

## MASCULINITY AS MULTIPLE MASQUERADE: The 'mature' Stallone and the Stallone clone

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Since the early 1980s feminist theorists have often drawn on Joan Riviere's essay, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade,' and Jacques Lacan's article, 'The Meaning of the Phallus,' to argue that femininity is a performance anxiously enacted for—and/or sadistically flaunted in defiance of—an audience of men. Within film studies, Mary Ann Doane's work on the masquerade has been particularly influential. In Doane's version, the masquerade of femininity compensates for women's 'lapse' into a subjectivity defined *a priori* as masculine. Women pretend to 'be' what they lack: they seem to embody the phallus. As a result, says Doane, women are positioned on the side of spectacle, in cinema and in society.

Yet though the masquerade of femininity conflates woman and spectacle—as Riviere puts it, 'womanliness and masquerade are one and the same' (Riviere 1929:38)—this conflation is only an appearance. Its effects, nevertheless, are very real. Looking for a way out from what is a sorry state of affairs, for women at least, Doane suggests that the very fact that femininity *is* a masquerade indicates the existence of a gap 'between the woman and the image of femininity' (Doane 1988:48–9). She urges female spectators to use this gap to highlight the artificiality of gender and expose the patriarchal 'network of power relations' (Doane 1982:87) which limits and defines femininity and women.

Recently other film critics have begun to investigate masculinity and male spectacle. Some argue masculinity is a performance. Rarely, however, do they discuss masculinity as a masquerade, an oversight I find surprising. After all, Lacan explicitly states that men can 'have' the phallus just as little as women can ever 'be' it, even labelling masculinity a display (Lacan 1958:85). Moreover, as Stephen Heath notes, for Lacan male masquerade is more intimately tied to power structures than female masquerade is: 'the trappings of authority, hierarchy, order, position make the man' (Heath 1986:56).<sup>1</sup>

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The failure to study men and masculinity in terms of masquerade has serious consequences: (1) masculinity remains the untouched and untouchable ground against which femininity figures as the repressed and/ or the unspoken;<sup>2</sup> (2) the differences between masculine and feminine masquerade and their various connections to power go unexamined; (3) the compulsory heterosexuality organizing masculinity and femininity as complementary if unequal opposites is left unchallenged; and, too often, (4) other matrices of masquerade are bypassed altogether.

If our analyses are to challenge dominant power structures, it is crucial we not allow masculinity to stand apart from femininity, and imperative we not think about gender separately from sexuality, race, region, age, and class. While I realize that in psychoanalytic circles it is customary to distinguish *male* fetishism from *female* masquerade, I am claiming both sexes masquerade in order to break down rigid gender-bound dichotomies.<sup>3</sup>

In the first section of this essay, therefore, I survey previous discussions of masquerade and show that, in different ways and with different objectives in mind, Riviere, Lacan, Doane, Judith Butler, Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha all intimate that masculinity as well as femininity can be thought of as a series of interlocking masquerades. For the most part, however, these theorists overlook the multiple masquerades of ambiguous figures like the gay butch clone, the lesbian femme, or the passing black, preferring to focus on the visible differences presented by other figures: the (white heterosexual) woman, the black (heterosexual man), the lesbian butch and the drag queen. I will argue, in contrast, that the butch clone's, lesbian femme's and passing black's masquerades of heterosexual white masculinity and femininity disguise subversive racial and/or sexual identities, and that the ways these masquerades overlap and interlock constitute specific links to power, conflict, and struggle. In no way are their masquerades 'benign variations' on an eternal, universal, originary theme.<sup>4</sup>

To delineate more precisely how masquerades of masculinity function in film today, in a second section I measure my model against two Sylvester Stallone movies from 1989, *Lock Up* (John Flynn) and *Tango and Cash* (Andrei Konchalevsky). Stallone is an especially fit figure for such an analysis: for audiences the world over he incarnates unquestioned virility, unassailable heterosexuality, and a US might and right which is, most decidedly, white. *Lock Up* and *Tango and Cash* both allude to and pump up Stallone's established tough guy image, built on muscles as a masquerade of proletarian masculinity, yet they shift this image significantly. Crucially, in both these films Stallone is no longer a loner, no longer a little Rocky or a big Rambo fighting unbeatable odds and winning impossible battles all by himself. Now he is joined by another man, a figure so like Stallone I call him the Stallone clone.

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*Figure 26* Sylvester Stallone and Kurt Russell in *Tango and Cash*

By naming this second man the Stallone clone I do not just mean he looks, talks, and acts like Stallone. In these films, Stallone and the clones are very fond of each other, so for me, 'clone' evokes the butch clone, the homosexual who passes as heterosexual because he looks and acts 'like a man.' Admittedly, my reading of these films is a 'queer' reading, but it is a 'queer' reading the films themselves propose. Thanks to the clones, moreover, in both *Lock Up* and *Tango and Cash* sexuality is more easily grasped as separate from yet allied with gender, and the national, racial, and class differences used to constitute 'good' as opposed to 'bad' male couples are more obvious as well.

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In conclusion, and still using the Stallone films as foils, I suggest directions for further research, and signal political limitations in thinking about masquerade solely or primarily as parodic performance or subversive spectacle. Although resistance through masquerade is not the only answer, I find arguing that masculinity and femininity are both masquerades polemically useful, because it makes it

easier to question, understand, and enjoy popular mainstream representations like *Lock Up* and *Tango and Cash*.

### **DRESSING UP, PUTTING ON, AND STEPPING OUT: THEORIES OF MASQUERADE**

I find looking at the secondary characters on which analyses of masquerades depend makes theoretical *partis pris* more visible. For masquerades change according to who is looking, how, why, at whom. If we are to assess how they are linked to power, and to resistance, we must think about how they function, and unravel the ways they are interconnected. We need, in other words, to distinguish dressing up (embellishment) from putting on (parody, critique), from stepping out (affirmation, contestation).

Riviere's essay, for example, is broadly interested in 'intermediate types' (Riviere 1929:35). In passing she compares her academic women subjects to three different sets of homosexuals: (1) gay men who 'exaggerate their heterosexuality as a "defence" against their homosexuality' (Riviere 1929:35); (2) 'homosexual women who, while taking no interest in other women, wish for "recognition" of their masculinity from men and claim to be the equals of men, or in other words to be men themselves' (Riviere 1929:37); and (3) a single gay man who finds sexual satisfaction by disguising himself as his sister, then looking at himself in a mirror.

Because Riviere thinks of sexuality only in relation to gender, she sees all these various masquerades as motivated by a similar need to disguise the desire to be heterosexual men. Throughout, she speaks only of 'womanliness' as a masquerade. In her view, no active female desire or lesbian eroticism exists. Gay male desire, too, is silenced.<sup>5</sup>

Had Riviere voiced the term she represses in each comparison, however, she might have mentioned the gay 'mirror' man's homosexual and feminine masquerades, the butch lesbian's homosexual and masculine masquerades, and the butch clones' heterosexual and masculine masquerades. All these people, it seems to me, are busy dressing up, if not necessarily putting on or stepping out.

The case histories Riviere recounts present other matrices of masquerade as well. The first suggests class and racial masquerades are entwined with feminine masquerade. As a child, Riviere's client, a

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wealthy Southern woman, dreamt of disguising herself as a domestic in order to kill her mother and father and steal their money. She also fantasized about seducing a black man, then masking her provocation by saying it was necessary to avoid rape. Surely this woman is engaging in multiple masquerades, dressing up to step out in style, even though Riviere never says so.<sup>6</sup>

Lacan, in contrast, recognizes that dressing up is a necessary part of stepping out as a sexual being, for both men and women. 'In 'The Meaning of the Phallus,' he maintains that, since both sexes lack and desire the phallus, both find pleasure and protection in disguise. Heterosexual men cover up their lack by projecting it on to women. In order to find a replacement part on their lover's body for what they know they do not have, heterosexual women willingly if unwittingly suspend all disbelief that the penis is not the phallus. Heterosexual desire is thus predicated on both sexes' tacit agreement to remain unconscious of how comic each finds the other's posturings. In Lacan's framework, as a result, these masquerades can never be parodies or put-ons.

And what of homosexual men and women? Like Riviere, in this essay Lacan sees lesbians as asexual, as suffering from a 'disappointment' in heterosexual love.<sup>7</sup> In a companion piece, 'Guiding Remarks

for a Congress on Feminine Sexuality,' he is more open to lesbian sexuality, admitting that lesbians are more interested in femininity than in masculinity. Nevertheless he continues to speak of lesbianism as transvestism, noting 'we still have to take up the naturalness with which such women appeal to their quality of being purely men' (Lacan 1966:97). Whether this lesbian 'dressing up' refers only to the butch, and whether it can be seen as 'putting on,' as challenging the alignment of masculinity and femininity with heterosexuality, is unclear.

Lacan is less concerned in 'The Meaning of the Phallus' with male homosexuality, presumably because gay men share with straight men the same desire for possession of the phallus. For both dressing up and display are essential. Indeed, Lacan's most provocative remark, made just after his discussion of homosexuality, obliquely links heterosexual masculinity with homosexual masculinity. Because in his framework the phallus is necessarily veiled, it is difficult to know where difference begins and where it ends.<sup>8</sup> As a result, Lacan notes that 'in the human being virile display itself appears as feminine' (Lacan 1958:85). For all their cocky, self-assured, flaunting of masculinity, therefore, straight men and butch clones both are merely masquerading.

Unlike both Riviere and Lacan, Doane pointedly mentions race and region. Briefly, she describes masculinity as a masquerade as well. Nowhere, however, does she mention homosexuality or explore the possibility that feminine masquerade might be pleasurable as well as anxious.<sup>9</sup> She says she wants to distinguish feminine masquerade from

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cross-dressing and transvestism. Yet homosexuality is not reducible to fetishistic transvestism. As Robert Stoller points out, the lesbian butch is erotically excited by the men's clothes she wears: she does not deny she 'is a female, knows she is a homosexual, does not wish for sex change and does not try to pass as a man' (Stoller 1985:150).

Butler's discussions of gender trouble, in contrast, revolve around the dressing up, putting on, and stepping out of butch lesbians and drag queens. Butler excels at uncovering the homosexuality repressed in Riviere's and Lacan's discussions of femininity, maintaining that 'gay is to straight not as copy is to original, but rather as copy is to copy' (Butler 1990:31). In her view, neither homosexual nor heterosexual performances are purely apprehensive or defensive. There is room for laughter and pleasure too.

Yet although Butler acknowledges, with Lacan, that 'the masculine subject only *appears* to originate meanings' (Butler 1990:45), she too speaks only of femininity in terms of masquerade, referring to homosexual cross-dressing as parody or performance. Because she rarely refers to the lesbian femme or the gay butch clone, she unwittingly continues the concentration on cross-dressing Doane decries.<sup>10</sup> Most problematic, however, given her goal of destabilizing the body as ground, is her failure to consider class and, especially, race.<sup>11</sup>

Focusing specifically on racial masquerade in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon unhooks both blackness and whiteness from male and female bodies. Although, he says, blacks must don white masks if they are to achieve success in colonial societies, this does not guarantee authenticity or essence: 'the Negro is not, anymore than the white man' (Fanon 1967a: 231). The white masks of the book's title disguise whites as well as black. As Stephan Feuchtwang observes, in Fanon's understanding of race, skin color thus becomes a kind of 'psychic interface' with social, political, and economic consequences (Feuchtwang 1985:458).

But the ambivalence which haunts whites as well as blacks is not equivalent. Other blacks often see through masquerades of speech, dress, and carriage adopted by passing and/or educated.<sup>12</sup> Whites, however, tend to type all blacks as 'black', and to dismiss them as inferior by treating them as children.<sup>13</sup>

Bhabha continues Fanon's project of examining racial masquerades. Drawing on Lacan, he argues that the sexual fetish and the racial stereotype are similarly structured around recognition and disavowal, pleasure and anxiety. Like Fanon, he sees racial masquerades as potentially subversive. On the one hand, he says, mimicry of colonial authority exposes this authority as hollow.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, 'the effect of mimicry is camouflage...' (Bhabha 1984:125): 'the veil [of the Algerian woman freedom fighter] conceals bombs' (Bhabha 1986: xxiii). Thus, while the ultimate threat of masquerade may be that under the

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mask there is *nothing*, there is always also a fear that the costume hides *something*. In the case of the Algerian woman, different contexts produced different perceptions: Europeans saw only the veil; Algerians 'saw' the masquerade *and* the bombs.

Yet Bhabha's decision to posit racial difference as *analogous* to sexual difference makes it hard to think the two categories together and against each other. His insistence on ambivalence makes it difficult to distinguish dressing up, putting on, and stepping out. Indeed, as Robert Young says, Bhabha's work is so dense that it becomes difficult to know 'who "the colonizer," "the colonized," or "the native" actually is' (Young 1990:151).

The uncertainty over how to interpret an ambiguous figure like the veiled Algerian woman is particularly acute. Not only does who she 'is' depend on who is looking, who she 'is' is obviously tied to a specific historical moment. The identities of the butch clone, the lesbian femme, and the passing black seem to me similarly connected to resistance and power. Yet where the Algerian woman freedom fighter relies on her veil for disguise, the clone, the femme, and the passing black use their bodies as masks, making it impossible to refer to the body as ground. The passing black, as Fanon shows, destabilizes whiteness as well as blackness. The clone and the femme upset the delicate balance of heterosexuality and gender 'truth,'<sup>15</sup> and offer an escape from the transvestite trap Butler and Doane confront. For the problem with looking at the drag queen, the lesbian butch, or the cultural cross-dresser,<sup>16</sup> is that it is all too easy to invoke a 'true' gender or racial identity under the clothes.

The butch clone's muscles and macho attire, in particular, ensure he looks 'like a man,' and a working-class man at that.<sup>17</sup> He is living proof that, as Lacan hints, masculinity, not just femininity, is a masquerade. Yet for those who know where and when to look, his homosexuality, seemingly so invisible, is unmistakable. Like the femme, moreover, he demonstrates that dressing up, putting on, and stepping out can be fun. Their masquerades, unlike those Doane and Riviere describe, are pleasurable, not just anxious.

No matter what figure we choose to look at, however, if we really want to question the body as base, we must acknowledge all matrices of masquerade, and study 'specific discursive form[s], in...particular historical conjuncture[s]' (Bhabha 1983:204). As one contribution to this project, I offer the following 'queer' examination of Stallone and his clones' muscular macho masculinity.

## THE 'MATURE' STALLONE AND THE STALLONE CLONE

Many male genre films contain homoerotic elements. But because most center on a single man or a group of men, it is relatively easy, as Steve

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Neale and Paul Willemsen argue, to displace, diffuse, and/or deny the homoerotic overtones of male bonding.

*Lock Up* and *Tango and Cash* make such denial difficult. Both are far more overtly homoerotic, if also more homophobic, than the Rocky or the Rambo series, *F.I.S.T.* (Jewison, 1979), *Rhinestone* (Clark, 1984), or *Cobra* (Cosmatos, 1986). Both are in part prison films, a sub-genre where homosexuality is more openly acknowledged than in most.<sup>18</sup> Both also draw on the *doppelgänger* sub-genre, and therefore 'enact the shifting relationships of men to masculinity and femininity, heterosexuality and homosexuality, sadism and masochism,' in much the same ways the literary doubles Otto Rank studied do (Holmlund 1986:33).

Most importantly, however, *Lock Up* and *Tango and Cash* feature male heroes who are *bona fide* buddies. True, Stallone sometimes had male friends in his earlier films, but these men were his helpers, never his equals, let alone his clones. *Lock Up* and *Tango and Cash*, in contrast, valorize, even glamorize, male friendships and relationships through the constant reflection of beautiful male bodies.

*Lock Up* tells the story of model prisoner Frank Leone's (Stallone) transfer to Gateway, a maximum security prison run by his old archrival, Warden Drumgoole (Donald Sutherland). The Warden is out to break Leone once and for all. The film chronicles Leone's resistance and his adoption of a young white male prisoner, First Base (Larry Romano). When First Base is murdered by the Warden's goons two-thirds of the way through the film, Leone's resolve hardens. After several spectacular torture scenes featuring a scantily clad Stallone, Leone exposes the Warden's villainy and obtains his own release.

*Tango and Cash* is more consistently a buddy movie. Tango (Stallone) and Cash (Kurt Russell) are rival California cops who join forces to fight a drug czar named Perret (Jack Palance). They begin to threaten his business; he, in return, has them framed and imprisoned for murder. Again we see Tango and Cash's prison tortures, then their death-defying escape, and finally their righteous retribution.

In both films masculine masquerade is doubled, for the clones masquerade as and mimic Stallone. In *Lock Up*, First Base is a younger, thinner, shorter, more naive but only slightly less muscular version of Frank Leone. Their hair color and cuts, speech patterns and movements, are identical. In *Tango and Cash*, Cash is less well dressed and more outspoken than Tango, but the two are almost equally muscular and almost equally 'bad'. The reflection of Stallone in the clones, combined with their constant framing, muscles bulging, in doors, mirrors, newspaper photos, and TV screens, leaves no doubt that these are men who are meant to be looked at, by men as much as if not more than by women. Clearly they are spectacles as well as actors.

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Omnipresent two shots and frenetic cross-cutting indicate the force of Stallone and his clones' emotional bonds, even though they rarely touch. Tango and Cash, especially, look at each other long

and hard and, although their looks signal competitiveness, they convey more than a little affection, admiration, and appreciation as well.<sup>19</sup> The shower scene in particular suggests that for these men, heterosexuality may be merely a macho pose. Here the looks are particularly 'meaningful,' the dialogue full of double entendres. Stallone's and Russell's biceps, calves, pecs, abs, and butts are displayed for their—and our—gaze as they stand naked in the prison shower. They look each other up—and down. Cash drops the soap. 'What are you doing?' Tango asks. 'Relax, soap up and don't flatter yourself, peewee,' Cash replies. Tango is nervous, but pretends he is shy: 'I don't know you that well.'<sup>20</sup>

In both films Stallone and his clones talk to each other a lot, in simple sentences and using one and two syllable words, of course.<sup>21</sup> Frequently, as in the shower scene, their teasing signals the possibility of a homosexual relationship. An example from *Lock Up*: after spraying each other with water and paint, First Base asks Leone if he is married. 'Are you proposin' to me? You're not my type,' Leone coyly replies. And how to convey in print the delight these inarticulate men take in their shared secret words—in *Lock Up*, 'DTA' ('don't trust anyone'), in *Tango and Cash*, 'FUBAR' ('fucked up beyond all recognition')? Constant explosions and grunts create a super-charged and definitely male sonic atmosphere, while shadowy blue tunnels and steamy rooms set the stage for heated half-lit passion. Not coincidentally, both films include torture by electricity. As we watch these big men twitch involuntarily, we suspect a certain orgasmic pleasure lurks alongside the obvious threat of death.

Both films, it is true, attempt to contain the homoeroticism generated by the display of male bodies and male bonding by positioning Stallone and the clones as 'family' and by designating Stallone as the more 'mature' of the two, labelling him the dad and the older brother-in-law, respectively, of First Base and Cash. Both films also portray the clones as slightly more effeminate, more naive, or more wild than Stallone. Right before he is killed, for example, First Base is made to hold a broom and sweep up. Often, as Neale and Willemsen argue, the direct looks of one man at another are coded as sadistic and attributed to an enemy: both Sutherland and Palance watch Stallone on video screens, and Sutherland, his face half in shadow, often looks down on Stallone in the prison yard below. To safeguard still further Stallone's heterosexuality, in *Lock Up* he is given a girl friend, Melissa (Darlane Fluegel); in *Tango and Cash* he ultimately gives his sister, Kiki (Teri Hatcher), not himself, to Cash. Melissa is clearly part of the 'normal' world outside the prison gates. Gateway is 'hell': the religious lyrics of the final song only underline the obvious. God would hardly approve of Tango's sister, Kiki, however: she

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works as an erotic dancer. We see plenty of her body, and especially, of course, her tits and ass.

But these careful restructurings of hints of homosexuality according to binary oppositions of gender betray the nervousness which underlies masquerades of masculinity: desire between men, the overt enjoyment of another man's body and especially of his penis, must be denied. A man who is a 'real man' does not acknowledge that 'having' a penis is insufficient, that it is *not* the same thing as 'having' the phallus. Fear and narcissism thus permeate masquerades of masculinity as well as masquerades of femininity, even though the two occupy different positions *vis-à-vis* power.

Cut-aways in both these films from moments of spectacle to chase scenes and fire fights only momentarily displace the anxiety accompanying male display, an anxiety which is even more acute in *Tango and Cash* than in *Lock Up* because here Stallone is so clearly aging, and so clearly a yuppie. Unlike *Lock Up*, where Stallone always wears fewer clothes than anyone else, in *Tango and Cash* Stallone's body is relatively rarely seen. As in *Rocky IV*, where in the first part of the film Stallone was

also rich and 'soft,'<sup>22</sup> in *Tango and Cash* costume and props (glasses, Armani suits, the *Wall Street Journal*) link masculinity with power.

As Yvonne Tasker details in her analysis of *Tango and Cash* in this volume, Stallone consciously tried to shift his image in this film—a phenomenon he continued in *Rocky V* (Avildsen, 1990) and *Oscar* (Landis, 1991). Unfortunately, his verbal reference to Rambo—'Rambo is a pussy'— at the beginning of the film is not enough to prove his toughness or compensate for his switch of class allegiance. We want to see the body. In Stallone's case, muscles are costume enough. In clothes, and especially in business suits, he looks overdressed. His attempts at being 'classy' only demonstrate how much masculine masquerades are shaped by class expectations.<sup>23</sup> As one reviewer put it: 'Stallone doesn't wear suits well— he's simply too big.... Stallone and *Tango and Cash* only really get rolling when he strips down to his muscle-tee and beats up bad guys. This, to his credit, he does extraordinarily well' (Fiorillo 1990:301).

But the hyper-spectacle of muscular masculinity both films offer in some ways only compounds the problem. For what's a musclebound straight guy to do when, as Lacan maintains, the very 'exaggeration of masculinity appears feminine' (Lacan 1958:85)? Because 'having' the phallus (masculinity) and 'being' the phallus (femininity) are both performances disguising the same lack of the phallus, 'having' may even tip over into 'being.' The spectacle of Cash in full female drag on the arm of Tango's sister, herself disguised as a motorcycle-riding bull dyke, demonstrates just how tenuous appearances can be: homosexuality always lurks beside heterosexuality. Indeed Butler suggests 'the very notions of

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masculinity and femininity...[are] rooted in unresolved homosexual cathexes' (Butler 1990:54).

But homosexuality and heterosexuality are not the only matrices which structure masculinity and femininity. In *Lock Up* and *Tango and Cash*, homoeroticism and homophobia are always threaded together with racial, class, and national stereotypes to create 'good' masculinities opposed to 'bad' masculinities. The principal characters of both films are white, opposed along ethnic rather than racial lines and, in *Lock Up*, along class lines as well. In both films Stallone plays a version of the sexy family-oriented Italian he made famous in *Rocky*. Admittedly, he insists less on his ethnicity here: hints of 'Italianness' are enough to evoke the whole package, as, for example, Leone's approving comment to his girl friend, 'Now that's Italian!', when she gives him a big kiss, or Tango's teasing of Cash with 'Ciao bella!' Loyalty to family is still a key component, however: Leone passes on to First Base the lessons he has learned in the school of hard knocks ('always be ready to move first'; 'you gotta respect something 'cuz you don't get much, and what you got you gotta protect'), and Tango jealously safeguards his sister's reputation, a losing battle to be sure. Significantly, in both films his enemies are well-to-do and northern European: the Warden Anglo-Saxon, the drug czar, Perret, French.

*Lock Up* is the more progressive of the two films, at least where race is concerned. Male doubles are everywhere, distinguished primarily by race and class. Sadistic poor white prisoners and staff threaten Stallone and his clone with homosexual rape and/or torture, shouting things like 'hey punk, when you gonna paint your nails and answer the name bitch?' Good blacks, on the other hand, become Stallone's allies, even part of his family. Two, Lt Meissner (John Amos) and Mr Braden (William Allen Young), are prison officials. Unlike the Warden, Meissner plays by the rules. His impartiality is evidenced by his dark sunglasses and impassive expression. Of the prisoners, Eclipse (Frank McRae) is the most important. A huge black, he is pitted against Chink Weber (Sonny Landham), the biggest and 'baddest' of the white prisoners. In many ways Eclipse is also the

reincarnation of Stallone/Leone's first white adoptive father: both take him under their wings and welcome him into their garages. Stallone's initiation of First Base into the joys of dipsticks and purring engines is but another link in an Oedipal chain premised on interracial and homosexual adoptions.<sup>24</sup>

In *Tango and Cash*, in contrast, the only real doubles are Tango and Cash. Here 'bad' masculinities are defined through racial and/or national stereotypes. Perret's gang includes blacks, Asians, and a working-class Brit known as Ponytail (Brion James). As in *Lock Up*, references to homosexual rape abound. When Cash walks into prison, for example, someone threatens to 'tear him a new ass' and someone else promises to 'pour brown sugar into [his] hole.' Undaunted, Tango and Cash respond

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Figure 27 *Sylvester Stallone and Kurt Russell in Tango and Cash*

to these 'bad' masculinities with equally homophobic, xenophobic, and racist insults. In the prison electrocution sequence, Ponytail tries to intimidate Cash: 'You're a pretty boy, aren't you? I'm going to yank your thing out of your 'ole and tie it in a knot.' Cash explodes: 'I don't wanna be killed by this Limey immigrant jerk-off. I wanna be killed by an American...jerk-off.'

But Tango and Cash always prefer fighting to talking. The finale is especially spectacular, combining a dazzling display of weaponry—tanks, cars, tractors, machine guns, grenades, dynamite, and more—with a dazzling display of muscles. When the smoke clears, however, Tango, Cash, and Kiki are quite literally the only people left. No longer need we worry about the fate and status of these bulky buddies or their bodies: white masculinity and the family have triumphed with a vengeance.

## CONCLUSION

The insistence in both films on the inviolability of heterosexual masculinity has a hysterical ring to it. The doubling and hyping of masculinity in these films only highlights how much masculinity, like femininity, is a multiple masquerade.

But it would be a mistake to underestimate how much and how often spectators, and performers too, see masquerade as reinforcing hegemonic power relations, precisely because masquerade suggests there may be

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something underneath which is 'real,' and/or 'normal.' As Lacan has shown, masquerade is inherently nostalgic, an appearance which gestures toward a lack perceived as originary. It is not coincidental, then, that Stallone's fans are so often conservatives: his mask of healthy, happy, heterosexual, white masculinity is eminently reassuring to the Right. Indeed, Stallone's reflection in and love for the Stallone clones of *Lock Up* and *Tango and Cash* may only increase this reactionary appeal. The butch clone is, after all, an ambiguous figure. Like the lesbian femme and the passing black, his identity is fluid, and the spectator in many ways holds the key which unlocks the meaning of his performance and spectacle, interpreting it variously as dressing up, as putting on, or as stepping out.

Thus, though I may talk about Stallone and the clones' masculinity and heterosexuality as masquerades, most people do not see them as such. The kind of perverse interrogation of box office blockbusters I have engaged in here has another drawback as well: there is always the risk that the specificity of homosexual pleasures will disappear within speculation about homoeroticism in what are, in this case, basically heterosexual male genre films.<sup>25</sup> This risk increases astronomically, it seems to me, if as critics we fail to notice or downplay the films' homophobia. It's like thinking *Soul Man* (Steve Miner, 1986), where a white man masquerades as black to beat Harvard Law School's affirmative action quotas, could ever tell us the whole truth about race and racism.

Still, I think, 'queer' analyses like this one are useful, because as Riviere hints, with the concept of masquerade we do not have to divorce critique from identification: dressing up, putting on, and stepping out are all possibilities. And since, in Butler's words, 'appearances become more suspect all the time' (Butler 1990:47), the question of what, if anything, masquerade masks need not produce answers which are mutually exclusive. What are decisive, as Fanon and Bhabha insist, are the concrete effects masquerades have.

As film critics, we may want to look with particular attention at a new sub-genre of action adventure films I call the 'buddy body movie.' Popularized in the 1980s, this sub-genre includes not just *Lock Up* and *Tango and Cash* but also the *Beverly Hills Cop* (Brest, 1984, and Donner, 1989), *Lethal Weapon* (Donner, 1987 and 1989) and *Die Hard* (McTiernan, 1988, and Harlin, 1990) films, *Twins* (Reitman, 1988), *Internal Affairs* (Figgis, 1990) and more—the list grows longer every day. All combine male action with male spectacle, and foreground matrices of sexuality, class, and race in ways the male genre films Neale and Willemsen studied do not.

After all, admitting that masculinity is a multiple masquerade 'does not constitute a denial of its forcefulness, its effectivity' (Doane 1988: 45).

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Masculinity may be only a fantasy, but as the success of Sylvester Stallone's films, including their invocation by right-wing politicians like Reagan and Bush, so amply demonstrates, masquerades of masculinity are eminently popular, and undeniably potent.

## NOTES

Thanks to Dale Watermulder and Jon Jonakin for their help.

1. 1 Eugenie Lemoine-Luccioni is more snide. She says, 'if the penis were the phallus, men would have no need of feathers or ties or medals' (Lemoine-Luccioni 1983:34).
2. 2 See also Doane (1988:47).
3. 3 Marjorie Garber adopts a similar strategy when she argues that both sexes experience 'fetish envy.' Garber does not consider racial fetishes and masquerades in her discussion of 'the triangulated relationship between Michael Jackson, Diana Ross and Madonna,' however, an oversight I find troubling. See Garber (1990:55).

4. 4 The expression is Chandra Mohanty's, in an article which eloquently denounces the silencing of race in academic analyses. See Mohanty (1990: 180).
5. 5 Butler makes much the same argument, though she skips over Riviere's analyses of gay men. See Butler (1990:50–4).
6. 6 Riviere's assessment neatly sidesteps class, age, race, and region: the black man becomes merely 'the man,' the wealthy Southern woman just 'the woman' (Riviere 1929:37–8). Riviere says nothing about her client's class-based masquerade as a servant or her imaginary transformation of herself from child to adult, and fails to comment on her client's desire for a black man.

A second case revolves around class. Here Riviere describes an acquaintance, a 'capable' 50-year-old housewife, who habitually 'act[s] a part' with workmen, the butcher, and the baker, making herself out to be an 'uneducated, foolish and bewildered woman' while 'rul[ing them] in reality with a rod of iron' (Riviere 1929:39). Yet in her analysis Riviere again reduces all difference to gender difference: working-class men become merely 'potentially hostile father figures' (Riviere: 39). See further Holmlund (1989:109–10) and Doane (1988:48.)

7. 7 See Lacan (1958:85) and Butler (1990:49).
8. 8 See Garber (1990:54) for a similar observation.
9. 9 See further Holmlund (1991) and Straayer (1990:51).
10. 10 Butler mentions the femme and the clone only three times. See Butler (1990: 51, 122, and 123).
11. 11 Except for nods in the introduction and conclusion to the need to 'describe their convergencies within the social field,' these matrices of masquerade disappear entirely (Butler 1990:13; see also 145).
12. 12 See Fanon (1967b: 17–27), especially 17–18.
13. 13 In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon angrily notes that 'a white man addressing a Negro behaves exactly like an adult with a child and starts smirking, whispering, patronizing, cozening' (Fanon 1967a: 31). See also Fanon (1967b: 102).
14. 14 See Bhabha (1984:129, 131).
15. 15 On the femme, see Holmlund (1991).

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16. 16 On cultural cross-dressing see, for example, Ching-Liang Low 1989 and Silverman 1989.
17. 17 See Humphries (1985:77–8).
18. 18 Yvonne Tasker argues rightly, however, that prison films associate homosexuality with punishment: heterosexuality is not an option.
19. 19 Steve Neale, in contrast, maintains that 'the male body cannot be marked explicitly as the erotic object of another male look: that look must be motivated in some other way, its erotic component repressed.... [T]he male body must be disqualified, so to speak, as an object of erotic contemplation and desire' (Neale 1983:8). Willemsen, too, sees Mann's Westerns as permeated by 'fundamentally homosexual voyeurism (almost always repressed)' (Willemsen 1981:16). See also Neale (1980) and Smith (1989).

20. 20 Penis jokes like this one are found throughout 1970s and 1980s Hollywood films. As is the case in *Tango and Cash*, however, the penis itself is rarely seen because, as Peter Lehman notes, 'the awe we attribute to the striking visibility of the penis is best served by keeping it covered up.... [It] may, much of the time, be unconscious homoeroticism.'
21. 21 Their chatter distinguishes them from the silent, solitary hunks Neale studied.  
See Neale (1983:7).
22. 22 For a detailed discussion of aging, class, and masculinity in *Rocky IV* see Holmlund (1990:88–91).
23. 23 In a study of *Rocky II*, Valerie Walkerdine stresses that 'masculinity is always lived as class specific, in relation to the body and the mental/manual division of labour' (Walkerdine 1986:198). Stallone's scrappy macho masculinity is identifiably working-class: for his characters, as for many of his fans, she says, fighting represents a 'bid for mastery, a struggle to conquer the conditions of oppression, which remain as terror' (Walkerdine 1986:177).
24. 24 The extent to which this Oedipal chain is forged in a homoerotic fire is more than usually obvious in *Lock Up*, since Leone and First Base function both as father and son and as butch clone. As Butler says, 'the resolution of the Oedipal complex affects gender identification through not only the incest taboo, but, prior to that, the taboo against homosexuality. The result is that one identifies with the same-sexed object of love, thereby internalizing both the aim and object of the homosexual cathexis' (Butler 1990:63).
25. 25 On the overuse of the term 'homosexual' in film studies, see further Green (1984:47): 'contemporary concerns should require us to differentiate this [homosocial bonding] from some kind of gay eroticism, as I imagine many gay men will find little interest in what are manifestly heterosexual phantasies about heterosexual men (together).'

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