



# Mirrors of Masculinity

(critical response)

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Sexual function is decreed by nature whereas gender is culturally determined. Gender is the means by which male and female sexual categories are constructed. It is an apparatus without agent, kept in motion through an endless repetition of norms in which all is imitation. Gender representations in cultural forms, including theatre dance, do not merely reflect changing social definitions of femininity and masculinity but are actively involved in the processes through which gender is constructed. The way that the socially produced parameters of and limits on male behaviour are expressed in modern theatre dance and rugby league football forms an interesting study. These representations of masculinities mirror the apparent polarisation of male opposites in Australia, however the reflections in the mirror are distorted by the perceptions of the theatre audiences and the sporting spectators. The male dancer and the male rugby league footballer may well mirror each other much more than we realise.

Rather than enjoying a secure autonomy, men have continually needed to adjust and redefine meanings attributed to sexual differences in order to maintain dominance in the face of changing social circumstances.

A fundamental problem for men in Australia today is the popular construction of 'manhood'. We have got it spectacularly wrong with the construction of what it is to be male. We exist in a cultural landscape which decrees aggressive macho behaviour – typified by the typical media profile of a footballer.

Today, to be a 'proper' male you need to be profitably employed in the business/commercial world, preferably wealthy and obviously successful. Real men are fearless, tough, powerful, determined, and even ruthless. These men don't cry, hesitate, show fears, demonstrate compassion or cooperate. They never 'act like a sheila'. A proper Aussie male is sporty. If he doesn't actually play – and most don't – he certainly talks, reads watches and 'lives' his team, as proof that he is not a 'wuss'. True blue Australian men are also avowedly heterosexual, their wives children, houses and careers all emphatic testaments to their 'straight' gender orientation.

This stereotypical image of masculinity results in the countless number of young boys and men who routinely crucify themselves on the crosses of perceived public opinion, peer pressure and self-delusion about what they should, or more importantly what they should not be. Currently, only 13% of primary school teachers in Australia are male and consequently the overwhelming majority of young Australians, both male and female in their years of compulsory primary school education, are deprived of an important male presence. The theory of 'denial masculinity' suggests that boys and men still define themselves largely in terms of what they are not.

Modern theatre dance is an arena in which some of the holes in the construction of male identity can be unveiled. It is an artform of the body and the body is where gender distinctions are generally understood to originate. Of all the arts, dance with its concerns for bodily display, its evanescent form, and its resistance to the verbal, has distinguished itself as overwhelmingly feminine in nature and for much of the twentieth century, the dance world has tended to appear to be predominantly a feminine realm in terms of audiences, dances and teachers. For many people, a key

source of contemporary prejudice is the association between male dancers and homosexuality. Masculinity is strongly moulded by homophobia, in the widespread fear of and contempt for homosexuals and it leads men to limiting their loving and close relationships with other men. The fear of being identified as a "poofter" leads men to behave in hypermasculine and aggressive ways and even to close up emotionally.

Evidence for the feminisation of dance is particularly noticeable in the media. A recent advertisement for Mazda cars features a ballerina's foot. The copy is revealing. It begins '*A dancer expresses herself with her body.*' The conflation of all dance with ballet and with the feminine is also evident in the proliferation of paraphernalia celebrating the ballerina.

Over the last two centuries there has been a similar disappearance of the male nude as a subject for painting and sculpture. What became conflictual and consequently repressed was anything that might draw attention to the spectacle of the male body. The expression and communication of emotions through the instrument of the body, that are gendered female by society, is considered to be a spectacle by contemporary hegemonic masculinity. It is this spectacle and not the activity of dancing that underlies the prejudice against the male dancer. Since male interest in grace, lightness and physical appearance is derided as unmanly, any male enactment of these values could easily be construed as homoerotic expression.

The frequent use of mirrors in learning to dance promotes a form of narcissistic enthrallment with the body, but this is usually mitigated by the tendency to focus on,

and criticise, bodily inaccuracies. A dancer's daily consciousness of the body thus ranges between the perceived body – with all its pains and distortions – and images, both fantasised and real, of other bodies. Dancers alternate between, or sometimes fuse together, images from all these bodies as they objectify, monitor, scan, attend to, and keep track of bodily motion throughout the day. Dance training, while attending to the feel and flow of movement, emphasises sight as the primary process of artistic conception, and kinaesthetic awareness. As dancers move, they carry mental pictures of the perfect performance of each step, comparing the mirrored image with the ideal.

Representations of gender in this cultural form are manifested in the gendering of bodies. Even when costumed in androgynous unitards, the female dancer elaborates a vast range of intricate coordinations for the legs, feet, arms, and head, while the male dancer launches into the air, defying gravity in a hundred different positions. *She* extends while *he* supports. *She* is the registering of *his* desire. These two bodies, because of their distinctly gendered behaviour, dance out a specific kind of relationship between the masculine and feminine.

The limitations placed on male dancers in dance technique and performance in terms of mastering 'manly' movement confirms modern dance as a female gendered form. Females are free to pursue any dance dynamic or vocabulary through technique, choreography and performance of modern dance. Males however are still restricted in dance by the concept of 'manly' versus female coded movement: males locomote and jump, use whole body movements, strongly and directly in general space, while females gesture and step with isolated body parts, gently and indirectly in personal space.

Choreographers are aware of the convention that, in order to represent masculinity, a dancer should look powerful. However the act of being on display and promoting the body as a 'spectacle' can be connected with the loss of power. Being extremely aggressive through movement is a way of re-imposing control and thus evading any objectification by the spectator. Masculinity can be signified through the appearance of strength, but it has been established within the dance world that a distinction should be made between the appearance of strength and the actual signs of physical effort. Within this gallant and chivalrous tradition the male dancer's role is almost rendered invisible by the spectator. Unlike that of the footballer whose obvious presence is rendered highly visible by a noisy roaring crowd, where there are no female partners or participants to distract the attention of the viewers.

Both the male dancer and the female dancer dare to accomplish so much and dare to mask the effort necessary to make their bodily shapings, rhythmic phrasings, and complex exchanges of weight appear so effervescent. Both *she* and *he* sweat to make the choreographers vision manifest just as they erase their faces of the tension inherent in their exertion and modulate the energy through their limbs so as to render their labour effortless in appearance. Perspiration marks slowly appearing around the armpits, groins abdomens, or backs only make the masking of their effort more miraculously convincing.

But if these dancing bodies share a dedication to artisanal perfection, they do not enjoy equal visibility. In their joint striving they construct unequal forms of presence. Presence is about power, and there is sometimes collusion between political

structures of authority and the persuasive power of presence. The way in which the male dancer's presence succeeds or fails in reinforcing male power is clearly central to an understanding of representations of masculinity in theatre dance. However, the paradox surrounding the male dancer's evocation and reinforcement of male power to the audience is essentially the crux of gender representation in theatre dance. While the male dancer enacts strong virtuoso movement that highlight his presence and authority over the stage space his masking of the effort inherent in exerting such movements somewhat undermines his presence and consequently his reinforcement of male power.

The role of the spectator is crucial to the construction of gender representations in theatre dance. Spectators' responses to a dance performance are made not only in relation to their own experiences of embodiment but also in response to visual imagery and cues. The primary mode of expression in dance is the body; in theatre, however, dance is something that a spectator watches. A crucial difference between the way we look at a dance and the way that we look at two or three-dimensional visual art and film is the fact that dancers are alive in front of us – we are aware of their presence.

While dance cannot communicate specific events or ideas, it is a universal language that can communicate emotions directly and sometimes more powerfully than words.

The French poet Stephane Mallarme declared that the dancer,

*“writing with her body . . . suggests things which the written word could express only in several paragraphs of dialogue or descriptive prose.”*

Thus, when the dancer leaps, the spectator understands it as a sign of exhilaration, and they feel something of the lifting and tightening sensations that excitement produces in the body. In the same way, if a dancer's body is twisted or contracted, they feel an echo of the knotted sensations of pain.

It is assumed that who looks at whom, and how surveillance relates to power in western society, are factors which influence representations of gender in dance.

Women are depicted in quite a different way from men – not because the feminine is different from the masculine – but because the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of a woman is designed to appeal to him. This underlies John Berger's much quoted observation that,

*"Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at."*

In modern western societies the one who sees and the one who is seen are gendered positions.

One of the most basic motives of dance is the expression and communication of emotion. However, in most men's relationships with other men in contemporary western society, emotional and sexual expression is necessarily suppressed in the interests of maintaining male power. As a result male dancers in their communication and evocation of emotion are stigmatised by a male audience. If the male dancer's



appearance is desirable, he is, from the point of view of a male spectator, drawing attention to the already crossed line between homosocial bonding and homosexuality. His appearance therefore carries with it for the male spectator the threat of revealing the suppressed homosexual component within the links he has with other men and through which he maintains his power and status in a patriarchal society.

For the majority of sexist males in western cultures the dancing male equates homosexuality with the thought or suggestion of male homosexuality producing in most straight men the aforementioned 'visceral clutch'. It is easy to imagine how male spectators can feel unease at watching men dance as to enjoy the spectacle of men dancing is to be interested in men. The central issue is that dance, ballet, effeminacy, homosexuality and homophobia have all been conflated into a single concept in many people's minds.

Sport and the mass media's representation of sport fulfills a central role in the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity. Australian sport is a relatively intact bastion of patriarchy. It is an institution that contains powerful messages and meanings about an oppressive form of masculinity which is reinforced through the uncritical assistance of the mass media. If the cultural value attached to masculine sports is not openly challenged then existing forms of subordination, domination and violence will continue to be viewed as 'natural' and therefore unchangeable.

As an area of inquiry, gender and sport has been relatively neglected. Similarly, the bulk of feminist theory has focused on productive and reproductive spheres of life,

indirectly treating sport as a peripheral concern. It is only through confronting the way in which hegemonic masculinity - the dominant model of how to be a man - is constructed and reconstructed that domination can be challenged.

For men, the polarity between rationality and emotionality may be internalised as part of the process of construction of masculine identity. It would be untrue to suggest that modern men are rational beings devoid of feelings. However, emotions can be perceived as gendered. Anger and hatred, which can lead to violence, are two of the emotions that are associated with masculinity and thus whose expression is generally considered acceptable for men. Repressing and evading those internal emotions that are not considered acceptable leads men to constructing their masculinity as a definitive response to modern society.

Journalist, Martin Pumphrey has identified in some of the more violent male film roles of the 1970s and 1980s an inability among male heroes to face up to and deal with personal feelings, and suggests that the consequent repression of feelings lead to violence.

*“Repressing and evading any self-conscious recognition of the internal contradictions their identities encompass, they construct their masculinities as defensive responses to the external crisis of modernity.”*

(Pumphrey 1989: 95)

The sanctioned violence that is enacted in the sporting arena is not only legitimised

but celebrated by a culturally valued hegemonic masculinity. Rugby League is a peak masculine sport in Australia, which in opposition to dance, has been gendered male in Australian society. It is a sport where the definition of excellence is premised on strength and speed, where there is a readiness to injure an opponent and where men have a considerable advantage over women. All of these features are heavily promoted by the mass media. For example, the willingness to injure an opponent appears in many newspaper articles including one titled '*Lazarus Burial a Raiders Priority*'. The article describes how an ankle injury suffered by Glen Lazarus would be "exploited" by the opposition.

Rugby League crowds expect to see the physical signs of exertion inherent in the footballers' effort. While in a darkened auditorium, a theatre audience is silent and almost spiritually absorbed. Their response is akin to contemplation. However, the football spectators spruik encouragement. Theirs is not a contemplative appreciation and they would be disappointed if they did not witness first hand, the blood, the sweat and the pain attributable to such a sport. The naked aggression of body contact sport guarantees cuts, bruises, torn ligaments and broken bones. Audiences revel in this demonstration of 'manliness' that footballers exude, whilst the dancer internalises his pain, lest it detract from his grace and composure. The mirrors of the two masculinities both reflect degrees of pain and suffering but the spectators ascribe differing values to them.

The mass media's treatment of sport has contributed to idealising and institutionalising competition, domination, toughness and aggression as

unquestionable and sacred masculine values. In these examples, the amount of pain a player can inflict and withstand is valued as a measure of 'manliness'. It is this process which makes Rugby League football a vehicle for masculine identification. The qualities of a good Rugby League player, which include physical strength, the capacity to be violent and the ability to play in pain reflect and reinforce a culturally valued form of masculinity. Sports associated with the dominant form of 'manliness' are the most culturally valued in our society. The cultural value surrounding Rugby League is evident in the public and media hype surrounding major games such as the Grand Final and the State of Origin. When these events are taking place Rugby League often assumes national importance by consistently appearing on the front page of major Australian newspapers. Essentially, Rugby League is able to sustain such widespread cultural appeal because it embodies the central characteristics of hegemonic masculinity which are reinforced by the mass media.

One of the major ways in which the mass media reinforces a hegemonic ideal is through a process of the successful marketing of football players in advertisements and promotions. The construction and continuation of hegemonic masculinity in sport is also evident in the objectification of sporting stars. Whereas, the objectification of women is centrally concerned with passivity, objectification of the male sporting star is more defined by action, strength and performance. The sporting man is likened to a machine where the body is disconnected from the whole person. The body becomes something to be primed, tuned and pushed in readiness to battle. Its orders: to survive and fight. The mass media assist in defining these measures as ideal masculine values. Print media examples of this process include '*Gutsy Lions survive late charge*' and '*Bulldog trio maul North's final hopes*'. Continually proving oneself 'fit to play' in

order to 'do battle' is a key process in the replication of hegemonic masculinity, where power, aggression and competition are predominantly viewed as natural.

The media assists in reproducing masculine values as natural by relying on conventional wisdom, which implies that men are physically stronger and therefore naturally superior. One magazine advertisement displays a photograph of the prominent footballer Glen Lazarus. Above his photograph lies a caption that reads, '*Strength in performance*'. Opposite this photograph is a young woman who is dressed in nothing more than a bikini. The woman is positioned in a sexually seductive stance and the caption above her photograph reads '*Elegant in looks*'. She is portrayed as a passive sexual object, while the football star is presented as powerful in action, predicated on his ability to perform. A dichotomy can be seen to exist between the instrumental values associated with 'manliness' and the expressive but passive importance of 'femininity'.

Given the generally heterosexist and homophobic tenor of sport, it is not surprising that the mass media tend to symbolically annihilate both sportswomen and gay men and symbolically glorify heterosexual sportsmen. However a perfect example of how our perceptions have distorted the reflection of rugby league footballers in the mirror of gender representation is the sexual identity of Ian Roberts. While he demonstrates the typical representation of a footballer, a prime muscular athlete, defined by action, strength and performance, the former international superstar is avowedly homosexual, and gained entry to the prestigious NIDA in 2001 as a first year drama student. Ian Roberts blurs the perceived image of such a cultural stereotype.

Even still there are only a handful of women sports journalists and commentators in Australia and less than 5% of media coverage is devoted to women's sport, with most newspaper items placed in a separate section. Moreover, the coverage that does exist generally patronises, stereotypes or objectifies women. Editors and journalists often devote inordinate time and space to how beautiful sportswomen (or 'sporting mums') are rather than to their physical and mental prowess. This implies to audiences that sportswomen's achievements are frivolous and that women can be beautiful despite being athletes.

By contrast, journalists constantly celebrate the "legitimate violence" of male athletes by depicting them as heroic "warriors", "gladiators", "field generals", "hit men", "top guns" or "combatants", who are engaged in a "blitzkrieg", "battle", or "shootout", with bodies that are portrayed as machines or weapons. Male journalists are also implicated in shielding their sporting heroes from public criticism and legitimising their sexually abusive and violent behaviour. Journalists are reluctant to jeopardise their access to the locker room by reporting candid accounts of sporting life. Moreover, a considerable number of sports commentators are ex-athletes, who are reluctant to bite the hand that continues to feed them.

The media have depicted sporting heroes as the victims of female rapacity. Former American football folk-hero O.J. Simpson's "fall from grace" (from superstar to wife-beater) was framed as an individual act - an anomaly when juxtaposed to his successful, morally valued sports career - rather than treated as a possible symptom of a sports culture that is systematically implicated in the reproduction of violence and misogyny.

The sport hype reduces us, men and women alike, to believing we are purely bodies: designed to throw far, jump high, play hard, and perform perfectly. The truth is we are each dispensable, constantly judged on our performance and on the size of our muscles. And we judge each other by the same criteria. One reason why masculine values assume cultural dominance is because muscles, which define action and represent strength, are equated with social power. Nature is seen as inevitable and unchangeable and women cannot generally rival muscularity. The naturalness of muscles legitimates male power and dominance.

The manner in which gender divisions are represented at many sporting events, including Rugby League, is indicative of the supposedly "natural" subordination of women. At a football game women are marginalised to the sidelines where they are confined to cheering on male success, this is exemplified by the female cheerleaders who *dance* on the sidelines. While women's participation in sport has improved considerably in recent years, Rugby League and other codes of football in Australia remain largely a 'male only' pastime, and they continue to be pastimes that offer important training grounds in the rules of male behavior. Queensland sociology lecturer Jim McKay notes that the most insulting accusation a coach can make about a player's inferior performance is to say that he played like a "sheila" or a "poofter".

The hypermasculine behaviour that occurs as a result of the fear of such identification has posited many theories concerning a parallel between rugby league bodies and pornography. The questions of homoerotic and traditionally 'deviant' behaviors in the sweaty masculine world of football have long been kicked around. From the

development of 'manliness' by contact sports in an attempt to quell the furtive discoveries of adolescence, to the mysterious much vaunted culture of 'the sheds', the greatest games of all have long been shadowed with the question of illicit sexuality. On the field alone, the finger has often been pointed at excessively heterosexual and unfeasibly masculine blokes engaging in close and often intimate exchanges as part of their sporting practice, and whether such all-male intimacy is possible to be divorced from the masculine constructs of assertive sexuality.

The National Rugby League exposes some sort of crude tribal ritual that was previously referred to as "Secret Men's Business". The recent crude on-field tactics of John Hopoate crystallise this practice and only came to light following the extensive media coverage that each league match exploits. *"If someone did that to me,"* a former international stated after the incident, *"I wouldn't breathe a word to anyone. I'd be too embarrassed! I'd just get him next time."*

The phenomenon of tribal ritual that is so inherent in Rugby League extends to the phenomena of tribal loyalty. The innate tribalism that seems to fester within the human condition is graphically expressed in a fan's affiliation with a football club (or tribe). At one level sport may be seen as ridiculous. Why do we race round kicking a leather ball, to chase and kick it again once we receive it? However, there is something deep in human nature that does find meaning in tribal activities, and somehow part of our identity is wrapped up with the tribes, or the groups we belong to. Sport is a very powerful generator of identity in this sense.

Contemporary texts in feminism, masculinity studies and cultural theory would have



us believe that male elite contact sports are a hot bed of repressed desire, with players engaging in a series of homo-erotic acts and constructs, which are the primary motivation for their ga[y]mesmanship. Sexualisation of elite sportsmen can be seen as a function of the way theorists construct sexuality and masculine physical contact.

While a body of research has looked at the potential for homosexual tendencies to be expressed through physical contact on and off the field in male contact sports, the gaze has been directed wholly at the players equating the playing of elite sports as an opportunity to express sexuality, with little focus directed at the nature of elite sports and the reality of total attention to the matter at hand. Seemingly, this type of research is hypothesising that a player, whilst engaged in potentially dangerous and strategic situation, has the time and inclination to construct an elaborate set of sexual fantasies while in play, or alternately has subconsciously been attracted to the game because of these latent and repressed desires. The question is not whether football or sport, per se, can be seen as a 'sexual' activity. That would be very much coterminous with a definition of sexual, and whether that sexuality was representative or kinetic.

Many theorists have written about sport as a 'sexual' endeavour. Freud took the argument one step further when referring to the practice of adolescent sport being used to sublimate sexual tensions:

*"It is well known that sports are widely used by modern educators to distract youths from sexual activity. It would be more correct to say that sports replace sexual pleasure... and push sexual activity back upon its autoerotic components."*

Given the nature of the masculinities inherent in the discourses surrounding contact sports, physical interaction and 'intimate' or emotional exchanges within the context of these arenas are reframed to merge with authentic heterosexual corporeal practices.

Mass sport impacts greatly on men's self-perception, lifestyle and physical activity choices. Mass sport is, a masculine gendered world, a world where winning is all, where violence is tacitly acknowledged and a world without feeling and emotions other than anger and determination. It is a hierarchical, authoritarian world where only one team wins. In this world there is no room for 'sissy' boys, certainly no room for homosexuals and girls are only tolerated provided that they act like 'one of the blokes'. Mass sport fits very neatly into the socio-cultural landscape of western sexism and misogyny.

Football teams win or lose. They are champions, heroes or losers. Their glory is reflected in inflated financial rewards, sponsorships from the business world and lucrative contracts. Dancers perform well or poorly. They are artists or wannabes. Their glory is their art, reflected in the emotional interaction with their audiences with rare financial recognition. Footballers thrill us while dancers entrall us, but it is their sheer physicality which blurs the mirror images of the polarised opposites. We have constructed an apparent gender representation for each one, separate representations to the extent that they have become embedded as stereotypical images in Australian society and yet the blurring of the images challenges all of us to revisit and rework these stereotypes.

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## MIRRORS OF MASCULINITIES

### REFLECTION STATEMENT

The construction of my English Extension course 2 major work developed from the conception of my stimulus. The extensive independent investigation I underwent prior to its development was not only stimulated by my intent to unveil the construction of masculine identity as reflected in two cultural forms, but also by the deep passion I hold for my twin-interests in rugby league football and modern dance. I have investigated an area that I am a participant in myself. I am not only a spectator of Australian society, but am also, and have been for most of my life, an active spectator of rugby league and a participant of modern dance. As an active member of the two reflections of masculine identity, I believe I have constructed a major piece of writing that accurately examines the processes through which gender is constructed in Australian society through the fulfillment of my original intent.

In composing *Mirrors of Masculinities* I intended to investigate whether, at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is any truth in the apparent polarisation of the male dancer and the male footballer as complete opposites. The mirrors of gender construction have reflected two very contrasting stereotypes surrounding the masculine identity of the two figures. However, as my extensive investigation has supported, I believe that society's perception and the mass media's reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity have formulated these socially constructed stereotypes and as a consequence the "mirrors of masculinities" have ultimately been distorted. In writing this piece, my intent was to reveal how surprisingly similar the reflections actually are.

This intent behind the process of writing my piece was directed to reach an audience consisting of thinking Australians who are willing to observe human behaviour with a critical and perceptive eye. Members of contemporary society, who seek further insights into the gendering of behaviour, and the reflection of masculinity as seen in two separate arenas of the body, may also begin to understand and recognise the construction of stereotypes with which they may be involved. A study of this kind may expect to be found in the form of a feature article in a newspaper or magazine, or alternatively in a journal devoted to all aspects of research in sociology and human behaviour.

*Mirrors of Maculinites'* purpose, in communicating to such an audience, was to contribute to the ongoing debate surrounding gender construction that has been thriving for decades. Through investigating the gendering of the two cultural forms and the stereotypes affiliated with those who partake in the reflections of masculinity, I have forged my own pathway in the study of a subject that will not cease to exist. The construction of gender will not disappear, however it will change as society develops and forms new understandings in varying social contexts. Gradually society's stereotypical perceptions of the two bodies will change. Individuals such as

Ian Roberts, an international rugby league superstar – who is also homosexual – have greatly contributed to the blurring of the images in the “mirrors of masculinities”. With such distortions, masculine identity may no longer have to conform to the hegemonic model of how to be a ‘man’, an ideal I intended to perpetuate in constructing my response.

I realised the concepts I set out to communicate in the finished product through a variety of means. I delved into my own thinking processes, interacted with my teachers at school, the dance coordinator at the University of New South Wales, as well as interviewing Rugby League footballer, Mark McLinden. During this process of investigation I also conducted an extensive search through written texts, magazine and newspaper articles, television programs and internet site for any material relevant to my concept. I realised the concepts in my finished product through synthesising all of the disparate ideas into a personal restated position.

The piece’s structure and language features that establish it as critical response heavily support the concept of my major work. The way that the socially produced parameters of and limits on male behaviour are expressed in the cultural forms of modern dance and rugby league forms the basis of my study. The representations of gender in the cultural forms are apparently polarised opposites, a reflection achieved through the stereotypical perceptions of theatre audiences and the sporting spectators. The structure of my piece is greatly indicative of this concept.

The opening of the work presents a case study for the popular construction of ‘manhood’ in Australia. This allows for the construction of male identity to be established in order for some of its holes to be unveiled in its representations in the mirror. I have intentionally separated the study of the representations of both the male dancer and the footballer in order to achieve an effective contrast as well as support my concept of the mirror by separating its two reflections. The response touches on how men perceive themselves within their respective realms. However the work is largely based on society’s perception of them, as this is also reflective of my concept concerning the spectators role in gender construction.

As the work is in the medium of a critical response I have employed formal conventions such as the use of direct quotes to support my arguments. The references to Sigmund Freud, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century psychiatrist and scholar, and the late 20<sup>th</sup> century academics Martin Pumphrey and John Berger, support the concept that the gender debate is not a recent development but rather one that has stretched throughout the course of history. It is not simply relative to Australia either, but is indeed a universal concern.

I have also implemented language features and conventions appropriate to the concept under investigation and its medium of production. The formal, analytical language is researched based and reflects the wide reading I have undergone during its construction. Jargon is inevitably inherent within a piece formulated around the study of sociology, with terms such as ‘gender construction’ and ‘male gaze’ being exploited. I have attempted to use such terms precisely in order to communicate meaning efficiently.

My extensive research into the concepts I explore within my response gave me the opportunity to discover how widespread the study of gender really is and how popular culture reflects such investigations. The conclusion of *Mirrors of Masculinities* is intentionally ambivalent, as the reflections of the images on the football field and the performance stage have become blurred in the mirror of masculine identity. The questions raised by my major work have not been resolved as they are part of a much larger debate surrounding gender construction that is forever in a state of flux.