. His body is unmarked and healthy, symbolic of masculinity reflected in the heroic posture, that is sought to transcend the illness. This might seem untenable given Mercury's association with homosexuality and AIDS but Yingling points to the centrality of irony in the construction of media representations of those living with HIV/AIDS:

> What allows irony to work, of course, is a traditional notion that texts are stable and expectations clear if reversible; irony sets a limit to the instability of reading by staging closure as a choice between alternatives, each of which is complete. Irony thus provides an epistemological security rather than a radical textual opening. Rather than lead to questions about the grounds of reading, the

> seeming undecidablity of irony becomes the key to a new stability. Thus, in the name of telling us something about AIDS, the media allows us to read AIDS - the most destabilizing social question of the last decade - through a set of stable discourses. (100)

What needs to be considered next is the relationship between AIDS and the 'stable' discourse which frames the figure of Mercury - nationalism.

It was discussed in the introduction how it became a point of fact that AIDS was identified as having entered the national body from outside. Randy Shilts (1988) begins his narrative at the moment that the modern American state celebrates its mythical history during the bicentennial celebrations and later goes on to develop the character of the Canadian airline steward Gaetan Dugas as the original infecting agent of the national body. If the AIDS discourse has been predicated on the fearful effects of the virus on the bourgeois family, it finds expression in the metaphorical extension of this to the nation. Margaret Thatcher, the free-market ideologue of the eighties would infamously declare: '...there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first ...A nation of free people will only continue to be great if family life continues and the structure of the nation is a family one.'[94] AIDS has been defined in relation to ideas around the fragility of borders - the borders of the body are threatened as are, by implication, the borders of the nation state - because

[94] Quoted in Watney (1989a) p.24

they are points of crossing and transgression. Geoffrey Bennington (1990) quotes Edgar Morin who highlights this Janus faced aspect of national sameness and difference:

> The frontier is both an opening and a closing. It is at the frontier that there takes place the distinction from and liaison with the environment. All frontiers, including the membrane of living beings, including the frontier of nation, are, at the same time as they are barriers, places of communication and exchange. They are places of dissociation and association, of separation and articulation. (121)

With such a conceptualization in mind Watney (1988) would summarise one of the dominant positions in AIDS education at that time as one based on the Terrorist Model', where:

> HIV is regarded as an external invader, an illegal immigrant shinning up the white cliffs of Dover, a dangerous alien subversive slipping into the country unnoticed through Heathrow of JFK Airport, an enemy submarine sliding invisibly underwater up the belly of a fjord. (20)

Such an ideological formulation manipulates contemporary stereotypes and fears of 'terrorists' and has been consistently mobilised in popular accounts of the disease as Triechler (1988) comments: '...we might even acknowledge our own historical moment more specifically by giving the AIDS virus a postmodern identity: a terrorist's terrorist, an Abu Nidal of viruses'(60). In a similar way to the myth of the vengeful carrier of the virus referred to in the introduction (24) the metaphorization of the virus as terrorist relied on preexisting fears of infiltration and destructive chaos. In this account, from Hancock and Karim (1986), an attempt is made to describe the process by which the virus reproduces in 'layman's' terms:

> The modus operandi of the virus is to hijack the cell's DNA and to insert its own genetic code in its place. The effect is to make the cell reproduce more viruses, instead of more of itself. This infiltration technique reminds one of the main character in The Manchurian Candidate, who looked, talked, dressed and behaved like an American citizen, but who was in fact a communist ideologue of the first order, running for office as President of the USA. Everyone in the White House, the State Department and Pentagon would then have become viral enzymes producing policies in strict accordance with someone else's party line. (75)

As bizarre as this description sounds, it was typical of the popular science approach to defining HIV transmission in the mid eighties. In an infamous issue, *National Geographic* produced an illustrated guide to HIV headed 'Cell Wars' with the virus (the enemy) that attacks the 'home[1] as a five pointed red star and described as 'Needing help to spring to life, a virus is little more than a package of genetic information that must commandeer the machinery of a host cell to permit its own replication.'(Fig. 2.7).[95] Brian Patton (1992) points to the underlying ideological message (not a particularly subtle one it must be said) in such a conceptualisation:

> Clearly, there is more going on here than a transparent metaphoric rendering of biological fact. The body becomes a nation under siege, calling up its 'internal bodyguards' to combat 'foreign invaders' and 'renegades'; its goal is to restore its untainted purity, to 'cleanse' itself of the 'foreign' particles. This model of the immune system is simultaneously a political allegory of national purity. (275)

HIV and AIDS, then, are mobilised to give the dominant culture something to

[95]*National Geographic,* June, 1986,p.708.

define itself against.[96] Timothy Murphy (1994), commenting on the approval by the US Congress to exclude those seeking entry to the country who are HIV +, wrote how identities, whether national or personal, are in part only tenable if there is something against which to define itself, not as a simple binary but usually something positioned as inferior to allow for a claim of moral superiority. In this sense any policy of exclusion is as much about notions of identity as about public health or financial concerns. (143)

In this way HIV acts as a foil to an assertion of the imaginary stability of the mythical category of the nation, which is, as Homi Bhabha (1990) says: 'An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force.'(I). As he says of the effects of the ambivalent nature of the discourse of the nation:

> If the ambivalent figure of the nation is a problem of its transitional history, its conceptual indeterminacy, its wavering between vocabularies, then what effect does this have on narratives and discourses that signify a sense of 'nationness': the *heimlich* pleasures of the hearth, the *unheimlich* terror of the space or race of the Other; the comfort of social belonging, the hidden injuries of class; the customs of taste, the powers of political affiliation; the sense of social order, the sensibility of sexuality; the blindness of bureaucracy, the strait insight of institutions; the quality of justice, the common sense of injustice; the *langue* of the law and the *parole* of the people. (2)

How does this relate the image of Freddie Mercury? What seems to be

[96] Judith Butler (1993) writes of this operation in terms of 'the abject': The abject designates here precisely those "unlivable" and "uninhabitable" zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of "unlivable" is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. This zone of uninhabitability will constitute the defining limit of the subject's domain; it will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which - and by virtue of which - the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life. In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own founding repudiation.' (3)

happening is that the newspaper, in seeking to celebrate an important figure for its audience, coupled with a reticence to be accused once more of cheapening a tragic moment, needs as strong an association as the national flag and the discourse of nationalism to overcome the discursive chasm between it and AIDS. Because the picture represents a shift from the ambiguous to the homosexual body of Mercury, it seeks to champion those representations that were able to circulate prior to his identification. What is evident in the textual account in the paper that supports the picture is a careful stepping between the two moments of past and present: The 45-year-old gay star's parents were at his bedside late last night.'. This is also evident in the days following the announcement where he is described as 'bisexual' and that the greatest love of his life was Mary Austin.

The struggle over the representation of the body of Freddie Mercury evident in this picture is a struggle for the discourse of respectability over the discourse of sexuality. An appeal to nationalism can therefore only be staged with an aestheticized, idealised body that bears no trace of an illness such as AIDS. As George L. Mosse (1985) says in his definitive account of the relationship between nationalism and sexuality:

> Nationalism is perhaps the most powerful and effective ideology of modern times, and its alliance with bourgeois morality forged an engine difficult to stop. In its long career, it attempted to co-opt most of the important movements of the age, to absorb all that men thought meaningful and held dear even while holding fast to certain unchanging myths and symbols. It reached out to liberalism, conservatism, and socialism; it advocated both tolerance and repression, peace and war - whatever served its purpose. Through its claim to immutability, it endowed all that it touched with a “slice

> of eternity." But however flexible, nationalism hardly wavered in its advocacy of respectability. (9)

The framing of Mercury with the flag in this way is an attempt not to foreground difference and diversity but an attempt to deny it under the weight of the abstraction of nationalism. The centrality of Mercury is an acceptance of difference not on equal terms but on unequal terms, of terms that are defined by the segregation and separateness of the male gay body. As Tololyan (1991) points out, within the nation-state difference is accommodated by either being assimilated or confined to clearly demarcated spaces whose boundaries are so visible as to allow for acknowledgement of difference within itself yet actually works to maintain the supposed homogeneity of the rest that then distinguishes itself from what lies over the borders. (6)

This aspect of 'what lies over the frontiers' is what will be addressed next because another element in the 'slippage' analysis of the image is the echoing by the Mercury picture of one produced during the Gulf war only ten months earlier. In this earlier picture (Fig. 2.8) the front page of the *Sun*, from the 16th January 1991, consists of a montage of a flag with a photograph of a soldier's head at its centre, headed by the words 'Support our boys and put this flag in your window' and I want to argue that there is a correlation between the two images.

The link between AIDS and military language is one visible from the early days of the pandemic. Susan Sontag (1989) wrote of the use of military metaphors

in the description of disease at microbiological level and its predominance in relation to HIV/AIDS. She writes,

> Disease is seen as an invasion of alien organisms, to which the body responds by its own military operations, such as the mobilizing of immunological 'defenses', and medicine is aggressive, as in the language of most chemotherapies.
>
> The grosser metaphor survives in public health education, where disease is regularly described as invading the society, and efforts to reduce mortality from a given disease are called a fight, a struggle, a war. (95)

The effect of the Gulf war on the medical discourse in relation to AIDS was to see elements of that conflict appropriated for application to the 'war' against it. What defined the experience of the Gulf war for observers in the West was the high-tech presentation of its ongoing encounters and the fetishisation of military hardware. Patton (1992) points to an issue of *Time* from June 1991 that includes an article on AIDS. Couched in terms of military 'tech-speak' the author proposes that the virus be targeted by metaphoric Stealth Bombers which is appropriately illustrated. Patton observes of this,

> Against the black background of two silhouetted human figures the AIDS virus appears in spectral white outlines as a trio of tiny triangular Stealth bombers. The immune system is represented as a bunker-like munitions factory from which tiny cartoon anti-aircraft rockets are being fired. This vision of Cell Wars is eerily similar to the Pentagon's video- game images of the bombing of Iraqi military installations. (284)

If this connection seems arbitrary Yingling (1994) also draws attention to the coincidence within two mass readership magazines of articles on HIV/AIDS being 'twinned' by patriotic news stories of the Gulf War:

> It is significant, of course, that the appearance of these pieces (in *Time, Newsweek*...) has coincided with our adventures in the Persian Gulf, and we can read in that linkage how questions about literature and cannon are sutured not only to national ideology but to the production and reproduction of bodies available for combat. (108)

I would argue that the effect of the war on thinking about the masculine body is to see an anxiety surface similar to that around HIV/AIDS in which the figure of idealised masculinity is fundamentally undermined.[97] In the same way that Mercury is engaged in the performativity of gender, he is engaged in the performativity of nationalism. Precisely because what is at stake with regard to the war in the Gulf is a loosening and redefinition of the boundaries of the nation-state (after all it was not possible to argue that the boundaries of the nation were under any direct threat), it raised, once again, the potential tenuousness of such definitions - at the moment when they should be most secure they are in fact at their most unstable. The montage cover from the war (Fig. 3.04) shows a flag motif overlaid with an unnamed soldier fixed at its centre. The reference to 'centre' and 'borders' is central to the construction of the stability of the epistemology of the dominant. The centre is

[97] Butler (1992) writes on the fetishization of the spectacle of the war directed from retired generals sat in studios: The various affirmations of the early success of these operations were delivered with great enthusiasm, and it seemed that by this hitting of the goal, this apparently seamless realization of intention through an instrumental action without much resistance or hindrance was the occasion, not merely to destroy Iraqi military installations, but also to champion a masculinized Western subject whose will immediately translates into a deed, whose utterance or order materializes in an action which would destroy the very possibility of a reverse strike, and whose obliterating power at once confirms the impenetrable contours of its own subjecthood.' (9-10) Morgan (1994) comments on the link between the hegemonic ideal and lived reality of masculine identity: 'It could be argued that war and the military represent one of the major sites where direct links between hegemonic masculinities and men's bodies are forged.' (168). One of the distinguishing features of the Gulf War was the massively increased involvement of women as combatants and as support troops on, or close to, the front line. Morgan says of the concerns voiced about this situation: 'coloring [sic] them at every point is a concern with the overall symbolic order, the apparent loosening of boundaries between men and women, and the weakening of the links between nation, the military, and gendered identities.' (171)

identified as being the nation, secure and transcendent, where it defines itself in relation to its history (sameness); the borders are where it defines itself in relation to others (difference). Mercury is at the centre of the symbol of the nation, the flag, yet as a Gay man associated with AIDS is metaphorically at its borders so the socially peripheral is symbolically central; the soldier is actually at the borders and only metaphorically at its centre.[98] Further, Mercury is shown full figure yet with the soldier only his head is shown raising an obvious question of where is his body? The absence of the masculine body of the combat soldier highlights the anxiety as to the authority of this hegemonic ideal.[99] In this way the anxiety of both the body under threat from 'marginal' sexuality and under threat from the consequences of war become

[98] It could be argued that such an ideological operation relates to theories of rhetorical representation specifically as plotted out on metaphoric and metonymic axes. Kellner and Ryan (1990) sees ideology as working primarily along the metaphoric axis: 'Metaphors privilege analogical thought of the sort which favours identities over differential thinking. That is, an image is analogically identified with a meaning. Metaphor is context-free and universalistic; its meanings shows the spectacle of assuming nationalistic motifs as merely one moment in a continuous stream of 'dressing up', one no more real or genuine or essential than any other.

[99] Dawson (1994) observes: ' Intimately bound up with the foundation and preservation of a national territory, the deeds of military heroes were invested with the new significance of serving the country and glorifying its name. Their stories became myths of nationhood itself, providing a cultural focus around which the national community could cohere. In England, soldiers such as Shakespeare's patriot king, Henry V, and popular heroes such as Drake, Marlborough, Wolfe, Nelson and Wellington have historically occupied the symbolic centre of English national identity.' (23)

visible in this series of reflections.[100] As Cvetkovitch and Gordon (1994) state:

> The masculinity that is consolidated, legitimated, and celebrated when a soldier dies with honour or when the United States engages in military combat - a masculinity marked by virility, strength, freedom and individualism - is precisely the definition of masculinity that a homophobe and sexist culture sees as threatened by homosexuality and AIDS (42)

Intrinsic, therefore, to any attempt to consolidate and fix a system of thought is the instigation of acts of partition to demarcate limits that point to the very potential for transgression. The subject that needs to view a society's limits of symbolic values, has always to be able to chart the transgressions and 'deviants' that allow it coherence. Cultural identity is defined by its limits and its sense of itself is always articulated around the figures at its edge.

With the reproduction of the picture of Mercury the marginal is now at the centre, visible and in one sense appropriating the garb of dominant culture to produce a moment of insecurity on its terms. Jonathan Dollimore (1991) writes of this process that has been visible in other cultural manifestations:

> This suggests a paradox: at certain historical conjunctures certain kinds of nonconformity may be more transgressive in opting not for

[100] This was especially the case in the Gulf war which saw an unprecedented level of technological involvement. As Brod (1995) states: The technologization of work and war... has diminished the importance of the male body as a productive or heroic figure and thereby undermined traditional male identities' (19). The implications of this in the longer term need to be posed in relation to the possibility for a radical transformation of society because of the centrality of the gender divisions to capitalist mode of production, as Easthope (1986) writes: The present shaping of the masculine myth is determined also at a secondary, deeper level of history, that of the capitalist era. This has intensified and the myth [of masculinity] in a number of ways. Since the early nineteenth century especially it has effected an unprecedented separation between work and home, between the sphere of production and the sphere of consumption. In doing so it has confirmed the polarization of gender by associating work with masculinity and the home with femininity. (169) For discussion of the specific effect of the presence of women combatants in the Gulf see Forde, C. ' "Women Warriors": Representations of women soldiers in British daily newspaper reports of the Gulf War (January to March 1991)' in Maynard, M and Purvis, J. (eds) (1995) *(Hetero)sexual Politics* London: Taylor and Francis

> extreme lawlessness but for a strategy of inclusion. To be half successful is to lay claim to sharing with the dominant (though never equally) a language, culture, and identity: to participate in is also to - - contaminate the dominant's authenticity and to counter its discriminatory function. (51)

Mercury is there in this way because, although contrived and extreme, he is projecting a thoroughly masculine image, in no way feminine. He is framed in this image by a dominant discourse - nationalism - to allow for difference to be accommodated on the terms of the dominant order. But it raises many questions beyond its attempt at closure. Ultimately, hegemonic institutions like the press can accommodate the transgressive behaviour of stars like Mercury because it is always shaped by the overall concern to remain within the confines of the 'carnival' space of the concert stadium and media culture, even if can offer a glimpse of a much less repressed social space. Stallybrass and White (1986) accurately, in my mind, describe this:

> It would be wrong to associate the exhilarating sense of freedom which transgression affords with any necessary or automatic political progressiveness. Often it is a powerful ritual or symbolic practice whereby the dominant squanders its symbolic capital so as to get in touch with the fields of desire which it denied itself as the price paid for its political power. Not a repressive desublimation (for just as transgression is not intrinsically progressive, nor is it intrinsically conservative), it is a countersublimation, a delirious expenditure of the symbolic capital accrued (through the regulation of the body and the decathexis of habitus) in the successful struggle of bourgeois hegemony. (201)

The 'textual dialogue' that readers engage in when attempting to read the discourse as coherent, that is essential for the users sense of subjectivity, continually points to the external elements that ultimately shape it and which are always being contested.

In the next chapter this process is examined in relation to some advertisements produced by the Health Education Authority to look at how a state-funded body attempted to control the disturbing effects of the public discussion of HIV/AIDS.

Chapter Three

Health Education and Advertising: Temporality, Anxiety and Ambiguity

The previous chapter referred to aspects of the newspaper media's treatment of AIDS from the early 1980s. This had become a source of concern for many, not least Doctors and public health promoters, given the high level of misinformation, bias and prejudice inherent in it that was perceived as a being a barrier to the development of responsible and safer behaviour amongst the general population. As Wellings (1988) wrote:

> The national press ... has a particularly powerful role to play in mediating between available scientific evidence on the one hand and public perceptions of AIDS on the other. Within this context,... misunderstandings have been generated via the the selective attention this section of the media has given to particular sorts of material as the basis for its news stories and features; via the ways in which scientific evidence has been interpreted and presented; and via the use of emphasis and the playing up of certain 'angles' in the reporting of AIDS stories. (101)

By 1985/6 the countering of the myth of the 'gay plague' was seen as a priority for public health educators and so in November 1986 the creation of the Health Education Authority (HEA) was announced, it coming into existence officially in April 1987. This body took over the education of the public on the health issues of HIV/AIDS after the initial wave of Government public awareness campaign from the Department of Health.[101] The HEA's emphasis was very specific in relation HIV/AIDS transmission, as they state in their booklet *Health Education Authority: HIV/AIDS Mass media Activity 1986-1993* (undated): The HEA's focus is the sexual transmission of HIV' (2).

[101] This consisted of a leaflet distributed to every household in the country and television and poster campaigns featuring the infamous tombstones and icebergs and predicated on the use of fear to supposedly motivate behaviour change. Wellings and Field (1996) describe how the juxtaposition of images of death, such as tombstones, with metaphoric images of sexuality, such as volcanoes erupting, posed the epidemic as a potential catastrophe symbolised by the iceberg with its 9/10ths submerged. As they write: 'In both cases the physical and natural worlds were used as metaphors for the social world, suggesting disruption to the social order mirrored and paralleled in the natural disasters.' (54)

What is intended, therefore, in this chapter is the consideration of specific examples of HEA adverts in the light of other contemporary representations of HIV/AIDS and the body that Circulated in the same or similar milieu to try and ascertain what assumptions and ideological concerns informed their construction and the contested and even contradictory nature of the end product. In relation to HIV/AIDS the mass media was of central importance given that in general the approach adopted to addressing the epidemic was not an explicitly repressive one of isolation and control but one of education and persuasion. It was accepted by health educators that media activity around the subject would ensure that it was continued to be seen as an important issue.

Health education is a discourse that struggles with a number of contending concerns. On a simplistic level it could be expected that information would be imparted as efficiently as possible as and when particular health concerns arise. Of course this is the never the case because public health issues are negotiated via varied and at times contending discourses that are institutionally and politically based. In the case of HIV/AIDS this was further complicated by the fact that it was a disease that was, amongst other things, sexually transmitted and was disproportionately affecting gay men. The dilemma for public health educators, therefore, was how to address the issue of encouraging individuals to make informed choices on health issues that necessitated a discussion of sexual practices and sexuality that acknowledged difference and desire other than that sanctioned by the state

and the explicit political agenda of the government in power. Garfield (1994) points to the recognition that some distance was needed between the government and public health educators:

> The HEA would have an enhanced and strengthened role and take over all responsibility for the DHSS AIDS campaign. Its quasi-autonomous status would, in theory, leave it free to criticise the government's health education policies and to research and develop new campaigns. It would, however, have to submit all its plans to ministers before proceeding. (129)

This political aspect cannot be underestimated given the level of interference on the part of ministers and officials. Miller and Williams (1993) refer to a 'Memorandum of understanding' drawn up by the Department of Health and the HEA in 1990 to once again clarify the relationship between the agency and departments with their political leaders:

> The HEA was not established to be, nor is funded as, a campaigning 'pressure group', although it is conceivable that issues might arise on which it would attempt to influence strongly the direction of government policy through 'pressure' and be seen *to* be doing so. it must judge such instances carefully. *It is important that Ministers, through the Department, are informed in advance of advice to be given in public* (emphasis in original) (129)

The effect of this was to see many initiatives bogged down in systems of administrative relays, many never to emerge again. The fundamental contradiction of a government wanting to be seen to be doing something but ideologically driven to repress the issues that therefore needed to be raised can be seen in the introduction of the repressive legislation of Clause 28 of the Local Government (Amendment) Act of 1988. This forbade any reference to homosexuality as a 'pretended' family scenario in anything produced by local government but which stated, almost postscript, that:

'nothing in ...above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing the spread of disease'.[102] Martin Durham (1991) plots many of the primary groups contesting the realm of sex education and their attempts at policing sexuality including The Responsible Society (subsequently renamed Family and Youth Concern) and those who were the subject of its ire such as the Family Planning Association, the Brook Advisory Centres and local authority Lesbian and Gay Units.[103]

What emerges from this morass of interests and positions is a series of campaigns and adverts that can be seen to reflect the contradictory nature of this process. Whilst it is possible to point to the struggle over the strategies and representations used between various agencies, from medicine to AIDS

[102] Section 28 of the Local Government (Amendment) Act of 24 May 1988 states:

> A local authority shall not
>
> (a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intent of promoting homosexuality;
>
> (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.
>
> (2) Nothing in subsection (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing the spread of disease.

[103] Durham (1991) describes how Michael Howard whilst expressing support for the initial proposal by Conservative MP David Wilshire of the amendment to the Local Government Bill also suggested that, in the light of reservations expressed on the behalf of the government on an earlier bill, certain changes be included, notably the fact that local authorities not be hindered in their work against AIDS. Wilshire accepted these changes. In relation to the government campaign of public education on AIDS he writes: 'While moral campaigners have attacked the government's campaign as immoral and insisted it should be directed at homosexuals and drug users, the government remains persuaded that heterosexual transmission is a real danger and continues to recommend the use of condoms. Despite what we might expect, then, it has not used AIDS in order to enforce a traditionalist moral stance.' (130) Durham is clear that he does not see the position of the political right as at one with the moral lobby but whilst his analysis is detailed and traces the myriad of competing positions on these issues he, in my opinion, does not take into account enough the attitudes and responses by many of those in the public realm who were opposed to any shift towards restrictions on sex and sexuality. Clause 28 was an oppressive piece of legislation but the angry response to it saw increasingly bigger and bigger demonstrations against it and a gay community becoming visibly politicised in a way that was the exact opposite of the governments intention. See also Thomson, R. 'Unholy Alliances: The recent Politics of Sex Education.' in Bristow, J. and Wilson, A. (1993) *Activating Theory: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Politics* London: Lawrence and Wishart.

activists, it is the government that has the ultimate power to sanction or disallow a campaign. As Miller and Williams (1997 unpublished manuscript - publication forthcoming) state:

> The public education campaign was characterised by persistent government intervention for quite clearly political and ideological reasons. The major problems of the DHSS campaign on AIDS were political and personal sensitivities on the part of ministers and caution on the part of civil servants partly because of uncertainties about public or government reaction. (2)

What can be seen in the examples of adverts that follow is the struggle to overcome the internal contradictions that such a process of construction entails. Ultimately, their effectiveness in terms of prevention and education does not seem to be the primary concern; McEwan and Bhopal (1991) write of the use of impersonal mass media campaigns;

> Mass media campaigns, however, have the advantage of being quick, adaptable, applicable to large numbers of people, and have a low cost in terms of manpower. These high profile campaigns are also politically attractive as they indicate concern and commitment to the prevention of HIV infection. (8)

Miller and Williams (forthcoming) conclude: 'Our research on public understandings and beliefs about AIDS and HIV indicated that such adverts contributed to public confusion and misunderstanding' (3)

It is useful to consider particular campaigns in the light of an historical overview of the epidemic. The medical historian Virginia Berridge (1991a) offers three phases of policy development in respect of the chronological framework of HIV/AIDS. From 1981-86 there was effectively no AIDS policy and it was an area in which groups outside of the official organisations effected

health strategies: There was the opportunity for policy to be defined from below and from a range of groups outside the usual expert advisory circles. Gay activists, clinicians and scientists from a range of involved areas ... joined in a sometimes uneasy alliance with public health interests in the Department of Health.' (180); 1986-87 is typified by a state of panic where: 'AIDS did indeed become a political priority at the highest level' (180); this was followed by a period of what was described as 'normalisation' of the disease from 1988 onwards. This latter stage of 'normalisation' signalled a shift away from what were seen as reliance on stereotypical representations of AIDS 'victims'. As Jenny Kitzinger (1994) wrote in relation to these dominant images:' "the-Face-of- AIDS" may be counter-productive because the emphasis placed on the distinctive "AIDS-look" can undermine the crucial health education message that people with HIV ("the AIDS virus") do not look any different from anyone else.'(17).

This shift entailed a change in strategies of representation of those with HIV/ AIDS. To begin to address, in dominant terms, the potentially destabilising effects of the spread of HIV/AIDS through heterosexual society the emphasis was put on the 'silent' spread of the virus without any physical signs of the condition being visible. This was effected by the introduction of a temporal element into many of the adverts produced in an attempt to get home the message that someone could be infected by the virus for years and unknowingly passing it on to others before they developed symptoms of AIDS. This aspect, whilst not necessarily emphasised before in public health terms in

mass media campaigns, was fundamental to its scientific definition. Susan Sontag (1988) wrote of the difference between AIDS and that other highly metaphorised disease, Cancer, and wrote:

> Cancer is first of all a disease of the body's geography, in contrast to syphilis and AIDS, whose definition depends on constructing a temporal sequence of stages. (108)

This conceptualisation is evident in an advert published between December 1988 and March 1989 (Fig. 3.1) which illustrates the centrality of the temporal formulation of the condition at this moment of 'normalisation': 'What is the difference between HIV and AIDS? - Time'. This narrative mediation becomes defining for a dominant attitude towards HIV/AIDS, which at various moments employed different temporal conceptions in an attempt to control the potentially disruptive effects of the condition in the public arena. Barbara Adam (1992) writes of the relationship between time and health:

> Time has further been utilized as finitude - the ontological condition of life unto death - as a resource to be used, allocated or controlled, as a commodity to be exchanged for money, and as a symbol expressive of the unequal distribution of power. (153)

If, as stated above, the dominant political order *has* to be seen to deal with the condition and the associated issues then this element of temporality serves as a moment of closure in the narrative before , potentially, loses control of it.[104]

This variety of temporal structures evident in health education and other sites

[104] Williamson (1978) observes of how adverts work to present such a closure, a narrative sequence that is predetermined, that has a fundamentally ideological function in that it offers a closed future as part of an unalterable present as opposed to the reality of an open future predicated on a present which can be changed.

of representation related to it will be one aspect explored in this chapter. One effect of the impact of HIV/AIDS has been to see a variety of temporal formulations introduced in relation to the representations of the body and its desires. The three dimensions of phenemonological time - past, present and future - are not merely aspects of a universal category that exists over and above the social against which our experiences can be plotted, rather, there are various temporalizations that offer alternative and contending structures of experience. Any particular conception of the present is itself a reference to the past/future and vice versa. With respect to dominant narratives of PWA's this is presented along the lines of past - transgression, present - agent of infection, future - death (the absence of future). A regime of fear is maintained by such an operation that is premised on the symbolic social death associated with seropositivity that is presented as a deterrent for those who are not positive. The maintenance of control of the present is predicated on the lack of a future. Kathy Acker talks of such ideological machinations in relation to her own diagnosis with cancer: '...conventional medicine was reducing me, quickly, to a body that was only material, to a body without hope and so, without will, to a puppet who, separated by fear from her imagination and vision, would do whatever she was told.'.[105]

The point, then, is that particular structures of time and experience have wider implications. Peter Osborne in his book *The Politics of Time* (1995) talks of such implications, albeit probably with a broader historical picture in mind, as he

[105] *The Guardian* 18/1/97 p 11:16

states:

> It is this sense that I write of a 'politics of time'; indeed, of all politics as centrally involving struggles over the experience of time. How do the practices in which we engage structure and produce, enable or distort, different senses of time and possibility? What kinds of experience of history do they make possible or impede? Whose futures do they ensure? These are the questions that a politics of time would attend, interrogating temporal structures about the possibilities they encode or foreclose, in specific temporal modes. (200)

The experience of the different temporal structures within the realm of medicine serves to reinforce the point made by Osborne above. When someone enters a hospital, the primary site of legitimation for contemporary medicine, what they experience is a distinct shift from one sense of time to another. Both are as real as one another but independent of each other. The formalities of admission for patients - storing of the individuals clothes and donning of surgical aprons, biographical details entered into information systems, wrist tags etc - serve as a point of transfer from one to another. From that moment on the individual is subject to a new regime of temporal existence where their own sense of time is one that is clearly marked out as distinct from that of the medical practitioners. As Frankenberg (1992) writes:

> In the mainstream of societies such as the United Kingdom and the United States, the cultural performance of sickness within a biomedical framework takes place in a context where social, and especially temporal, mechanisms to control relationships of nature and culture are disrupted. In order to maintain social order and restore natural order, patients are removed from their normal temporalities to a space where the time views of others can be imposed upon them. (25)

According to the medical sociologists Wellings and McVey (1990) the 'Time' advert was one of two that had the biggest impact on the public perception

of the disease out of all those produced during the campaign. As they wrote in an evaluative essay on the campaign and its reception:

> Interestingly, the two advertisements with apparently higher impact, that is , 'What is the difference between HIV and AIDS: Time' and Two faces of a woman', were also those which attracted the most attention in terms of media coverage, a fact which may not be coincidental but may reflect the power of the media in guiding selective attention of the public to advertisements, since these were the advertisements which received the most editorial coverage. (III)

The 'Time' advert was, in fact, withdrawn by the HEA after it was condemned for generating a great deal of anxiety amongst those already affected, a constituency which remains unspoken to by public health education. The advert operated by seeking to overcome the stereotype of people HIV+ and with AIDS by using a purely linguistic message and so avoiding any problems of visual representation at all. Its visual effect is an attempt to portray the message as direct, assertive and authoritative. It is an acknowledgment of the problems of representations of the body at the same time as presenting the message as above ideology, as medical fact and therefore unquestionably true. There is no dialogue here, only the anonymous voice of authority, an authority that appeals to a transcendental order such as that of fate or natural law that by definition does not allow for any social agency to challenge the outcome. As an example of closure on the condition it is an imposition of a particular temporal structure that collapses the distance between the two points (or potential points) that works to shut down on the question of self activity.

The other advert mentioned by Wellings and McVey was part of the same campaign and described as the Two faces of woman' advert. This bears examination in the context of the above because of the very way the advert was constructed to be read by the viewer. The reader would see the full page image on the right-hand side of the newspaper with the words 'If this woman had the virus which leads to AIDS, in a few years she could look like the person over the page' and then turns the page to then be confronted with exactly the same image of the woman (Figs. 3.2; 3.3). Roberta McGrath (1990) has discussed this image in relation to the representation of the woman as seductive and deadly but what is relevant here is how the temporal element is once again worked into the very structure of the advert.[106] It seems that it actually tries to undermine the stereotype of someone seropositive who later goes onto develop AIDS by not presenting a body marked by disease but a mirror image. As McGrath points out there are several markers present in the image that signal that the woman is to be desired by the viewer who then pauses to contemplate the fear of contagion not from an ugly body but from

[106] McGrath writes: The image mobilises the ideology of glamour; the beautiful face, the long hair, the jumper which falls off the shoulder are all signs of a woman as lure, as a seductress who is out to attract men (an old theme). The advert makes us aware that she is (possibly) the dangerous harbourer not only of disease, but of certain death. Beauty can be a mask which conceals all that is rotten' (147). Gilman (1995), in his discussion of the beautiful body and AIDS, includes an illustration of an American poster that is a single image of a beautiful white woman framed by the question: 'Does she or doesn't she?' and the statement 'people can carry the AIDS virus, but show no signs of symptoms. Don't take chances. Get tested before you become sexually involved.' (141)

a beautiful body.[107] This generates a growing sense of anxiety around the presence of desire in the viewer as culturally dominant representations are themselves questioned and subverted. Because AIDS has until then been associated with the moral agenda of the homosexual body as visibly punished for transgression with the marks of disease, an anxiety is activated by the temporal aspect of the advert which this time creates a space for the lurid sense of horror to emerge only to be then denied and so the viewer experiences a moment of shock. Of course one reading could be to take the message that even if you are seropositive there is no reason why you should not be attractive, sexually active if practising safer sex, and live a long life. This reading, I would maintain, is against the preferred moral message designed for the advert indicated by the text underneath which states that 'the more people you sleep with the more chance you have of becoming infected'.

The latter image in the series is not of someone who has aged by years but is in fact the same person at *exactly* the same moment in time; these are not two distinct points on a temporal scale but the same instance. It attempts to fix a moment of idealised representation that refuses any space for a subject to actively partake of the passing of time with attendant possibilities for active engagement in the process of contesting the future. Instead it has frozen time

[107] Of course this advert is gendered in that it is the male who is at risk from the seductive but deadly female and also in that it is the reader who is assumed to be uninfected and therefore male. Wilton (1997) observes: 'Because the discursive structuration of AIDS has with such docility replicated the (nationalistic) reproductive heteropolar scripting of sexually transmitted disease, the infected *become women*. Their needs become irrelevant, their social status is reduced to that of 'dangerous object', their continued good health something not to be celebrated but to be abhorred on behalf of the not-yet-infected. (133-134)

in a fetishized image of deadly desire that is a doubling of the photographic process itself.[108] As Diana Fuss (1992) states in relation to women's fashion photography to which this image is generically related:

> Photography, which similarly seeks to fix an image in an eternal moment of suspense, comes to function not merely as a technical analog for the psychical workings of fetishism but as one of its internal properties - that is, the fetish itself has the "frozen, arrested quality of a photograph" '(720)

The advert reduces the temporal element down to a caricature of temporality in the need for the reader to turn the page. What is more the feeling of strangeness that the viewer experiences because of the mirror image reinforces the representation of the AIDS subject as uncannily different. To have not visibly aged at all in the space of years has implications of vampire like existence or a 'Dorian Grey' like pact with the unnatural.[109] The intention of both adverts was essentially to scare people into changing their behaviour. This fear becomes part of a wider perception of those who are HIV + as somehow purposefully infecting others, something referred to throughout the thesis, and evident in the struggle between health educators and the advertising agencies with the latter constantly attempting to frame the messages within this scenario. (Miller and Williams, forthcoming) This could be explained by the differing perspectives on the health messages to be proposed. Advertising, fundamentally, works on the basis of an individualistic message directed at the viewer who, it is hoped, will subsequently act on this

[108] Burgin (1982) writes: The photograph, like the fetish, is the result of a look which has, instantaneously and forever, isolated, 'frozen', a fragment of the spatio-temporal continuum. In Freud's account of fetishism something serves in place of the penis with which the shocked male infant would 'complete' the woman; the function of fetish is to deny the very perception it commemorates, a logical absurdity which betrays the the operation of the primary processes.' (190)

[109] Thanks to Wendy Leeks for this point.

by buying the product (even if they are buying a lifestyle, a message or a sense of identity). Public health works on a broader basis that seeks to address the structures of social and even economic forces that impact on health status. Within the field of health education in which both parties seek to combine their efforts there is an inherent tension. Waitings and Field (1996) comment on this:

> Advertisers, because of their individualistic orientation, consider it generally acceptable to place responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the individual if he or she gets sick. There is now a gradual recognition that public education efforts to date have been marked by an overreliance on individual behaviour change and an insufficient emphasis on creating a favourable social context. (6)

A related operation of temporal construction had already been used in a different way in an example of the news coverage (Fig 3.4) of the death of Rock Hudson in 1985, a moment that signalled a fundamental change in the public perception of the disease and is discussed further in the next chapter in the context of Hollywood and its place in media culture. Under the heading: 'From screen idol to a wasted shadow in 18 months' two photographs are contrasted. One shows Hudson as seemingly healthy, smiling engagingly as he looks at someone off-screen, the angle of his head slightly downwards; in the other we see Hudson gaunt, marked by the stereotypical signs of someone with AIDS (discussed in chapter one) his eyes not connecting with anyone but looking seemingly upwards, above the heads of the viewers. In one he is engaging with us from the elevated position of a 'star' and in the other he is isolated and disengaged from any social interaction. We can consider this in relation to what Dyer (1982) says of the coding of

spectatorship and viewing of the male pin-up:

> ...the male model looks either off or up. In the case of the former, his look suggests an interest in something else that the viewer cannot see - it certainly doesn't suggest any interest in the viewer... In the cases where the model is looking up, this always suggests a spirituality: he might be there for his face and body to be to be gazed at, but his mind is on higher things... (63)

The caption states 'from screen idol to wasted shadow in 18 months' when, in fact, the effect is from 'idol to shadow' in an *instant* by the very construction of the visual frame. Hudson has gone from healthy to ill, from beauty to beastly and from heterosexual to homosexual in the flick of an eye at this moment of revelation. A tension exists, therefore, between the textual account and the visual representation where the former emphasises the temporal and the latter the instantaneous. The shift, in this scenario, from beauty to ugly signals a fall into moral turpitude.[110]

The format of the picture adheres to the before-and-after convention of medical and photojournalistic practice where the event which marks the boundary of Hudson's transformation from a symbol of masculinity into a figure reviled for his 'dishonesty' in keeping his sexuality a secret, is his development of symptoms of AIDS. As Watney (1987) puts it: The AIDS agenda requires…that AIDS should reveal itself as the stigmata of the doomed and the damned, the concrete visible evidence of the deserts of depravity. Hence the tremendous emphasis on the physical transformation of Rock Hudson's face and body…' (20-21). The opposition of beautiful: ugly slips into

[110] See Gilman (1995) chapter six 'The Beautiful Body and AIDS: The Image of the Body at Risk at the Close of the Twentieth Century'.

healthy: diseased, as Sander Gilman (1995) puts it: 'it is not only that the healthy becomes the beautiful, but that beauty becomes the healthy; the diseased is not only the ugly, but the ugly the diseased' (51). Hudson is not just positioned as ill but as corrupt and dishonest in his keeping his sexuality a secret. As an icon of Hollywood masculinity during the hallowed period of American life - the 1950's - he has to be seen to be punished for undermining the myth. The opposition operating in this construction is what Timothy Landers (1988) has called the paradigm of Body/Anti-Body. He says of this:

> Commercial media representations in general are informed by a variation on the normal/abnormal paradigm - one better suited to a visual medium: that of Bodies/Anti-Bodies. The Body - white, middle-class, and heterosexual - is constructed in contrast to the Other, the Anti-Body (frequently *absent* from representation) - blacks, gay men, lesbians, workers, foreigners, in short, the whole range of groups that threaten straight, white, middle- class values. (282)

What such representations as those above point to is an increasing anxiety for the relationship between desire and the idealised body. If appearances can be so deceptive with regard to categories of healthy/diseased and the masculine body with regard to heterosexual/ homosexual, then what effective strategies can be adopted to provide a secure grounding once more for sex and desire.[111] Such anxieties and the attempt to fix once more

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[111] Harvey (1989) talking of the sense of a new stage in the experience of spatial/temporal representations including within 'spaces of representation' that is defined by him as Postmodernity which an archetypal modernist body such as the Health Education Authority rooted as it is in nineteenth century notions of social education and control can be seen to struggle with. Harvey writes: '... the idea that the experience of space-time compression in recent years, under the pressures of the turn to more flexible modes of accumulation, has generated a crisis of representation in cultural forms, and that this is a subject of intense aesthetic concern, either *in toto* (as I think is the case in *Wings of Desire*) or in part (as would be true of everything from *Blade Runner* to Cindy Sherman's photographs and the novels of Italo Calvino or Pynchon). Such cultural practices are important. If there is a crisis of representation of space and time, then new ways of thinking and feeling have to be created. Part of any trajectory out of the condition of postmodernity has to embrace exactly such a process/(322)

some stable identities is evident in an HEA advert from 1994 designed specifically for an audience Of bisexual men and published in male interest magazines (Fig. 3.5): 'Which do you find more attractive ? If you're not certain, read on.' Confronted with the torso's - no heads, no genitalia - of a man and a woman each occupying a page of a double-page spread, we are asked to make a choice. The reader who experiences an anxiety as they flit from one to the other in an instant, unable or not wanting to make a choice, is asked to engage with the medical discourse in a doctor/patient dialogue, itself a boundary between the expert and the subject of the expertise referred to by Bourdieu (1984): 'specialists agree at least in laying claim to a monopoly of legitimate competence which defines them as such in reminding people of the frontier which separates professionals from the profane .' (24) The authority of the opinions of medical professionals was actually the entire basis of one advertising campaign, the so called 'experts' campaign transmitted on TV and in the national press between December 1989 and March 1990. One example (Fig. 3.6) includes portrait photographs of three such figures, all of them looking off screen in the way described earlier, alongside their statements. The objective of the campaign according to the HEA survey was: To provide authoritative factual information on the spread of HIV. In particular to clarify confusion surrounding heterosexual transmission,' even though it is still permeated by the dominant moral position which is included in the underlying text that states, amongst other messages including condom use, that casual sex is risky and less partners is part of the solution.

Within the example from 1994, this mediating presence assumes the authority of truth-speaker, or oracle[112] i.e one that assumes the silence of the addressee:

> For some people it's not always clear cut which sex they are attracted to. If that sounds like you, you may have felt unsure for as long as you can remember. Or maybe your uncertain feelings are a relatively new thing. You might even be in a heterosexual relationship when such feelings begin. Whatever the case, it can seem very confusing, and discovering your sexuality may take time. […]

By foregrounding the uncertainty of choice an ambiguity is effected in the relationship between the male body and the female body as objects of desire. The 'normal' viewer, that is one who *can* make a choice, confines his or her desire to one or other compartment and it is the deviant that either can't or won't make a choice in this construction. That which is threatening to the social order in this scenario are those who cross from one body to the other and back again with no concern for confining their sexual desire within the categories offered. The dangerous is the permeable that does not maintain effective boundaries, whether at the level of the body or of society. As Catherine Waldby (1996) writes:

> The bodies of gay and bisexual men and women are considered to be implicated in the spread of infection because of their inherent permeability. They are imagined to form fluid, infectious circuits and ambiguous relationships with other bodies, either sexual or uterine. Just as bodily permeability is the means for the virus to gain access to the fluid matrix of the particular body, to move through its blood stream and lymph system, so too does bodily permeability provide the fluid conduit from body to body which allows the virus to move through the body politic, threatening the public health. (110)

[112] Woodhead (1995) observes of this role: The health promoter is thus expected to assume the role of 'black box' where pieces of *objective*, complex, scientific information are taken in, and equally objective (yet simplified) scientific information is produced.' (234)

The advert recognises the issue of homosexual desire, as it has to in relation any effective public health strategy around HIV/AIDS, but it does in a way that once again maintains a binary opposition of fixed and immutable categories. The spatial categories of desire for the male or female body are divided by a line of demarcation down the middle of the double page spread. The uncertainty of the viewers desire is what is posed as dangerous here, where the 'other' category of homosexuality *can* be accommodated as the opposite term in the binary opposition (this is not to imply an equivalence of course, it is a hierarchy) in an attempt to reduce the heterogeneous and indefinite into the singular and definitive.[113] As Samira Kawesh (1993) points out, this configuration: 'delegitimates non-gender-exclusive desires. Current struggles over the 'authenticity' of bisexuality illustrate this effect: if the world is divided into 'same' and 'different', 'homo' and 'hetero', then bisexuality is something which cannot exist, and individuals claiming a bisexual identity are confused or in a state of transition.' (28)[114] In another example of an advert produced by the HEA targeted at bisexual men from 1990 we see a picture of two hands interlocked (Fig. 3.7). Represented synechdochically by the pair of hands it asserts that 'If a married man has an affair, it may not be with a woman.' The attitude on this is clear, however, from the supporting text which helpfully provides a 'dictionary

[113] Hemmings (1995) writes of the accommodation that can be made of boundaries *shifting* but effectively maintained, she states: ' Transgression of the status quo can, in fact, *consolidate* the dominant discourse, rather than undermining it. Dominant discourses rely on the presence of an 'other', defining what is dominant through what is not... Unless transgression actually disrupts the underlying *forms* of the discourses being challenged, the attempt runs the risk of becoming yet another partner in the endless spiral of binary oppositions.' (48)

[114] Quoted in Gutterman, D, 'Postmodernism and the Interrogation of Masculinity' in Brod & Kaufman (1994).

definition' of a bisexual man as 'one who has sex with both men and women' but immediately delegitimates this with the warning that ' as a way of life, however, bisexuality can prove to be anything but simple'.

From this perspective, reading the 'which do you find more attractive..' advert, if the viewer is positioned between the two images, in line with the centre of the page, the implication is that is the 'confused' bisexual man who can transmit the virus from one side to the other. The figure of the bisexual is seen as subversive and threatening, even after the attempt to pin him down to making a final choice, because he does not respect the boundaries. As Waldby (1996), again, states:

> This public health, the health of the body politic, is however lethally threatened by bodies with unstable boundaries and fluid tendencies, bodies which seep beyond the borders dictated by individuation. These bodies are considered to form contagious circuits within the body politic, to act as weak points in its corporeal matrix which enables the propagation of the virus. (III)

The existence of the boundary needs to be clearly presented as a demarcation to signal the inherent danger, in hegemonic terms, of transgressing this and 'polluting' the social order. Mary Douglas (1966) writes of how this conception is present in a number of cultures:

> Pollution powers which inhere in the structure of ideas itself and which punish a symbolic breaking of that which should be joined or joining of that which should be separate. It follows from this that pollution is a type of danger which is not likely to occur except where the lines of structure, cosmic or social, are clearly defined.
>
> A polluting person is always in the wrong. He [sic] has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed over some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes

danger for someone.[115]

Such a formulation was a fundamental part of the perception of the threat of the AIDS epidemic to 'mainstream' society during the eighties and seen in this editorial in the *Independent* (30 January 1988)

> The West faces the prospect of a steady 'leakage' into mainstream society which could prove difficult to contain....The victims who could reasonably be deemed guilty are those - homosexual, heterosexual or drug-abusing - who have refused to adjust their behaviour.... They are endangering their own lives and those with whom they come into contact.... Indeed, it is ironic that evidence from the United States ... suggests that many homosexuals have changed their habits and abandoned the wild promiscuity of a decade or less ago, which did disgust many people not involved. (10)

That which is deemed desirable in this scenario is the classically proportioned, seemingly healthy, body and it is the viewer who can potentially effect a catastrophic destruction of the social order by transgressing the boundaries and therefore, in this case, transmitting the virus. This potential for chaos must be addressed by fixing your sexual desire for now and in the future and respecting the borders determined by dominant culture, for as David Harvey (1989) states: 'Symbolic orderings of space and time provide a framework for experience through which we learn who or what we are in society.' (214).

If the gendered compartments offer boundaries, the bodies themselves also

[115] Quoted in Butler (1990) and of which she comments: 'Douglas suggests that all social systems are vulnerable at their margins, and that all margins are accordingly considered dangerous. If the body is synecdochal for the social system *per se* or a site in which open systems converge, then any kind of unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment. Since anal and oral sex among men clearly establishes certain kinds of bodily permeabilities unsanctioned by the hegemonic order, male homosexuality would, within such a hegemonic point of view, constitute a site of danger and pollution, prior to and regardless of the cultural presence of AIDS.' (132)

significantly offer boundaries of impenetrability.[116] The truncated bodies are cut off to exclude any orifice that can potentially be penetrated. Partly what motivates this is an attempt to try and avoid the object of desire, the phallus, but also by cutting off the heads of the two subjects there is no threat of becoming the subject of the gaze. Simpson (1994) offers the view that such advertising allows narcissistic identification by the viewer:

> Most ironic of all is the possibility that the decapitation/ depersonalization of the model allows the male viewer to substitute any face and fantasy he desires (including his own: marrying narcissism and homoeroticism) to make a perfect vision of queer Eros. (107)

That which is present is the chest and the effect is once again to reinforce the ambiguity between the male and female. The female breast is of course seen as the signifier of sex but the male breast has usually been seen, as Simpson (1994) once again puts it, 'officially erotically neutral'(103). However, in this advert it becomes something other than neutral and is the object of desire, albeit ambiguously. The pumped-up body of the male model does of course blur the distinction between the two anyway but once again the hard body is

[116] Waldby (1995) writes,[1] The male body is understood as phallic and impenetrable, as a war-body simultaneously armed and armoured, equipped for victory. The female body is its opposite, permeable and receptive, able to absorb all this violence. In other words, boundary difference is displaced outwards from (imaginary) genital difference. The fantasy of the always hard and ready penis/phallus characterizes the entire surface of the male body, while the fantasy of the soft accommodating and rather indeterminate vagina is synechdochal for the entire feminine body. In this way the genital markers of sexual difference, the penis and the vagina, seem to render the kinds of power relations attendant upon them as natural and inevitable. ' (268)

offered as a potential defence to the dangers of the permeable.[117] As Dyer (1982) observes: The potential for muscularity in men is seen as a biological given, and is also the means of dominating both women and other men who are in the competition for the spoils of the earth - women.' (71)

The advert as an example of the discourse of health education assumes values of both advertising, something being sold to assuage an anxiety, and medical epistemology, knowledge and truth. This latter discourse has used photography as an essential element in its investigations given the indexical nature of photographic representation.[118] The naked body as the subject of the medical gaze is by now assumed to be a natural object in the drive to greater understanding. As Emmanuel Cooper (1990) observes, photography has become essential to this process:

> Behind all such investigations there was a search for some notion of 'truth', whether this could only be seen and registered by the camera, or a new sort of 'truth' created by the photographic process. As well as recording physical appearances the camera also helped identify expressions of psychological conditions; features could be measured, comparisons made, 'norms' established, classifications carried out. Medicine and science offered a rationalised domain of order and control which the photograph could substantiate.
>
> Within these scientific and medical procedures, the male body stripped of clothes and subjected to detailed scrutiny of gesture,

[117] McGrath (1988) writes: 'For within the myth that upholds male power (and since it is a myth it must be kept secret) the anatomical penis can never live up to the great expectations of symbolic phallic power. In short, this power rests on very little. Moreover, for the heterosexual male viewer gazing upon his like can arouse not only the fear that he is looking at another man with the repressed eye of desire but that he himself may be looked at with that same eye. This latter aspect can arouse a fear of being objectified, of being passive, of being less than male, and consequently like a woman: powerless. This accounts for the wild extravagances, the 'hysterical quality' as R. Dyer calls it, to which so many representations (hetero and homosexual) must go. In this imagery the muscle-bound body becomes the phallus. These are literally 'hard men': turgid, erect, impenetrable.' (59)

[118] See McGrath (1984)'Medical Police' *Ten. 8* n.14, pp.13-18.

> appearance and structures was an ideal subject. The obligatory nudity opened up the body to the detailed rituals of doctors and scientists. (37)

What is evident in the advert is such a relationship to medical discourse that offers the two bodies for viewing. The fragmentation of the bodies is an act of control, both of the subjects positions - woman and homosexual man (given that the advert is designed for bisexual men) - and of desire as such. Fuss (1992) writes of the way that fashion photography produces similar images:

> The specular image of the body that women's fashion photography constructs is a reimaging of the body in pieces *[le corps morcele],* the fragmented and dispersed body image that Lacan posits as the infant's pre-mirror experience of its amorphous self. These photographs recall Lacan's identification in "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis" of a group of images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body." Some of the most common and prevalent shots of female bodies in women's fashion photography are those of decapitation and dismemberment - in particular headless torsos and severed heads. (718)

The torsos are reminiscent of Hans Bellmer's fragmented dolls in his 1934 *Die Puppe* of which Hal Foster (1995) comments on Bellmer's description: 'he speaks of the doll as a way to recover "the enchanted garden" of childhood, a familiar trope for a pre-Oedipal moment before castration.'(231) Problematic in terms of charges of misogyny Bellmer posed his *Poupees* as an attack on the militarization of the fascist state and its obsession with the body as armour. Foster says of the contradictory nature of Bellmer's constructions: '...the dolls may go beyond (or is it inside?) sadistic mastery to the point where the masculine subject confronts its greatest fear: its own fragmentation,

disintegration and dissolution.' (237) The purpose of the fascist armouring in this relationship: 'is to defend against the fragmentary and the fluid, the dispersed and the dissolute, as represented by the feminine.' (239) For the HEA advert the two bodies represent the dangerous realms of femininity and homosexuality and so are presented as just such threats.

This style of hard-bodied, sexy young men became a stable advertising imagery throughout the eighties and early nineties and can be seen as part of a cultural shift in images of masculinity where images of men are designed for consumption by other men. Frank Mort (1988) argues that the changes in fashion and culture signalled by this sees men ...'getting pleasures previously branded taboo or feminine.' (194)[119] The imagery of the HEA advert is echoed by a double-page advert for the 'Sloggi' brand of underwear: 'Sloggi for women. Sloggi for men' (Fig. 3.8). As in the HEA advert both figures are represented only partially and although the genital area is included its covering by the product allows it to remain once again unthreatening, an effect reinforced by the lack of any possible return gaze. But it is not merely the format of the picture that is followed, at the bottom of the advert it asks: '20 styles for women. 12 styles for men. Or is it the other way round?' and so the ambiguity and instability of the readers potential desire is again foregrounded. This image would seem to serve the purpose of what Freud describes as an example of a masculine fetish, where the product

[119] Mort sees this coming from a number of directions: ' It may just be that young men and women are already renegotiating their personal and sexual relations, renegotiations which have been made via the gains of feminism, but also through the changes in market culture and probably most important of all the impact of AIDS. (223)

compensates for the hidden phallus, as Silverman (1992) writes:

> One of those fetishes is an athletic support belt, which covers up the genitals, and so erases all evidence of anatomical difference. Freud writes that this item of clothing not only signifies at the same time "that women[are] castrated and that they [are] not castrated," but "allow[s] of the hypothesis that men [are] castrated, for all these possibilities [can] equally well be concealed under the belt". (46)

Again what seems to be being expressed is an underlying anxiety as to the myth of masculinity.

Once more the aesthetic of the hard body is offered as reassurance, this time to the more mainstream audience. This look became increasingly popular in the eighties and nineties represented best by Bruce Weber's pictures for Calvin Klein products of young men clad only in their underwear with an explicit undercurrent of gay voyeurism (Fig. 3.9). As James Cary Parkes (1997) wrote in *Gay Times* : 'As Aids ruined the lives of a generation of American gay men, physical contact itself became a hostage to hysteria and sex at a distance ... became the norm. Weber's photography of implicit but essentially allusive sexual suggestiveness fitted a period in which fantasy replaced the unfettered physicality of the gay 70s.' (32) When Calvin Klein launched his perfume *Obsession* in 1985 a fashion journalist wrote: 'In Calvin's world, polymorphic perversity is par for the course' that seemed to reject the authoritarian morality that sought to mobilize AIDS as a punishment for sexual liberation and to suspend it in a moment that transcended the threat of the bodies decay into illness. What it does, of course, is to commodify this and present the idealized body as a symbol of potential unity for the subject

where the perfect outer form gives shape to an inner health. As Mike Featherstone (1982) says of the body in consumer culture:

> Within consumer culture the body is proclaimed as a vehicle of pleasure: its desirable and desiring and the closer the actual body approximates to the idealised images of youth, health, fitness and beauty the higher its exchange value. (177)

In this scenario, the aerobic body is opposed to the aging body which by definition bears the marks of time. But the valorisation of this idealized body is at a moment when it becomes increasingly less secure. The HEA develop a poster, never actually published, that shows an 'old' man looking straight out at the camera with the words underneath: ' Practise safer sex and you could end up like this.[120] By 1988 Calvin Klein launched a new perfume called *Eternity* appealing to a desire by many for the illusion of infinite or unending time.

A photograph by Bruce Weber was used for an HEA advert targeted at Gay men. Interestingly, Wellings and Field (1996) point out that two versions of the advert were produced. The first, for general readership in London listings magazines, the torso's of the two men are cut off above the nipple (Fig. 3.10) but in the second, for publication in the gay press, the nipple of the man is shown (Fig. 3.11) (91). The nipple as the site of erotic focus presumably needs careful placing and this level of control over the adverts illustrates the problems for the HEA of political concerns of sexual explicitness.

[120] reproduced in the *Pink Paper*, 23 February, 1992.

The effectiveness of such imagery has anyway become to be fundamentally questioned on the basis of the increasing numbers once more of men engaging in unsafe sex. Michael Bronski addressed this question in last December's World AIDS Day special issue of *The Pink Paper*. One explanation he offers is that safer sex advertising that relies on the idealized male images actually contributes to low self-esteem on the part of some men who therefore do not make thoughtful and informed decisions about safer sex. Given the imagery used he writes:

> The message was: beautiful men = safer sex. The problem was, of course, that any man who felt that he fell short of this standard of beauty could feel excluded from the message of the poster. If men feel that they can never measure up to the physical (and ethical) ideal of safer sex, they may feel like failures and have an even more difficult time acting safely when engaging in sexual activity.[121]

The image of the idealized body in advertising is of course something that became central to the consumer culture in the age of mass production. Precisely because health education became in the eighties part of the consumer culture: remember the safer sex adverts 'you're as safe as you want to be', the style it uses is reminiscent of general commodity fetishism.[122] Traditionally this has entailed an effective exclusion of the aged body as it no longer has the potential for consumption epitomised by images of youth, fitness and beauty. The AIDS epidemic, however, offers a contemporary

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[121] Bronski, M. 'Why gay men still have unsafe sex' in *The Pink Paper* December 1996, p.8.

[122] Featherstone (1982) writes: 'Preventative medicine offers a similar message and through its offshoot, health education, demands constant vigilance on the part of the individual who has to be persuaded to assume responsibility for his health, introducing the category 'self-inflicted illness', which results from body abuse (overeating, drinking, smoking, lack of exercise etc.[we might at this point add Gay sex]) , health educationalists assert that individuals who conserve their bodies through dietary care and exercise will enjoy greater health and live longer... In effect, the health education movement is trying to bring about a change in the moral climate so that individuals assume increasing self-responsibility for their health, body shape and appearance.' (183)

image of dying unconnected with age. Indeed it can offer a paradoxical image of youth becoming associated with the threat of decline, (Fig. 3.12): 'Another day another chance to feel healthy'.

This illustrates the cultural shift that has arguably taken place where the transition from young (healthy) to old (unhealthy) in an ordered structure of work, marriage, parenthood, grandparenthood, retirement, no longer has the stability it once did. The opposition between the terms of young and old is still maintained but the temporality of the social process of transition has been fundamentally challenged. The emphasis on the gaunt, skeletal face of Rock Hudson also served as a reinforcement of the seeming accelerated aging of the film star.

What is significant is that the image of aging presented by the unpublished HEA advert seems to subvert the dominant cultural stereotypes and to be at odds with the general production values of advertising. As John Tulloch (1995) observes:

> Representations of youth and aging in government health ads are produced by commercial advertising agencies, often the same ones which produce, for other clients, the images that "retard, diminish or disguise the effects of aging". In the case of health advertisements, however, generic understandings of both 'fun' and 'horror' also mediate the signifying process. (264)

The subject of AIDS and film is discussed at length in the next chapter but it is worth pursuing this line of argument to contemporary filmic representations. The point made by Tulloch above can be seen in examples of recently

produced horror films where there is a concern similar of that of some adverts to abstract the body from the threat of aging. It is surely no coincidence that the film *Interview With The Vampire* is about the attempt to freeze time and stop the body from getting old in the figures of two young, passionate and beautiful young men and a female child, their bodies suspended in time even if the world around them continues to change and develop. In the dream state of film it is possible to engage in the fantasy of travelling forwards, backwards or forever 'now' in time. Sometimes this can act as a cathartic release for the viewer. In the film *Longtime Companion* three friends walk along the beach on Fire Island in 1989, where the film began eight years before. In a general discussion about a forthcoming ACT-UP demonstration they are all going to attend, one asks the question of what it might be like to be around if they ever found a cure, at which point the films slips into a sequence where the three of them watch all their dead friends come streaming down onto the beach where they celebrate and embrace each other. Such a 'utopian' moment that transcends the reality of time and its effects speaks more of a genuine desire to somehow overcome loss than merely an empty nostalgia or overbearing sentimentality. The latter can be see at the end of *Philadelphia* where 'home- movies' of childhood play at the funeral reception in an attempt to reclaim a prior moment of innocence in contradistinction to the denigrated moment of the present which is the death of the subject from AIDS. In contradistinction, *Longtime Companion* is framed by the evident desire to use the past or the future to engage with the viewer now, in this case an ACT-UP demonstration.

In contrast what is denied in dominant cultural representations of those living with the epidemic is the temporal experience of self-control, self-activity and self-directed future. Instead there is a presentation of the past and future as a fatalistic transition that works to disempower those who become its subjects. As Timothy Murphy (1994) states, if the epidemic was conceived of differently, time does not have to be viewed as the horizon of inevitable tragedy but as a moment of struggle over the 'now' for everyone. (27)

Chapter Four

"No rubbers, no women, no guns": AIDS and Hollywood Film

The potential for film to offer a space in which fears and anxieties around AIDS could be articulated, referred to at the end of the last chapter, is the next area to be considered. Cinema, as a site for the production an consumption of popular culture, is central to many people's negotiation of social reality, and central to movie production is Hollywood. This chapter, therefore, will examine how a product such as a Hollywood film, that is constructed to be accessible to a mass audience by relating to popular collective fantasies has, or has not as the case may be, responded to the advent of AIDS. Within media culture Hollywood is an immensely powerful force, not just in the sense of the influence of individual filmic products but also in relation to the broader generic systems of representations that it works within. AIDS, then, is not just a subject for particular films, however that may be, but, as will be shown, impacts on wider social aspects of Hollywood.

As has been argued previously the eighties can be described in general terms as an era in which the New Right was in the ascendancy and this was as evident in Hollywood as elsewhere. The Hollywood film can be considered as an ideological formation in that its codes and structures are very familiar to the viewers and who are presented with a visual product that occupies a space of dream like fantasy. But films, like any other representational construct, will always negotiate between the social and political forces in the wider world, the mediating form of the system of representation, and the viewers own position. Films are extremely powerful in projecting and encouraging an identification with particular views dominant, or even

struggling for dominance, in society at any one time and can act to give a strong sense of identity against the fears and insecurities of an increasingly changing social reality. Nevertheless, to present Hollywood film as a monolithic entity offering the reinforcement of conservative ideology to the exclusion of any countering movement for progressive change would ignore the ways in which any attempt to try and offer an idealised view of social relations always has to in some way relate to the very real lives of the viewers who are desperately needed to provide the profit for the industry. In this way the changes in the social organisation of the family, and women and men's role within it, can be seen to reflected, to varying degrees of course, in films of the sixties and seventies. The struggle and establishment of civil rights, a growing cynicism towards the motives and behaviour of multinational corporations, and an increasing awareness of the machinations and corruption of government, can all be seen to be visible in films from this period.

By the late seventies and early eighties the failure of the liberal agenda to solve the economic and monetary crisis in the wider world, therefore, fed directly into Hollywood. The emergence of AIDS in the early eighties amongst the group of people most badly represented and treated by Hollywood film coincides with the regressive agenda of the New Right.[123] I would contend,

[123] the term New Right is one that is used to refer to the resurgence of conservative programmes predicated on the rhetoric of 'the family'. There are of course a great many differences between the American political forces at play and those in Britain. Weeks (1989) discusses the differences and the way in which in this country the roots of the New Right are secured to Christian Fundamentalism as oppossed to the more explicitly political appropriation in this country. (128-129). What encompasses both is the centrality of the family to the project, operating at many levels from 'pretended family' scenarios of Clause 28, to the dismantling of welfare state programmes.

therefore, that the subject of AIDS, up until *Philadelphia* which can be seen as a liberal attempt to address the subject, could only be addressed obliquely, in a process of displacement, because of the conservative climate that dominated in Hollywood during this period.

The readings offered on the films that follow draw on an awareness of the polysemic nature of representation and its historical context. It has been observed that allegory,[124] the rhetorical operation of shifting meaning from one reading to another in a process of figuration, is more common at times of political oppression and when censorship prevails, as Angus Fletcher (1965) writes:

> ...allegory likewise appears to express conflict between rival authorities, as in times of political oppression we may get "Aesop-language" to avoid censorship of dissident thought. At the heart of any allegory will be found this conflict of authorities. (22)

Although the era of the Reagan tenure cannot simply be compared to McCarthyism, aspects of its rhetoric and popular appeal are an attempt, conscious or otherwise, to echo this . Up until *Philadelphia,* therefore, AIDS as explicit subject matter for mainstream film was seen as a deeply problematic area for Hollywood, given the issues it raised about the body and sexuality, and that effectively what was enacted was self-censorship in a period of

[124] Owens (1992) describes the 'allegorical impulse' as the defining element of postmodern art, see his two essays: The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism' and The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism, Part 2'. Orton (1994) in his re- evaluation of the work of Jasper Johns from this perspective points to the 'otherwise' of allegory: 'Most of the persons addressed by allegory are cognitively and emotionally satisfied with what it says literally, but other persons, sharing the allegorist's attitude to language and stimulated by his self-reflexive use of it, are predisposed, in skills and competence, to take another meaning, or several other meanings from it.' (161) in *Figuring Jaspar Johns* London: Reaktion Books

wider political reaction.

Before developing any further the analysis of particular films I want to consider two other points of crossover between Hollywood and AIDS to illustrate the centrality of Hollywood to American and Western popular culture. The political climate in which AIDS emerged was one that was linked to Hollywood and the myths generated by it in the figure of Ronald Reagan who as President saw AIDS grow from a relatively small and isolated phenomena to an epidemic that by 1987 had taken 25 000 lives. Reagan was the target of bitter recriminations for his refusal to even say the word 'AIDS' let alone provide funds and organisations to deal with the problem. As part of a wider programme of political reaction and economic class war Reagan's tenure was instrumental in the very defining of AIDS as a disease the Gay community brought on themselves. But a central part of Reagan's appeal to the voters had been his persona as an ex-Hollywood actor, an actor who had started his political career on the back of the McCarthyite witch-hunt of the 1950's which was itself predicated on the language of invasion and cancer that would come to be used to define AIDS.[125] Reagan symbolised the centrality of Hollywood and its myths to American culture, and indeed it has been argued that the cultural resonance of 'Reaganism' was its self-conscious referentiality to other representations, as MacKinnon (1992) observed: 'Its reference is not

[125] For discussion of this see Rogin, M.P. (1987) *Ronald Reagan, the Movie, and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* Berkeley: University of California Press.

outward to conceptions of sociopolitical actuality but inward or else "sideways" to other media products.' (19).

The second point of coincidence between Hollywood and AIDS was the death of Rock Hudson from an AIDS related condition. Earlier chapters have discussed aspects of the news coverage of his diagnosis and death in 1985 but the announcement that Hudson was affected by the condition signalled a profound qualitative shift in the perception of AIDS in American consciousness. Precisely because of his mythical status, being an icon of postwar American masculinity, his diagnosis and the revelation of his sexuality was bound to destabilize dominant ideology's view of gender and disease. The gap revealed between the image on the screen and the person who existed outside of this drew attention to the tenuous nature of all representations of masculine identity. Hudson, as seen in earlier chapters, was made to pay a price for such a role and given his status was vilified for his 'secret' life when in reality he was vilified for disturbing the veneer of gendered behaviour.

The effect of Hudson's diagnosis is described by Randy Shilts (1988) in his 'documentary' style which was discussed in the introduction;

Sunday, July 28

> AIDS was on the front page of virtually every Sunday morning paper in the United States. Any local angle was pursued with a vengeance, and entertainment sections crowded with retrospectives on Rock Hudson's career. There was something about Hudson's diagnosis that seemed to strike an archetypal chord in the American consciousness. For decades, Hudson had been among the handful of screen actors who personified wholesome American masculinity; now in one stroke, he was revealed as both gay and suffering from the affliction of pariahs. Doctors involved in AIDS research called the Hudson announcement the single most important event in the history of the epidemic, and few knowledgeable people argued.

Cindy Patton (1990) wrote that there was a: 'significant perceptual shift, at least in the mass media, ... in 1985 with the death of Rock Hudson.' (18) and one effect of his diagnosis and death was a large scale public discussion of the condition and a massive increase in funding for AIDS work. If what Richard Durgnat wrote is true: '...the stars are a reflection in which the public studies and adjusts its own image of itself ' then Hudson's diagnosis was indeed a defining moment.[126] Nevertheless it was a problematic moment, as Patton (1990) observes:

> Rock Hudson epitomized the fear of fluid sexuality which epidemiological risk categories were supposed to shore up. Rock Hudson, the closet gay/screen heterosexual personified the fearful paradox: AIDS was a gay disease and anyone could get AIDS. Neatly sidestepping the obvious conclusion that anyone might be gay (or bisexual), Rock Hudson's death proved what everyone knew; despite *public* hysteria about casual contagion, "getting AIDS" required a private act, required "taking it," required feminization. (127)

[126] Quoted in Dyer (1979) p.6

Ultimately, perhaps the greatest effect of the Hudson announcement was to set off a growing anxiety in American society without there being any fundamental change in the public perception of the condition. The awareness of it had been like that of a horror-movie: frightening at the time and then pushed back into the recesses of the mind.

What I hope to show is that in each of the examples that follow it is possible to point to clear moments when the anxiety generated by popular representations of HIV and AIDS breaks the surface and reveals underlying social concerns. In general terms the chapter will take as a useful interpretive strategy the reading of films 'symptomatically' in the way outlined by Laura Mulvey (1993)

> Psychoanalytic film theory has argued that mass culture can be interpreted symptomatically, and that it functions as a massive screen on which collective fantasy, anxiety, fear, and their effects can be projected. In this sense, it speaks to the blind spots of a culture and finds forms that make manifest socially traumatic material through distortion, defense, and disguise (6)

The film can be seen to operate in the way in which Freud described his notion of dreams as functioning to rework conflicts and anxieties which would otherwise disturb an individual's sleep. The manifest content of dreams starts from the everyday sensory experiences and these become the material to which latent repressed wishes and fears attach themselves, in the process disguising their content to avoid censorship by the consciousness of the

subject. The dream work is this modification that takes place.[127] The parallels with film are obvious and although I am aware and in agreement with those who charge this approach with being reductive, such things work on a number of levels and perhaps being 'crude' is at times valid and useful as it does,[128] in this case, offer an illustrative analogy to the issue of AIDS and representation in Hollywood film.

This can be considered an ideological operation and therefore one that is continuously contested. T.J.Clark (1974) described ideology as 'the dream-content without the dream-work' (562). Similarly Slavoj Zizek (1994) commenting on this process in relation to Marxist notions of ideology in which he maintains a 'homology' between the interpretative procedures of Marx and Freud writes:

> The relationship between the 'latent thought' and what is called the 'manifest content' of a dream - the text of a dream, the dream in its literal phenomenality - is therefore that between some entirely 'normal' (pre)conscious thought and its translation into the 'rebus' of the dream. The essential constitution of dream is thus not its 'latent thought' but this work (the mechanisms of displacement and condensation, the figuration of the contents of words or syllables) which confer on it the form of a dream. (297)

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[127] Freud (1982) writes: 'let me again remind you that the process by which the latent dream is transformed into the manifest dream is called THE DREAM-WORK : while the reverse process, which seeks to progress from the manifest to the latent thoughts, is our work of interpretation' (135)

[128] For instance Lapsley, R. and Westlake, M. (1988) comment on the first attempts at applying a Freudian interpretation of filmic motifs as tending 'towards reductionism in that the ostensible meaning of the film (comparable to the manifest content of the dream) was displaced by the hidden, Freudian meaning (equivalent to the dream's manifest content)...' (67). By the 1970's psychoanalysis has been reintroduced as a critical method on the basis of work by those such as Christian Metz (1982) develops a sophisticated reading of cinema as the 'imaginary signifier' that is a development of Lacan's theory of the mirror phase and which seeks at address the question of the relations of the subject to discourse.

The work that is done in this process is where it is possible to identify a space in which there is a negotiation with social and personal anxieties. Popular films rework conflicts and contradictions present in the broader social world and so at any one time they must be able to respond to new experiences in their audience. These conflicts and contradictions are contained within the two defining elements of a film: the narrative (temporal) and the image (spatial) and it is the disjunctures that can occur between them that is revealing - the seductive image that undermines the narrative or vice versa. The advent of AIDS in the early eighties was a new category of experience that mobilized pre-existing types and formations yet created new cultural forms that can be identified in the films discussed below.

Hollywood film as a mass media formation is a major site of cultural production where social concerns and trends can be seen to be mediated and reflected.[129] Because it is possible to point to a specific historical moment at which AIDS was identified and named, that is it became an object of discourse, then we can similarly point to the moment when the wave of 'fears and anxieties' generated by this process manifested itself in the medium of film and how, indeed, pre-existing cinematic narratives can be seen to have influenced the very construction of the condition. Judith Williamson (1993)

[129] Annette Kuhn (1990) distinguishes between five cultural instrumentalities of film and genre criticism: reflection; ideology; repression; spectatorship; intertextuality. My approach is to adopt whatever strategy best seems to enlighten the object under scrutiny.

describes how such a process is evident in popular films which need a big financial return to satisfy the investors. They need to draw in large audiences and so they have to appeal to those audiences, however indirectly, by addressing the '...wishes, fears and anxieties current in society at any given moment.' (27)

This chapter will examine a number of films that, it will be argued, do precisely that. This is not to argue that there is a straightforward relationship between AIDS and Hollywood film that can be unproblematically read off from one discourse to another. Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner (1988) perceive the relationship between film and social history as a process of 'transcoding', that is there is a conversion from one form of coded representation to another. As they state:

> Films transcode the discourses (the forms, figures, and representations) of social life into cinematic narratives. Rather than reflect a reality external to the film medium, films execute a transfer from one discursive field to another. As a result, films themselves become part of that broader cultural system of representations that construct reality. That construction occurs in part through the internalization of representations. (12-13)

In this process of transcoding there is always the potential for any number of issues and ideas to begin to work their way into the text and so to be able to identify the contested nature of the struggle over all representations. What is of interest with the material that follows is how, in different ways, it struggles to

seek reassuring closures on the threatened chaos of uncontrollable bodies, their desires, fluids and excesses.

Films are commodities and at the same time ideological products, as Christian Metz (1982) states:

> Let me insist once again, the cinematic institution is not just the cinema industry (which works to fill cinemas, not to empty them), it is also the mental machinery - another industry - which spectators "accustomed to the cinema" have internalised historically and which has adapted them to the consumption of films. (7)

What can be identified in the filmic product, therefore, is a struggle, a contest, between any number of contending ideological and political positions in the way that references to Bakhtin's notion of 'dialogic' described in earlier chapters. It can be argued that some films seek to naturalize particular representations as part of a wider mobilisation of consent for dominant political positions. For instance, during the eighties a representation of the 'stability' of passive femininity as opposed to the dangers of assertive female sexuality was played out through any number of 80's film including *Fatal Attraction* which can be identified with a wider anti-feminist project.[130] In relation to AIDS it is possible to identify the manifestations of fears and anxieties generated by the media in particular films. As has been seen Susan Sontag (1991) has explored some of the metaphors surrounding AIDS and Paula Triechler (1988) has talked of AIDS as as much 'an epidemic of

[130] See Faludi (1992) for an analysis of the cultural manifestations of this from a wider political perspective.

signification' as a medical syndrome with real effects, so the fears and anxieties that manifest themselves are not based on the experience of what it is to live with AIDS or be diagnosed as HIV positive but are a pretext for the mobilisations of other fears in a similar way to that of fifties fears of aliens from outer space being, amongst other things, about popular and manipulated fears of Russian communism. As has been discussed in previous chapters AIDS was formulated as an invading agent and this central notion of boundaries under threat, whether of the body or nation state, is a key element in the process of seeking to legitimize social domination through practices of exclusion and control. This will be seen to be a common aspect of the films focussed on in the following.Any analysis of the rhetorical and representational strategies in any particular film will always be a partial and relatively inconclusive discussion. What is offered here is not any notion of a 'complete' reading of the films but rather a symptomatic reading that addresses those elements relevant to AIDS. Films are very complex texts that have any number of social issues crisscrossing the discursive space even to the extent of contradicting one position with another contending viewpoint within the same film.[131] It is not surprising that this perception is denied by those who seek to maintain the purely superficial as the limit of any reading. Adrian Lynne, the director of *Fatal Attraction*, is quoted as saying, in response to questions about the wider social aspects of the film:

[131] See Stam, R, Burgoyne, R, & Flitterman-Lewis, S. (1992) section The contradictory text' for a good discussion of this with reference to the theorists such as Narboni and Comoli who drew up a taxonomy of the possible relations between a film and dominant ideology and of course Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia.

> ...to draw wide ranging political conclusions from a case history about a woman who eventually goes wacko -1 don't see it.. The irony is, I've never been interested in pseudo sociological or political themes. I've always liked the little picture.[132]

To shift from a passive to an active reading it is essential to go beyond the 'little picture'

At this point I want to consider some examples of Hollywood film in detail to see how the issues and anxieties that were part of the AIDS discourse at this time were transposed into the popular media in horror movie stylistic and genre references. The genre of horror film is one that seems to offer an imaginary space in which to explore contemporary cultural anxieties, as Ryan and Kellner (1988) observe:

> It is in the horror genre that some of the crucial anxieties, tensions, and fears generated by these changes, especially feminism, economic crisis, and political liberalism, are played out. Unlike the last great wave of horror films in the 1950's, the contemporary horror film articulates a greater level of social anxiety as well as, frequently, a higher degree of pessimism and even nihilism. (169)

In this section four films will be considered: *The Thing* (1982); *Fatal Attraction* (1987); *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992); *Alien*^{3} (1992). There were other films which also can be read as references to AIDS, such as David Cronenberg's remake of *The Fly* (1986),[133] but the four chosen serve to illustrate a number of perspectives in relation to the subject of AIDS that give a sense of coherence to the analysis.

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[132] *The Guardian* 17 December 1987, 'Mortal friends' interview and article by Mike Bygrave, p.11.

[133] The films of Cronenberg are deeply resonant with many issues relevant to AIDS and of course predate the emergence of the condition which illustrates, I would argue, the way in which popular conceptions of it drew on a reservoir of contemporary cultural anxieties. For discussion of aspects of his work see Andrew Parker, 'Grafting David Cronenberg: Monstrosity, AIDS Media, National/Sexual Difference' in Garber, M. et al (1993) *Media Spectacles* London and New York: Routledge.

John Carpenter's 1982 film *The Thing* is a remake of the 1951 film which can be read as an example of paranoia generated by the Cold War. In this sense it is useful to consider the 1982 version in the light of emerging fears around viral invasion and body anxieties. Edward Guerrero (1990) considers in this new version that:

> The repressed, latent meanings of blood as well as the replication and covert spread of the alien and monstrous have shifted with the contemporary focus of public dread from 1950s threats of communist subversion of the body politic by "Red agents" to 1980s biological threats of the pandemic spread of bacterial and viral agents through our physical bodies. (87)

The film opens with a shot of the earth from space and the alien ship seen entering the earth's atmosphere and crashing (Fig. 4.1). This starting point signals therefore the moment of the crossing of the boundary from outside that defines the alien-ness of that which enters, earth and non-earth are demarcated. The peaceful harmony of nature is momentarily shattered by the invading entity which then seems to return to its prior state but with the alien agent now lying dormant buried under Antarctic ice. The film proper begins with a helicopter flying over the snow covered vista's of Antarctica in pursuit of a fleeing dog which enters an American scientific base. The alien, as the dog is later revealed to be, has now crossed over into the community represented by the base (Fig. 4.2). The narrative structure built up in this way provides a logical development of any epidemiological map. The reverse of this can be seen in Shilts (1988) where the overarching imperative is the

identification of 'Patient Zero' to be able to explain the starting point for the narrative of AIDS that *must* be an agent from outside. The infectious agent enters in innocuous form of the dog. The dog as domesticated animal is also a symbolic point of crossover from nature to culture and signals the tenuous nature of that opposition when it goes feral at moments of crisis engendered by moral breakdown.[134]

The research station as an all male community can be seen to reflect aspects that were beginning to emerge of the developing scientific understanding of AIDS at that time. As the recognition that there is an alien presence inside the camp grows the camp doctor identifies that it operates at cellular level and we see a visual representation of an alien cell attacking an animal cell to then assume its new identity indistinguishable from the original host (Fig. 4.3). It is of course of crucial importance for medical science to be able to represent such an entity with the authority of a visual image that can act to objectify the condition.[135] Having identified the alien virus he gets the computer to project an epidemiologic_AI map of global invasion/infection if it got to populated areas and is given the answer of 27 000 hours until complete replication (Fig. 4.4).

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[134] This is most starkly posed in the film *Cujo* (1983), a story about a rabid St. Bernard, where the threat of the crazed dog is linked to the threat to the family unit created by the mother's infidelity.

[135] A good example would be electron microscope images related to HIV. *The Face* published a double page spread of such an image: The spectre of the decade: Transmission Electron Micrograph of stages in the growth of Human T-Cell leukemia Virus III, identified as the cause of AIDS.' May 1985, n.61. (see pages 48-50 for discussion of the magazine)

As in the film *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and (1978) those taken over by the virus are indistinguishable from 'normal' people: the person next to you rather than harbouring a subversive ideology now harbours a subversive virus. Once identified, however, the now alien body of the victim transmorgrifies into a screaming mess of tentacles and gore as the body convulses and is effectively evaginated. In this sense the film serves as an example of 'body horror' which illustrates a shift within the genre to focus less on spaces and zones external to the body and more on the inside of the body in all its corporeality becoming visible through the bursting of its boundaries.[136] Pete Boss (1986) views films such as The *Thing* and *Alien* as fundamentally run through with references to cancer, what he calls an 'intimate apocalypse' where disaster is inflicted at the level of the body, 'the enduring image is of the body irreversibly self-destructing by the actions of inscrutable cellular networks operating in accordance with their own incomprehensible schedules.' (17) The initial conception of AIDS as a 'gay cancer' and the processes of metaphorization identified by Sontag (1991) illustrate how this is easily applicable to AIDS.

Williamson (1993) sees this shift to body horror in terms of a wider loss of confidence since the late seventies in wider social change where the focus on the body in general reflects a change of the political milieu where

[136] The best example is *Alien* (1979) where the alien first penetrates the male body via the mouth then bursts out through the stomach. See Creed, B. (1993) *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* London and New York: Routledge for discussion of this film from one perspective.

people's sense of control has become limited to the extent that it extends no further than the boundaries of the body. (302) This can be seen in the film not just in relation to body horror but in the way that the individuals on the camp react by fracturing into individualistic and mistrustful behaviour. After several transformations of human to Thing the most masculine and macho character, MacReady, played by Kurt Russell,[137] ties the surviving individuals down and subjects them to a blood test to identify who has been infected and who is human (Fig. 4.5). This attitude was echoed by the obsession of Western drug companies to develop an anti-body test that could identify those infected with the virus. In the film, once those who were infected are identified they can be legitimately destroyed.

The individuals in the all-male community represent and display a variety of manifestations of cultural marginality. There are a number of black characters, some of them smoke marijuana, they exhibit aspects of counter-cultural behaviour and are disrespectful of authority. Coupled with the notion of a predatory infectious agent such as a virus existing in the smallest amount of bodily fluids *The Thing* encapsulates a number of anxieties and fears of viral infection spread by aberrant behaviour and sexuality. What can be seen in the 1982 version of the film is a descent into chaos and destruction as individuals are hunted , social cohesion breaks down and destruction of

[137] MacReady's masculinity is signalled by several indicators: he wears a cowboy hat, carries a rifle, drinks whiskey from a bottle and refers to the chess computer which beats him as 'cheating bitch'.

property is enacted. The ending of the film does not see the threat safely annihilated but the fear that it still exists and able to make its way to civilization. As Linda Badley (1995) observes we can see this as: '...one of several discourses of the body that uses the fantastic - the iconography of the monstrous - to articulate the anxieties of the 1980s and to re-project the self.' (3) Such constructions as the 1982 version of The *Thing* point to how AIDS could be figured, conceptualized and mobilized by a right wing rhetoric that offered the illusion of a reconfiguring of stability and selfhood premised on a return to preliberalised social behaviour.[138]

One aspect of the horror genre is the way in which it provides a space to view those aspects of culture and behaviour normally repressed. This element of voyeurism is something identified earlier and, as has been seen, is evident in a product such as a tabloid newspaper that whilst framing a story in highly repressive language goes into great detail about the particular incident to allow the reader to engage in a moment of fascinated disgust. In this way it acts to reinforce the need for social repression and within film there is usually a symbolic closure on the events to allow order to reign once more. Such a

[138] Anne Billson (1997) in a booklet on *The Thing* produced as part of the BFI series Modern Classics, denies that the film can be seen as a metaphor for AIDS because AIDS was not front page news yet and it was unclear what the precise nature of the condition was. She sees such an attempt as the inability to acknowledge the 'multiplicity of its metaphors' (77) by attempting to pin down the meaning within it to a single reading. What is wrong with this analysis, as I see it, is not that any text cannot be limited to a single reading as that is evidently true, but that it does not take into account the relationship going the other way, i.e that many narratives of disease, invasion, bodily permeability actually played a part in popular and scientific conceptions of AIDS. The argument is surely that something like a horror film condenses and makes visible aspects of the social and cultural realm *out of which* dominant systems of thought, including science, present themselves.

narrative is played out in *Fatal Attraction* (1987), the next film to be considered.

One of the most widely disseminated representations of AIDS has been that of a man who contracts HIV from a one-night stand or prostitute and who then returns to the family which consequently faces the threat of destruction.[139] This is an obvious development of what has been referred to as the 'venerealization' of AIDS where the first attempts to model the epidemiological nature of this unknown condition focused on the route of sexual transmission. This immediately saw those affected by the condition discursively framed in the rhetoric of Victorian morality with its opposition between the clean and unclean, healthy and unhealthy both physically and morally. That this model was taken up over others must be seen in the context of the moral agenda of the Right which focussed on 'the family' and its values and targeted those such as gay men, single mothers and lesbian mothers as a source of moral decline that was the basis of a crisis around the nation state.[140]

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[139] *The Face* (February 1994) details a Japanese computer game that engages the player in such a role, the purpose being to see how long you can survive: 'In the Japanese role-playing game *Jin-aiSeijin* (the saint of sacred love), Taro, a 25-year-old businessman, visits a prostitute while his girlfriend is away and contracts Aids. The player guides Taro through the course of his illness, using Aids info supplied by other characters. Medic, the software company behind it, reports high sales.' (19)

[140] For discussion of this see Altman, D. (1986) *AIDS and the New Morality*. London: Pluto Press.

This can be considered in relation to the 1987 film *Fatal Attraction* directed by Adrian Lynne. The central male character Dan, played by Michael Douglas, has an affair with a confident and assertive woman, Alex, played by Glenn Close, while his wife and child is away for a weekend. When he tries to break off the relationship she becomes increasingly pathological leading to an eventual attack on the wife in their home. The film can be seen as an illustration of the attempt to enforce conventional morality and fits therefore a wider rhetoric around AIDS. It is also an attack on feminism with the comfortable, safe, likable wife threatened by the independent and sexually confident career woman who wants out of her loneliness and into the home. Susan Faludi (1992) saw *Fatal Attraction* as part of a wider anti-feminist project: 'Hollywood restated and reinforced the backlash thesis: women were unhappy because they were too free; their liberation had denied them marriage and motherhood.' (141). Faludi charts the changes the script for the film went through which was originally written with the male character as the villain but subsequently rewritten to portray the female lover as psychotic. The film company went to the additional cost of $1.3 million by reshooting the ending to give the film a much more horror type finale. Faludi convincingly shows that the film is a sustained attack on feminism and serves as a warning to those who go against conventional morality.

At a metaphorical level the character of Alex can be read as the virus and at points in the film the visibility of bodily fluids signals crisis points for the

protagonists. The consequence of the affair for Dan is to see the family now threatened by something out of his control because he wavered from conventional morality. There are several key moments that visualise the anxiety of infection from HIV. The initial sex scene between Alex and Dan is one of unfettered sexual energy that sees them having sex in the kitchen on the sink and later in the lift to her loft in the abattoir district after they have been to a Latin disco with its atmosphere of passion and heat. The next day as he gets up to leave Alex becomes aggressive before finally embracing him. As she does this he realises that she has slashed her wrists covering him in her blood and he attempts to stem the flow of blood at the sink where penetration first took place (Fig. 4.6). This is the first sign, therefore, that something has gone badly wrong. The opening of her veins and the blood that is on him signal that he now has put in motion an irreversible series of events that can only end in a moment of crisis. From this point on Alex wages a campaign of harassment and violence against him that fundamentally revolves around the threat of his wife finding out. Later she reveals that she is pregnant so it is clear that they did not practice safer sex. He ultimately moves his family to the country away from the city with its dangers and its unstable morality. This provides them no haven as Alex tracks them down and continues her campaign.

The order of the family is now threatened by chaos and destruction epitomised by Alex. By transgressing the boundaries of morality and sexual

behaviour Dan has opened up himself and his life to the dangers of the Other which progressively pushes the narrative into the realm of horror. At one point, as Alex looks in through the window onto the family scene she is convulsed by horror and vomits, she is abject, she represents the tenuousness of the boundaries that seek to hold the superego in check (Fig. 4.7). As Julia Kristeva (1982) writes:

> Along with the sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. "I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen, "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not an "other" for "me," who am only in their desire, I expel *myself,* I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*. (3)

Fatal Attraction serves to illustrate the sense of 'sexual panic' that permeates this moment in time, the film offers an acting out of sexual fears and desires displaced onto the horror film. The ending of the film as Dan and his wife struggle and eventually kill Alex allows for a release of fear and anxiety as order is once more restored. Faludi (1992) describes how some male observers entreat Dan to 'Kill the bitch ... kill her off now!' (140) in a misogynistic display of hatred stemming from their own fears. Brian De Palma is reported to have called the film 'a post-feminist AIDS thriller' and what it represents are the fears and anxieties of the moment, shaped by Right morality, and mobilised on a popular level.[141]

The introduction (20-23) has already referred to the way in which the *Dracula*

[141] *The Guardian* 17 December 1987, p. 11 op cit.

narrative can be seen to foreground a similar set of concerns over sexuality and boundaries as around dominant discourses of AIDS. The 1992 version, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* , was bound to be seen as referring to AIDS and those affected by the condition, as Frank Rich the drama critic of the *New York Times* wrote in the *Guardian*[142], the film acted out:

> The subliminal fantasies, both deadly and erotic, of a country that has awakened to the fact that the most insidious post cold-war enemy is a virus. AIDS, after all, actually does to the bloodstream what communists and other radicals were once rumoured to do to the water supply' (30)

As in *The Thing*, what is enacted in *Dracula* is a process of infection and transformation but with the surface appearance of normality. This what Rich picks up on in relation to cold war notions of the suburban neighbour as actually an insidious internal enemy. As Jackson (1991) points out, that which is potentially unseeable poses problems for the dominant epistemology:

> An emphasis upon invisibility points to one of the central thematic concerns of the fantastic: problems of vision. In a culture which equates the 'real' with the 'visible' and gives the eye dominance over other sense organs, the un-real is that which is in-visible.That which is not seen, or which threatens to be unseeable, can only have a subversive function in relation to an epistemological and metaphysical system which makes 'I see' synonymous with 'I understand' (45)

It is from this perspective that science and the figure of the scientist is privileged as the one who can indeed *see* the threat. Those with the specialized knowledge can identify, classify and therefore control that which

[142] *The Guardian* Weekend January 2 1993 'Blood Count' p.24.

passes unnoticed through our midst with the potential for catastrophic destruction. In *Dracula* it is the figure of the scientist Professor Van Helsing that acts to balance the threatened chaos of vampire sexuality and can restore order through his knowledge and purposeful actions: 'His is a seemingly arbitrary man, but this is because he knows what he is talking about better than anyone else. He is a philosopher and a metaphysician, and one of the most advanced scientists of his day; and he has, I believe, an absolutely open mind.' (41). In the film the contemporary reading of this is made clear in the character played by Anthony Hopkins. The scene in which he is introduced begins with a ticker-tape message print out reading; "A dear friend near death. Disease of the blood unknown to all medical theory. I am in desperate need. Jack Seward." (Fig.4.8). This then fades into the image of bright red blood cells under a microscope and in turn to the lecture theatre of Van Helsing discoursing on the insatiable drive of the vampire bat to drink blood. He goes on:

> Blood, and the diseases of the blood such as Syphilis that concern us here. The very name venereal diseases, the diseases of Venus imputes to them divine origin and they are involved in that sex problem about which the ethics and ideals of Christian civilization are concerned. In fact, civilization and syphilization have advanced together.

Clearly, it can be seen that this relates to the particular formulation of AIDS referred to above in terms of its origins and its positioning as other to civilization. Van Helsing's role is made explicitly clear - to identify but also to destroy. After identifying Lucy as having been infected by Dracula he organizes to drive a stake through her undead body in a scene of symbolic

and sanctioned violence against a sexually confident and promiscuous woman Fig. 4.9). The screenwriter is quoted as calling her a victim of: 'unsafe vampire sex ... Lucy pays the price for her wanton ways. Just like any woman today who has sex with multiple partners and is not practising safe sex is going to pay a price.' (14).[143]

This theme is played out in the scene that immediately follows. Van Helsing carves into a side of beef whilst recounting the prior events to Jonathan Harker and Mina, by now a newly wed couple. He raises the issue of whether Jonathan has been 'infected':

> Van Helsing: "Mr Harker as your Doctor I must ask you a sensitive question. During your infidelity with those creatures, those demonic women, did you for one instance taste of their blood?"
>
> Harker: "No!"
>
> Van Helsing: "Good! Then you have not infected your blood with the terrible disease that destroyed poor Lucy."

Harker and Mina embrace in the knowledge that they are safe in the civilizing atmosphere of Victorian Britain and the sanctity of marriage that has been maintained as the only way to avoid infection and death. The fearful has been suppressed by through science and violence, the realm of the masculine and heterosexual. In this way the film is clearly not a 'queer'

[143] Screenwriter James V. Hart quoted in interview with Henry Sheehan 'Trust the teller' *Sight and Sound* v.3, n.1, January 1993, p. 14.

reading of the vampire mythology.[144] That there is a potential for this within the narrative is alluded to in an early scene in which Harker, now a prisoner in Dracula's castle, is seduced by three 'weird sisters'. At this moment Harker is paralysed with the contradictory feelings of fear and desire: "There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked,burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips." As Christopher Craft (1984) observes:

> Harker awaits an erotic fulfilment that entails both the dissolution of the boundaries of the self and the thorough subversion of conventional Victorian gender codes, which constrained the mobility of sexual desire and varieties of genital behaviour by according to the more active male the right and responsibility of vigorous appetite, while requiring the more passive female to "suffer and be still." (108)

This opening section of the narrative is framed by the anxiety that Dracula will actually seduce, penetrate and infect Harker. Precisely what is so fearful about Dracula is his lack of any regime of order that acts to maintain borders of himself or his desires. As Horrocks (1995) writes:

> In terms of boundaries, the vampire transgresses at least three: that between life and death (since he lives for ever); gender boundaries (since he is both masculine and feminine); and between Christian order and pagan disorder. (89)

Whilst the very power of the Dracula narrative is its ability to connect to a cultural resonance due to its rich metaphors, it works within the broader genre of horror to displace the fears and desires of the moment into a fetishistic

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[144] Richard Dyer in his personal review of the film 'Dracula and Desire', *Sight and Sound* details why he sees this film failing to offer any space within it for celebrating the queer as opposed to other film versions. See also his "Children of the Night:Vampirism as Homosexuality, Homosexuality as Vampirism' in Radstone, S. (1988) *Sweet Dreams: Sexuality, Gender and Popular Fiction* London: Lawrence and Wishart, pp.47-72.

display of crisis iconography, an attempt to put the fears on display to then reassure categories of self and their stability.

The metaphoric fecundity of the vampire myth is, however, firmly brought down on the side of reaction in relation to AIDS. The predatory nature of the vampire is mobilized via contemporary urban myths to reinforce the essential otherness of those with the condition. A writer in the *Guardian* warns: 'So after 200 years, it seems the vampire is more popular than ever. To the point where we are in danger of forgetting the essential truth of vampires - they exist by killing others, by taking the lifeblood of innocent victims.'.[145] The trope of PWA as vampire is relatively easy to accommodate even within the broadsheet media because of such representations. The *Guardian,* again, ran the following story in the 'International' section reproduced from a news agency: HIV 'vampires' wreak revenge

> Police in the southern Brazilian city of Pelotas are hunting down the 'vampires of death' - 27 HIV positive homosexuals and prostitutes who are deliberately contaminating local residents, a police official said yesterday.
>
> 'One of the vampires who was identified confirmed that the group's intention was to transmit Aids through intercourse,' he said. The 'vampires of death' have concentrated in the city's centre, which has been nearly empty since the news began to spread a few days ago.
>
> The gang was uncovered by two psychologists from an Aids support group who tried to persuade the members not to vent their anger at society by seeking revenge. It is not clear how many people

[145] *The Guardian* op cit. Wright, S.D. 'Why the lady is a vamp' p.26.

have been infected by the group. - Reuter.[146]

Finally, in this section I want to consider the 1992 film *Alien*^{3} . This last example offers a rather different reading of the pandemic than the previous ones in that, arguably, it reads as an allegory of AIDS from the perspective of those actually affected by the impact of the condition. This film was, at the time,the final instalment of a hugely successful and highly influential series of films.[147]*Alien* (1979) can be seen to be the defining moment in the development of the body horror genre and *Aliens* (1986), made at the height of Reagan's tenure, has a strong militarist line that can be read as amongst other things, an examination of the post-Vietnam condition with many interesting representations relating to issues of gender and masculinity.[148] *Alien*^{3} was different in many ways, not least its relative commercial failure and its complete reversal of the military theme of the previous instalment, all of which worked to generate a disturbing nihilism. Amy Taubin (1992) observes of it that:

> ...the structure of this $50 million mega-sequel often seems like a secondary elaboration (in the Freudian dream work sense), a jagged and digressive cover to the anxiety churning beneath. (94)

What makes it particularly relevant to the subject of AIDS is that it works as a powerful plague allegory with scenes that connect it to the contemporary struggle over the social effects of the condition and the subsequent activism

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[146] *The Guardian* 15 July 1993, p. 11.

[147] *Alien - Resurrection* , the fourth instalment has been on release since 28 November 1997.

[148] Creed (1987) states: '*Aliens* is extremely self-conscious about its play with gender roles' (65)

of those marginalised. The film was based on a story by Vincent Ward who had previously written and directed *The Navigator,* an allegory of plague set in the fourteenth century, described by one observer as the best film made about AIDS.[149]

Alien[3] signals from the beginning that it is going to be very different from the previous film. The first thing to be destroyed is the 'family unit' of Hicks, Newt and Ripley who entered cryogenic sleep at the end of the *Aliens*, as the escape pod crashes on the planet Fury 161. Ripley is the only survivor, a woman on an all-male ex-prison colony that now serves as a home to inmates who have adopted a millennarian mystical Christianity. The presence of Ripley has the effect of destabilizing the status quo much to the concern of the leader of the group who expresses his fears: "we view the presence of any outsider, especially a woman, as a violation of the harmony and a potential break in the spiritual unity"; and as another proclaims:"! have taken a vow of celibacy that also includes women!" The iconography of the prisoners, their shaved heads, identificatory tattoos, flight jacket and baseball cap of one of the warders point to a gay sub-theme in this all male community. Ripley is the alien here, and she has brought two of the predators with her, one of which

[149] 'Films and the fear of AIDS' *Economist* May 28,1994: The best film about AIDS does not mention it and is set 700 years before the disease existed. Vincent Ward's New Zealand film "The Navigator" is an allegory for our times, in which 14th-century Cumbrian peasants, fearful of the plague, bore through the earth and fetch up in 20th-century Auckland, where salvation depends on attaching a crucifix to a church spire. Pious as well as fantastic? Perhaps, but for those on this director's idiosyncratic wavelength, he is the first to have translated his perception of the disease into a work of art.' (125-126)

gestates in the stomach of a dog and the other is actually inside her, and in this sense she is now a composite of human/alien.[150] At first she is concerned that Newt, the young girl, has been implanted with an alien foetus and demands an autopsy from the company Doctor, Clemens, on the grounds of the 'fear of contagion,' and a 'cholera epidemic.' The two bodies are cremated in case of "even the possibility of an unwelcome virus" entering the community but of course it is too late and the alien erupts out of the stomach of the dog. Ripley forms a sexual relationship with Clemens who was a former drug addict and prisoner himself. The inclusion of an off-screen love scene is an interesting innovation within the trilogy narrative. The focus on the two heads laying on a bed, post-coital, is coded in such a way as to foreground the ambiguity of the characters' identity by both having shaved heads. This can be seen as part of the iconography of the film which has been argued as suggestive of gay men but it can also be seen in relation to a strand of lesbian imagery, as Ros Jennings (1995) observes:

> ...any reference to lesbian iconography, especially of the provocative kind expressed by the photographs of Della Grace, seems to have been overlooked. The result of the use of crossover iconography, however, creates a somewhat starling postmodern encounter, where Ripley is endowed with a lesbian aura and Clemons is visually coded as gay, and where they have sex while simultaneously reversing the norms of the heterosexual active and passive. (202-203)

Later, as Clemens tells Ripley of his past as Doctor, drug addict and prisoner, he is about to administer an injection to her but pauses to ask: "do you still

[150] This is a key element of the plot of *Alien -Resurrection.*

trust me with a needle?" She nods her acceptance and as we see a close up of the needle going into her vein the alien appears and decapitates him. All these elements point to an awareness of AIDS, routes of viral transmission, and unforeseen death. It is the outsider status of Ripley and the prisoners ('murderers, rapists and child molesters'), that draws parallels with the experience of gay men at the beginning of the epidemic in America.[151] Ripley forms an alliance with the leader, Dillon, a black man wearing Malcolm X type glasses, as she realises that she is carrying an alien inside her, and that the company will try and obtain it through her, and that it is to the prisoners that she must turn to organise to defend themselves.[152] These moments when they come together to try and organise a response provides the images of collective strength, and the attempt to control their own lives in the face of an insatiable alien entity that will seek to destroy all of them. At the first meeting Ripley is vilified by one of the prisoners as the one who brought the alien into the community, a community that has nothing: "no rubbers, no women, no guns." (Fig. 4.10). Dillon rejects this and refuses to condemn Ripley recognising her as a victim as well, a reversal of the 'patient zero' scenario of blame and vilification.

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[151] D'Emilio, J. in the essay The homosexual menace: the politics of sexuality in Cold War America' talks of how to be a 'fag' in the nineteen fifties was to be on a level with Commies and child molesters, in Peiss, K. et al (1989*)Passion and Power: Sexuality in History,* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

[152] Dyer (1997) in his book on race and representation with respect to the identity of the category 'white' writes on the element of this fear in the film: The most common aetiology of AIDS in the popular imagination combines uncontrolled African heterosexual appetite with the *ne plus ultra* of white sexual decadence, namely queers: excessive reproductive drive wreaking havoc on the white world by using its most perversely non-reproductive members. This is the deliriously bleak vision of *Alien3*'s world.' (216-217)

It is at the second meeting, held after the first plan has failed, that this theme is fully developed. The company representative argues that they should wait for the company to turn up but this is rebutted by Ripley who reminds them that in the company's eyes they count for nothing, that they are seen as expendable: "they don't give a fuck about one friend of yours that has died." Dillon continues in the same vein: "You're all gonna die, the only question is how you check out - on your feet or on your knees begging. I ain't much for begging, nobody gave me nothing. So I say fuck that thing, let's fight it." (Fig. 4.11). This scene is one that can clearly be identified with aspects of the political struggle over AIDS, as Taubin (1992) observes of Ripley's charge, this is '...an Aids activist line if ever there was one.' (99).[153] What these scenes between Ripley and the group led by Dillon do is represent the forging of an alliance between marginalized identities against corporate power. Taubin goes on to say:

> The alien's basement lair, with its dripping pipes and sewage tunnels, represents not only the fear of the monstrous-feminine, but homophobia as well. It's the uterine and anal plumbing entwined. Which is why the alliance between Ripley and Dillon (the 'feminist' and the 'homosexual') is so moving. (99)

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[153] I am thinking specifically of the speech by Larry Kramer (1990) given at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center in New York on March 10,1987 that founded ACT-UP: 'Let me rephrase my *Native* article of 1983. If my speech tonight doesn't scare the shit out of you, we're in real trouble. If what you're hearing doesn't rouse you to anger, fury, rage,and action, gay men will have no future here on earth. How long does it take before you get angry and fight back? I sometimes think we have a death wish. I think we must want to die. I have never been able to understand why for six long years we have sat back and let ourselves literally be knocked off man by man - without fighting back. I have heard of denial, but this is more than denial; it is a death wish. I don't want to die. I cannot believe that you want to die. But what are we doing, really to save our own lives? Two thirds of you -1 should say of us, because I am in this too - could be dead within five years. What does it take for us to take responsibility for our own lives? Because we are not we are not taking responsibility for our own lives....' (33)

The grimness of the film reaches its logical conclusion with the deaths of Ripley, Dillon and all but one of the prisoners who is still able to exclaim a defiant 'Fuck you' to the company thugs as the planet is abandoned.

Alien^3 was not a commercial success and critically very little was ever made of its references to AIDS. Manohla Dargis (1992) writing in the *Village Voice* argues that there are at least two reasons for this: firstly a growing lack of confidence in the viewer to engage with such texts on the level of metaphor,'Primed by deconstructionists from Derrida to Reagan, we've lost our ability to trust language'; and secondly, '...the critical refusal to even recognize A^3s (sic) metaphor signals profound denial, particularly about heterosexual transmission.' (64) The symbolic self-destruction of Ripley at the end of the film can be read as a moment of defiance and a refusal to bend to the will of either the alien or the dominant order represented by the company.

> I walked the avenue 'til my legs felt like stone I heard the voices of friends vanished and gone At night I could hear the blood in my veins Black and whispering as the rain On the streets of Philadelphia.[154]

By 1993 the first film produced by Hollywood to deal with AIDS explicitly was released. *Philadelphia* was directed by Jonathan Demme, starred Tom Hanks and Denzil Washington, and was a great commercial success including an

[154] Bruce Springsteen, lyrics from opening song to film.

award winning album of music from the film which indicates that the film was successfully marketed. Hanks won an Oscar for his performance and the film was positively received by the mainstream press. It is worth considering, however, the response to the film from AIDS activists and gay critics. Larry Kramer in an uncompromising statement condemned the film and offered the opinion that it was: 'worse than no movie about AIDS at all'.[155]

If Hollywood did finally get around to producing a film about AIDS a number of things can be said about the film. Firstly, it could be read primarily as a civil rights courtroom drama, with AIDS as a secondary issue providing the motive of discrimination. Secondly, its portrayal of the gay characters and their life was so devoid of anything that might challenge an audience's views that it was seen as utterly unreal by the constituency most affected by the epidemic. Thirdly, its closures on many issues and especially around the death of the central character played by Hanks left many observers dissatisfied.

By marketing the film as a courtroom drama the studio avoided foregrounding issues of sexuality and AIDS and pitched the film as a continuation of a long line of films that are seen as challenging discrimination and can therefore be seen as part of a liberal tradition within Hollywood, the opposite pole to conservative between which any film will fall (Fig. 4.12). In an

[155] Quoted in Baker (1994), p.21.

interview in the *New York Times*[156] the co-producer of the film, Edward Saxon, offered his view of where *Philadelphia* fitted in, he compared it to:

> ...films like "Gentleman's Agreement," which attacked anti-Semitism; "In the Heat of the Night," which attacked racism, and "Love Story," which had a heroine doomed by cancer. "This picture is about discrimination as well as being about AIDS," he said. (28)

The film can in this way be reduced to the abstractions of 'justice' and sentimentality. The poster that advertised the film had no reference to AIDS on it, instead the space is taken up by the heads of the two stars, separated by a judge's gavel and the words: 'No one would take on his case..., until one man was wiling to take on the system.'. Many gay critics were angered that Demme would one minute claim the moral highground by making the first Hollywood AIDS film and then seem to run scared on the issue and instead insist that it played a secondary role to discrimination:

> One minute, Mr Demme, Tri-Star executives and the screenwriter, Ron Nyswaner, want to shout from the rooftops that they are making a movie about AIDS and homophobia, boasting of their own commitment and Hollywood's. But the next, seemingly fearful of how the picture will play in Middle America, they portray AIDS and homophobia as merely ancillary to the larger themes of relationships and discrimination.[157]

Demme offered the example of *Terms of Endearment* as a model approach that whilst having the narrative driven by the cancer of one of the characters

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[156] Sunday, December 19, 1993.

[157] Jeffrey Schmalz, 'From visions of paradise of hell on earth' *New York Times* 28 February, 1993 11:26

was pitched as a moving story about a stormy relationship between mother and daughter. Such a position fails to appreciate the very nature of AIDS as a highly politicized and socially marginalized condition, as William Grimes observes: '..cancer is not a politicized disease, AIDS is. Cancer does not cut to the heart of social attitudes toward homosexuals, AIDS does.'[158] Like *Terms of Endearment* , *Philadelphia* offers a vision of the family as the final realm of security and stability and a place to seek comfort in the face of terminal illness. In Kellner and Ryan's (1990) view, once a critical diagnosis of *Terms of Endearment* is undertaken, it is clearly exposed as being underpinned by'...several ideological mainstays of the softcore brand of conservatism.' (161) *Philadelphia* is framed by a similar liberal agenda evident in a widely criticised scene in which Andrew and Miguel visit Andrew's parents and family who offer their undevoted and uncritical support of his intention to pursue the court case to the extent that Andrew proclaims: "I Love you guys!" (Fig. 4.13).

The film portrays the plight of a gay man, yet by making the message one of justice and tolerance it is clearly targeted at a straight audience. The character played by Denzil Washington then takes up the position of identification for the viewer.[159] His homophobia is *legitimated* by his outburst in

[158] *New York Times*, Sunday December 19, 1993, pi 1.

[159] As Hirschkop (1986) writes: '...the working class has a presence in modern culture, in the shape of mass culture organized for it. Within it, cultural activity typically involves a mass spectatorship composed of isolated, private individuals, who engage in the assessment, in moral terms, of the actions of textual characters with whom they are asked to identify.' (I11)

court: "are you gay, are you a homo, a faggot, a plumper, a pillow biter, a fairy, booty-snatcher, rump roaster?" by conflating the issues of AIDS discrimination and homophobia. The courtroom is a space that is defined as being dedicated to justice and truth, where the judge responds to Miller's outburst with: "In this courtroom, Mr Miller, justice is blind to matters of race,creed, colour, religion, and sexual orientation."

The legal case revolves around the visibility of the Kaposi Sarcoma lesions on Andy's body which a partner is argued to have recognised as such and to have deduced that he was therefore gay. In this way the body of the gay man is seen as enscripted with the marks of difference (Fig. 4.14). Andrew is seen here as someone whose identity is continuously fluid compared to the coherence and stability of the heterosexual Joe Miller whose identity is produced by his place within a family unit with its reproductive role epitomised by the birth of his daughter. The fluid nature of Andrew's identity is seen by his ability to project different faces at different times: he is not out at work but is to his parents, he bears the marks of disease and difference yet is able to hide them, he is in a stable relationship yet engages in casual sex in a cinema. This is what makes him the target for vitriol and hatred from the hetero-normative organisations of society, as Charles Wheeler spits out to one of the partners having reservations about the court case: "Look Bob, Andy brought AIDS into our offices, into our men's rooms, he brought it to our annual goddamn family picnic!" (Fig.4.15). There is even a reference to the

vampire myth of the horror genre within the film when in the courtroom, Joe asks Wheeler: "Isn't it true that when you discovered that your golden boy, your future senior partner Andrew Beckett, was gay and had AIDS it drove a stake of fear right through your heterosexual heart... and it made you say, my god was does this say about me."

The character of Joe as point of identification for a straight audience is not matched by any such potential for a queer audience. One aspect of the film for which it was widely criticised was its lack of any intimacy between Andrew and Miguel. Demme did, in fact, shoot two scenes of them at home including one where they are in bed but both of these were edited out of the final film. This becomes clear when the novelization of the film by Christopher Davis (1993), based on the screenplay by Ron Nyswaner, is compared with the film.[160] Over pages 117-118 they lie in bed discussing what future there might be including a cure, finishing with: 'Andrew moved to his own pillow and rubbed Miguel's cheek with the back of his hand. "I love you," he said. "I love you too.". The cutting of these scenes has the effect of reducing the characterization of a gay couple to a fairly empty series of signs that adds once more to the sense of a film lacking in any psychological depth. Having Miller turn the issue around from AIDS discrimination to homophobia, the lack of portrayal of the gay relationship denies the very real link between gayness

[160] Thanks to Richard Canning who attended the dayschool at the Cornerhouse in Manchester on AIDS and Hollywood film in June 1995 which I presented for pointing this difference out.

and AIDS, as Grundmann and Sacks (1994) point out:

> Minimizing Miguel's role is just one of the ways in which the film's red ribbon mentality severs gayness from AIDS - thereby doing exactly the opposite of what the gay community needs these days, which is an insistence on this connection as part of its history, cultural identity, and political/medical plight. (52)

What motivates the films makers, ultimately, is a concern to remain within the orbit of a successful Hollywood product which means not crossing a line from fairly insipid and abstract representations around issues of sexuality and AIDS to challenging and demanding representations. Richard Lippe (1994) in an article that sought to defend *Philadelphia* points to such a consideration: ' To take up the complaint that the relationship isn't sufficiently sexualised, arguably, Demme and Nyswaner didn't want to distract and possibly alienate their heterosexual audience with a transgressive sexual/erotic display.' (27). Ultimately, then, any criticism of the film is a criticism of its liberal agenda, an agenda that is grounded on the individual perceived as an atomized subject whose only sense of collective security is that of the bourgeois family to which they must ultimately return.

Also produced in 1993 was a screen adaptation of Randy Shilts paradigmatic account of the emergence of AIDS in America, *And the Band Played On*. In the strictest sense this is not a Hollywood film, being made by HBO Pictures, an American cable TV network, but in this country it had a cinema release

followed by video and was largely perceived as a Hollywood product and so is considered here.[161]

Given the scale of Shilts' book and its myriad of interweaving scenes any adaptation would have to find some way to deal with its breadth of material. As examined in the introduction, Shilts relies on subheadings to keep the reader informed of each spatial and temporal coordinate but this strategy could not quite so easily be transferred to the film medium although it is used to a much lesser degree. The film, therefore, adopts other more cinematic strategies to signify particular places or zones of knowledge, for instance the cinematographer details how he lit the different medical establishments using the violet light emitted by anti-bacteria lab equipment as the basis for this: 'I thought that could be an interesting light to play ... so we rented some blue screen tubes from Kinoflo and accentuated them in the scenes in the Pasteur Institute. Whenever the viewer sees those blue lights, he knows he is in the French lab.'[162]

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[161] Of course today there is a big interaction between various media at the very least because there are multinational conglomerates that own Hollywood studio's, cable channels, film libraries and satellite channels. It should also be noted that I have not considered in this chapter the film *Longtime Companion* (1990) even though it was made for the PBS channel and premiered on *American Playhouse* because it was not seen in this country as a 'Hollywood' film, stylistically closer to a TV movie, even though many of the people involved were Hollywood regulars. In this sense it could be considered Hollywood's first 'unofficial' attempt to address the subject.

[162] Quoted in Oppenheimer, J. (1993) 'HBO's *And the Band Played On* explores impact of AIDS', *American Cinematographer,* October, p.54.

The opening scene is, as in the book, a defining one and of most relevance here. Land Rovers pull into view through thick jungle vegetation, coming to a halt and showing the blue symbol of the World Health Organisation on the side of the vehicles. Two white doctors, looking out through the windscreen at mud huts, pull on respirators that completely cover their faces and emerge from the Land Rover dressed in surgical clothing and wearing yellow rubber gloves. They make their way through a devastated and deserted village. The words, 'Ebola River, Central Africa 1976' flash up on the screen. They come across a dying woman, who wide-eyed and seemingly talking gibberish grabs at the Doctor before dying whilst holding him in a death grip leaving him covered in blood. They proceed to burn the bodies as a young boy, presumably a survivor plaintively asks them "why this happened?". Against the background of the consuming flames a text reads 'The Ebola fever outbreak was contained before it could reach the outside world. It was not AIDS but it was a warning of things to come.[1]. The next scene is of a dead woman lying in bed, 'Rigshospitalet, Copenhagen, 1977', 'First Case', to a man lying in bed breathing through an oxygen mask in Paris. At this point we enter the 'real' space of Washington D.C. 1980 and a Democratic Party convention.[163]

[163] The opening scene can be compared to a sequence in the *Andromeda Strain* (1971) where two 'bio-hazard' suited scientists enter a Californian village in which everyone has died of a mysterious virus apart from an old man and a baby proving once again that all media representations of HIV/AIDS actually owe more to previous media representations than anything else. The virus (from outer space) is later found to be one that affects the blood causing insanity before death.

In the book, Shilts clearly places the origin of AIDS as Africa and as described in the introduction he relies on a number of novelistic techniques that contrast the 'brightness' of America with the 'darkness' of Africa. This essentially racist stereotype, needless to say, was much criticised and didn't survive to the film version quite so blatantly. However, the film by opening as it does, still holds to various signifiers of difference. The white Doctors travel by Land Rover to a remote and inaccessible African village where death has wiped out 99% of all inhabitants including the white Doctors who were there before. The only survivors are a child and a woman who gives the impression of madness and danger before dying. The text states that this was Ebola river fever. The Ebola virus has since the late eighties become a favourite subject for tabloid hysteria starting with Richard Preston's book The *Hot Zone* which contains a helpful map of Central Africa highlighting the 'AIDS highway' that runs through it (Fig.4.16). William T. Close, father of the actress Glenn Close, has just published his account of working in Africa, *Ebola*, which is a reflection of substantial media interest in an outbreak of Ebola in May of 1995 in Zaire. Ebola seems to serve as a substitute for AIDS which has through the activism of groups such as ACT-UP become such a 'political' subject. All the stereotypes and myths are displaced onto Ebola seemingly unproblematically and so far unchallenged. What it releases are whole numbers of apocalyptic end of millennium fears generated by a loss of faith in modern medicine and science coupled with images of dark hordes of infected aliens. The symbols of the modern age, the jet plane, automobiles, have now become symbols of potential danger serving as fast and efficient transmission routes.

The narrative patterns that can be identified in fictions around the subject of AIDS of course pre-date the emergence of it. in Eli Kazan's 1954 film *Panic in the Streets* the hero, played by Richard Widmark, warns of the dangers of informing the people of the city of the presence of a plague carrier, "Community what community? You think you are living in the middle ages. Anybody that leaves here can be anywhere in the country in 10 hours. I could leave here today and be in Africa tomorrow and what ever disease I had could go right with me." It is the inverse of this that is of course played out today - whatever disease an African has can infect America or the West. It was for precisely this reason that 'Patient Zero' was identified as an airline steward who travelled all over the world. So the opening scene in *And the Band Played On* demarcates the boundaries of disease and the 'warning' any breakdown of these poses.

A further development of the 'Ebola' scenario can be seen in the film *Outbreak* from 1995. Part medical detective drama, part Hitchcockian race against time, it poses the threat of viral invasion as the contemporary doomsday scenario. Within this scenario AIDS becomes merely a 'low level' example of the consequences of such an event, prompting one commentator to observe that *Outbreak* and Preston's *The Hot Zone* are macho reworkings of old themes and sarcastically described them as

examples of 'viral envy'.[164] A film such as *Outbreak*, therefore, exploits contemporary paranoia around viral disease and fear of infection. This is interestingly addressed in the film in a scene where a carrier of the virus goes to the cinema and sneezes with the camera following the path of the expelled bodily fluid across the air and into contact with another person, drawing attention to the fact that the viewer in the cinema *now* outside of the imaginary space of the picture is at risk (Fig. 4.17). In another scene the hero flies out to a foreign registered ship which had transported the original carrier to track down the 'patient zero' and which is a reworking of exactly the same scene from *Panic in the Streets.*

Philadelphia still remains the only Hollywood film to attempt to address the issues of AIDS explicitly. Given the inability of the industry of Hollywood to offer any serious portrayal of gay life, the point of biggest condemnation of *Philadelphia*, the subject of AIDS as a central theme will probably be only ever represented outside of Hollywood in the independent sector. In opposition to the dominant view of sexuality and health as one premised on romantic, morally defined notions of hygienic spaces of purity the horror genre and parodic films such as *Zero Patience* (see p.25) offer a visualization of the potential for excessive and unrestrained bodily engagement that posits an alternative reading of the condition, of one in the spirit of carnival and the

[164] David van Leer 'The Body Positive: AIDS and its Audiences' opening paper at *AIDS Cultures* conference, May 10 1997, held at the University of Sheffield.

possibility of community rather than private despair.

Chapter Five

Masculinity, Marks and Media: Derek Jarman's *Queer* Paintings

> Art must compete with (rectify, purge) the media, which have thoroughly politicised AIDS…[165]
>
> Edmund White, '*Aesthetics and Loss'*.

> Queer is a symptom, not a movement, a symptom of a desire for radical change.
>
> Keith Alcorn, *The Pink Paper*

Edmund White's charge that art must challenge the media's politicisation of AIDS is the context for this final chapter. The opposition between high art and mass culture is one that has become profoundly looser as the commodification of all levels of culture has continued in the post war era. As Frederic Jameson (1991) points out the frontier between the two has continuously become effaced in his periodization of contemporary postmodern society as late capitalism. Within this the impetus for a radical reworking and questioning of the power relations that govern the production and reception of visual culture itself can be seen, as John Roberts (1990) argues: The responsibility of the radical postmodernist artist therefore is to attack the formats of "dominant representation" as a denial of sexual and racial difference, and the divisions of subjectivity generally.' (4) In this last chapter I want to consider the issue of AIDS and representation in relation to a series of paintings by Derek Jarman. Jarman himself became something of an icon as an artist, his own status of living with AIDS from his diagnosis in 1986, and his sexuality. In many ways what is signalled within this work is a moment

[165] White, E. 'Aesthetics and Loss' published in Gott, T. (1994) *Don't leave Me This Way: Art in the Age of AIDS*, p.136.

of cultural dissidence with regard to dominant representations of HIV/AIDS.

The series of paintings was commissioned and exhibited by Manchester City Art Gallery in 1992 with the title *Queer*. The fact that the pictures were first exhibited in Manchester points to the relative marginality of the subject and the fact that it is possibly because it is positioned at the margins that it can offer a moment of contest.[166] The paintings are relevant to the thesis as a whole and a useful point to end in that they can be seen as a complex negotiation between various discourses around HIV/AIDS and notions of subjectivity. What I want to do is to consider each of the three moments of production of the paintings that can be read as a commentary on issues intrinsically iinked to AIDS. The three moments of this process, in different ways, can be read as part of an artistic strategy of appropriation coupled with an ironic commentary on the mythical status of artistic production itself. What is examined here is not an example of what might be called 'activist art' produced either collectively or as part of an ongoing campaign of street activity. In this sense Jarman's work could be argued to remain within a minority audience of the institutions of art with their particular modes of address and representations of history. Crimp and Rolston (1990) in championing an AIDS activist art outline the problems they see in such a approach:

> The constituency of much politically engaged art is the art world itself. Generally, artists ponder society from within the confines of

[166] Manchester also has of course a vibrant gay and lesbian presence centred on the Village around Canal Street just yards down the road from the City Art Gallery.

> their studios; there they apply their putatively unique visions to aesthetic analyses of social conditions. Mainstream artistic responses to the AIDS crisis often suffer from just such isolation, with the result that the art speaks only of the artist's private sense of rage, or loss, or helplessness. Such expressions are often genuine and moving, but their very hermeticism ensures that the audience that will find them so will be the traditional art audience. (19)

Jarman himself was, however, someone very much active in campaigning around AIDS and issues relating to homosexuality and so whilst the paintings are limited in the way described by Crimp and Rolston in a wider context they can be viewed as a commentary on the broader social context of AIDS.

In his 1992 book, *At Your Own Risk: A Saint's Testament*, Jarman over seven pages lists headlines from the front pages of British tabloid newspapers relating to AIDS and homosexuality. In between some of the strident, hate filled headlines Jarman intersperses short reports from the gay press. Presented in such an intertextual way the reader gains a real sense of the climate of hate that was generated around the issue of AIDS and its intrinsic link to sexuality. Jarman extends this strategy in his paintings for the *Queer* series by covering the blank canvas with photocopies of the actual front pages of these tabloid newspapers. The multiple reproduction of these pages in a grid formation, in some paintings almost completely obscured by the paint later applied over them, signals the appropriation of their cultural hegemony and a recontextualisation by the producer (Fig. 5.1). No longer part of the seamless background of everyday life that is a fundamental part of maintaining dominant culture's values, they are estranged and held up for

viewing within a context that seeks to denaturalise them. The repetition has the air of compulsion that is suggestive of the title of Freud's paper from 1914: 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through' but rather than Jarman being unaware of the source of this action the canvas seems to act as a moment of abreaction or catharsis from which he can then develop the action.[167] In the same way as this thesis has been organised around specific iconic images, moments at which particular discourses have materialized and produced this construct of 'AIDS', each tabloid front page for Jarman is a moment of this production and the social effect is the continuous repetition of such narrow and stereotypical representations. The repetition on the canvas itself gives the viewer a fragmented sense of the effect of this type of press reporting.

The use of a grid formation to organise this puts it, of course, within a particular discourse of art history and modernism. Krauss(1986) comments on the place of the grid structure within modernist art:

> Logically speaking, the grid extends, in all directions, to infinity. Any boundaries imposed upon it by a given painting or sculpture can only be seen - according to this logic - as arbitrary. By virtue of the grid, the given work of art is presented as a mere fragment, a tiny piece arbitrarily cropped from an infinitely larger fabric. Thus the grid operates from the work of art outward, compelling our acknowledgement of a world beyond the frame. This is the centrifugal reading. The centripetal one works, naturally enough, from the outer limits of the aesthetic object inward. The grid is, in relation to *this* reading a *re*-presentation of everything that separates the work of art from the world, from ambient space and

[167] Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) define the compulsion to repeat as the deliberate action ait he subject to place him or herseif in distressing situations to repeat an old experience but which the subject views only in the context of the present. (78-80)

> from other objects. The grid is an introjection of the boundaries of the world into the interior of the work; it is a mapping of the space inside the frame onto itself. (19)

The repetition of the pages from the tabloids on the canvas thirty, thirty six times creates an effect of scale that reinforces the sense of the sheer magnitude of the level of bigotry directed at the subject of AIDS and homosexuality and points to the commodity status of the news product itself.

Such a strategy is deeply reminiscent of Warhol's early screenprints and in a way could be described as a contemporary 'disaster' series. Stuart Morgan in the catalogue of the exhibition observes how: '..his treatment of the frontpages summons up a different phase: Warholesque repetition, which shifts the mind from pointed, analytical perception to a wholesale modification of space, time and mental set, used for political purposes in Warhol's early silkscreened works...' (unpaginated).[168] Like Warhol, what Jarman sees behind the image is death and mourning, but not a nostalgic and passive mourning rather a 'mourning *and*^-a militancy' as Douglas Crimp describes.[169] Jarman's choice of tabloid pages produces a different

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[168] Since his death in 1987 from post operative complications, Warhol's life and work has been reassessed in the light of his sexuality and has been described by one commentator, Emannuel Cooper (1996), as part of a 'queer tradition' that reads his work as a reflection of his history described by the camp and shifting sexualities present within it. (20) The artist Deborah Kass, one of twelve artists interviewed in *Art in America* on the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, describes her fascination of Warhol as part of the fact that he: '...was the first queer artist -1 mean queer in the political sense we mean queer....He was the first queer-boy artist and he really made these pictures of the inside of his queer brain..', quoted in Dellamora (1996) (28)

[169] Crimp, D.'Mourning and Militancy' *October* n.51, Winter 1989, pp.3-18. He writes: There is no question but that we must fight the unspeakable violence we incur from the society in which we find ourselves. But if we understand that violence is able to reap its horrible rewards through the very psychic mechanisms that make us part of this society, then we may also be able to recognize - along with our rage - our terror, our guilt, and our profound sadness. Militancy, of course, then, but mourning too: mourning and militancy.'(18)

observation than that of Warhol but one that can be related to it. In the way that Warhol draws attention to the fetishisation of particular icons of American culture - Marilyn Monroe, the automobile - Jarman draws attention to how the tabloid papers reduce the complexity and diversity of sexuality and the condition AIDS down to shrill, moralistic and hateful headlines. Thomas Crow (1990), who posits this early period of Warhol's career, 1962-65, with his 'images of catastrophe, as one of a critical viewpoint on capitalist culture as opposed to one celebratory of it[170], writes:

> ...Warhol, though he grounded his art in the ubiquity of the packaged commodity, produced his most powerful work by dramatizing the breakdown of commodity exchange. These were instances in which the mass-produced image as the bearer of desires was exposed in its inadequacy by the reality of suffering and death. (313)

In *At Your Own Risk* Jarman segues from a tabloid headline to accounts from the gay press of gay bashing, individual and state sanctioned homophobia. In the paintings he does something different but something which can be read in a similarly intertextual way. The headlines serve as the first level of a dialogue within the the painting. The particular style used by tabloids, the capitalisation, scale of type and type of language condenses the hatred directed at the subject. The headlines seek to automatically link certain subjects so that homosexuality is usually linked to children, includes the word sex, and is described in terms of horror: 'SEX BOYS FOR SALE AT QUEEN'S GROCERS: Gay vice moves to top store', VILE BOOK IN SCHOOL: Pupils see

[170] Terry Atkinson disputes Crow's reading of the 'early' Warhol in his essay 'Warhol's Voice, Beuys' Face, Crow's Writing' in Roberts, J. (1994) *Art Has No History: The Making and Unmaking of Modern Art* London and New York: Verso.

pictures of gay lovers', 'LESBIAN TEACHER HORROR'. As has been argued in earlier chapters such representations seek, by way of an excessive vernacular, to allow for the subject to be reassured of their own 'normality' and identity. Newspaper frontpages, especially tabloid, have an immediacy that sees them looking dated even after a short time. Jarman, by picking them out and representing them holds them up in a way that does not allow them to be part of the apparently seamless sense of the everyday but causes them to be reevaluated in the light of his own perspective, as Watney points out in an essay in the catalogue:

> In these pictures Jarman is, as it were, re-writing history, with the conventions of painting. Working over and on top of the hate-filled surfaces of the British tabloid press, Jarman's pictures concern the unconscious of mass media coverage of AIDS. (unpaginated).

The photocopying of the pages onto the canvas, an updating of the screenprint, is a mechanical, photographic process that Jarman uses as a background onto which he then applies paint in a way that can be read in a metaphorical way as the mass media as background onto which we project our subjectivity.[171] At this point I want to consider this next level, the painting, as Jarman's own intervention in this social contest.

On some of the paintings the image of the tabloid pages shows through clearly, on others it is completely covered over by paint and in others vague traces show through. The effect of this is as of a palimpsest, where one text has been written over another, a text meant to have been erased but which

[171] The work of Gilbert and George could be also seen to mobilise similar artistic strategies.

at points shows through. The art critic and writer Craig Owens (1992) saw the palimpsest as the paradigm for the allegorical work, the impulse at the heart of postmodernist art, as he writes: 'Allegorical imagery is appropriated imagery...' (54). In the way that Jarman repeats the pages, not to somehow correct their accusations or statements but to use them as a screen onto which he projects another layer of meaning, Owens argues that there can be detected an allegorical motive in photomontage with the piling up of fragments repetitively in a manner reminiscent of 'obsessional neurosis' (56). Over this Jarman creates another level, a layer of paint (Fig 5.2).

The artistic strategies of Pop art are usually posed, within art historical narratives, as a rejection of the values of Abstract Expressionism. Jarman parodies this and adopts the gestural style of action painting as that which actually *follows* the Pop technique in the production process. Ken Butler writes of his observations of Jarman at work on his series after that of *Queer* , but which employs the same gestural style:

> Watching *Scream* being painted, I was reminded of films and paintings of the American Abstract Expressionists of the Fifties. I had been watching an action painting come to life. I thought of Jackson Pollock, and the meaning of rage.[172]

This is an interesting observation given that in recent years the mythical figure of Jackson Pollock and Abstract Expressionism has been reassessed in terms of its centrality to postwar notions of masculinity. The irony is of Jarman, an openly gay man in whose work in general queer sexuality is central, using a

[172] [6] Ken Butler, 'All the Rage' *Vogue* December 1993, n.12 v.158, pp.156-159.

style so strongly identified with the myth of masculinity. It would be useful at this juncture to consider some of the ideas around masculinity and abstract painting with the discussion centred on Jarman's painting.

Andrew Perchuk (1995) in an essay on Pollock sees the mythology that surrounded him as partaking of and to an extent constructing masculine archetypes of central importance to dominant culture. Within this he argues that not only are 'certain process of masculine display' at the heart of the works themselves but also '...constitutive of an entire masquerade of masculinity within the creation and reception of Pollock's paintings and were an irreducible component of these works acceptance by the culture during the social and political era in which they were produced and later canonized.' (32) Perchuk's reference to masquerade refers to Joan Riviere's essay of 1929, 'Womanliness as Masquerade'[173] which has provided the basis for much discussion on the notion of masculinity as well as femininity as constructed categories of social identity.[174] In Chapter two I made reference to the notion of performance in relation to Freddie Mercury's stage persona to try and illustrate the non- essential and unstable or unsecurable nature of gender coding. Performance and masquerade, then, relate to the central idea of gender as something we do rather than something we are. For some contemporary theorists the distinction between gender, as a cultural matrix of

[173] Reprinted in Burgin, V. Donald, J. Kaplan, C. (eds) (1986) *Formations of Fantasy* London: Methuen.

[174] A good example would be Cohan, S. 'Masquerading as the American Male in the Fifties: *Picnic*, William Holden and the spectacle of Masculinity in Hollywood Film,' in Penley, C. and Willis, S. (eds) (1993) *Male Trouble* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

social roles, and sex, biological categories of difference, is denied so that there is ultimately only gender, a socially constructed division not grounded on any transcendental signifier. So the notion of the body as a surface on which gender is inscribed is rejected on the basis that the body itself can only be 'materialized' on the basis of power, which is itself gendered, prior to the act of naming. Judith Butler (1993), one of the foremost theoreticians of this viewpoint, describes this from a textualist construction perspective:

> If gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this "sex" except by means of its construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that "sex" becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access (5)

Perchuk, therefore, sees Pollock's paintings as drawing connections between them and issues of sexuality, gender and display. Much of this argument revolves around the physicality of the painting process itself, something Ken Butler saw in Jarman's work. Being a witness to the production process is, within this genre, portrayed as vitally important to producing an understanding of it. Within the mythology, the struggle to produce is the struggle to discover a sense of being in a Sartrean existential process of suffering, struggle and self definition. The black and white photographs taken by Hans Namuth and later documentary film by him and Paul Falkenberg have become central to the continuing perpetuation of the Pollock mythology. Indeed it it possible, as Pollock and Orton point out, that the technical pragmatics of taking the early photographs (due to the type of camera used the photographer was unable to get Pollock to pose and so instead established an arena or stage-set across which Pollock

would roam as an actor would) meant the pictures portrayed Pollock in a way, the image of the artist as action painter, that was then able to be mobilised by subsequent critical discourses.[175] What is most pertinent is the performance in which Pollock is perceived to engage in when being seen working on the canvas. Central to this is, as T.J.Clark points out, Pollock's gender, as he argues:

> For the drip paintings are clearly implicated in a whole informing metaphorics of masculinity: the very concepts that seem immediately to apply to them - space, scale, action, trace, energy, "organic intensity," being *in* the painting, being "One" - are all, among other things, operators of sexual difference. (229)

What are the implications of this as regards Jarman's paintings? An interesting comparison between the myth of Pollock as action painter and Jarman can be seen in a film made of him working on his last series of paintings.[176] The furious gesturation of Pollock is contrasted by the repose of Jarman who, after having spent time in hospital, only manages to actually work on the canvas with great effort. In the High 8 film Jarman spends the vast majority of the time sat in a chair, looking through thick lensed glasses as his eyesight fluctuated from good to bad, directing the painting process actually effected by his assistant. Giving the impression of directing a film rather than a painting in the process of being produced, the marks on the canvas, those essential marks of artistic presence, are those of Karl Lyndon his painting assistant. In the *Queer* series the viewer can imagine the expressionists layering of oil paint over the

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[175] Orton, F and Pollock, G. 'Jackson Pollock, Painting and the Myth of Photography' in Orton, F and Pollock, G (1996) *Partisans Reviewed* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

[176] Included in the TV programme The Last paintings of Derek Jarman' on Granada, transmitted on 25. 7. 1995.

photocopied pages of the tabloid newspapers by Jarman as an attempt to furiously proclaim an identity carved out of the material at hand that signals his own demand for a legitimate subjectivity in the face of dominant cultures refusal to recognise such assertions. Stuart Morgan (1996) relates Jarman's paintings to Pollock's on the basis of the deeply resonant nature of the pictures:

> A similar revolutionary fervour is present in Jarman, as if every mark he made was there to change your life. Although in one sense his art is more specific, more local than that of the great American masters of the 1950s, it recalls classic Abstract Expressionism nonetheless, if only^because of the greatness of his theme: an issue of human rights involving a higher number of people than we could imagine. (115-116)

The most popular reading of the abstract work of Pollock and the Abstract Expressionists is in terms of the painting process working out of the unconscious in an unmediated fashion.[177] For Jarman the canvas can be seen as a screen which can make visible the pre-existing nature of social discourse, in the way that Lacan talks of language preexisting the infant, from which it establishes subjecthood. In the mythology of Pollock the presence of subjecthood and its unconscious drives are used to try and shore up increasingly crisis ridden representation of masculinity, in Jarman the othering of subject formation within the Symbolic order is foregrounded and therefore what is offered is by

[177] Within art historical terms this, of course, goes back to the Surrealists who invoked a number of strategies to attempt to produce imagery unconsciously, spontaneously and unfettered by the civilizing force of the conscious. See Foster, H. (1995) *Compulsive Beauty* Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press; Briony Fer, 'Surrealism, Myth and Psychoanalysis' in Fer, B; Batchelor, D; Wood, P. (1993) *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism* New Haven: Yale University Press. On Pollock and his interest in the Surrealist notion of 'automatism' see Leja, M. (1993) *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* New Haven: Yale University Press who quotes one interviewer as getting the response to the question of the influence of the surrealists on him: "He said yes, in one way: their belief in 'automatism' or making a picture without 'conscious' control of what would happen on the canvas before beginning one. He felt Masson in particular had obtained some happy results utilizing 'automatism' " (140)

definition an unstable and disunified identity. Jarman's abstraction is, of course, appropriative and self-reflective rather than autonomous and hegemonic in the way that Pollock's was written. The surface of the Abstract Expressionist canvas was a metaphoric instant that signalled an existential depth; Jarman's canvases are of a different order than that of the modernist subject. Brian Wallis asks: 'Is abstract art culturally constructed as masculine?' Does the absence of the masculine body in abstraction perpetuate the mystique of the phallus, a mystique that is maintained by keeping the constructions of masculinity out of view.[178] For Jarman it is not the masculine body that is absent but the AIDS body, that which can't be represented. In his film *Blue* Jarman denies any representation whatsoever in his attempt at creating an account of the condition. He seems to be asking what cultural language is there untainted or unprejudiced by dominant culture.

This point is taken one step further when Jarman inscribes words into the wet surface of the painted canvas. At this point a highly charged relationship is set up between the background of tabloid frontpages, the applied layer of paint, and the words put onto the surface (Fig. 5.3). If the tabloid pages act as a reminder of dominant cultures bitterly repressive attitude towards the subject, and the expressionistic action painting a working out of Jarman's own private emotion, then the words or text on the surface point to the fundamentally public and social nature of language itself, the only means by

[178] Wallis, B. 'Power, Gender, and Abstraction' in Wallis, B. (ed) (1991) *Power: Its Myths and Mores in American Art. 1961-1991* Indiana: Indiana University Press, p. 102.

which we have to try and negotiate and even contest the meanings of HIV/ AIDS. Shifting from a visual to a linguistic field of meaning works to present the viewer/reader with a rhetorical charge that seeks to effect a response in the direction of that plotted by the producer. This is a terrain of contestation over meaning, values and identities. The paintings can be viewed in the light of Frederic Jameson's (1991) notion of the postmodern text as one of "surface" as opposed to the "depth" of modernity, and where the centrality of photography in contemporary art (such as Warhol's traffic accidents or electric chair series) does not foreground death or death anxiety at the level of content but emblematic of '...some more fundamental mutation both in the object world itself - now become a set of texts or simulacra - and in the disposition of the subject.' (9) At a literal level the painting becomes a text but in a metonymic sense can be seen as the body onto which the unconscious and the conscious is written.

The title of the show and one of the paintings - *Queer* - points to the central term around which these concerns revolve and can be seen in the light of Jameson's formulation of postmodern subjecthood. Donald Morton (1996), critically, defines this:

> In the (post)modern moment, desire has displaced need, the signifier has displaced the signified, exchange value has displaced mode of production, textuality has displaced conceptuality, the meaningless has displaced the meaningful, indeterminacy has displaced determination, undecidability has displaced causality, feeling has displaced knowing, difference has displaced commonality, and so on. So also, in relation to these complex shifts, *the "queer" has "returned" to displace the "gay"* (10-11) (emphasis in original)

Queer politics is articulated as a transcendence of the terms of the debate as laid out in, by its terms outmoded, gay and lesbian theory.[179] The politics of gay liberation are rejected on the basis of their attempt at equalizing, within the general terms of the dominant system, relatively stable identities central to which is a concern with positive images. This new position has to be seen in the light of the AIDS crisis which concentrated and distilled much of the dissatisfaction with aspects of gay and lesbian political positions, coincident with the stripping away of the pretence of acceptance on the part of a ruling order that was prepared to do nothing to alleviate the immense suffering and trauma of gay men. The theoretical aspect of this in queer theory was largely based on Foucauldian and deconstructive analysis of language. Part, therefore, of a wider shift in cultural studies, a 'linguistic turn', a turn away from sociology and history, queer theory looked to transgressive and performative strategies of social contestation. Weeks (1995) describes the emergence of this new politics:

> A profound sense of exclusion forced the emergence of a more radicalized sexual politics, in which the ancient stigmatizing 'queer' could be reclaimed by a new generation of activists, radicalized by the experience of AIDS. The direct action groups Queer Nation in the USA and Outrage! in Britain were established as a militant response to a deep sense of alienation from the existing language of citizenship, based as it was on a normalizing notion of belonging. (113)

Jarman aligned himself to Outrage! and was critical of those such as Ian

[179] The political effectiveness of Queer has been the subject of much debate with the problem of attempts at 'reappropriating' a term of abuse and the separatist nature of its agenda the main objections. See Morton (1996) and Sharon Smith 'Mistaken identity - or can identity politics liberate the oppressed?' *International Socialism* n.62 Spring 1994, pp. 16-21 for critiques of this position from a historical materialist perspective.

McKellen who campaigned 'constructively' with government on issues of equality through the organisation Stonewall and who accepted a knighthood.[180] What is at stake, then, is a view of the struggle over the politics of sexuality as that between the demand for better minority rights or a challenge to the very epistemological validity of sexuality itself. Given the construction within the dominant media explored in previous chapters of an intrinsic link between AIDS and 'gay', queer was posed as a celebration of aspects of an oppressed culture and a reassessment of the cultural norms that worked to establish 'homo' as the denigrated term in opposition to 'hetero'. Jarman is quoted (Smith, 1992) voicing his dissatisfaction with gay': ' I never (liked the word 'gay' (although I never said so), because it exuded a false optimism. It wasn't my word. I was in the party of miserabilists'.

The solidifying of speech in the words on the canvas visibly fixes for a moment language that continuously circulates within the public discourse of AIDS (fig. 5.4). The words: 'Love, Sex, Death', 'Sick', 'Blood', 'Plague', 'Queer', are all ones that appear and reappear within any discussion of the condition and those living with if. They all exist prior to Jarman's use of them and of course continue to do so after him. But Jarman, for a brief moment, can rearticulate them, reframe their citation, intervene in their contested and negotiated meanings in an attempt to signal a moment of resistance to the dominant

[180] According to Stonewall their agenda is: 'To work for equality under the law and full social acceptance for lesbians and gay men. Our approach is an innovatory one for lesbian and gay rights - professional, strategic, tightly managed, able and willing to communicate with decision makers in a constructive and informed way.' 'Interim Report', The Stonewall Group, 1990, quoted in Smith (1992)

discourse around HIV and AIDS.

Conclusion

Mediating AIDS

One of the central issues addressed in the introduction to the thesis was the way in which the developing sense of identity of individuals is heavily influenced by the realm of mediated forms or representations referred to as media culture. What is at work is a continuous social process of appropriation, interpretation, self-reflection and incorporation of media messages out of which people develop an understanding of themselves and others. The way in which key iconic representations of AIDS is related to this process is what has been explored throughout the thesis and points to the powerful impetus for producing such overdetermined representations at moments of crisis where there is a struggle over meaning in the public realm. As has been said earlier one aspect of the media coverage of HIV and AIDS was the portrayal of those affected as somehow 'alien' and other because their behaviour did not conform to the normative matrix of heterosexuality. But such attempts to privilege one normative position over another labelled 'deviant' within the binary relationship continuously cuts across the actual diversity and experiences of people in general who are the audience for such cultural products. There is, therefore, always a struggle or contest over such representations, something we saw in the coverage of the death of Freddie Mercury in chapter two. Within one discursive regime of signification a variety of positions were articulated with regard to Mercury's life and death, from rabid homophobia to expressions of sadness and loss. By tracing these different attitudes and positions in relation to particular moments such struggles over the meaning of someone's death from HIV illness become visible.

This in itself is useful but a few other things can be theoretically articulated. Firstly, the positioning of such representations within particular discursive frames such as news, health education, advertising, and film was done to allow for an examination of the specificities of the complex systems of production and transmission of the representations and the ways in which the discourse structured the potential readings of them. But, significantly, such a relationship between the producers and the readers is not one of equivalence but one that is fundamentally asymmetrical. To use a terminology defined earlier by Bakhtin, the relationship is characterised more by monologism than dialogism. As has been clearly shown throughout, this is not to deny *any* potential for the contestation of dominant representations but an acknowledgement of the actual relations of power inherent within the system of media communication.

This becomes amplified in relation to the subject of AIDS when the actuality of the demographic spread of the condition is taken into account. The fact that over the course of the epidemic in this country charted in this thesis most people have not personally known someone with AIDS has meant that it has been something that has only entered the social space of such a constituency in the form of media representations. John B. Thompson (1995) in

his book on the effects and implications of media on modern societies, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* , draws a distinction between 'lived experience' and 'mediated experience' which seems a useful way of addressing this issue. If lived experience is the continuous engagement with the practical contexts of daily life and encounters with others, mediated experience is rather a discontinuous process of engaging with refracted, spatially distant and recontextualised representational forms that provide a very different set of identificatory registers. This is not to offer the realm of lived experience as one simplistically defined by the 'rear or as a moment of pure authenticity but to acknowledge it as a different register that is, in general terms, characterized more by a dialogic impulse than that of the mediated.

One aspect of mediated experience is its sense of shock as the two realms of social existence are brought together in the media form as the spatial and historical coordinates are (usually) collapsed. It was precisely this quality that was explored in chapter one with regard to the picture of David Kirby. In this instance the iconic aspect of the image saw its mobilization within an abstracted and dehistoricized space positioned within the metaphoric realm of bourgeois humanism with its supposed 'universal' essences. The advertiser in this case sought to use such shock quality as part of its own programme which, as was shown, was actually very problematical for a number of publishers. In a different, arguably resistant, way Derek Jarman also sought to effect such a shock response and drew attention to the processes by which

we all negotiate our identities and sense of the world by recourse to the many discourses that surround us. With Jarman, then, what can be seen is the visibility of the two realms of social existence, in Thompson's terms the lived and the mediated, brought together. On the question of the relationship between the two, Thompson concludes that:

> While lived experience remains fundamental, it is increasingly supplemented by, and in some respects displaced by, mediated experience, which assumes a greater and greater role in the process of self-formation. Individuals increasingly draw on mediated experience to inform and refashion the project of the self. (233)

This relates to an important point with respect to experience and representation. The usefulness in analytical terms of placing images within discursive frameworks throughout the thesis was the ability to highlight the structuring nature of those processes that produce intelligibility within the domain of lived experience. If it is the case that there is an extra-discursive order of social relations that discourse or representation attempts to negotiate but yet never exhausts, something I take to be true, then the processes of subjectivity relate to self recognition and identification but also to the contested nature of such processes. This was precisely the strength of Bakhtin's formulation and highlights the issue of power, or lack of it, that must also be considered in any argument for a purely media defined subjectivity.

Because AIDS begins to come into discursive existence around about 1981 it is relatively easy to identify the ways in which it was taken up within systems of representation that predated it; a new language cannot just emerge because a new condition does, any understanding would have to be in the terms of what was available at that moment. The fact that it was identified among a group of gay men therefore set the terms of the initial agenda for addressing the condition. This fact cannot and should not be denied and of course on a global scale the pandemic is not one primarily confined to gay men. Alongside this Sander Gilman and others have shown how the iconography mobilized around AIDS in the beginning was that of the syphilitic and morally dangerous outsider. This illustrates the ways in which representations produced within the limits of the systems of dominant thinking always look back to a previous imagery to try and project as absolute its own understanding of a new condition, as can be seen in the way in which it defined AIDS as a contemporary plague.

Each of the iconic images considered in the thesis can be seen to be as much about pre-existing images that dominate within the discursive formation as about, if at all, AIDS. The picture of David Kirby gained its status not just from the fact that it was of someone with AIDS and played a role in the viewers sense of self-identity but also because its religious iconography effected a cultural resonance that related to anxieties around premature

male death. Similarly the picture of Freddie Mercury used by the *Sun* was one that had religious connotations given his crucifix like pose. Health education could be seen as a field of contending and at times disputing forces that struggled to address a condition that raised many issues of behaviour and sexuality that were difficult to contain within existing narratives of sexual morality. Hollywood film, typically, struggled to address some of the issues from within the horror genre, a genre itself significantly at the margins of the mainstream and dismissed by serious observers, whereas *Philadelphia* had to be constructed as a civil rights/cancer film because that was the political limits of the liberal thinking that motivated its production. Such problems of what cultural language to try and use led Derek Jarman, the subject of the last chapter, to make his own film - *Blue* - about living and, in his terms dying, with AIDS that avoided representation altogether, suggesting that for him there was no significant language available that could represent the condition.

Overall, the thesis has sought to consider a range of representations of AIDS that, it can be argued, have given many people a sense of its meaning within this country but not limited to it given the interactions across the terrain of contemporary global culture as is evidenced, for instance, by the cultural effects of Hollywood film. American media culture such as Hollywood film is exported across the globe in a way that it is possible to talk of a global culture yet any analysis must pay attention to the specific regional and local coordinates within which it is mobilized. The ways in which the subject of AIDS

has been articulated within the discourses of media culture has been considered as well as moments of resistance and strategic rearticulation by those who are the subjects of this process. Given the heavily over-determined nature of the public discursive formation surrounding AIDS this cannot easily be revealed and straightforwardly critiqued. Nevertheless, such representations can be interpreted from the point of view of the absolute need for a belief in the collective requirement for social justice and to therefore actively engage with the de-legitimation of dominant accounts of the epidemic, gay men and all those affected by the ongoing catastrophe of AIDS.

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Illustrations

Fig:

1.1 The Benetton Campaign, from *Creative Review* April 1992, p.31.

1.2 Therese Frare's picture, May 1990.

1.3 Nicholas Nixon's picture of man with AIDS in hospital bed.

1.4 Nicholas Nixon's picture of man with AIDS silhouetted against window.

1.5 From the *Positive Lives* exhibition and catalogue.

1.6 From the Terrence Higgins Trust's 'Reality' campaign, six images on two pages.

1.7 From the *Guardian* 21.6.95, p.9.

1.8 The Benetton picture, colour.

1.9 Front page of the *Face* March 1992.

1.10 From the *Face* March 1992, p.100-1, 'junkie business'.

1.11 From *Elle* March 1992, p.90-1, 'Why these pages are blank.

1.12 Benetton's condom advert, colour.

1.13 Benneton advert, body stamped, arm.

1.14 Benneton advert, body stamped, midriff.

1.15 Benneton advert, body stamped, buttocks.

1.16 ACT-UP advert from *Pink Paper* 'There's only one pullover…'.

1.17 Silence=Death, colour.

1.18 Kissing doesn't kill poster on side of bus.

1.19 Kissing doesn't kill, colour.

1.20 Leeds Postcards Benetton advert subverted.

2.1 Freddie Mercury, union jack, Sun front page 25 November, 1991.

2.2 Same issue of the *Sun*, pp. 14-15, 'Tragic Toll of Showbiz Plague'.

2.3 *Newsweek* cover, Nureyev, January 18, 1993.

2.4 Same issue, double page spread, 'A Decade of Loss', pp.42-43

2.5 *Daily Mirror*, front page, 25 november 1991

2.6 *Daily Star,* 25 November 1991, pp.24-25.

2.7 Red star from *National Geographic*, June 1986, p.708.

2.8 Front page of the *Sun*, January 16, 1991.

3.1 Health Education Authority 'Time'

3.2 Health Education Authority 'Face of woman', p.1

3.3 Health Education Authority 'Face of woman', p.2

3.4 Rock Hudson

3.5 Health Education Authority 'Which do you find more attractive?'

3.6 Health Education Authority 'Doctors testimony'

3.7 Health Education Authority 'Two men holding hands'

3.8 Sloggi advert

3.9 Calvin Klein pants

3.10 Health Education Authority, Bruce Weber photo, 'no nipples'

3.11 Health Education Authority, Bruce Weber photo, 'nipples'

3.12 'another day…'

4.1 Opening shot from *The Thing,* 1982.

4.2 The dog/Thing enters the American camp, *The Thing,* 1982.

4.3 Computer simulation of thing attacking and replicating cellular form, The *Thing,* 1982.

4.4 Computer projection of infection of total world population, *The Thing,* 1982

4.5 Blood test, *The Thing,* 1982.

4.6 Trying to stem the flow of blood from slashed wrists, *Fatal Attraction*, 1987.

4.7 Alex vomiting, *Fatal Attraction*, 1987.

4.8 Ticker tape message, 'unknown disease of the blood' *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, 1992.

4.9 Ritual killing of the promiscuous female vampire, Lucy, *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, 1992.

4.10 Vilification of Ripley, *Alien3*,1992.

4.11 Organising to fight, *Alien*3,1992.

4.12 *Philadelphia* film poster, 1993.

4.13 Family moment, *Philadelphia ,* 1993.

4.14 Kaposi Sarcoma lesions on Andrew's body, *Philadelphia,* 1993.

4.15 "Andy brought AIDS into our office Bob!" *Philadelphia* , 1993.

4.16 The 'AIDS Highway' from Preston's *Hot Zone*, 1994.

4.17 The cinema cough, *Outbreak,* 1995.

5.1 *Blood*, from *Queer* catalogue Manchester City Art Gallery, 1992.

5.2 *EUR*, from *Queer* catalogue Manchester City Art Gallery, 1992.

5.3 *Sick*, from *Queer* catalogue Manchester City Art Gallery, 1992.

5.4 *Toxo*, from *Queer* catalogue Manchester City Art Gallery, 1992.