

lounges against the deep empty space filling the rest of the canvas. Nicholls finds an interesting place somewhere between figural and abstract to launch a new chapter in transgender aesthetics—one in which the abstract and the figural are not binary opposites but where they inhabit the same space at the same time, letting us know what it means to live in a queer time and place. This chapter has traced a postmodern aesthetic through eccentric and extravagant representations of the body, body parts, neo-organs, and trans bodies. I have used the term technotopia, or technotopic, to refer to the spatial dimensions of this aesthetic, its preoccupation with the body as a site created through technological and aesthetic innovation. Technotopic inventions of the body resist idealizations of bodily integrity, on the one hand, and rationalizations of its disintegration, on the other; instead, they represent identity through decay, detachability, and subjectivity in terms of what Hesse referred to as “the non-logical self.” The transgender form becomes the most clear and compelling representation of our contemporary state of permanent dislocation. Semi-living objects, semi-dying art pieces, and semi-coherent human bodies express and condense the set of relations that Jameson referred to as postmodern; but while he feared the loss of historicity, the waning of affect, and the decline of the masterwork, these “nonworks” remind us that political defiance in late capitalism has a powerful place, takes unexpected forms, and hides out in the seemingly superficial and ludic forms of experimentation that have been dismissed as a form of superficial body politics. Superficiality, Besemer’s and Nicholls’s work suggests, may not be a symptom of a diseased political culture but a marvelously flat and uninhibited repudiation of the normativity inherent in “deep” political projects.

Oh Behave!

Austin Powers and the Drag Kings

That ain’t no woman! It’s a man, man!

—Austin Powers

There has been much ink spilled in popular media and popular queer culture about the intimate relations shared between gay men and straight women. The “fag hag” role has indeed become a staple of popular film, and at least part of the explanation for how gay male culture and gay male images have so thoroughly penetrated popular film and television cultures has to do with the recognized and lived experience of bonds between “queens” and “girls.”¹ New bonds on television between gay men and straight men (*Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *Boy Meets Boy*) only solidify a general recognition of the important contributions made by gay white men to popular culture. Still, there is no such recognition of the influence of lesbian queer culture, and there is no relationship between lesbians and straight men that parallels the bonds between “fags” and their “hags.” While the structure of the dynamic between lesbians and hetero-males could change significantly in the next few decades as more and more lesbians become parents and raise sons, for the moment there seem to be no sitcoms on the horizon ready to exploit the humorous possibilities of interactions between a masculine woman and her butch guy pal or set to send five dykes to “makeover” some unsuspecting heterosexual guy or gal. This is not to say that no relations exist between the way lesbians produce and circulate cultures of masculinity and the way men do. These relations, however, are for the most part submerged, mediated, and difficult to read.

This chapter recognizes that masculinity has become a hot topic in recent years for both scholars and journalists, but that popular culture continues to protect the essential bond between masculinity and men. Any number of writers claim now to be examining a current “crisis” in masculinity, and in both the United States and England, articles appear regularly in leading newspapers asking questions about male violence, the difficulties faced by

parents raising male children, and the long-term effects of changing conceptions of manliness. As another indication of the popular appeal of masculinity in the 1990s, Susan Faludi's book *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* received widespread attention, and was lauded for its attempt to address the trials and the tribulations as well as the power and the glory of contemporary manhood (Faludi 1999). In academia, there are journals and book series given over to the study of men, male bodies, and masculinities; furthermore, there are numerous new titles in the burgeoning field of "men's studies." Unfortunately, in this flurry of media interest and scholarly work on dominant maleness and its crises, almost no attention has been paid to the way that the crisis produces its own solution in terms of alternative forms of masculinity. All too often, solutions for the crisis of white male masculinity are proffered in terms of the shoring up of that same form of manhood; real solutions have to be sought out in the minority masculinities that flourish in the wake of dominant masculinity's decline.

As an example of the limited ways in which we approach the crisis of dominant masculinity in the United States, we can turn the series of school yard shootings by white boys in the 1990s—in Arkansas and Colorado most prominently—that rocked the nation and may have had some connection to the escalation of hate crimes toward gays, lesbians, and transgender people, particularly in rural areas. Much of the popular coverage of these seemingly random events asked broad questions about gun control, violence in video games, and the breakdown of the family, but few critics thought to interrogate the construction of adolescent white hetero-masculinity itself. In fact, only rarely were these violent crimes specifically attributed to white boys or white men. More often, school shootings and hate crimes are depicted as random attacks by disparate individuals. While obviously it does not make sense to simply demonize young white men as a group, we should be asking some hard questions about the forms of white masculinity that we encourage and cultivate in this society. I believe that the rise of alternative models of masculinity within gay, lesbian, and transsexual communities in this century has been part of an ongoing interrogation of models of manhood that were previously viewed as "natural," "unimpeachable," and even "inevitable." These alternative masculinities, moreover, have long histories and have spawned potent subcultures. Very little time or scholarship, however, has been devoted to recording and documenting the shape and the narratives of these subcultures. For this reason, few mainstream critics think to

look to those subcultural histories when searching for answers to the problem of white male violence.

This chapter traces the strange and barely discernible influence of lesbian drag king cultures on hetero-male comic film. My contention throughout will be not that straight men learn how to parody masculinity from butch women and then take that parody to the bank; rather, I will be trying to map circuits of subcultural influence across a wide range of textual play. I take for granted Dick Hebdige's formulation in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* of subcultures as marginalized cultures that are quickly absorbed by capitalism and then robbed of their oppositional power, but I will expand on Hebdige's influential reading of subcultures by arguing that some subcultures do not simply fade away as soon as they have been mined and plundered for material (Hebdige 1979). Furthermore, I emphasize the utility in tracking precisely when, where, and how the subculture is "beamed up" into the mainstream. Tracing the mysterious process by which, say, a performance in a queer nightclub, a genre of queer humor, or a specific mode of parody has been observed, appreciated, and then reproduced is not simple, and has much to offer future studies of the ever more complex lines of affiliation between the marginal and the dominant. One obvious way to trace the difference between the dominant and the marginal in this instance is to see who becomes rich from certain performances of male parody and who never materially benefits at all. And yet, profit is not ultimately the best gauge of success, and it may well be that by tracing a cultural phenomenon back to its source, we restore a different kind of prestige to the subculture and honor its creativity in the process.

King Comedies

Nineteen ninety-seven was a banner year for abject English masculinity films—*The Full Monty* (directed by Peter Cattaneo) and *Austin Powers* (directed by Jay Roach) both took U.S. audiences by surprise. *The Full Monty*, for example, was made for only \$3 million, but within a few months it had made twice that at the box office. Both of these "king comedies," as I like to call them—using king as a more precise term than camp—were built around the surprising vulnerabilities of the English male body and psyche. Indeed, the king comedy as a genre attempts to exploit not the power but the frailty of the male body for the purpose of generating laughs that come at the hero's

expense. King comedies also capitalize on the humor that comes from revealing the derivative nature of dominant masculinities, and so it trades heavily in tropes of doubling, disguise, and impersonation. So while *Austin Powers* parodically reenacts a long tradition of secret agent films, raiding the coffers of sexist British humor from *Benny Hill* to the *Carry On* comedies, *The Full Monty* forces its lads to relearn masculinity the hard way—from women.

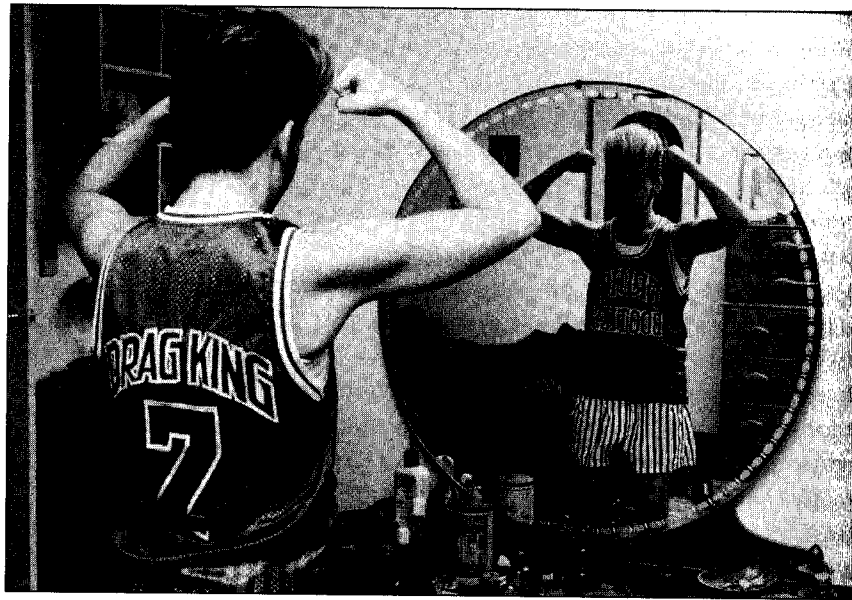
What models of masculinity do *Austin Powers* and *The Full Monty* draw on? What is their appeal to U.S. audiences in particular, and what vision of Englishness and English manliness circulate through these very different comedies? Furthermore, what cultural changes have allowed for mainstream parodies of dominant masculinity in the 1990s? What are the main features of the king comedy genre, and what kinds of subcultural histories go into this particular form of humor? Can we read kinging and king comedy as an equivalent for camp? If camp, on some level, describes an ironic relation between femaleness and the performance of femininity, can king describe the distance between maleness and the performance of masculinity in comic terms?

King comedies emerge out of specific traditions of masculine humor, but in their present incarnation they can also be linked to the recent explosion of active drag king cultures. Not surprisingly, mainstream comedies about masculinity never do articulate their indebtedness to these subcultural and queer comedic representations; accordingly, we have to re-create and actively imagine the possible routes of transmission that carry drag king humor from the queer club to the mainstream teen boy blockbuster movie. In his book *Disidentifications*, Jose E. Muñoz allows for such re-creations of routes of transmission by way of the term counterpublics: for Muñoz, counterpublics are “communities and relational chains of resistance that contest the dominant public sphere” (Muñoz 1999, 146). Counterpublics, in Muñoz’s work on performances by queers of color, validate and produce minoritarian public spheres while at the same time offering a potent challenge to the white heteronormativity of majoritarian public spheres. Drag king culture, I believe, constitutes just such a counterpublic space where white and heteronormative masculinities can be contested, and where minority masculinities can be produced, validated, fleshed out, and celebrated.

In my work on drag kings, I have tried to identify the specificity of drag king acts and distinguish them from drag queen acts by using the term kinging. As I explain in my drag king chapter of *Female Masculinity*, to king a role

can involve a number of different modes of performance from earnest repetition to hyperbolic re-creation, and from quiet understatement to theatrical layering (Halberstam 1998). My hope was there, and remains here, that we can recognize a particular kind of cultural work that takes place in drag king performances that is not exactly commensurate with what we call camp and yet has similar effects. Camp has been written about widely as a critical comic style deployed by Euro-American gay male and drag queen cultures, but present in other nongay cultural forms. Esther Newton, in particular, in *Mother Camp* traces camp back to drag queen performances where specific use is made of “incongruity, theater and humor” to denaturalize gender (Newton 1979, 106). Obviously, while camp may have originated in and be particular to drag queen cultures, it also travels as a cultural style, and allows for a gay counterpublic site to influence and ironize the depiction of femininity in mainstream venues. In other words, in the same way that camp shows up in many sites that are not gay as an aesthetic mode detached from one particular identity, so we might expect kinging to exceed the boundaries of lesbian and transgender subcultures and circulate independently of the drag king act itself. In relation to the king comedies, we need not trace one-to-one instances of transmission between drag king cultures and filmmakers and producers; what we can trace, however, is a particular kingy effect within otherwise mainstream representations.

We find moments of king humor in both auteur comedy (Jerry Lewis or Woody Allen) and ensemble comedy featuring a comic duo or trio (Abbot and Costello, Laurel and Hardy, the Marx Brothers); in each case, male fragility or male stupidity has been tapped as a primary source of humor. In much male comedy, indeed, a weak or vulnerable male is paired with a more robust specimen of manhood. Sometimes—as in Laurel and Hardy, say—both forms of manhood are shown to be lacking and futile, but often—as in a Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin routine—the bumbling guy makes the straight guy less formal and the straight guy makes his idiot companion more appealing. And sometimes, it is difficult to see or appreciate the kingy effect of the classic comedy act until it is reproduced in a counterpublic sphere. So, for example, Laurel and Hardy may not immediately shout male parody, and yet, when we see Beryl Reid and Susannah York dressing up as Laurel and Hardy in *The Killing of Sister George*, the kingy effect comes to the surface. In much the same way as the image of a gay man impersonating Bette Davis makes Davis herself into a camp icon, so the image of lesbians impersonating Laurel and Hardy can transform them into king icons.



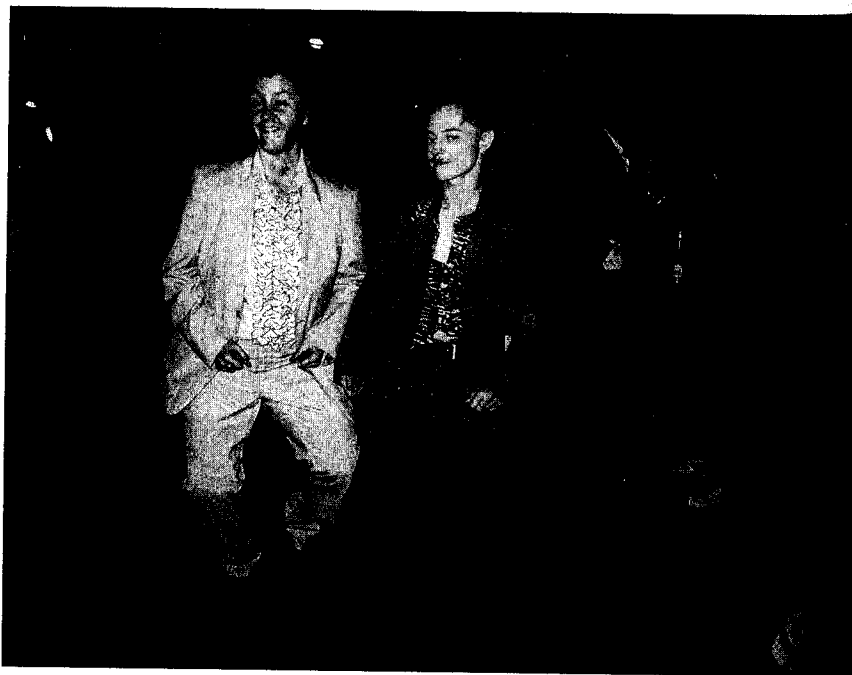
Del LaGrace Volcano, "Mo B. Dick with Muscles," 1999, *The Drag King Book*. Printed by permission of the artist.

Whereas camp reads dominant culture at a slant and mimics dominant forms of femininity to produce and ratify alternative drag femininities that revel in irony, sarcasm, inversion, and insult, kinging reads dominant male masculinity and explodes its effects through exaggeration, parody, and earnest mimicry. It may be helpful to use some images to establish some of the methods of drag king performance. In "Mo B. Dick with Muscles," Volcano's photographic method allows us to visualize the drag king technique of "de-authentication." The mirror scene is one that Volcano returns to repeatedly in his work. Here, the mirror is a clue that what you are looking at is not to be read as real, and yet the image itself of Mo B. flexing is a classic pose of authenticity. The muscle pose is complemented by the basketball T-shirt, but even as the shirt affirms maleness, seemingly it also deconstructs it because "DRAG KING" is inscribed across the back. As the viewer searches for clues as to the "authentic gender" of the body in sight, the photograph frames the project of authenticity as flawed and unproductive. Instead, Volcano revels in the proliferation of clues and red herrings all in the same location.

Another strategy favored by Volcano can be called "masculine supplementarity." Now we move from the drag king and his mirrored self to the drag king coupled with what could be a drag queen or a bio-woman in Volcano's "Tits and Tomcat." The "tits" on the "woman" here both affirm and destabilize Tomcat's masculinity. On the one hand, they allow us to see him as obviously not female, but on the other hand, his size in relation to the much larger female allows him to be read as not male. Ultimately, however, the woman's hyperfemininity *lends* the drag king any masculinity that his own image lacks and indeed supplements his masculinity. In many ways, the contrast between Mike Myers and Elizabeth Hurley as Austin Powers and Vanessa Kensington, respectively, in *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* depends on masculine supplementarity. He anxiously announces and emphasizes his masculinity even as she towers over him and makes visible his masculine lack. Powers's lack of sex appeal is supplemented and veiled by Vanessa's desire *nonetheless*.



Del LaGrace Volcano, "Tits and Tomcat," 1999, *The Drag King Book*. Printed by permission of the artist.



Del LaGrace Volcano, "The Geezers: Double the Trouble," 1999, *The Drag King Book*. Printed by permission of the artist.

Here one drag king is coupled with another in order to enhance or emphasize the realness of the drag masculinity. Doubling, as we will see, is a major trope in *Austin Powers*, and in both the dominant and the subcultural arenas, masculine doubling invokes a homoerotic aesthetic. Doubling, however, is different from cloning or impersonating—white masculinity in particular becomes more performative when it is not simply multiplied but, as we see here in "Elvis Herselvis and Elvis Herselvis Impersonator," replicated imperfectly. We might consider the Mini Me clone in *Austin Powers 2* as the mainstream version of this standard drag king move whereby a form of masculinity, which is already defined in terms of impersonation (Elvis), is impersonated. Finally, I want to name one last drag king strategy of masculine performance: indexical representation. Volcano's cover for *The Drag King Book*, a photo titled "Duke: King of the Hill" (in chapter 5), uses one of the "realness" kings as a cover and as *the* cover. Without the title that runs across his middle, viewers would not know that this masculine icon was a king—so

we can refer to a strategy of indexical naming that reminds viewers or readers at various moments that they are watching or viewing a representation of a representation. Mike Myers uses precisely this mode of indexing in a clever slight gag in *Austin Powers*. In this scene, Austin walks around a room nude while Vanessa, seated in the foreground and oblivious to his presence, holds up various objects (a sausage, a magnifying glass, a pen) that simultaneously conceal and prosthetically extend his penis. In this penis concealment/replacement sequence, the naked body of the male is both on display and under construction; while the gaze of the camera at Austin's nude body should confirm at least that this body is phallic, in fact, once again it suggests that the body requires a prosthetic supplement. Like the drag king strip act that culminates in the exposure of not the female body but the dildo, this scene suggests that masculinity and indeed maleness are no less constructed on the body than in the clothing.



Del LaGrace Volcano, "Elvis Herselvis and Elvis Herselvis Impersonator," 1999, *The Drag King Book*. Printed by permission of the artist.

Drag king parodies of particularly white masculinity are perhaps the most popular form of drag king performance at present. In the past, male impersonation might have been much more oriented toward the production of an effect of male credibility (Storme Delaverie of the Jewel Box Revue, for example); but the most recent wave of drag king cultures has reveled in the humor of male mimicry and the power of male parody. At a drag king show nowadays, spectators will see comedic acts outnumbering sexy acts ten to one, and while certainly this has something to do with the influence of drag queen models of camp performance, it also seems to appeal to the spectators' desire for a deconstruction of maleness rather than a reconstruction of masculinity elsewhere. Much of the humor of these parodies will revolve around exposing the dated look of latter-day sex gods (like Tom Jones, Elvis, or Donny Osmond), and emphasizing the prosthetic nature of male sexual appeal by using overstuffed crotches, chest rugs, and wigs.

In my own work on female masculinity, I have tried to provide full accounts of the histories, forms, and cultures of these so-called counterfeit masculinities—masculinities that are produced subculturally, and that challenge the primacy, authenticity, and originality of dominant masculinities—and I want to continue that work here by tracking the effect of the rise of mimic genders on those bodies that still imagine themselves to be original. So while we may grant the reversal of original and copy in queer theoretical formulations of heterosexuality and homosexuality, the question I want to tackle here is how do drag king performances (copies, supposedly) influence the representation of male performativity (original, supposedly)?

Drag king shows draw large crowds of both straight and gay spectators, and they have also attracted quite a bit of media interest. Mainstream magazine articles on drag kings have commented on the altogether unusual and hilarious spectacle of ridicule directed at dominant masculinity; and yet the general interest shown in drag king theater has not translated into anything like mainstream visibility. Drag king shows and clubs may well have been a fixture in places like New York City and San Francisco for well over five years now, but there still seems to be little market beyond the lesbian club circuit for the parodies of male midlife crisis, the performances of bloated male pride, and the drag king stand-up comedy routines. The reverse sexism of the drag king shows has, not surprisingly, simply failed to sell. But while marketing people presume that mainstream audiences will not tolerate the active ridicule of male sex symbols by queer male impersonators, there is no such assumption made about the appeal of men parodying masculinity. Of course,

the tolerance for male parodies of masculinity depends on a long history of male comedy within which male insufficiency is first played for laughs and then rescued from a future of constant boyhood or else explicit effeminacy by the mechanism of compulsory heterosexuality. The transition from being an inadequate, but humorous boy to becoming a sufficient and funny man is made by coding humor as either an intellectual skill (as in Woody Allen films, for example) or a mark of attractive male vulnerability (as in Jerry Lewis films). In the new king comedies, however, humor is neither a skill nor a gift; rather, it is an effective tool for exposing the constructedness of male masculinity.

Many of the king comedies in the theaters today, oddly, seem to have learned some lessons in gender trouble and even show signs of recognizing what students in cultural studies programs across the country already know so well—namely, that in Butler's influential formulation, gender functions as a "copy with no original" (Butler 1991, 21). While this phrase has become a standard academic formulation for rethinking the relations between heterosexual and homosexual embodiment and performance in the late twentieth century, we may still be a little shocked to find evidence of a self-conscious recognition of performativity in mainstream culture itself. Still, the king comedies that I am most interested in here all show dominant masculinity to be the product of repeated and scripted motions; and furthermore, they highlight the ways in which most masculinity copies and models itself on some impossible ideal that it can never replicate.

The king comedy derives much of its humor from an emphasis on small penises and a general concern with male anxiety and fragility. In this respect, it seems to call for a psychoanalytic reading. And yet while psychoanalysis has usefully detailed the forms and methods of male empowerment, only rarely does it provide tools for the examination of male vulnerability. Because of the emphasis on the drama of castration in psychoanalysis, we are left with remarkably limited and humorless ways of thinking about male vulnerability. Indeed, within a phallic economy, one either has the phallus or lacks it; one either masters castration anxiety or is mastered by it. In either case, the drama of castration is tragic rather than comic. The king comedy, however, takes castration anxiety to new levels or new depths rather, and in the process, manages to find and produce more nuanced models of male masculinity. The king comedy, for example, may build on not castration but phallic renunciation, and much of its humor may well derive from exposing the elaborate mechanisms that prop up seemingly normative masculinity.

Traditional psychoanalytic formulations of male comedy tend to read the comic male body as tainted by fallibility and femininity. The funny man, in other words, has often been marked in explicit ways as simply hysterical in all senses of the word. The comic hero, think here of Jerry Lewis, is some combination of twitches and spasms, pratfalls and stutters; he spits, trips, cries, and screams. And yet by marking the funny man as flawed and hysterical, instead of seductive and hyperbolic, say, we simply read him back into that phallic economy of having or lacking.

Psychoanalytic critics talk about masculine comedy in terms of oedipal and pre-oedipal genres. In an oedipal comedy, the overgrown boy (think here of Jim Carey or Adam Sandler) resists adult manhood and indeed seems inadequate to its demands. The plot involves the boy's accession to maturity, which is marked by the beginning of a heterosexual romance with an acceptable female love object; the love object may find the funny boy humorous but not ridiculous, and this distinction allows him access to the illusion of mastery. Pre-oedipal comedy, on the other hand, tends to avoid excessive individuation and revel in the farcical humor of undirected play—the key-stone cops and Buster Keaton are some examples of this kind of comedy, which almost refuses narrative coherence.² The king comedies actively resist, in various ways, the narrative conditions of both oedipal and pre-oedipal comic conventions. In *Austin Powers* and *The Full Monty*, the comic heroes are struggling neither to resist adulthood nor to achieve it; on the contrary, in both films, our heroes have become men and have discovered that manhood does not allay the fear of castration—it confirms it. In fact, the comic hero in both films has to grapple with the serious limitations of male masculinity in a world where feminism has empowered women, changes in the workplace have altered dominant conceptions of masculinity, and queer models of gender seem far more compelling and much more successful than old-fashioned heterosexual models of gender polarity. Confronted by the failure of the masculine ideal, the male hero must accept economic as well as emotional disappointment and learn to live with the consequences of a shift of power, which has subtly but completely removed him from the center of the universe. While contemporary oedipal comedies like the gross-out films released in the late 1990s (*American Pie* and *Big Daddy*, for example) continue to invest in fantasies of robust and normative masculinities that have both national and racial dimensions (U.S. manhood in one, and white fatherhood in the other), the king comedies expose the anxious male posturing of these films as the aftershocks of a seismic shift that has already taken place. The

humor in *The Full Monty* in particular depends on some recognition of the toll taken by postimperial decline on the psyches of white males in England in the 1980s and 1990s. And the ridiculous but lovable character of Austin Powers derives at least in part from a serious reconsideration of the waning appeal of stereotypical English masculinity in a postcolonial and multiracial Britain.

On account of the decline of empire in the second half of the twentieth century, and the rise of new ethnicities in postimperial Britain, white English masculinity offers more opportunities than its U.S. counterpart for registering widespread cultural changes in conceptions of manhood. At the beginning of the twentieth century Great Britain had achieved international dominance, but with the dissolution of the British Empire by midcentury, we can talk about the rise of U.S. military and economic hegemony. Accordingly, what can be called “Anglo-American dominant masculinity” shifted in the late twentieth century from British to U.S. cultural terrain. In fact, U.S. cultural dominance of conceptions of manhood have been so complete on both sides of the Atlantic that by the close of the century, even representations of white English masculinity, as portrayed in films such as *The Full Monty* and *Austin Powers*, return to U.S. audiences as minority masculinities.

The Full Monty

The Full Monty, starring Robert Carlyle, takes place in the aftermath of the decline of Sheffield's steel industry. At least part of the current crisis in masculinity must be explained in terms of the effects of economic restructuring in the United States and Europe. Beginning in the 1970s, the privileging of service-oriented economies over industry among Western nation-states dramatically changed our conceptions of who makes up the “working classes.” The surge of labor force participation among women, the privileging of service over industrial labor, and the rise of sweated and “unorganized” labor in the heart of the metropole have all contributed to significant and radical changes in the conceptions of manliness that emerge from and are connected to definitions of the working body. Useful information about the changing relationships between men and work can be gleaned, surprisingly, using contemporary theories and studies of performativity. Eric Lott's work on Elvis impersonation, for example, uses these performances to talk about “how white working-class men currently live their whiteness” (Lott 1997). Lott sees these acts of impersonation as both the repository of a particular

kind of cultural envy of black culture and black masculinities, but also the imaginative response to “post-white-male politics” and to post-Fordist era changes in the meaning of work. As he makes clear, when “work” for working-class men no longer simply signifies in terms of factories and manual labor then the terms “working class” and “masculinity” shift perceptibly in meaning. Lott’s attempt to map the effect of the emergence of “office styles of manhood” on male class identities provides one richly complex account of the interlocking structures connecting class to gender.

The Full Monty refers clearly to the effects of changes in the workplace on the meaning of male masculinity. The film opens with a short documentary, a public service film, that recounts the glory of Sheffield’s steelworks in the early 1970s. The film begins some twenty years later when the steelworks have closed and thousands of steelworkers are unemployed. Steel, in this film, works as a metaphor for past models of masculinity—masculinities dependent on “hard bodies,” to use Susan Jeffords’s term—but the decline of the steelworks also serves as a grim reminder of the ravages of Thatcherism on British nationalized industry (Jeffords 1994). Many men in Sheffield are out of work while their girlfriends, wives, and mothers, who all work in the service industry, still have jobs. The economic disparities between the blue-collar men who are now unemployed and the blue-collar women who retain their service jobs shifts significantly and irrevocably the coordinates and meanings of gender and sexuality. When a Chippendale show comes to town, some of the local lads decide that they should try and make some money by stripping and erotic dancing. Amazingly, the process of developing a show throws the men into a series of dilemmas that we almost never associate with masculinity, but have instead come to define femininity: the men worry about their bodies, their clothes, their ability to dance, and their desirability.

The film opens with a series of assaults on male privilege. The film’s protagonist, Gaz, is unemployed and struggling to make custody payments to his ex-wife in order to maintain a relationship with his son. Dave, his mate, has in the words of his wife “given up” and resigned himself to redundancy at work and at home. Gerald, the former boss of Gaz and Dave, cannot bring himself to tell his wife that he is out of work, so he leaves for work every morning and heads to the job center, desperately hoping to find work before she finds out that their money has run out. The conventional masculine roles of father, husband, and breadwinner are all under serious pressure as the film begins, and masculinity is defined from the outset as a category

threatened on all sides by redundancy. As Gaz and Dave return home after a hard day of trying to steal scrap metal from the old factory, they encounter a long line of women waiting to be admitted to the Working Men’s Club, where the Chippendale dancers are performing. Gaz sneaks into the men’s bathroom through a window to survey the “women-only” scene inside. But before he has a real chance to take in the glorious scene of hundreds of women yelling and whooping at a male stripper, three women make their way toward the men’s room, hoping to avoid a line for the toilet. Gaz slips into a stall and watches what transpires through a hole in the door. While Gaz here occupies the seemingly traditional male position of the voyeur or Peeping Tom, what he sees changes radically the gendered roles of spectatorship. At first, Gaz takes pleasure in watching the women transform the men’s room into a women’s room by applying makeup in the mirror. He watches them watching themselves. Right before his eyes, however, the scene changes abruptly from a feminine scene of display to a masculine scene of activity when one of the women hikes up her skirt and pees standing up at the urinal to the delight of her friends. Rather than conforming to simply a psychoanalytic model of either castration or female phallicism, this scene, I think, registers a refusal of several gender logics. First, it refuses to mark maleness as the place of sexualized voyeurism, and second, the scene suggests the effects of even casual invasions of male space by women. Finally, the framing of the shot—which locates a man hiding behind a door, two women in front of a mirror, and another woman at a urinal—predicts the politics of the gaze that will be elaborated in the film and will culminate in the film’s final shot.

The growing redundancy of old forms of both gender relations and masculinity is underscored in *The Full Monty* by this abrupt, irreversible reconfiguration of the male gaze. In Hollywood cinema, as I discussed in chapter 4, the male gaze structures the look of the viewer, and allows for the male spectator to identify with activity in the scene and to desire the female, who is positioned as the object of his gaze/desire. The masculine woman in this scene, the woman at the urinal, restructures the male gaze by insisting that it be routed through alternative modes of masculinity. In the men’s room scene, then, Gaz can peer voyeuristically at the women in the mirror only if he also looks at the woman at the urinal. His struggle, here and in other key scenes of watching and being watched, indicates how thoroughly male-female relations have been transformed by changes at the level of economy and labor practices. It would be inaccurate, however, to say that the lack of

economic power exercised by the working-class men of Sheffield "castrates" them; rather, it allows them to see themselves, rather than women, as the subjects who represent and figure lack.

When Gaz reports back to his friends at the unemployment office about what he has witnessed in the men's room, their responses record unfamiliar forms of male paranoia that are inflected less by rage at women and more by a sense of the impending redundancy of heteronormative maleness once masculinity circulates through different bodies. Gaz himself suggests that "when women start pissing like us, that's it, we're finished, Dave, extincto." Another man adds, "They're turning into us." "A few years," Gaz continues, "and men won't exist, except in zoos or summat. I mean, we're not needed no more, are we? Obsolete, dinosaurs, yesterday's news." This theme of male self-deprecation reaches its nadir when Dave and Gaz find a man trying to kill himself in his car. The rescue and resuscitation of the suicidal character, Lamper, is unsentimental and yet it precipitates a strong fraternity between men in trouble. The fraternity crosses class lines when the lads recruit their former boss, Gerald, to be their dance instructor. His ballroom dance skills, once the mark of a refined and respectable masculinity, now become the basis for a new male collectivity inspired by disenchantment and exclusion, but productive of a new model of maleness centered on masculine display and vulnerability.

The dance fraternity grows in numbers when Gaz and his new friends begin auditions for their stripper troupe and they find two more members: a black man named Horse, and a gay man named Guy. *The Full Monty* hints at alternative constructions of masculinity, and associates them through these characters with race and sexuality. The character of Horse, despite his name, manages to rise above the stereotype of a black masculinity anchored by a huge phallus, and it is the gay man, generically called Guy, who assumes the role of alpha male in the group. Furthermore, when Guy begins a relationship with Lamper, their alternative versions of masculinity only persuade the other men that dominant masculinity (like the dying steel industry) is a totally bankrupt form.

The film ultimately suggests that when men and women reverse places socially, financially, and even culturally, the effects are not all bad. Women with power, we discover, do not simply behave like men; they cultivate their own relations to masculinity and femininity, and encourage the men around them to do the same. Similarly, disempowered men may easily fall into con-

ventional concerns about impotence, but they also learn lessons in objectification. In a hilarious scene at Gerald's where the men first try stripping in front of each other, a whole array of issues come up about embodiment. When Dave confesses that he feels fat and out of shape, Gerald shoots back, "Fat is a feminist issue, you know." The men proceed to give Dave and each other advice about dieting and working out. The fact that this scene takes place in the "posh" suburban home of the former boss also recalculates the class differentials within the group as well as the relationships between men and domesticity. Just as we found women in the men's room at the Working Men's Club, so we find men at home during the day discussing body issues.

One final scene suggests how new conceptions of masculinity can and indeed must be routed through feminism and the female body. Gaz steals a copy of *Flashdance* in order to give his dancers some sense of what good dancing should look like. But as the film begins, Dave peers at the screen in wonder at the film's opening scene of Jennifer Beals, dancer by night, welding by day in a factory. The spectacle of the female dancer as welder, like the image of the woman at the urinal, challenges once more the idea of woman as an object of display, but also creates the uncanny image of a female masculinity that the men must now emulate. Masculinity throughout *The Full Monty* is precisely welded together from a collectivity of minority masculinities. This film about men under pressure creates new standards for the depiction of masculinity in mainstream film and it ends by referencing the taboo representation of male nudity. In its final flourish, this British comedy reveals that minority masculinities can expose mainstream masculinity as a dangerous myth of potency, invulnerability, and violence. The final shot that should constitute the "money shot" of "the full monty," actually refuses to make the visibility of the phallus into the totality of maleness; the finale of the strip show is filmed from the back of the stage, and a freeze-frame captures the six naked men from behind and the crowd of screaming women full on. The full monty, then, is this shot that includes the female voyeur looking and the male body on display, and it echoes in form and content the earlier shot of the woman at the urinal. In both scenes, we only see the phallic subject from behind, and in both scenes, the gaze of the male voyeur is routed through the gaze of women. The two scenes together make up the full monty.

We can link this final shot in *The Full Monty* to the use of reaction shots in *Austin Powers*. As we will see next in *Austin Powers*, masculinity may not be learned directly from women but it is modeled on a drag king aesthetic.

Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery

In Myers's first and classic *Austin Powers* film, our hero leaves behind the shagadelic revels of 1967 and enters a thirty-year cryogenic sleep in order to pursue the nefarious Dr. Evil (also Myers) through time and space. When he awakens, various British intelligence agents and his future partner, the delectable Vanessa, welcome Austin into the 1990s. Vanessa also warns him promptly that "a lot has changed in thirty years, Austin." Undaunted, Austin responds, "As long as people are still having premarital sex with many anonymous partners while at the same time experimenting with mind-expanding drugs in a consequence-free environment, I'll be sound as a pound!" Of course, Austin finds that safe sex and enforced monogamy are only the most obvious signifiers of what has changed since the groovy 1960s in London. Confronting the brave new world to which he awakens, Austin discovers slowly that the time warp that propelled him into the future has also transformed him into a dinosaur whose particular brand of English masculinity has come and gone. Undaunted by the prospect of being the last of his kind, Austin dives into the 1990s still wearing his Union Jack Y-fronts and hoping against hope that he can still find lots of willing "birds" to shag.

In a self-conscious nod to its own time-loop conceit, *Austin Powers* tries to carry forward into the 1990s comic English masculinity from the 1960s and 1970s. Part Peter Sellers from *Casino Royale*, part Benny Hill or Frankie Howard, the character of Austin Powers is both a loving tribute to and a fond critique of the repulsive and lascivious "carry-on" heroes of 1970s British comedy. The *Carry On* comedies of the 1960s and 1970s created a comic universe on the thin—very thin—premise of the ubiquitous appeal of the randy white Englishman embodied most often in these films by Sid James. The *Carry On* comedies paired James, however, with a rather flaming counterpart, played by Kenneth Williams, whose signature line, "stop messing about," is echoed in Austin's naughty and nasal "oh behave!" While Williams spends his time in these films running from matrons and other overpowering females (mostly played by Hattie Jacques), the James character in a *Carry On* comedy usually tries to ditch his wife while constantly propositioning busty nurses and curvaceous ingenues. These two forms of masculinity are depicted as interdependent, and Williams's homoeroticism is tolerated by James while James's homophobia is actively encouraged by Williams. In *Austin Powers*, Myers brings these two carry-on masculinities into one body with interesting and queer results. Inheriting James's randy disposition,



Austin Powers and the Fembots.
Press packet for *Austin Powers*.

Austin also channels Williams through his campy overuse of double entendres. By combining these two carry-on roles, indeed, Myers exposes English masculinity as a peculiar combination of camp and compulsory heterosexuality.

While I will return later to the implications of this parody of national manhood, I want to focus here on the queerness of Austin's masculine affect and the drag king effect of his particular mode of male parody. I do so precisely because the film does not reference these sources for its humor even as it is positively meticulous in telegraphing the mainstream historical sources.³ Austin's clothing, his fashion photography career, and his overall camp affect suggest that his imperfect masculinity owes much to gay male models of manhood; but his nonphallic, emphatically prosthetic, and endearingly

cloddish attentions to women make his sexual identity look butch or kingy rather than "faggy." Furthermore, Austin's prosthetic masculinity is matched in the film by the fabulous prosthetic femininity of the "fembots," robotic killer females sent to shoot Austin. The fembots serve to locate an automated femininity that ensures that femaleness cannot be the signifier of the "natural" in the film. The drag king effect becomes more readable indeed when Myers takes his parody of English masculinity beyond camp and adds phallic renunciation to the mix. As we see in the infamous penis-enlarger scene, Myers particular genius lies in his ability to transform the rather unappealing and misogynist English comic masculinities of the 1960s into a new form of abject comic masculinity that acknowledges its debts to queer and sub-cultural forms.

In a film in which penis jokes come second only to jokes about flatulence, the penis-enlarger scene stands out as the ultimate acknowledgment of the failure of the phallus. I want to read this scene closely in order to demonstrate the kingy effect of both phallic renunciation and what Myers refers to as "comedy torture." In some remarks about his comedic method in *Austin Powers*, Myers speaks of the effect of taking a joke much further than it should go. Comedy torture, he says, comes from repeating something until it stops being funny and then repeating it some more until it becomes funny again.⁴ That line between comic and no longer comic is of course narrow and quite precise, but repeatedly in *Austin Powers*, Myers finds exactly the right balance between repetition, overkill, torture, and comedy. In this scene, a joke that points to Austin's failed phallic masculinity, is repeated until it becomes the source of a new masculine power accessed through abjection.

In brief, the penis-enlarger scene begins when Austin goes to collect his belongings after being awakened from his long sleep and welcomed into the 1990s. Austin is handed back his kit piece by piece by a cloakroom guard who presents Austin with a crushed-velvet suit, a pair of pointy black boots ("bon-journo, boys!"), a pendant with a male symbol on it, and finally a Swedish penis enlarger. "That's not mine," Austin says to Vanessa. The officer now presents Austin with "one credit card receipt for Swedish-made penis enlarger signed by Austin Powers." Again Austin protests, "I'm telling you, baby, that's not mine!" The guard continues, "One warranty card for Swedish-made penis-enlarger pump, filled out by Austin Powers." Austin protests again, "I don't even know what this is! This sort of thing ain't my bag, baby." And then the guard clinches the scene: "One book, 'Swedish-

Made Penis Enlargers and Me: This Sort of Thing Is My Bag, Baby,' by Austin Powers."

Here, we witness the castration of Austin under the withering gaze of Vanessa. In this scene, Austin reclaims his kit, the bundle of accessories that were crucial to his sex appeal in the 1960s. The male symbol necklace and crushed-velvet suit with black pointy boots suggest the swinger, the sexy man about town, but the Swedish penis enlarger implies that the accessories are not simply the superficial markers of an invisible phallic potency; instead they cover over phallic lack. Austin is revealed by the law (represented by the officer) and in front of the desirable woman as lacking the equipment for phallic success, and as hopelessly sexist at a moment when women simply expect more. But rather than wilt or rebuild his masculinity in normative ways, Austin actually works his loser status up into an alternative mode of masculinity throughout the film. Danger may be his middle name, but his last name, Powers, speaks to the refusal of the logic of castration. This is not to say that Austin repudiates lack; instead he revels in it. This point is driven home by the rivalry between Austin and his nemesis, Dr. Evil. In a parody of conventional spy film rivalries, within which two men compete for phallic mastery, Austin and Dr. Evil are matched by equal levels of incompetence. Dr. Evil may be floating around the earth in a phallically promising spaceship called Big Boy, but when he comes down to earth, he too finds he is hopelessly and permanently out of date. The incompetence of Dr. Evil, matched only by Austin's spectacular knack for losing, ensures that this will be a film with no winners.

Furthermore, Austin's lack of phallic authority does not at all diminish his ability to attract the attention of Vanessa, his love object. The penis-enlarger scene then stands as proof that her attraction to Austin depends not at all on phallic endowment. In fact, Austin becomes attractive to her precisely because he lacks and therefore has to try harder, has to literally seduce her through laughter rather than phallic mastery. In one scene, for example, Vanessa declares her absolute abhorrence at Austin's randy attentions, telling him, "Mr. Powers, I would never have sex with you, ever! If you were the last man on earth and I was the last woman on earth, and the future of the human race depended on our having sex, simply for procreation, I still would not have sex with you!" When Austin responds quickly with "What's your point, Vanessa?" he literally refuses to understand her rejection of him, refuses phallic mastery, but also playfully turns the intensity and hyperbole of her rejection into a potential for further comic interaction.

Vanessa's responses to Austin are recorded in minute detail in this film. As if to emphasize the subtle but momentous shift in gender dynamics that this film records, the comic power of the penis-enlarger scene depends absolutely on a series of these reaction shots from Vanessa. For instance, as Austin plays out the comedy torture of repudiating and then accepting the penis enlarger as his own—as his bag, baby—Vanessa responds with a range of reactions from amused to disdainful, to amused again, to imperious, and finally to seduced. The director, Jay Roach, has commented that the film could easily have consisted of 10 percent comic action and 90 percent comic reaction shots.⁵ This cinematic emphasis on the reaction shot here, as in *The Full Monty*, reverses the formula of the masculinist action film where little time is spent on reaction—the reaction shot, of course, records and actively engages the presence of an other, and in this film, it acknowledges rather than obliterates the comedic contribution made by the mostly female other to the comic success of the film. Vanessa plays earnest to Austin's superficial, knowing to his ignorant, competent to his ineptitude, and prim to his lascivious. She is not simply his opposite, nor his stooge; she is a filter for the audience's own responses and, again as in *The Full Monty*, a powerful image of female voyeurism.

In terms of his dependence on the reaction of others, his camp femininity, and his demonstrably prosthetic, presumably charming butch masculinity, Austin is marked irredeemably as queer. And with his foppish clothes and fake chest hair, his penis enlarger and off-color jokes, Austin is abject masculinity incarnate. Austin's name, however, specifies his masculinity by linking Englishness to power (his name echoes that of the Aston Martin driven by James Bond), and suggesting that white English masculinity, perhaps more than most, relies heavily on prosthetics, tricks, and bad jokes. As I contended earlier, *Austin Powers* also continuously recalls its debts to other generic traditions (the spy film or British comedy), and its hero is marked throughout as a winner from the 1960s who becomes a loser in the 1990s. Through this mechanism of the time loop, *Austin Powers* remarks on and indeed participates in the recent English nostalgia for the 1960s, which are not remembered as one step removed from the ravages of World War II and the decline of empire but instead glorified as the good old days when England had just "won the war."

By making the 1960s in *Austin Powers* into the fab world of swingers, the film participates fully in the romance of this golden age. And yet by remarking throughout on Austin's obvious repulsiveness—bad teeth being the

metonym for unappealing white English masculinity—the film seems to be aware of the cultural agenda at work in harkening back to a memory of an all-white England and erasing other memories of the 1960s. While the romance with a depoliticized 1960s is somewhat understandable in the context of the anxieties generated by a multiracial and postcolonial England in the 1990s, what is the appeal of the British 1960s to U.S. audiences? Specifically through the *Austin Powers* films, U.S. audiences have invested heavily in the idea of England as a place untouched by civil rights strife and racial disharmony; *Austin Powers's* shagadelic visions of 1960s lovefests replaces the more threatening history of a postimperial Britain torn by race riots and struggling with the pernicious anti-immigration legislation inspired by Enoch Powell's new populism. Moreover, the advertising campaigns that accompanied the second *Austin Powers* film, *The Spy Who Shagged Me*, continued to sell England to U.S. tourists as the land of the Fab Four, Carnaby Street, and Monty Python.

In 1999, U.S. audiences lapped up another version of an idyllic England—a place emptied of people of color and rich in traditional values—in yet another summer comedy: *Notting Hill*. This comedy of errors tells of a U.S. slave to celebrity (Julia Roberts) who tries to escape into the anonymity of a bustling London neighborhood. Hugh Grant reprises his role from *Four Weddings and a Funeral* here as the bumbling lover whose masculinity is understated, restrained, and quintessentially English. In *Notting Hill*, he is contrasted favorably to the muscle-bound, bad-boy, U.S. masculinity of Roberts's ex-boyfriend, played by Alec Baldwin, and Grant's appeal continues to rely on what one critic has called "the social tactics of niceness, compliance and liberal tolerance" (Rutherford 1997, 46). Grant's "nice" model of manliness aspires to represent both old-world charm and also new-world sensitivity to women's issues. And the setting in Notting Hill for the romance between the new woman and the "new" old man wipes out the racial past of Notting Hill as the site of race riots, and holds fast to the idea of England as a place that balances properly the charge of keeping alive a tradition while remaining in touch with contemporary culture. That Grant's character works in a charming old bookstore—a travel bookstore, in fact—only completes the imperial fantasy of a Great Britain whose "greatness" resides in a learned cultural tradition that must be preserved in England and imported elsewhere by any means necessary.

Mike Myers, of course, is no Hugh Grant in the sense that he deliberately pokes fun at this fantasy of English masculinity. In the first *Austin Powers*

film, Myers creates a wicked parody out of the U.S. romance with white English manliness. The appeal and even charm of the first *Austin Powers* film lay precisely in its acknowledgment of a sea change in sexual mores and gender norms—a sea change, moreover, that left Austin's once dominant mode of masculine narcissism exposed to ridicule at every turn. No longer the international man of mystery from the 1960s, in the 1990s Austin becomes a lovable loser. But in the overmarketed sequel, *Austin Powers 2: The Spy Who Shagged Me*, Austin's abject masculinity is recuperated and turned into potency once more. Even before the sequel's release in summer 1999, Myers's mug appeared on numerous billboard ads selling Virgin Atlantic ("Shagatlantic, Yeah Baby!"), Heineken Beer, and other products. What, we might ask, happened between 1997 and 1999 to make *Austin Powers* into a marketing dream? How and why did the rotten-toothed antihero in need of a Swedish penis enlarger morph from dated and dateless in the first film to hip and clueless in the second?

In many ways, the second *Austin Powers* attempted to rewrite or reroute the cultural chain of transmission that begins with queer parodies of masculinity in drag king comedies, passes into subcultural visibility through extensive press coverage and more limited forms of exposure in films like *Pecker* by John Waters, and finally ends with male parodies of male masculinity consumed by mass audiences. In *The Spy Who Shagged Me*, not even the British *Carry On* comedies and spy farces occupy the position of original. Instead, the second *Austin Powers* retells the first *Austin Powers*, meticulously repeating every clever joke from the first film and thereby making those jokes seem original. The difference between these two films reveals the ways in which mainstream culture absorbs and disarms the subcultural material on which it depends. The first *Austin Powers* tried to disarm both hero and villain in the espionage set piece, but the second makes both hero and villain equally attractive and powerful. In the first film, Austin fights to save the world for free love; in the second, he saves it for multinational capitalism. The first *Austin Powers* clearly and humorously acknowledges as well as articulates a feminist critique of sexism that changes completely the constitutive forms of male masculinity. In the sequel, Austin's sexism is no longer a mark of his anachronism; it has become his comic signature.

But this is not to say that *Austin Powers 2* is totally irredeemable. Cloning and doubling in *Austin Powers 2* remain as an echo of the powerful humor of the first film. In *The Spy Who Shagged Me*, Austin clones himself through a malfunctioning time machine; at the same time, Dr. Evil, not satisfied

with his legitimate offspring, his son Scott, creates a literal clone of himself in miniature. "I shall call him Mini Me," Dr. Evil says of his clone in one of the film's few highlights. The presence of the Mini Me clone self-consciously refers to the kingy effect of "repetition ad nauseum" and allows for a forceful critique of masculine authenticity. There is another evil character in *Austin Powers 2*, an obese Scotsman called Fat Bastard who is again played by Myers; the cumulative impact of having Myers in three of the main roles is to make masculinity into merely another of the film's special effects. Myers's monopolization of the film's male roles (with the exception of Mini Me, played by Verne Troyer) seems to quote Eddie Murphy's virtuoso comic performances in *The Nutty Professor*, where Murphy plays the nerdy professor, his alter ego Buddy Love, and Love's entire family (both Buddy Love and Austin Powers are also marked by grandiose allegorical names). Murphy's *Nutty Professor*, of course, was already a remake of the original version by Jerry Lewis. Lewis's film used the trope of cloning to suggest that a perfect masculinity can emerge from the combination of two extreme forms—the nerd and the cad—but in Murphy's remake, the practice of cloning becomes a fascinating meditation on racial stereotypes as fetish figures for all of black masculinity. *Austin Powers* refuses the Lewis method of resolving masculinity into a perfect whole and offers us in many ways a counterpart to Murphy's clever representation of the stereotypes of black masculinity. If Murphy tries to expose both the pleasure and the danger of racial stereotyping, Myers tries to disarm white masculinity of the power it draws from racial stereotyping. In *Austin Powers 2*, the effect of cloning allows white masculine failure and ineptitude to spread across the entire narrative, and breaks down all claims to masculine and white authenticity.

One scene explicitly registers the historical debt that seemingly authentic white masculinity owes to performative black masculinity. In this scene, Dr. Evil and Mini Me perform a rap duet that samples not only Grover Washington's "Just the Two of Us" but also Will Smith's version of the Washington original. In one comic move, Myers reveals the structure of "evil" white masculinity as homoerotic, narcissistic, and culturally derivative. The spectacle of Dr. Evil and Mini Me rapping and dancing to a romantic duet creates a drag king effect within which one form of masculinity is expressed through and layered over another kind, but also articulates the cultural debt that white hetero-masculinity owes to the gay, black, and butch masculinities that it absorbs and erases.

The scene also reminds us that significantly, *Austin Powers 2* has moved from England to the United States in location as well as in terms of the cultural archive it draws from—for example, when we first see her, Austin's love object in the second film, Felicity Shagwell, is dancing to Lenny Kravitz's remake of "American Woman"; later, when Austin and Ms. Shagwell drive off together, Austin notes that the English countryside looks an awful lot like Southern California, and references to U.S. products like Starbucks litter the script. The Americanization of king comedy—in the case of this film, self-conscious as it may be—severely diminishes the set of opportunities that the film offers for the representation of masculine abjection. In terms of its box office success, marketing tie-ins, and mainstream appeal, *Austin Powers 2* has clearly relinquished the more subculturally informed aspects of the original, opting instead to feed into the gross-out comedy market designed to fill the theater with teenage boys chortling at shit jokes. And so the king method of repetition ad nauseum meets a sorry end by renegeing on its promise of non-phallic mastery and humorous seduction. By the end of *Austin Powers 2*, we are no longer in the realm of king comedy, drag king parody, subversive repetition, and masculine abjection. Austin does not have to work hard to get the girl, he is no longer bewildered by the abrupt time zone shifts, nor is he playing off an English sensibility of white male decline. Rather, he is an American imperial master of his domain and no longer a comic king; he has become instead another American king of comedy.

In this chapter, I have tried to trace the evolution of a sensibility that we can call kinging that links mainstream critiques of normative masculinity to subcultural forms of parody, tribute, and satire. While refusing to trace a one-to-one or cause-and-effect relationship between mainstream culture and queer subcultural productions, I have argued that like camp, kinging works through indirect and mediated influence. If camp can as easily be found in classic Hollywood films, 1960s drag queen performances, and contemporary fashion shows, then we should also attend to the multiple sites within which the distance between maleness and masculinity becomes visible with comic effects. I am also trying to allow for distinctions between mainstream comedies that prop up dominant masculinities and king comedies that aim at disarming them. The *Austin Powers* phenomenon illustrates for me both the power of the kinging effect and yet how short-lived the subversive ripples may be. While the first *Austin Powers* film reveled in the phallic incompetence of its comic hero, the second film reduced his masculine abjection by cloning him and transforming him into a sex machine who temporarily loses

his "mojo." While the first film is marked by its cultural debt to other locations of king comedy, the second film, as sequel, turns the first *Austin Powers* into an original. The mechanism of mainstreaming can be seen in precisely the way the two films create a neat circuit of transmission that cuts out the subcultural, and even the historical, influences altogether. Significantly, then, the punch line in *Austin Powers 2* is not from a low-budget spy film, a drag king performance, or even a *Carry On* comedy but instead from the Tom Cruise blockbuster romance *Jerry Maguire*: Dr. Evil is reunited with Mini Me after a near disaster and he mimics Cruise in *Jerry Maguire*, telling his romantic partner in sign language, "You Complete Me." This gesture, hilarious as it is, unfortunately fails to parody *Jerry Maguire* and shows how far we have come from the king comedy acknowledgment that "gender is a copy with no original." This combo of Dr. Evil completed by his Mini Me clone takes the sting out of king comedy and reminds the queer spectator that once again, the joke is on us.

But as the summer's gross-out comedies give way to the winter's mawkish dramas, we can at least take comfort in our knowledge that *Austin Powers*, *The Full Monty*, and other king comedies have borrowed liberally from butch, nonmale, or penisless models of masculinity. They have also resigned themselves to a world in which the phallus is always fake, the penis is always too small, and the injunction to the masculine subject is not to "be" but to "behave." The work that falls to us, then, is to constantly recall the debts that the successful king comedies would rather forget—in other words, to remember that behind every good king comedy is a great drag king.