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ADOLESCENT MASCULINITY, REPRESENTATION AND TRANSCENDENCE

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University.
I certify that this thesis, and the research to which it refers, are the product of my own work, and that any ideas or quotations from the work of other people, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices of the discipline.

[Signature]

Christopher Brent Chapman

Date: 21 March 2007
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While this thesis analyses the representation of adolescent masculinity in visual art and has not involved field work that has directly involved adolescent males, it has helped me to understand the importance of fostering positive models of representation of adolescent males in culture at large. On a personal note, I have been privileged to know Frazer Bull-Clark, the son of my dear friends Deborah Clark and Gordon Bull, since he was a young child. Frazer is now fifteen years of age and possesses a loving spirit and an enquiring mind. I dedicate this thesis to him.
Abstract

This thesis analyses representations of adolescent masculinity in Western culture in order to challenge normalised and restrictive discourses. It is a cross-disciplinary study which examines histories of the construction of adolescent masculinity with reference to sociological concepts of adolescence, to contemporary understandings of hegemonic masculine cultures, and to the visual representation of the adolescent male in art. Particular attention is paid to the symbolic visual representation of the adolescent male in the European iconographic history of Western art, and its implications of spiritual transcendence, and to the sociological construction of contemporary adolescent masculinity in relation to cultural discourses of the early twentieth century. The concept of transcendence is shown to be an animating trope of the representation of adolescent masculinity. Contemporary photographic and filmic art works by North American artists Larry Clark and Gus Van Sant are analysed in relation to these perspectives, and are found to engage complex and challenging articulations of adolescent masculinity, representation and transcendence. Clark's artist books of the 1990s, and his 2001 film Bully, are analysed in detail, and are found to offer important deconstructions of adolescent masculinity with reference to the physicalised adolescent male body, media-generated imagery, and questions of violence and death. Van Sant's 2003 film Elephant, a fictionalised account of the 1999 Columbine High School shootings, is found to engage adolescent masculinity with concepts of metaphysical and sociological transcendence. Theoretical perspectives on death and eroticism, normalising and heterotopic spatiality, and concepts of sacrifice are used as tools to engage analyses of Clark's and Van Sant's work. Issues of the sexualisation of the adolescent male body, the representation of male youth suicide and alternatives to hegemonic cultures of adolescent masculinity are discussed. The thesis concludes by appealing to compassionate and heterodox articulations of adolescent masculinity.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Adolescent Masculinity, Representation and Transcendence argues that the concept of transcendence can be understood as an animating trope of the representation of adolescent masculinity in visual art. It draws upon art historical, sociological and theoretical perspectives, and closely analyses particular artistic photographic and filmic work in order to emphasise the contradictory and fragmentary nature of the representation of adolescent masculinity. The thesis argues that the promise of transcendence in adolescent masculinity is conditioned by challenges to normative models of the culture of hegemonic masculinity, and in the performance of extreme demonstrations of transcendence through the motif of sacrifice.

Since the early twentieth century, adolescence has been characterized as an emotionally stressful, traumatic, and unstable period in an individual's life. Male adolescence in particular has often been pathologised, signifying deviation from societal norms, often characterized by violent and extreme behaviour, while conforming to normative and hegemonic models of masculinity.

This thesis analyses the representation of adolescent masculinity in the film and photographic work of two contemporary artists whose engagement with youth culture continues to redefine and challenge normative representations of adolescent masculinity. The thesis proposes that through their work, the artists offer a construction of transcendence that significantly develops a contemporary representational concept of adolescent masculinity. It is argued that tropes of transcendence, as explored in the work of North American artists Larry Clark and Gus Van Sant, operate as a liberating force that challenges normative models of adolescent masculinity.

The thesis analyses in depth particularly significant examples of contemporary visual film and art in order to deconstruct the representation of adolescent masculinity in contemporary Western society. The construction of adolescent masculinity in North America as a ubiquitous cultural construction that informs adolescent masculinities in the
English speaking West is related to developmental formulations of adolescent masculinity in Europe, Australia, and North America. Critical thematics are shown as operating across the work of the artists discussed, thematics which engage with, and challenge, popular cultural and sociological assumptions about adolescent male identity. The thesis demonstrates how the artists respond to and challenge historical paradigms and definitions of adolescent masculinity, as defined by sociological narratives derived mainly from the English-speaking West. The thesis examines the construction of adolescent masculinity in relation to the iconography and symbolism of Judeo-Christian cultural formations as informing broader readings of concepts of transcendence. These trajectories, and the cultural imperatives implied, are shown as applying to the construction of adolescent masculinity and transcendence as it appears in the work of the artists under discussion.

Recent sociological studies on the formation and articulation of adolescent masculine identities in relation to cultural imperatives note the need for an understanding of the particular roles played by cultural and ethnic difference on masculine identity formation and expression. Robert W. Connell has noted the need for masculinity studies to incorporate concepts of local and global masculine cultures,¹ and in relation to adolescent male sexual identities, Laureen H. Smith (et al) has noted the significance of ethnicity and cultural customs on adolescent male identity formation.² As the work of the artists under discussion refers to Western Judeo-Christian formulations of adolescent masculinity, the conceptual frameworks deployed in order to analyse these formulations are drawn from Western Judeo-Christian cultural, visual and sociological paradigms. The analysis of adolescent masculinity and transcendence mobilised by the thesis excludes investigations of adolescent masculinity in relation to non-Western Judeo-Christian cultural formations such as those of Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East, first nation

cultures and specifically African-American and Asian-American because these are not addressed in the work of the artists under discussion.

A conception of adolescent masculinity that moves beyond hegemonic models of identity is presented. In order to derive a concept of transcendence as a defining trope of adolescent masculinity, particular theoretical texts are engaged. George Bataille’s investigation of eroticism and death, Michel Foucault’s concepts of space, discipline, ‘heterotopic spatiality’ and analyses of sacrifice and redemption by Rene Girard are useful theoretical tools that are employed to illuminate the complexities of transcendence in relation to the representation of adolescent masculinity. The concept of transcendence as ‘going beyond’ a perceived situation, in a secular sense, is the primary sense of the concept that is employed in the thesis. The concept of transcendence as a spiritual phenomenon is implicated at times, and references to Christian spirituality – as they refer to identifiable symbolic tropes in the work of Clark and Van Sant are analysed.

The thesis analyses the work of Clark and Van Sant within a context that has not been previously explored in depth. It engages a close conceptual reading of Clark’s work in particular, where this has previously been lacking in published literature on his work. While publications exist that focus on specific aspects of this history, such as Kenneth B. Kidd’s analysis of ‘boyology’ and the construction of youth and early adolescent masculinity in relation to narratives of the North American wilderness, the thesis provides an original overview of the ‘invention’ and representation of adolescent masculinity.

Larry Clark has consistently explored extremes of youth culture in his photographic and film work, since the publication of his photographic artist book, Tulsa in 1971. Initially presenting a documentary view of a specific youth culture in rural America, Clark’s work

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has engaged with extreme aspects of youth culture including an interrogation of violence, sexuality, drug use and suicide in order to deconstruct the representation of youth identity. While Clark’s work has engaged with adolescent and youth culture in a broad sense, the thesis focuses on his representation of adolescent masculinity as a defining trope of his work.

Clark’s work is held by major museum collections worldwide, he has produced six artist books, and six feature films. Since 1971 his work has been included in over sixty one-person exhibitions in North America, Europe and Asia. His work has been widely reviewed in the art and film press, however there has not yet been a major monographic work published about Clark’s work, or a major in-depth analysis of his work in relation to social or conceptual imperatives. This imbalance is signalled by the absence of a major publication to accompany his 2005 survey exhibition at the International Centre of Photography (ICP) in New York, an exhibition that could have afforded the opportunity to evaluate Clark’s work in a scholarly and intensive manner. Curator Brian Wallis presented an easily digestible account of Clark’s work that appealed to generalised readings, and the exhibition omitted a key phase of the artist’s work. In the brochure accompanying the exhibition Wallis introduces Clark’s work by stating:

Widely regarded as one of the most important and influential American photographers of his generation, Larry Clark is known for both his raw and contentious photographs and for his controversial films focusing on sexuality, violence, and drug use. Clark burst into public consciousness with his landmark book *Tulsa* in 1971, and since then he has continued to use photography to expose

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5 Clark’s work is held by the Centre for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona; FRAC Collection Aquitaine, France; Pinakothek Der Moderne, Munich, Germany; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

6 See bibliography for details.

7 For a complete list of Clark’s exhibitions see http://www.luhringaugustine.com/ [cited 2006].

8 For a complete bibliography of writings on Clark’s work see http://www.luhringaugustine.com/ [cited 2006]. Many of these texts consist of short exhibition or film reviews, often placing Clark’s work within a generalised framework of outsider culture. Key texts on Clark’s work are discussed in this chapter.

9 As discussed further, the exhibition did not include any of Clark’s images of adolescent boys in suicide scenarios, published in his artist book *1992.*
urgent social issues pertaining to youth culture. In particular, he is interested in investigating the perils and vulnerabilities of adolescent masculinity, which he often explores from an autobiographical perspective.\footnote{Brian Wallis, "Larry Clark," in Larry Clark, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: International Centre of Photography, 2005). p.5.}

The highlighting of sex, violence and drugs in Clark’s work tends to operate as an accessible and stereotyped ‘entry point’ for audiences. However it offers only a basic and uncritical framework within which to explore Clark’s work. It is notable that while Wallis also foregrounds Clark’s investigation of ‘the perils and vulnerabilities of adolescent masculinity’, he qualifies this content in Clark’s work by appealing to autobiographical imperatives, an approach which also serves to restrict the range of productive readings that Clark’s works offer. The survey exhibition of Clark’s work at the ICP was accompanied only by a twenty-seven page exhibition brochure which included a short introductory essay by the exhibition curator Brian Wallis, a short essay on Clark’s films by Katherine Dieckmann, and a re-printed, slightly revised version of a 1992 essay by Jim Lewis. Clark’s autobiographical history, or the effects of his photographic and film work in relation to moral concerns, is often taken as the subject of writing on his work. Wallis’s text for the exhibition brochure is exemplary in this respect, and while written within the context of a publication designed to be accessible to a very broad audience, offers a familiar overview of Clark’s work:

In all his works, Clark pursues a set of related themes: the destructiveness of dysfunctional family relationships, masculinity and the roots of violence, the links between mass imagery and social behaviours, and the construction of identity in adolescence. To address these issues Clark often uses sexually explicit imagery, as well as scenes of overt drug use and violence, actions that are addressed casually by his subjects but which are often shocking to audiences. These works are at once unimaginable and unforgettable. And in the ways they address such socially relevant topics as teen violence, pornography, masculinity, censorship,
and the influence of the media, Clark’s works deliberately challenge viewers to engage in a dialogue about these controversial issues.\textsuperscript{11}

Wallis’s text offers an accessible overview of the subject matter of Clark’s work and appeals to popular assumptions about its controversial nature, but does not attempt a reading of Clark’s work on formal or conceptual grounds. Dieckmann, in her short text on Clark’s films also appeals to popular assumptions about his work. She calls Clark’s films \textit{Kids} 1995, \textit{Bully} 2001 and \textit{Ken Park} 2002 a ‘troika of teen depravity’ qualifying this statement with a moral imperative: ‘Clark’s work raises questions about the exploitation of young people in our increasingly censorious and hypocritical culture’ which ‘makes Clark’s voice a bracing and essential one’.\textsuperscript{12} Only Lewis’s text attempts to engage with the complexities of Clark’s practice and to evoke its contextual possibilities. In the ICP exhibition brochure he writes:

Here was this artist, then, and here was this work, and no one seemed to know quite how to look at it, and I suspect most people still don’t. Clark is generally classified with friends and colleagues like Richard Prince, Christopher Wool, Cady Noland and Mike Kelley – with all of whom, to be sure, he seems to belong, but as a kind of \textit{reductio}. What distinguishes him from them is this: Those artists are moralists, in the sense that the work they make is evidence of an attempt to understand what, in the broadest sense of the terms, is good and bad about our lives. And while Clark, too, has a kind of moral life in mind, the practice he’s proposing is meant to be exemplary in a very different way.\textsuperscript{13}

This practice, Lewis suggests, involves ‘an account of the ethics of sheer attention’ and that Clark’s work ‘starts to take on a tone of very personal shamanism’.\textsuperscript{14} In the original

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. p.10.


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. p.20.
version of Lewis’s essay, published in the European art journal *Parkett* in 1992, and in his revised version for the ICP exhibition brochure, he raises issues about the difficulty of classifying Clark’s work as ‘art photography’, as homoerotic, as ‘intelligible’. Lewis surmises that Clark’s works exist outside of a system of moral or art historical obligation. He says in the 1992 essay that ‘Clark’s pictures aren’t made in order to be appreciated, so his admissions aren’t made in order to be absolved’ but that the crux of Clark’s work engages broader issues of ‘looking’, a concept signalled by the title of his 1992 essay ‘What is this?’ and its 2005 revision ‘What are you looking at?’ to which he responds in each case: ‘[What is this?] is not a question at all really, but simply the expression of an intention, beyond interest, to watch as well as one can.’ And ‘What are you looking at? Some pictures. Just look at them.’

In addition to Lewis’s 1992 text on Clark in *Parkett*, two other texts published that year remain as important insights into Clark’s work. North American artist Mike Kelley’s interview with Clark titled ‘In Youth is Pleasure’ published in the European journal *Flash Art*, raises the issues of Clark’s interest in representing the physical signs of male adolescence and the conceptual processes that lay behind the creation of Clark’s collage works, as a development from working with photographic triptychs. In a lengthy interview with Jutta Koether published in the European *Journal of Contemporary Art* topics including fear, loss of innocence, and the constructed nature of Clark’s photographs are raised. In 1992 Clark’s artist book *1992* was published and he had several exhibitions in Europe – in Paris, Cologne and Berlin. Clark’s work had moved from the documentary style of images such as those published in his artist books *Tulsa* and *Teenage Lust* towards the experimental methodology of collage. Collage works incorporating images of teenage celebrities Matt Dillon and Jay Ferguson were produced in 1989 and 1991 respectively. Interest in Clark’s work in Europe extended to the European publication of his artist books. *1992* was co-published by his New York

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16 Ibid. p.24.
17 Lewis, “What Are You Looking At?”. p.22.
gallerist Thea Westreich and his Cologne gallerist Gisela Capitain, The Perfect Childhood was published in a first edition by L.C.B publishers London, then by the German publishing group Scalo, and his 1999 retrospective at the Groninger Museum in The Netherlands was accompanied by the publication of the artist book Larry Clark.

The reception of one particular aspect of Clark's work, his images of adolescent males in suicide scenarios included in the artist book 1992, has often been met with critical elision or silence. Clark describes the impetus for these images in his interview with Kelley, and discusses their constructed nature in his interview with Koether. However, reproduction of the images in a catalogue produced by The Power Plant in Toronto resulted in the pages featuring the images to be glued shut under the proviso of a legal disclaimer. The artist book from which these images are taken, 1992, was included in the 2005 ICP survey exhibition, however it was displayed closed, in a vitrine, with no intimation as to its contents.

Clark's work as a filmmaker has led to the creation of a public visibility connected primarily to his feature film output. His first feature film Kids produced in 1995, was the culmination of themes Clark had pursued in his photographic and film work. In an interview with filmmaker Paul Schrader, Clark stated "I always wanted to make the teenage movie that I felt America never made – the great American teenage movie, like the great American novel." He continued: "When you asked how my work has changed, I mentioned structure: Tulsa is very formally laid out, but then the books get more complicated, with the collages and letters – more film-like, I think." The controversial

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20 This aspect of Clark's work is discussed in chapters four and six.
21 The exhibition catalogue included a double page featuring many images from Clark's 1992 reproduced as small images in a grid format. These pages are glued shut in the catalogue, and an erratum slip citing 'legal reasons' for this was inserted into the catalogue. In the author's copy of the catalogue the original erratum slip has been lost, and research has been unable to determine reasons for this action. See Philip Monk, The American Trip: Larry Clark, Nan Goldin, Cady Noland, Richard Prince (Toronto: The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery at Harbourfront Centre, 1996). Clark's book 1992 was printed in an edition of 1,000 half of which are believed to have been destroyed. This information appears in the exhibition checklist of the ICP exhibition, but no explanation is given. Wallis, "Larry Clark." p.26.
22 Wallis's description of this group of work in the exhibition brochure elides any mention of the subject of suicide. This is discussed further in chapter six.
nature of the content of Clark’s film works culminated in the banning of his 2002 film Ken Park. The film has been screened in Europe, has not yet been released in the USA, and is refused classification in Australia.\textsuperscript{24} The subject matter found to be contentious by the classification board remains central to Clark’s deconstruction of adolescent masculinity: that of the conflict of youthful ‘innocence’ and the expression of physicalised sexuality. In the context of Clark’s work, Ken Park also evokes ideas of transcendence. Referring to a scene that involves a sexual scenario between two adolescent males and an adolescent female, Clark has stated that ‘my idea was to have this scene as a kind of redemption, a kind of salvation’.\textsuperscript{25}

North American artist Gus Van Sant’s career as a filmmaker spans twenty-four years and twenty-three films. Van Sant came to public prominence with his 1989 film Drugstore Cowboy, and he has acknowledged Clark’s work as an influence on the visual style of the film\textsuperscript{26}. Van Sant acted as an executive producer on Clark’s film Kids. Van Sant’s series of films Gerry 2002, Elephant 2003 and Last Days 2005,\textsuperscript{27} all evoke concepts of transcendence in relation to male youth. A number of interviews and articles about Van Sant’s work evoke issues of the intimation of transcendence,\textsuperscript{28} however, a thorough study of the articulation of transcendence in relation to the construction of adolescent masculinity in Van Sant’s recent films has not been written.

In analysing the representation of adolescent masculinity and transcendence, the thesis focuses on specific works of art by Clark and Van Sant. Chapter three analyses Clark’s artist books of the 1990s, chapter four analyses Clark’s film Bully and chapter five

\textsuperscript{24} The Australian Office of Film and Literature Classification stated that ‘In the Classification Board’s view [Ken Park] deals with matters of sex in such a way that they offend against the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults to the extent that it should be refused classification.’ And ‘In the Classification Board’s view, the film contains scenes of actual sexual activity involving characters who are portrayed as minors that could not be accommodated within the “R18+” classification.’ Following a submission by The Sydney Film Festival to review the classification, it was upheld. See Australia Office of Film and Literature Classification, “News Release: Classification Board Refuses Classification for Ken Park,” (22 May 2003).


\textsuperscript{27} See bibliography for details.

\textsuperscript{28} These are cited in chapter five.
analyses Van Sant’s film *Elephant*. In each case the thesis examines the artists’ stylistic or formal methodology and the articulation of symbolic registers that figure a mode of adolescent masculinity.

The thesis begins with an analysis of the cultural paradigms of adolescence and masculinity, which outlines the recent history and cultural and sociological paradigms of these concepts. This serves as a map of reference points against which aspects of the analysis of the visual material can be pitted. This historical and sociological framework is necessary in order to establish the normalizing discourse that has been established as the prevailing cultural definition of adolescent masculinity. This reading of adolescent masculinity will be challenged in the thesis via an analysis of the work of the artists under discussion, and an appeal to concepts of transcendence in relation to alternative models of adolescent masculinity.

What these artists suggest, through their work, are models of adolescent masculinity that challenge societal norms, and move beyond a romanticisation of youth which has continued to define adolescence as a cultural phenomenon. In their work the artists develop a contemporary concept of adolescent masculinity that incorporates ideas of transcendence, which challenge historical and stereotypical paradigms of adolescent masculinity and the hegemonic archetypes these historical paradigms perpetrate.

In Clark’s work, adolescent masculinity is constantly fractured and torn apart. The sense of identity this entails is constantly in flux. The young males he represents perform a range of paradoxical identity positions: they constantly strive for a normative model of hard masculinity, one that is bound in heterosexuality, masculinity and action. In Clark’s collage works a range of young masculine identity styles are deconstructed. Newspaper clippings describing violence perpetrated by adolescent males are shown with idealized media-created images of virile youth masculinity. In Clark’s photographs in his book *1992* staged scenarios of suicide are played out. The characters in Clark’s photographs perform the action of suicide, in a manner that parodies the media-driven identity of teen suicide as a defining trope of adolescent masculinity. Clark’s illustrative
approach is a complex reflection on this media-generated performance of identity. While aspects of his imagining of these scenarios sometimes evoke the symbolism of historical imagery of martyrdom and self-sacrifice, and suggests a parallel experience of transcendence through death, the theme of redemption through self-sacrifice is a powerful contemporary subtext. These images are charged by the confluence of eroticism and death. The sexualized energy of youth masculinity is ever-present, in the revelation of young sexual maturity, and in the evocation of the masturbatory self-immolation of the practice of auto-erotic asphyxiation. Images of a boy with a noose around his neck, his arms raised above his head, and wearing only striped underwear briefs evokes the symbolism of Saint Sebastian, and also sensualises the boy’s body. Images of a boy with a gun in his mouth play off the sensationalism of this form of suicide, and the visibility of the boy’s genitals through the gape in his shorts reveals that he has the capacity to be an adult sexual being. In these representations, the promise, or the possibility of death is redemptive. Transcendence would be achieved by the violent act of self-immolation. The promise of sexualized adulthood and the promise of redemption through death operate as a metaphor for wholeness.

In Clark’s film *Bully*, performed adolescent masculine identity is manifest in violence and ultimately murder. Running counter to this hard masculinity is a desire for affection and love. In *Bully*, the dysfunctional friendship between Marty and Bobby is played out through competition and bullying. Marty finds redemption, only briefly, in the stated affection for his little brother. But the poignancy this evokes, and the attempt at a transformative expression and reciprocation of love is only approached. Redemption remains unresolved.

Clark continually affirms and disavows the imagined security of adulthood and hard masculinity, and the sensuality, sensitivity and beauty of pubertal male identity. In challenging the normative sociology of age-related pubertal development, Clark succeeds in transcending the oppression of identity this entails. Clark’s work presents a paradox. In the representation of adolescent masculinity he articulates a desire for contradictory states. He desires the ‘adult’ physicality and sexuality defined by puberty, and laments
the ‘innocence’ and purity of pre-pubertal boyhood: states which correlate with ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ masculine identities. Clark has acknowledged an ‘element in my work about innocence and the loss of innocence’;29 and this operates in a complex manner in relation to his representation of adolescent masculinity. The concept of paradox informs Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity in several ways. It operates as a signifier of the complex and conflicting registers of ‘innocence’ and physicalised masculinity within the representation of adolescent masculinity, of the conflicting media-generated imagery of adolescent masculinity which appeals to both victimisation and demonisation and to the relationship between early-adolescent ‘purity’ and sexualisation. As a conceptual position that evokes a stance contrary to dominant opinion, within Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity, paradox can be seen as operating as a defining aspect.30

In Gus Van Sant’s film Elephant the sacrifice of others at the hands of two male adolescent protagonists operates as a form of redemption. Adolescent masculinity, for Van Sant in Elephant, operates in relation to the disciplining structures of social hierarchy. The boys who perpetrate the acts of violence, Alex and Eric, are constructed as social outsiders. They are not accepted by the cliques of the high school social system, and parental affection is absent. Alex is bullied by his classmates, and neither boy conforms to the idealized identity of the hard masculinity of athleticism and demonstrated heterosexuality. The school itself is presented as a maze, where particular actions are manifest in the directing flows ordered by the school’s corridors. The school, as a metaphor for society at large, encourages particular normalised forms of identity expression. Alex’s bedroom, in contrast, is presented as a sanctuary. In this space, he is allowed to express himself through music and art, and share his friendship with Eric. It is in this sanctuary environment of Alex’s home that the boys find a space of transcendence.


30 Justin Leiber notes the early seventeenth century understanding of the term paradox, as derived from its Greek translation of ‘contrary to opinion’. Its usage also evoked a critical stance that makes sense when raised in relation to Clark’s work, that ‘paradox is a contrary formulation that has the spice of insight and dangerous truth, as against the leaden dough of accepted opinion’. Justin Leiber, Paradoxes (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 1993). p.28.
While the architecture of the school can be understood as a metaphor for control, Van Sant allows pockets of resistance that enable a variety of identity positions to occur. Elias photographs his colleagues, and is shown in various scenes in the school’s photography darkroom. In a class discussion, a group of students discuss the performance of non-heterosexual identity. Importantly, Eric and Alex are absent from these institutionalized forums for creative expression. Tellingly, when Eric and Alex are about to shoot their first victim Michelle, in the school library, Elias raises his camera and takes a photograph of the two boys: they are documented, in a way, as ‘types’ rather than as individuals.\(^{31}\) Alex and Eric, through their violent actions, transcend the boundaries of control of the school and its systems of hierarchy. They succeed in destroying its order, but at the cost of their own lives, and of the lives of other students and staff.\(^{32}\)

In *Elephant*, the idea of transcendence through beauty, art and music is a defining aspect of the representation of adolescent masculinity.\(^{33}\) Unlike Clark’s fast-paced filmic

\(^{31}\) In an establishing scene in *Elephant* Elias is shown photographing a young couple in the park-lands outside the school. Here, however, he engages them in conversation, seeks permission to photograph them, and explains his artistic process. Likewise, when encountering his friend John in the school corridor he asks to take John’s photograph, and John obliges by striking a pose. In both of these instances a permissive exchange occurs, which is denied Alex and Eric.

\(^{32}\) In the actual events of the Columbine High School shootings of 20 April 1999 on which Van Sant’s film is loosely based, the perpetrators Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed themselves after killing and wounding twenty-one others. In the film *Elephant* Alex shoots Eric and the final scene shows him confronting Nathan and Nathan’s girlfriend Carrie. Nathan represents the idealised performance of heterosexualised and athletically young male identity. Regardless of the outcome, we can safely assume that Alex’s life is effectively over.

\(^{33}\) It is noted that these qualities may be understood as traditionally ‘feminine’ in Western culture, however this thesis attempts to engage an open and heterodox field of masculinity, as is further discussed in Chapter Two. For an introduction to concepts of the performance of gender see Sara Salih, “Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions,” in *The Judith Butler Reader*, ed. Sara Salih with Judith Butler (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004). Pp.90-94. With reference to Butler’s theorising of the performance of ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ gender expression, Salih states: ‘If gender is a “doing” rather than a “being”, a verb rather than a noun, it is not an action that is done by a volitional agent who is free to select her/his gender “styles” (Butler’s word). Instead, the subject is “done” by gender; it is the effect rather than the cause of a discourse which is always there first.” Ibid. p.91. The formulation of the performance of ‘gender’ in this thesis chooses to articulate the necessity for a heterodox field of masculinity that might encompass a complex movement across ‘active’ and ‘passive’ identities. For example, the semiotic and symbolic values ascribed to the fifteenth to eighteenth century visual representation of Judeo-Christian Saint Sebastian, who was often depicted as an adolescent boy; and its recapitulation by early twentieth century photographer Frederick Holland Day, are not straightforward cooptons of binary ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ traits. However, as is discussed in Chapter Two, these representations articulate complex representations of identity that are fluid in their understandings of symbolic registers such as ‘muscularity’ and ‘passivity’. The fluid terrain of identity as it regards the adolescent male may also be seen as apparent in the figuring of the character of Marty in Clark’s film *Bully*, as discussed in Chapter Four, as his physical and psychological identity coopts a range of identity traits that may be traditionally catalogued as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’, ‘heterosexual’ and ‘homosexual’. In Van Sant’s film *Elephant*, in addition to the complex field of identity expression articulated by the male adolescent characters John, Eric and Alex, the spatial construction of the narrative itself is created as a layered and multi-dimensional field that reflects the complex identities of these key characters, and which is in constant flux. This is discussed in Chapter Five.
montage, Van Sant’s representation of his subject is lyrical and poetic, seemingly at odds with the violent nature of the film’s narrative. In *Elephant*, particular scenes are repeated from different vantages, producing a multi-layered experience of space and time that transcends single linear perspective. Sensitivity, as a positive aspect of young male identity is a theme of the film. Alex and Eric, find the resolution of desire for compassion with each other. The character John, whose presence as an observer throughout the film is allowed the physical manifestation of androgynous beauty, and in an early scene in the film, is shown gazing heavenward as if in prayer or contemplation, before quietly weeping. In *Elephant*, Van Sant’s own filmic representation of the main characters in the film is loving and compassionate. It is in the method of representation that transcendence is achieved.

Following this introduction, chapter two ‘Conceptualising Adolescent Masculinity and Transcendence’ provides an overview of the cultural articulations and constructions of adolescent masculinity in Judeo-Christian Western culture. It introduces the key concept of hegemonic masculinity, and describes how conceptions of transcendence are deployed in the thesis. The origins of the understanding of adolescence as a part of the life cycle, and as constructed by sociological and social discourses are discussed. Close analysis is made of the representation of Saint Sebastian as an exemplary adolescent male, and as a figure whose representation continues to inform constructions of adolescent masculinity in relation to the operation of sexualisation and transcendence in the work of Clark and Van Sant. The concept of the ephebe is analysed with reference to the complexities of passive and active masculinities, and with reference to the concept of martyrdom. The importance of the conception of adolescence as a period of moral weakness is analysed, which bears upon the evocation of Judeo-Christian symbolism as a signifier of transcendence as an inclusive trope in the work of Clark and Van Sant. A key aspect of the conceptualisation of the adolescent male is his pathologised status as a delinquent, and of the social and cultural discourses that were set into play in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in an effort to provide moral and physical education within the context of ‘boy work’ exemplified by adolescent male oriented youth movements. As Kidd states: ‘[Early] boy workers rallied around “boy culture”, conducting fieldwork and
profiling boy types. The boy became a subject, the source of much concern and scrutiny. He was “real”, self-evident but not self-explanatory. Most importantly he was white and middle-class. The cultural issues informing the operation of adolescent male oriented youth movements is noted in relation to the formation of influential groups such as the scouting movement. The adolescent male, at this crucial juncture in his cultural construction, is placed in relation to the imperatives of moral education and the invigorating experience of being in the natural environment. The implications for this constructed identity to incorporate sexualised homosocial scenarios in further analysed in chapter six.

Chapter three ‘Constructed adolescent masculinity: Larry Clark’s artist books of the 1990s’ examines the inherent operation of conflict and paradox identified by Clark in his deconstruction of adolescent masculinity. The normalising discourses of sociology with reference to puberty are challenged in relation to Clark’s work and its engagement with the trauma of puberty, and with its capacity to engage discourses of sexualised activity and desire. In his artist books of the 1990s, Clark engages with the mythology of the adolescent boy’s relationship to nature, and the articulation of innocence that this evokes. The contentious subject of male youth suicide as Clark represents it, is analysed in relation to theoretical concepts of eroticism and transcendence, that bear upon challenges to hegemonic masculine culture. An analysis of Clark’s use of imagery of ‘teen’ male stars including Matt Dillon, Jay Ferguson and River Phoenix reveals the complex media-generated constructions of the adolescent male as a subject to be sexually desired for his pubertal corporeality. Clark’s deconstruction of media-generated imagery, and the public discourses that serve to construct the adolescent male reveal conflicts and paradoxes that define the representation of adolescent masculinity.

Chapter four ‘Complex adolescent masculinities: Larry Clark’s film Bully’ analyses the complex relations of innocence and corruption, and the articulation of ambiguous sexual identity in Clark’s 2001 film Bully. The film, based on the 1993 murder of Bobby Kent in Florida, allows Clark to examine the conflicting constructions of adolescent masculinity.

in his representation of the characters Bobby Kent and Marty Puccio. The chapter analyses the complex articulations of male adolescent sexual identity that Clark engages, and the symbolic and metaphoric articulation of innocence and the corrupting consequences of physicalised adolescent masculinity that Clark presents in his film. The symbolism of the pre-pubertal boy as a signifier of innocence and as an identificatory and redemptive figure in relation to concepts of transcendence is discussed.

Chapter five 'Transcending space and identity: Gus Van Sant’s film Elephant' analyses adolescent masculinity in relation to concepts of sacrifice in order to reveal the operation of transcendence. Van Sant’s 2003 film Elephant, based on the 1999 shootings at Columbine High School, articulates complex registers of transcendence in relation to adolescent masculinity by evoking metaphysical paradigms. The chapter analyses the stylistic construction of the film in relation to Michel Foucault’s conception of ‘heterotopic spatiality’ and its transcendent qualities. The metaphoric relationship between the adolescent male and the Judeo-Christian representation of the angel is analysed with reference to the student character of John. The transcendence of hegemonic models of adolescent masculinity is analysed and the operation of sacrifice as an imperative of transcendence is argued as central to the film’s articulation of adolescent masculinity.

Chapter six ‘Consequences for the symbolic representation of adolescent masculinity and transcendence’ analyses the conceptual implications of the representation of adolescent masculinity and transcendence as articulated in the work of Clark and Van Sant as discussed in the previous chapters, in relation to the cultural frameworks which have informed the construction of adolescent masculinity as outlined in chapter two. The chapter focuses on the implications of the sexualisation of the adolescent male body and the possibilities for its objectification. The sexualisation of adolescent masculinity is analysed in relation to Clark’s representation of the pubertal adolescent male body, to discourses of twentieth century sexualised homosociality, and to contemporary cultural manifestations of the sexualised adolescent male body. The operation of transcendence as
a defining trope of adolescent masculinity is analysed in relation to the paradoxical construction of the adolescent male as innocent and as sexually active.

*Adolescent Masculinity, Representation and Transcendence* argues that transcendence is a defining trope of the visual representation of adolescent masculinity. In analysing the cultural construction of adolescent masculinity, and its deconstruction in the work of Clark and Van Sant, the thesis argues for an engagement with the symbolic production of adolescent masculinity as creative and ultimately compassionate.
Chapter Two: Conceptualising adolescent masculinity and transcedence

This chapter provides an overview of the historical conceptualization of adolescent masculinity since its cultural formation in medieval times, and social paradigms that have defined the concept of adolescent masculinity since the early twentieth century. Key texts which have played a defining role in the representation of male adolescence, and of masculinity have been drawn upon in order to provide an outline of the ways in which male adolescence has been articulated in Western cultural discourse. An analysis of this material is necessary in order to establish cultural definitions of adolescent masculinity, and how they relate to hegemonic and alternative aspects of masculine identity.

In this chapter, key aspects of the work of artists and film-makers Larry Clark and Gus Van Sant will be introduced in relation to social and historical formulations of adolescent masculinity under discussion, which are then examined in detail in following chapters that focus directly on their work as it bears upon the subject of the thesis. Analyses of their work are related, in turn, to issues raised in this chapter. In their work, Clark and Van Sant challenge normative definitions of adolescent masculinity, as proscribed by normalizing sociological data about adolescence and puberty, and normative models of masculinity that reflect hegemonic masculine cultures, informing the construction and performance of male adolescent identity.

The chapter surveys the conception of hegemonic masculinity and relates this to the history of male adolescence. An understanding of the concepts of dominant masculine identity forms is central to the thesis, which argues for an alternative model of adolescent masculinity that incorporates the idea of transcedence as a defining trope. Concepts of what might constitute alternative versions of masculinity must be understood in relation to those of conservative, heteronormative and hegemonic masculinities.
As referring to a dominant cultural form, hegemonic masculinity can be understood as ‘the most honoured or desired’. As masculinities theorist and historian Robert W. Connell points out ‘hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual’. It follows then that hegemonic forms of masculinity are the most visible within a cultural matrix. Connell notes that:

The number of men rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small. Yet the majority of men gain from its hegemony, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men gain from the overall subordination of women.

By its ubiquitous nature hegemonic masculinity can be understood as conservative, in that it represents traditional and widely-held values, in relation to other different alternative and radical forms of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity involves complex and specific operations of dominance and subordination:

Oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men. Gayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is expelled from hegemonic masculinity, the items ranging from fastidious taste in home decoration to receptive anal pleasure. Hence, from the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, gayness is easily assimilated to femininity.

As Connell points out, the concept of the male and female sex role was connected to ideas about gender socialization, determined by the physical criteria of biological sex, as well as heteronormative gender:

37 Ibid. p.79.
38 Ibid. p.78.
[In] which being a man or a woman means the enacting of a general set of expectations which are attached to one’s sex - the ‘sex role’. In this approach, there are always two sex roles in any cultural context, a male one and a female one. Masculinity and femininity are quite easily interpreted as internalized sex roles, the products or social learning or ‘socialization’. 39

However, the construction of a male sex role is fundamentally restrictive:

In sex role theory, action (the role enactment) is linked to a structure defined by biological difference, the dichotomy of male and female - not to a structure defined by social relations. This leads to categoricalism, the reduction of gender to two homogeneous categories, betrayed by the persistent blurring of sex differences with sex roles. Sex roles are defined as reciprocal; polarization is a necessary part of the concept. This leads to a misperception of social reality, exaggerating differences between men and women, while obscuring the structures of race, class and sexuality. 40

Masculinity is however dependent upon a relation to femininity in that a ‘culture which does not treat women and men as bearers of polarized character types, at least in principle, does not have a concept of masculinity in the sense of modern European / American culture’. 41

The concept of masculinity, as developed in the 1970s, was often superimposed upon previous ideas about the male sex role, and took for granted established power relations between men and women in social contexts such as the man being the ‘breadwinner’. These definitions of masculinity, Connell states ‘are deeply enmeshed in the history of

39 Ibid. p.22.
41 Ibid. p.68.
institutions and of economic structures. In understanding masculinity, Connell stresses the importance of thinking through the relationships between different registers of masculinity that operate on principles of inclusion and exclusion. The idea of hegemonic masculinity, for example, might be demonstrated by the exaltation of masculinity in competitive sport.

Reviewing academic responses to the concept of hegemonic masculinity in 2005, Connell writing with James W. Messerschmidt states that:

[Well] supported is the idea that the hierarchy of masculinities is a pattern of hegemony, not a pattern of simple domination based on force. Cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization, and the marginalization or delegitimation of alternatives are widely documented features of socially dominant masculinities. Also well supported is the original idea that hegemonic masculinity need not be the commonest pattern in the everyday lives of boys and men. Rather, hegemony works in part through the production of exemplars of masculinity (e.g., professional sports stars), symbols that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them.

The authors state that:

Empirically existing hegemonic masculinities can be analyzed at three levels: 1. Local: constructed in the arenas of face-to-face interaction of families, organizations, and immediate communities, as typically found in ethnographic and life-history research; 2. Regional: constructed at the level of the culture or the nation-state, as typically found in discursive, political, and demographic research; and 3. Global: constructed in transnational arenas such as world politics and

42 Ibid. p.29.
transnational business and media, as studied in the emerging research on masculinities and globalization.\textsuperscript{44}

In relation to the operation of hegemonic masculinity as it pertains to male youth identity, the importance of sport – and the athleticism that it implicates – is of major significance. In youth, ‘skilled body activity’ is a major exemplar of masculinity, and ‘[this] is a key way that heterosexuality and masculinity become linked in Western culture, with prestige conferred on boys with heterosexual partners and sexual learning imagined as exploration and conquest’.\textsuperscript{45} A usable contemporary concept of masculinity would be characterised as constructed, produced, reproduced and variable and changing.\textsuperscript{46}

Typically, since the early twentieth century, adolescence has been characterized by extreme states of being. It is a period when individuals experience intense physical and physiological awareness and change. As a contemporary cultural trope, the concept of adolescence operates as a powerful signifier. In her exploration of the representation of adolescence in fiction, Patricia Meyer Spacks notes that:

Individual fantasies of adolescence in some respects have more power than have those of childhood, a time of life associated with innocence but also with helplessness; about adolescence we can imagine not only the infinite power of untested potential but the gathering force of actual human capacity.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. p.849.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. p.851.

\textsuperscript{46} In their introduction to the \textit{Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities}, Kimmel, Hearn and Connell state that their approach to masculinity includes characterisations defined: ‘By recognising men and masculinities as explicitly gendered rather than nongendered; By understanding men and masculinities as socially constructed, produced, and reproduced rather than as somehow just ‘naturally’ one way or another; By seeing men and masculinities as variable and changing across time (history) and space (culture), within societies, and through life courses and biographies.’ R.W. Connell, Jeff Hearn, and Michael S. Kimmel, “Introduction,” in \textit{Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinity}, ed. R.W. Connell, Jeff Hearn, and Michael S. Kimmel (Thousand Oaks, California; London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, Inc., 2005). p.3.

The concept of adolescence as a particular and measurable period of life can be traced to around 500 B.C., where the critical distinctions within the life cycle as occurring at seven-year intervals was first documented, attributed to the Greek law-maker and poet Solon. 48 In an elegy attributed to Solon, the life-span is divided into equal seven-year phases. 49 The concept of adolescence was understood as one part of the influential concept of seven-year cycles and of the seven ages of man, as described in a ‘pseudo-Hippocratic’ text dated between the fourth and first centuries B.C., where *adolescens* is defined as the seven year period from the ‘emission of seed’ at fourteen years to ‘the appearance of the beard’ at twenty-one years. 50 Subsequent conceptions of adolescence extended to twenty-eight, thirty, or thirty-five years of age. 51 The masculinisation of adolescence reflects, in part, a prevalent conception of adolescence based upon work: Shulamith Shahar notes that up to the fifteenth century, among the working classes, ‘a boy was denoted *adolescens* once he began to work more independently and was given greater responsibility as the herder of his father’s flocks or the apprentice of another shepherd’. 52 From the fifth to the fifteenth century, the emphasis on the significance of adolescence for boys, in relation to girls, reflected the more visible societal roles accorded to boys during this stage of development. Shahar states that:

48 Solon, c.638-558 B.C.

49 Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). p.38. This reflected the hebdomadal thought (an understanding of processes based upon progression of the number seven) that defined the Pythagorean age (from around 400 B.C.). Sears notes that during this period: ‘The entire human life from conception through ultimate decline was described in terms of phases lasting seven hours, seven days, seven months and seven years.’ Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle*. p.40.


51 Richard M. Lerner and Laurence Steinberg, in their overview of scientific studies of adolescent development state that the term adolescence was first used in the fifteenth century, but that Aristotle based youth development on the seven year life cycle, which they describe as ‘infancy, boyhood, and young manhood’, a definition which genders adolescence as male, a point they do not pursue. Richard M. Lerner and Laurence Steinberg, "The Scientific Study of Adolescent Development," in *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology: Second Edition*, ed. Richard M. Lerner and Laurence Steinberg (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004). Richard J. Susman and Alan Rogol state that fundamental to an understanding of adolescent development is that it ‘proceeds through integration rather than compartmentalization of psychological, biological and contextual processes’. Elizabeth J. Susman and Alan Rogol, "Puberty and Psychological Development," in *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology: Second Edition*, ed. Richard M. Lerner and Laurence Steinberg (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004). 18. They continue that 'the traditional ages of the beginning of pubertal development have been 8 years for girls and 9 years for boys', and that while 'pubic hair may be the first external sign of puberty in some boys, reddening and thickening of the scrotum and increased testicular size are the first physical findings of gonadarche (puberty). During puberty in the male the larynx, criothyroid cartilage, and laryngeal muscles enlarge: the voice breaks at approximately 13.9 years, and the adult voice is attained by approximately 15 years.' For girls the first external sign of pubertal development is normally the appearance of breast buds. Susman and Rogol, "Puberty and Psychological Development." pp.19, 20.

In discussing the first stage of childhood, *infantia*, writers refer to both boys and girls. In analyses of the *pueritia* stage [from age seven], they usually devote separate sections or chapters to boys and girls, but emphasis is on education of the former. In discussion of the third stage [*adolescens*], on the other hand, which in girls commenced at twelve [and boys at fourteen], the proportion devoted to girls is much smaller, and they are almost overlooked in discussions of problems of transition to full adulthood. Girls could inherit in all strata of society, but, almost without exception, boys took precedence. In secular society girls were not accorded higher education or protracted vocational training. They were also barred from serving in public office (unless they inherited a fief which involved rulership of some kind), and the secular church was also barred to them. Those who married usually did so at an early age, at least earlier than those males in the same social class who took wives, and on marriage they forfeited the full independence in civil matters they had enjoyed since reaching adulthood.\(^{53}\)

In the twelfth century, Bruno of Segni noted that adolescence was a time ‘when the devil was particularly active in deceiving man’.\(^{54}\) Shahar notes that: ‘During the Inquisition trials in the Haute Ariege region [of France] at the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, all males aged fourteen and over and all females from the age of twelve were obliged to take a vow of faith and to deny on oath any affiliation to heretic sects.’\(^{55}\) In the fourteenth century Benedictine monk Petrus Berchorius applied a set of moral virtues to the seven ages of man, with adolescentia corresponding to the concept of pietas, a period of growth and worth.\(^{56}\) The receptivity accorded adolescence meant that it was often considered an ideal time for moral and spiritual education. In fifteenth century Italy, male adolescents were educated with Christian values, and

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54 Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle*. p.90. Bruno of Segni’s concept relates to approaches to the heavenly Jerusalem, where different approaches through different gates relate to ages of the life cycle and times of conversion to Christianity.

55 Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*. p.27.

religious figures were often represented as male youths. An image of Saint John as a boy, for example, could ‘speak more directly to adolescents and thus could be employed more effectually as an instrument of edification and social control’. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, male adolescence continued to be associated with the necessity for moral education through ‘boy work’ and ‘moral panic’ over its absence.

Writing about the representation of the adolescent boy in Renaissance Florence, Christopher Fulton describes how idealized representations of male youths ‘could produce an inspiring effect on an adolescent audience’. The representation of the male adolescent as a dutiful citizen operated as a symbolic reference to the moral codes and aspirations of the city of Florence itself. In relation to less civically-minded representations of male youth, Fulton raises the important issue of transcendence, in this case, with regard to self-sacrifice. He states:

Such idealized depictions of youth obscure the troubling reality of collusive, self-satisfying adolescents in tension with the patriarchal order. One characteristic type of image that completely effaces the difficult issues concerning youth presents a solitary figure stripped of his clothing and undertaking some form of self-sacrifice. Isolated from all corrupting influences – especially those of his unregenerate peers – the portrayed subject dutifully accepts a prescribed fate while exhibiting the most meritorious conduct.

The adolescent male body, as it was represented in fifteenth century Italy, was invested with a sense of physical and spiritual revelation as well as being subject to the social and

58 See Kidd, Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale.
59 With regard to the construction of adolescence in twentieth century Britain, Stanley Cohen states that: ‘One of the most recurrent types of moral panic in Britain since the war has been associated with the emergence of various forms of youth culture (originally almost exclusively working class, but often recently middle class or student based) whose behaviour is deviant or delinquent.’ Stanley Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics, 2 ed. (London: Paladin, 1973). p.9. It is important to note the social construction of adolescent ‘deviation’ and the roles played by sociological discourses, and the media, as is discussed in detail in later chapters.
60 Fulton, "The Boy Stripped Bare by His Elders: Art and Adolescence in Renaissance Florence." p.33.
61 Ibid. p.33.
institutional control of the church. This control, and its disciplining imperative, is a condition of the manifestation of accepted adolescence in the twenty-first century through the institutionalisation of youth in the school system.\textsuperscript{62} Fulton gives as examples a mid-fifteenth century painting of Saint John the Baptist depicted as a young naked adolescent\textsuperscript{63} and notes how depictions of Saint Sebastian from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth century depicted the saint as an attractive male youth. The symbolism of Sebastian in relation to the representation of adolescent masculinity remains significant, and the iconographic representation of male youth in guise or pose of Sebastian continues to provide inspiration for artists, and for popular and mass-media cultures.\textsuperscript{64} Sebastian was a Roman martyr of the late third century. According to accounts of the fifth century, Sebastian was a Roman soldier, secretly a Christian, and was made a captain of the praetorian guards by Emperor Diocletian. Sebastian assisted other martyrs and was ordered by Diocletian to be killed by arrows. Sebastian recovered and was subsequently clubbed to death at the Emperor Diocletian’s orders. Early representations of Sebastian in the seventh and eight centuries depict him as an elderly bearded man. However, the enduring image of Sebastian, as represented in imagery from the fifteenth to eighteenth century is as a youthful male, his arms bound behind his back or above his head, his torso exposed, his body pierced by arrows.

In his sixteen volume treatise \textit{The Lives of the Saints}, first published in 1872, the Reverend S. Baring-Gould gives a fuller account of Sebastian’s life:

\begin{quote}
He was a fervent soldier of Christ at the same time that he served in the army of the Emperor. He was so greatly regarded by the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, for he was a man prudent, upright in word and act, faithful in business, fervent in spirit. He was enabled, by his rank and office, to be of service to those
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{62} The implications of the normalizing aspects of this institutionalization are discussed in detail in chapter five with reference to Gus Van Sant’s film \textit{Elephant} and Michel Foucault’s theorization of the institution.

\textsuperscript{63} Domenico Veneziano, \textit{St. John the Baptist in the Desert}, c.1445, tempera on panel, 11 x 12.3/4 inches, 27.9 x 32.4 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington.

\textsuperscript{64} See Wolfgang Fetz, Gerald Matt, and Angela Stief, eds., \textit{Saint Sebastian: A Splendid Readiness for Death} (Bielefeld: Kerber, 2003).
who were imprisoned for the faith of Christ. He relieved their sufferings, and urged them to constancy.\textsuperscript{65}

The story states that two young brothers, Marcus and Marcellianus were imprisoned for their Christian faith. Sebastian rushed to save them, and in the presence of the youth's family, other prisoners and the magistrate Nicostratus, he implored them to hold steady to their faith. All were moved, and Nicostratus's wife Zoe, who was unable to speak because of a paralysis six years earlier, was healed and made able to speak by Sebastian, in the name of Christ. Sebastian's faith soon leads to his martyrdom:

The care which Sebastian took of the Christian prisoners, and the efforts he made to stimulate their courage, could not long remain secret; and he was denounced to the Emperor Diocletian, who sent for him, and in a rage, exclaimed, "What! I have had thee about my person, and thou hast conspired against my safety!"

S. Sebastian answered, "I pray daily for thy safety and for the prosperity of the state, to the God of heaven, for I reckon no succour can be got from gods of stone."\textsuperscript{66}

Diocletian ordered for Sebastian to be taken into a field and executed with arrows. After the soldiers had left, Irene, the widow of martyr Castulus, saw that he was still alive, and took him in to her home. When he was healed, Sebastian encountered the Emperor and again proclaimed his faith. The Emperor ordered him to be clubbed to death and cast into the sewer.\textsuperscript{67} His body was rescued by a devout woman, Lucina, and buried in her garden. A church was later built on this spot by Pope Damascus on the Appian Way.

An influential example of the representation of Saint Sebastian is Guido Reni's portrayal, painted in various versions from 1615 to 1619. (See: Figure 1. Guido Reni, \textit{Saint}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[66] Ibid. p.304.
\item[67] A rare depiction of Saint Sebastian's body being dumped into the sewer is held by the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Lodovico Carracci, \textit{St. Sebastian Thrown into the Cloaca Maxima}, 1612, oil on canvas, 65 3/4 x 91 3/4 inches, 167 x 233 cm. Getty Museum, Los Angeles.
\end{footnotes}
Sebastian, c.1615, oil on canvas, 57 1/2 x 44 1/2 inches, 146.1 x 113 cm, Galleria di Palazzo, Genoa.) Two very similar versions, one in Genoa and one in Rome,\(^6^8\) painted circa 1615, depict the Saint as a young man with curly hair, his arms tied above his head, his gaze heavenward. In both paintings, Sebastian is tied to a tree in the central foreground of the picture, his torso occupies much of the picture plane, a loin cloth draped around his waist revealing the crease between the top of his thigh and his pubic area. The paintings are primarily distinguished by the number of arrows that pierce the figure’s torso, two in one image, and three in the other. Writing of the Genoa version, Giovanna degli Esposti states that:

The moment of martyrdom is thus depicted as an instant of ecstatic union with the divine, which, far from compromising the beauty of the body, exalts it so that it too, no less than the soul, experiences a moment of purification. Stylistically this is brought out by the elegant perfection with which the forms of the torso are rendered, and the arrows – the sole element other than the bound hands referring to his physical torment – penetrate almost gently into the flesh of the saint, leaving no dramatic wound.\(^6^9\)

The depiction of bodily wounding as minimal is true of both versions: the arrows enter the body with no evidence of trauma, and Sebastian’s expression is one without anguish. Both versions present Sebastian as an adolescent male youth. In the Genoa version, his body is muscular so as to suggest that of a young man in mid to late adolescence. The Rome version depicts a younger-looking boy, with less developed musculature and the smoother body of an early adolescent. Both figures are hairless under their arms, or their hair is not made visible by the artist, symbolising the boyishness and purity of the subject of Saint Sebastian through the use of the aesthetic device of a hairless torso.

\(^6^8\) Guido Reni, Saint Sebastian, c.1615, oil on canvas, 57 1/2 x 44 1/2 inches, 146.1 x 113 cm. Galleria di Palazzo Rosso, Genoa. In this painting Sebastian’s body is pierced by two arrows, one below his left armpit, the other midway between his shoulder and waist on the right-hand side of his body. Guido Reni, Saint Sebastian, c.1615, oil on canvas, 51 x 39 inches. Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome. In this painting Sebastian’s body is pierced by three arrows, one in his left armpit, one mid-way on the right-hand side of the torso, and the third in the stomach below the navel.

René’s depictions of Sebastian had a significant influence on writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1877, after seeing René’s Genoa version of Saint Sebastian, playwright, poet and essayist Oscar Wilde composed an elegy to the deceased poet John Keats. Prompted by a visit to Keats’s grave in Rome, Wilde’s poem included the lines: ‘Taken from life when life and love were new / The youngest of the martyrs here is lain, / Fair as Sebastian, and as early slain.’

Wilde later added a prose addendum to the poem:

As I stood beside the mean grave of this divine boy, I thought of him as a Priest of Beauty slain before his time; and the vision of Guido’s St Sebastian came before my eyes as I saw him at Genoa, a lovely brown boy, with crisp, clustering hair and red lips, bound by his evil enemies to a tree and, though pierced by arrows, raising his eyes with divine, impassioned gaze towards the Eternal Beauty of the opening Heavens.

Sebastian signified a direct correlation between male youth and beauty, encompassing physical attractiveness, the concept of transcendence through martyrdom as beautiful, and of Sebastian as beatific, in the manner of an angel or saint. The image of Sebastian appealed as an icon of male sensuality which was connected to concepts of passivity, as opposed to active, athletic, masculinity. In his study of René, Richard E. Spear suggests that:

[Ardent] response to the sight of bound Sebastian penetrated by arrows has a long and varied history, if for no other reason than that the spectacle of a passive nude

70 Oscar Wilde, ‘The Grave of Keats’, 1877. ‘Rid of the world’s injustice, and his pain, / He rests at last beneath God’s veil of blue. / Taken from life when life and love were new / The youngest of the martyrs here is lain, / Fair as Sebastian, and as early slain. / No cypress shades his grave, no funeral yew, / But gentle violets weeping with the dew / Weave on his bones an ever-blossoming chain. / O proudest heart that broke for misery! / O sweetest lips since those of Mitylene! / O poet-painter of our English Land! / Thy name was writ in water — it shall stand: / And tears like mine will keep thine memory green. / As Isabella did her Basil-tree.’ Oscar Wilde, The Complete Stories, Plays and Poems of Oscar Wilde (London: O’Mara Books, 1990). p.750.

male body on exhibit was relatively uncommon [apart from the exception of Christ on the Cross].

Spear’s evocation of the unique nature of Sebastian’s passivity fails to recognise other allegorical representations of male youths in poses that evoke passivity. Fulton identifies a ‘characteristic type’ of representation of male youth of the fifteenth century that ‘presents a solitary figure stripped of his clothing and undertaking some form of self-sacrifice’. A fifteenth century depiction of Saint John represents the saint as an adolescent boy, stripped of all clothing and cultural artifice. Of Domenico Veneziano’s *St John the Baptist in the Desert* c.1445, Fulton states that:

[By] discarding vainglorious robes, John cleanses himself of the lusty habits and pomp associated with adolescence, and, not yet clad in the rough hair-skin cloak that hangs loose across his shoulder, he stands momentarily unclothed. Thus shorn of youthful excesses, John makes no claims to status or property, and in his utter nakedness he has nothing to conceal. Stripped bare by his elders who commissioned the painting, the youth is shown undefended and fully subject to paternal control.

Caravaggio’s representations of adolescent boys in the guise of Saint John the Baptist present the male youth in various degrees of bodily revelation, presenting himself to the viewer. Caravaggio’s *St John the Baptist with a Ram* 1602 depicts the young saint on the verge of puberty, his left leg raised and right leg lowered, revealing his genitals. In another version from c.1602-04 the saint is shown as a pensive adolescent, eyes

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73 Fulton, "The Boy Stripped Bare by His Elders: Art and Adolescence in Renaissance Florence." p.33.
74 Domenico Veneziano, *St John the Baptist in the Desert*, c.1445, tempera on panel, 11 x 12 3/4 inches, 27.9 x 32.4 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington.
75 Fulton, "The Boy Stripped Bare by His Elders: Art and Adolescence in Renaissance Florence." p.33.
76 Caravaggio, *St John the Baptist with a Ram*, 1602, oil on canvas, 50 3/4 x 37 inches, 128.9 x 94 cm, Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome.
77 Caravaggio, *St John the Baptist*, c.1602-04, oil on canvas, 68 1/4 x 52 inches, 173.4 x 132.1 cm, William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City, Missouri.
downcast, legs spread, and groin covered by a soft pelt of fur that can be understood as signifying the soft pubic patch that it covers. Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit have noted the ambiguous masculinity and sexuality of Caravaggio’s representation of these male youths, allowing them an open field of sensual potential. Bersani and Dutoit suggest that ‘Caravaggio’s enigmatic bodies have not yet been domesticated by sexual – perhaps even gendered – identities’. 78 The complexities of an automatic reading of eroticism of images of male youths in Caravaggio’s work evoke the ‘unfathomable nature’ of the erotic. 79 For Bersani and Dutoit, in Caravaggio’s depiction of the young Saint John, the revelation of the boys genitals is less an overt sexual address than an aspect of the overall conceptual movement of the image towards transcendence. They suggest that the youth presents an appeal to the viewer: ‘Join me, although where I am is somewhere between two realms of being, between my physical, individuated existence and my being as a disseminated connectedness throughout the universe.’ 80

In Sebastian’s martyrdom as a Christian, the hardness of masculinity is challenged by the symbolism of his act, in addition to the passivity this evokes. Kaja Silverman states:

> The exemplary Christian masochist [seeks] to re-make him or herself according to the model of the suffering Christ, the very picture of earthly divestiture and loss. Insofar as such an identification implies the complete and utter negation of all phallic values, Christian masochism has radically emasculating implications, and is in its purest forms intrinsically incompatible with the pretensions of masculinity. 81

Sebastian’s representation as a young male, with his hands bound either behind his back or above his head, engage concepts of masochism, eroticism and spiritual transcendence. Sebastian’s passivity and its complex implications of arrested masculinity, the

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79 Ibid. p.6.
80 Ibid. p.82.
unselfconscious revelation of his youthful body, and his beatific attitude toward his punishment evoke discourses of eroticism and sexualisation.

Frederick Holland Day’s photograph of an adolescent male in the pose of Saint Sebastian suggests a sense of ecstasy. (See Figure 2. Frederick Holland Day, St Sebastian, 1906, platinum print on textured paper, 9 3/4 x 7 3/4 inches, 24.8 x 19.7 cm, Library of Congress, Washington.)82 The boy is recognizably in the guise of Sebastian by virtue of his pose and costume: his torso is bare, he is bound to a tree by rope with his hands tied behind his back, his waist covered by a loin cloth. The boy’s head is thrust back, his eyes closed, his mouth partly open.83 His expression suggests one of spiritual ecstasy, and of the possibility of sexual pleasure. In her analysis of Gianlorenzo Bernini’s sculptures representing the martyrdom of Saint Theresa and the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni,84 Shelley Karen Perlove states that:

As portrayed by Bernini, Theresa and Ludovica are undergoing similar religious experiences. Represented in the Saint Theresa is an event described in her autobiography: the transverberation or piercing of her heart by an angel who left her afire with divine love. The Spanish saint, like the beata, is inflamed with

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83 Frederick Holland Day produced the photographs of Nicholas Giancola in the pose of Saint Sebastian in the northern summer of 1906. Holland Day produced many allegorical images derived from Christianity, including self-portraits as Christ on the cross. He was also highly interested in the poetry of John Keats, and wanted to create a memorial to him. Estelle Jussim suggests that Holland Day would have been aware of Oscar Wilde’s poem ‘The Grave of Keats’, which compares Keats to Saint Sebastian. Estelle Jussim, Slave to Beauty: The Eccentric Life and Controversial Career of F. Holland Day, Photographer, Publisher, Aesthete (Boston: D.R. Godine, 1981), p.76. While the representation of Saint Sebastian has retained a strong symbolism for many artists since the early twentieth century, Holland Day’s photograph is significant for its overt connections to adolescent masculinity and the representations of transcendence and ecstasy, and for its historical relation to the conception of boyhood around the 1900s. This thesis does not attempt to examine an overly diverse range of representations of Saint Sebastian, except from where they inform an analysis of adolescent masculinity and transcendence. For a contemporary response to the symbolism of Saint Sebastian see publication that accompanied an exhibition at the Kunsthalle Wien: Fetz, Matt, and Stief, eds., Saint Sebastian: A Splendid Readiness for Death.

84 Gianlorenzo Bernini, Saint Theresa, c.1647, marble, Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome. Gianlorenzo Bernini, Blessed Ludovica Albertoni, 1672-74, marble, Altieri Chapel, San Francesco a Ripa, Rome.
charity for God, an idea asserted emblematically in both chapels by flaming hearts.\textsuperscript{85}

Bernini’s depiction of this transverberation is manifest in an expression of ecstasy: the body is reclined and twisted in what we imagine to be exquisite pain or pleasure, the head is thrown back, the eyes closed, and mouth agape; a treatment also applied to Antonio Giorgetti’s sculpture of Saint Sebastian in the Roman church San Sebastiano.\textsuperscript{86} In his analysis of eroticism, Georges Bataille states plainly that ‘flights of Christian religious experience and bursts of erotic impulses are seen to be part and parcel of the same movement’.\textsuperscript{87} Holland Day’s representation of an adolescent boy as Saint Sebastian enacts complex registers of eroticism that challenge normative models of adolescent masculinity as they were produced in cultural representations of the early twentieth century. As discussed later in this chapter, cultural constructions of adolescent masculinity were often framed by an active athleticism which operated in relation to the outdoor pursuits associated with movements such as the Boy Scouts and the Wandervogel. In these contexts, the production of adolescent male identity was framed by physical activity, and registers of eroticism that were articulated within sanctioned homosocial scenarios. The evocation of the mythological symbolism of Saint Sebastian and that of ecstatic experience serves to eroticise Holland Day’s depiction of the boy and complicate readings of the image based upon purely allegorical symbolism.

The image of the boy as Saint Sebastian is depicted in a pose that is passive: he is bound and vulnerable. However this passivity operates as a complicated register. Richard Dyer states that:

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{87} Georges Bataille, \textit{Erotism: Death & Sensuality} (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), p.9. First published in 1957. Bataille’s conception of eroticism is closely tied to the operation of transcendance, and can be usefully applied to an understanding of Larry Clark’s work as it relates to concepts of death, eroticism and transcendance, discussed in chapter three.
\end{itemize}
The idea of looking (staring) as power and being looked at as powerlessness overlaps with ideas of activity/passivity. Thus to look is thought of active; whereas to be looked at is passive. In reality, this is not true. The model prepares her or himself to be looked at, the artist or photographer constructs the image to be looked at; and, on the other hand, the image that the viewer looks at is not summoned up by his or her act of looking but in collaboration with those who have put the image there. [Yet] it remains the case that images of men must disavow this element of passivity if they are to be kept in line with dominant ideas of masculinity-as-activity.88

Dyer also states that '[even] in an apparently relaxed, supine pose, the model tightens and tautens his body so that the muscles are emphasized, hence drawing attention to the body’s potential for action'.89 While Holland Day’s Sebastian reveals the muscularity of athleticised youth, the particularities of the subject complicate Dyer’s proposition of the engendered active nature of, even, ‘passive’ images of men. Sebastian, who is shown at the moment of supposed death, will no longer be able to be active in a physical sense. The act of binding and piercing him will render his body inactive, that is, dead. But, Sebastian’s imagined spirit will be active, and the moment of his self-immolation, his willing acceptance of his own sacrifice, can be understood as spiritually active in the manner of the martyr. Further, the ecstasy inherent in Sebastian’s moment of transcendence bears the hallmarks of an orgasmic and therefore eroticized sense of identity that is active. Like Bernini’s Saint Theresa, who’s ‘transverberation is also her death, her mystical matrimony with God’,90 Sebastian is also experiencing a transcendent state through his self-immolation, and an imagined union with a higher power or spiritual force.

89 Ibid. p.67. Dyer’s discussion is based on images of men in ‘pin-up’ magazines and in cinema where the subjectivity of the model is designed to be gazed at. However his analysis makes fundamental propositions about the nature of the gaze upon the image of the male subject.
Reni’s Genoa Sebastian plays an important role of psycho-sexual awakening in Yukio Mishima’s novel *Confessions of a Mask*. The narrator, at age twelve, describes the experience of discovering a reproduction of the painting in his father’s art books, which signifies for him ‘only the springtime of youth, only light and beauty and pleasure’. Rather than perceiving pain in the body of the saint, the boy in Mishima’s novel observes ‘some flicker of melancholy pleasure like music’. Looking at the picture the boy experiences his first ejaculation, and later ruminates of the saint: ‘[Was] not such beauty as his a thing destined for death?’ a fate ‘proud and tragic’ and ‘shining’. Mishima’s experience of sexual awakening, while engaging with homoerotic fantasy and identification operates as a symbolic parallel to Sebastian’s own ‘spiritual’ awakening as a young man as conditioned by his own experience of adolescent masculinity and the transcendence he identifies in the imagining of Sebastian’s self-immolation.

Larry Clark’s photographs of adolescent youths that enact the trope of Saint Sebastian’s self-immolation in his artist book *1992* also operate in accordance with the registers of passivity in appearance, an eroticism of body display, and the possibility of transcendence in death. They also evoke a trope of masochism in the suspense they signify: they depict the moment before the act of hanging – and possible auto-eroticism, or suicide by gunshot into the mouth or to the head. In images of Saint Sebastian, such as those by Reni or Holland Day, the youth is depicted on the verge of death and therefore release, while offering himself to his punishers and to God. In the photographs of adolescent boys by Clark, and in the images of the youthful Sebastian by Reni and Holland Day, the promise of transcendence in death, is deferred.

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92 Ibid. p.39.
93 Ibid. p.45.
94 This deferring of experience can be understood in relation to Deleuze’s conceptualization of the sexual masochist: ‘The masochist waits for pleasure as something that is bound to be late, and expects pain as the condition that will finally ensure (both physically and morally) the advent of pleasure. He therefore postpones pleasure in expectation of the pain which will make gratification possible.’ Gilles Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty," in *Masochism* (New York: Zone Books, 1989). p.71. While artistic representations of Sebastian may suggest the operation of masochism, caution should be exercised in interpreting his physical arrest purely in these terms. Sebastian may endure his pain in the knowledge of salvation, but it is only through the ‘frozen’ nature of his representation in the still image of painting or photography that this deferring of pleasure is articulated – and therefore may excite the imagination of the operation of masochism in the viewer.
In a sequence of images in Clark’s artist book *1992*, a boy and girl are shown engaging in erotic play on a bed. In several images, the girl tightens an object which appears to be a strappy black brassiere around the boy’s neck, and holds his arms above his head so that his pose is reminiscent of Sebastian. The foreclosure of their activity as consummation is never arrived at; instead, the boy is shown alone, the clothing tightened around his neck, his arms raised, and his eyes gazing heavenward. This scenario articulates the boy’s masculinity as passive in a normalised sense, and the assumed pleasure of sexual consummation is deferred, in the manner of masochistic erosicism. His heavenward gaze also suggests a desire for transcendence, in the manner of Saint Sebastian. Rather than manifesting a masochistic urge, this denied love is represented by Clark as both a condition of adolescent masculinity (which therefore resists the possibility of transcendence), and the ultimate goal of adolescent masculinity (which therefore provides closure in transcendence).

In Gus Van Sant’s film *Elephant*, the trope of Sebastian implies vulnerability. The character Eric, who we know to be one of the protagonists of the high school shootings, is shown asleep, his body in the pose of Sebastian. (See Figure 3. The character Eric asleep adjacent to his friend Alex, still image from Gus Van Sant’s 2003 film *Elephant*.) This image signals a passivity and vulnerability at odds with the normative conception of adolescent masculinity as aggressive, and complicates the actions of Eric later in the film by initiating a complex and paradoxical masculine identity. While Clark’s use of the pose of Sebastian with arms raised acts as a revelatory gesture in order to establish the physicalised nature of puberty (the evidence of new hair growth under the arms), for Van Sant, the image of Eric sleeping in the same pose evokes his youthful innocence in body and in spirit, that allows him an inner life denied the demonized representation of male adolescents as juvenile offenders. Eric literally transcends the promise of violence and destruction in the internality of sleep and the sanctuary that offers, overlaid with the possibility of spiritual transcendence symbolised by the iconography of Saint Sebastian.
In her analysis of the representation of adolescent masculinity in eighteenth and nineteenth century France, Abigail Solomon-Godeau notes the ‘ephbeic’ character of the representation of adolescent masculinity which articulated a sense of passivity that can be seen as relating to earlier representations of Saint Sebastian as a ‘passive’ male subject. In his analysis of ephelophilia Tariq Rahman notes that an ancient Greek culture, aesthetic and erotic investment in ‘boys’ was ‘normal’ as long as ‘they retained some female characteristics such as lack of facial and bodily hair, youthful good looks and bodily grace’. While the smooth skin of the adolescent was seen as desirable in Greek and ‘oriental Muslim’ cultures, Rahman also notes the significance of the soft facial hair of early adolescence as a sign of beauty. Rahman cites first century Roman poet Marcus Valerius Martialis: ‘So soft on your cheeks is the shadowy down / That it fades with a breath in the breeze or the sun / Such a delicate bloom as on quinces oft lingers / The shine when they’re plucked by a maiden’s fingers’ and early nineteenth century Urdu poet Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib: ‘The down on thy cheek is a sign of beauty / Or how else can the greenery grow on flame.’ In Persian and Urdu, the light facial hair of an adolescent boy had the specific term of khar. The conflation of masculine and feminine characteristics in the ephbeic youth is indicated by the use in Greek poetry of the term pais, which could mean boy, child, girl, son, daughter, or slave, however, as Kenneth James Dover notes, when used in relation to a homosexual relationship ‘[pais] was often a youth who had attained full height’. While the character of the ‘ephbeic’ male has come to encompass feminine aspects with respect to the androgynous physicality of the pre-pubertal or early adolescent male, its originary character presents a more complex articulation of masculinity. Dover notes that the ephebos is a male of eighteen or nineteen years, and that opportunity for observing boys were served by gymnasia and wrestling schools. The equating of femininity with passivity becomes more complex since the desirable boy is also one who is physically athleticised in a normalised masculine sense.

96 Ibid. pp.128-129, p.139, n.17.
98 Ibid. pp.66, 54.
As David Halperin notes, in pre-modern Europe, the articulation of sexual desire of men for boys was not a reciprocal erotic exchange:

[Boys] have to be motivated to submit to their male lovers by a variety of largely non-sexual inducements, such as gifts or threats. So their ‘passivity’ does not extend to their desire, which remains unengaged and can therefore claim to be uncontaminated by any impulse to subordination, any hint of ‘femininity’. In that respect, they uphold and embody, even while playing a ‘passive’ sexual role, traditional standards of virility.99

The recapitulation in eighteenth and nineteenth French classicism of the ephebic male, as Solomon-Godeau states, engaged with complex concepts of androgynous masculinity which evoked the heroic ideals of sacrifice. She states that:

[An] imagery of disempowered and androgynous masculinity proliferated even as republican discourse limned its own ideal of masculinity in phallic, martial and stoic terms. It is though in violently ‘expelling’ the frivolity, decadence, and corruption of the ancien regime [sic] and its courtly culture, and linking these to a malign femininity (or a perverse and depraved masculinity), republican culture required a stand-in for an eroticised femininity deemed inimical to republican and civic values. The ubiquity of the ephebic body and the erotic investments to which it testifies suggest its escapist, even utopian facets. Given the nature of class and gender conflicts in the revolutionary period, there is reason to think that the beautiful ephebe is a kind of imaginary resolution of intractable contradictions, its pathos and grace a respite from the cataclysms of revolutionary change, its corporeal ambivalence and sensual appeal an escape from the misogyny (and homophobia) of republican discourse. As an idealised male figure, it is charged with all the exalted and ‘public’ values traditionally incarnated in the image of

masculine beauty, yet its androgyny or effeminacy permits it to function as a surrogate for sexual difference, indeed, for desirability itself.¹⁰⁰

Solomon-Godeau notes the proliferation of images of male youths as ‘disempowered’ in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, often being represented as ‘dead’ or ‘dying’, and celebrating a sense of ‘passive male beauty’ which invited ‘a relationship with the viewer that is essentially contemplative, private and hedonistic’.¹⁰¹ The concept of pathos was thus implicated in the representation of the ephebic male youth, which ‘elevated ephebic weakness to tragedy’.¹⁰² Like earlier and contemporary representations of Sebastian, the ephebic youth was often portrayed in the role of martyr, emphasising again a connection between the representation of male adolescence and the articulation of transcendence. The ephebe, Solomon-Godeau notes ‘was officially supposed to embody the ideal – the pure and disinterested form of abstract perfection – not to provoke carnal desire’.¹⁰³ Christian iconography and its appeal to martyrdom served secular messages, mixed as they were, so that the ephebic body was ‘so well suited to the contradictory requirements of a heroic masculine ideal that nominally abjured sensuality, and a culturally embedded homosociality that nominally proscribed homoeroticism’.¹⁰⁴ This representation of the adolescent male body, in which the apparent dualities of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ cohabited, established it as a complex locus for the construction of masculinity per se. It incorporated ideals of male beauty that were distinct from those of muscular authoritative masculine codes, and operated in a spiritual realm of sacrifice and pathos.

At the most basic level, it can be suggested that adolescence in itself is transcendent in that its innate experience is something ‘beyond’ the limits of childhood and adulthood, and it evokes extremes of experience often beyond the domain of accepted socialized behaviour. Further, it can be suggested that an adolescent masculine identity that

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p.88.
¹⁰² Ibid. p.123.
¹⁰³ Ibid. p.123.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p.139.
challenges hegemonic models of identity incorporates a model of transcendence precisely because its articulation is one 'beyond' that of a standard model of identity. Writing about the operation of transcendence in relation to self awareness Jean-Paul Sartre states:

The transcendental field, purified of all egological structure, recovers its former limpidity. In one sense, it is a nothing, since all physical, psycho-physical and psychical objects, all truths, and all values are outside it, since the me has, for its part, ceased to be part of it.105

Sartre's definition of the operation of transcendence as exclusive of all 'truths' and 'values' can be applied to its articulation in relation to adolescent masculinity and dominant forms of hegemonic masculine culture. By virtue of its transcendent qualities, adolescent masculinity resolves to 'cease to be a part of' dominant masculine culture. The challenges and imperatives evoked by this position are analysed by Clark and Van Sant, and are evident in the social and cultural histories that inform their work.

Clark and Van Sant's work under discussion locates transcendence as an identifying aspect of adolescent masculinity as they represent it in relation to dominant masculine culture, and to symbolic articulations of transcendence in relation to sexualisation, death and sacrifice. Edith Wyschograd writes: 'Whatever transcends, whether conceived as unlimited in the absolute sense or as unsurpassable by any other being, acquires its meaning by virtue of its elusiveness.'106 The possibility of death by suicide or sacrifice is fleeting and elusive, as is the transit of eroticism over death, or the socialization of alternative masculinities in relation to the hegemonic paradigms of male adolescence. There are two significant articulations of transcendence in Clark and Van Sant's work as is discussed in the thesis. Transcendence can be understood as being manifest as a symbolic agent that facilitates passage from one state to another, and as a signifier of the


metaphoric transcendence symbolised by Judeo-Christian iconography. Clark and Van Sant do not appeal to the belief systems implicit in Christianity, but their work often refers to its iconography and symbolism in order to articulate the concept of transcendence as a symbolic force in relation to the representation of adolescent masculinity as constructed. It must be noted that the concept of transcendence as it is used in this thesis engages a range of specific effects with regard to the theoretical situation in which it employed. Transcendence is not taken as having a singular or particular meaning, but is demonstrated as operating as an effect in relation to the representation of adolescent masculinity under discussion. In the thesis, transcendence reflects a range of values. It is discussed as symbolic of Judeo-Christian spiritual transformation for metaphorical purpose, as a force that challenges and disrupts normative values, and as a complex field of heterodox identity expression. Most significantly however, it is identified as an integral aspect of the representation of adolescent masculinity as analysed by this thesis.

In his 1986 book on adolescence in Britain, John Springhall refers to particular constructions of adolescent masculinity:

> It has been suggested that 'youth' in seventeenth-century England was close to the modern concept of 'adolescence' in that both recognize some sort of 'identity crisis' appropriate to this stage of life. In a traditional, rural and pre-industrial society this would naturally have taken the form of a religious crisis, as expressed by the falling-off in intensity from youth to maturity in the religious fervour of the writers of diaries and autobiographies. Efforts at religious conversion sometimes began in childhood rather than adolescence and continued throughout life for early modern man but the general pattern was for the conversion experience to begin in adolescence. Since it was such an important stage of life in religious terms, seventeenth-century society needed to have a fairly concrete concept of youth, not romanticized as in later centuries but seen as a special period of life which somehow found favour with God despite its potential for sinfulness.107

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The relationship between adolescence, and the moral crises it raised in relation to perceived needs for spiritual guidance, also found favour elsewhere. In the United States from the late eighteenth century during a period of evangelical Protestantism, adolescence was seen as the ideal life stage to induce religious conversion (a corollary to the fourteenth century representation of adolescence where 'the devil is particularly active'). As discussed further in this chapter, various concepts of 'moral' hygiene continued to inform the construction of adolescent masculinity into the twentieth century, when psychological and biological frameworks, in concert with socially driven programs sought to construct the adolescent male in relation to performed athleticism and activities designated to take place within the invigorating environment of 'nature'.

Adolescence may be conceptualized in relation to the physical and biological signs that represent the change from childhood to adulthood in terms of the physical signs of puberty (the word itself derived from the Latin pubescere, meaning to grow hair, or become mossy). In the work of Larry Clark, the visibility of the signs of puberty is often present as signifying adolescence, and as articulating a sexualized conception of adolescent identity. According to the differing circumstances defined by changing historical attitudes, the concept of adolescence is defined by contextual means. Post-twentieth century understanding of adolescence in relation to psychological and biological markers engages a different approach to that of the nineteenth century, when the concept was defined by social factors. As Springhall notes:

The characteristics of puberty were, of course, well known even before the onset of industrialization but, in general, little significance was attached to them. Prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, contemporaries associated puberty with rising power and energy rather than with the onset of an awkward and vulnerable stage of life which would later become known as adolescence. Adulthood and its

108 Ibid. p.15.
responsibilities, both during and after the industrial revolution, were determined far more by the acquisition of independent wage-earning status than by the attainment of physiological maturity and, more often than not, this status preceded full physical and sexual development. Boys and girls experiencing the psychosexual changes linked with puberty were not as conspicuous as they have since become in society.\(^{111}\)

Adolescence, states Springhall 'is not simply a biological fact [associated with] puberty, nor a period of emotional turbulence as a result, but a cultural definition of a certain stage in the life cycle with a long history that still remains to be unravelled'.\(^{112}\)

It is from the beginning of the twentieth century that the concept of adolescent masculinity – as it is currently understood – was formulated and 'named'. The social phenomena of 'boyology,' various male-oriented youth movements, and the exploration of the psychology of the male adolescent converged to create a defining modern construction of adolescent masculinity. A contemporary and wide reaching social theory of adolescence was proposed by American psychologist Granville Stanley Hall, whose exegesis Adolescence: It's Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education was published in 1904.\(^{113}\) Hall’s theory of adolescence was a part of broader ‘maturationist’ theory based on Charles Darwin's theory of evolution:

Within a social Darwinian framework, the growth and development of individuals reflected the development of the race from savagery to barbarism, and barbarism to civilization. Hence, adolescence would be the point in which the individual, reflective of society as a whole, would either develop into a superior, Western self or remain stunted in a savage state. [Hall] and his colleagues also issued

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\(^{111}\) Springhall, Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960, p.34.

\(^{112}\) Ibid. p.235.

"pedagogical imperatives," that is, disciplinary and instructional techniques that were essential for each stage of adolescence.\textsuperscript{114}

The influence of Hall's work in the United States of America raised concerns about masculinity and fears of social decay. Boys' education "was meant to produce young, masculine Christians"\textsuperscript{115} and educational reforms were built around the presumptive prominent interest of boys in physical activities. The concept of the adolescent male in the United States in the early twentieth century "emerged within worries over the future of Western masculinity, the nation, and the white race".\textsuperscript{116} The social representation of the adolescent male was systematized by the public education and juvenile justice systems.

In his study of the American concept of "boyology", Kenneth B. Kidd explains the context within which Hall's complex study of adolescence was produced.\textsuperscript{117} Kidd takes the term "boyology" from its influential use by Henry William Gibson, a leader of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and author of Boyology or Boy Analysis, published in the USA in 1916,\textsuperscript{118} although the term first appeared, according to Kidd, in the YMCA's journal Rural Manhood, in 1910 (also the year that the Scouting movement began in the USA).\textsuperscript{119} Kidd states that:

Gibson's text is a standard example of the American primers of boy education and management published during the first two decades of the twentieth century. It serves more as an epitome of the genre than an original contribution to "boy analysis". "Boyology" was a familiar term, which Gibson and others used in their lectures and institutional work. Boyology gave boy work a philosophy, codifying


\textsuperscript{115} Ibid. p.2.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid. p.7.

\textsuperscript{117} See Kidd, Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale.


\textsuperscript{119} Kidd, Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale. p.25.
a cluster of ideas about boyhood and the national character that also inspired church youth work, organized camping, and character-building agencies such as the YMCA, Boys' Brigade, Order of the Knights of King Arthur, Sons of Daniel Boone, Order of the American Boy, Woodcraft Indians, Big Brothers, and Scouting. Modeled in part on urban child-saving efforts, these agencies targeted white, middle-class boys. Most were organized from 1900 to 1920, years that saw the publication of influential handbooks predating Gibson's, notably William Byron Forbush's *The Boy Problem* (1901), Granville Stanley Hall's two-volume *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (1904), and Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* (1908), quickly embraced in the United States.\(^{120}\)

Kidd describes 'boy workers' as '[typically] bourgeois white men' who 'saw themselves as ethnographers and role models'.\(^{121}\) While boyology literature considers boys aged generally from eight to sixteen years of age, Kidd notes that 'Hall alone distinguished adolescence from boyhood'.\(^{122}\)

The general tenor of Hall's analysis and its motivation are made clear in his chapter headings. In addition to explanations of biological development, Volume I includes chapters titled 'Diseases of Body and Mind', 'Juvenile Faults, Immoralities, and Crimes', and 'Sexual Development: Its Dangers and Hygiene in Boys', the latter chapter largely devoted to the dangers of masturbation.\(^{123}\) In his preface, dated April 1904, Hall states:

> Never has youth been exposed to such dangers of both perversion and arrest as in our own land and day. Increasing urban life with its temptations, prematurities, sedentary occupations, and passive stimuli, just when an active, objective life is

\(^{120}\) Ibid. p.67.

\(^{121}\) Ibid. p.67.

\(^{122}\) Ibid. p.67.

most needed, early emancipation and a lessening sense for both duty and
discipline, the haste to know and do all befitting man's estate before its time, the
mad rush for sudden wealth and the reckless fashions set by its gilded youth — all
these lack some of the regulatives they still have in older lands with more
conservative traditions.  

While Hall's analysis was guided by contemporaneous biological understandings of
human growth and development, he invokes classical and literary conceptions of
adolescence: the concluding chapter of Volume I is titled 'Adolescence in Literature,
Biography, and History', containing within it sub-topics including 'Plato's boys', 'The
disciples of Jesus', 'Youth and the Saints', 'Men of Science', and 'Literary Women'.
Hall's own role as a pedagogue is stated with respect to his subject in the concluding
remarks of his preface:

As for years, an almost passionate lover of childhood and a teacher of youth, the
adolescent stage of life has long seemed to me one of the fascinating of all
themes, more worthy, perhaps, than anything else in the world of reverence, most
inviting study, and in most crying need of a service we do not yet understand how
to render aright. Socrates knew that there was no such companionship or
inspiration. In ministering to it the higher instincts of parenthood culminate and
age renews its youth. This should make teaching the most humanistic, the noblest,
and the most satisfying vocation of man, as well as the surest safeguard against
pessimism. These years are the best decade of life. No age is so responsive to all
the best and wisest adult endeavour. In no psychic soil, too, does seed, bad as well
as good, strike such deep root, grow so rankly, or bear fruit so quickly or so
surely. To love and feel for the young can alone make the teacher love his calling
and respect it as supreme. That it may directly and indirectly help the young to

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exploit all the possibilities of the years from fourteen to twenty-four and to safeguard them against the above insidious dangers is the writer's chief desire.\textsuperscript{125}

It is important to recognize the social changes that occurred in North America, the United Kingdom and Australia, in relation to the construction of identity of the adolescent boy as a figure identified in relation to nature and to the urban environment. In the 1880s in Sydney, a group of 'philanthropic and civic-minded citizens and churchmen'\textsuperscript{126} formed a 'brigade' or 'union' to protect young newspaper sellers against what was understood as the corrupting influence of the street, leading to the establishment in 1882 of 'a Newsboys' Brigade and Young Workmen's Club for fourteen to twenty-one year olds'.\textsuperscript{127} The success of the movement in providing shelter and an identity for underprivileged adolescent boys has been noted by Michael E. Hoare:

The early [1890s] were very troubled times for Australia as strikes grew, banks collapsed and the economy generally waned. The waterfront was especially prone to trouble in Sydney and so the 'Boys' Brigade' of Sussex Street found itself providing 400 beds (one night's accommodation) and 1,000 meals in 1890-91 for homeless and hungry Boys [sic] of the city. Socials were run and employment service begun.\textsuperscript{128}

From around 1900, organizations in Australia, North America, Canada and the United Kingdom were being established in response to the ideas put forward by Forbush and Hall, and equally, they fostered a sense of behavioural and identity based characteristics that sought to provide an ideal conception of adolescent masculinity at the time.

Referring to the general tenor of 'America of the year 1900' Jay Mechling writes:

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid. pp.xviii-xix. James Youniss, reviewing Hall's work in 2005, notes that Hall's understanding of adolescent psychology was one that embraced a multi-disciplinary approach to the study. James Youniss, "G. Stanley Hall: Neither Psychology Alone nor Basic Research Is Sufficient," \textit{Journal of Research on Adolescence} 14, no. 4 (2005). p.360. It must also be noted that Hall's stated motivation about the virtue of pedagogy for the adolescent also elevates Hall's own role as a teacher.


\textsuperscript{127} Ibid. p.27.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid. pp.27-28.
Most agree that boys' nature is driven considerably by their biology, that male children struggle with impulses created by eons of human evolution, impulses pushing them toward strong peer group loyalty, very physical play, hierarchical relationships, competitiveness, aggressiveness, and violence. Experts advise that, rather than trying to fight against this biological nature of boys, we should create youth programs that will accommodate boys' natural instincts and shape them in socially constructive directions. The experts also lobby for single-sex schools and recreational programs; and only then, they say, can we attend to the special developmental needs of boys.¹²⁹

Robert H. MacDonald notes that the youth movements founded in the United Kingdom, the 'British Empire' and the United States of America represented a class based philanthropy directed from the middle-classes to the working-classes. He states:

The youth movements preached virility, discipline, love of nature, Christianity, patriotism, imperialism; they were a mission to save a generation of boys from godlessness and degeneracy. Their success depended on the sugar round the pill: on the images each movement projected, on their uniforms, on the adventures they inspired, on the models of manhood they paraded and made glamorous.¹³⁰

The Scouting movement fostered a mix of 'wild' youth masculinity and ordered moral discipline. The 'tension between adventure and discipline, between escapism and the moral lesson'¹³¹ was a core aspect of the movement. While cultures such as scouting and camping organizations fostered a strong identification between youth masculinity and the experience of the 'wilderness', its close-knit male culture involving adolescent boys and adult mentors could be understood as challenging our contemporary understandings of

¹³¹ Ibid. p.6.
normative masculinity by articulating concepts of the recognition of the beauty of adolescent boys by men. Kidd chooses to preface the opening chapter of his book with a quote from Gibson’s *Boyology*, ‘No earthly object is so attractive as a well-built, growing boy.’ The mythology of scouting was a powerful one in relation to the formation of an influential adolescent masculinity type: ‘In its rituals its campfire was an emblem of fellowship, a dream of male innocence in the woods.’

The importance of adolescent male oriented youth movements was reflected across the Western world from the 1880s and into the early part of the twentieth century. While the circumstances around the formation of individualised groups in England, Australia, the USA and Europe bore evidence of their own specific requirements and were fashioned according to slightly different civic, nationalist, militaristic or Christian imperatives, they were characterised by a felt desire to respond to the paternal needs of adolescent male youth at the time, with the aim, as Springhall notes, ‘of propagating some sort of code of living’.

The implications of culturally-specific nationalist constructions of masculinity, as it pertains to male youth, has operated as influential force, and, indeed, conditioned aspects of the scouting movement as it was linked to concepts of national defence. The hierarchical structures of many male youth movements can be understood as correlating with the progression of rank as it is articulated in militaristic cultures. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the role of military movements, and the effect of war on the construction of adolescent masculinity has been largely sidelined, since its articulation of adolescent masculinity can be encompassed within the larger economy of hegemonic masculinity and its signifiers of masculine power. That is not to suggest, within particular

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133 MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918*. 208-209. The concept of ‘male innocence’ in a rural setting and the concepts of ‘boyology’ current in the early twentieth century establish a complex relationship in relation to Holland Day’s photographs of adolescent boys in the guise of Saint Sebastian. While historically parallel to the formation of a masculine identity in relation to ‘boyology’ and male youth movements, Holland Day’s representation of male youth in a rural setting is infused with eroticism and spiritual transcendence.

historical and cultural moments, the impact of war, and the representation of the soldier has not affected the construction of adolescent masculinity: in the Homeric tradition of Ancient Greece ‘the peak of a warrior’s strength was reached in the flower of his youth’. Indeed, within cultural contexts outside of the Western model, the implication of military service as a defining and required rite of passage and responsibility for male youth remains a significant factor in the construction of adolescent masculine identity.

Against a backdrop of industrialisation, an appeal to the invigorating aspect of camps and excursions helped to define the symbolic connection between adolescent boyhood and the ‘free’ and ‘wild’ experience of a connection with ‘nature’. Youth movements ‘appeared to offer an antidote to what could be seen, in a self-fulfilling way, as increasing signs of juvenile restlessness’. The development of the youth movement in Germany, as Walter Laqueur notes, ‘was shaped by the impact of romantic philosophy, by a glorification of the past fraught with misgivings for the future’. Laqueur attributes the foundation of the German youth movement, or the Wandervogel, to Berlin University student Hermann Hoffmann, who in 1896, at age twenty-one, led walks to into the German countryside which soon attracted a great number of his peers. The impact of his excursions took on a wider following and significance, since it implied a youthful engagement with nature without the authority of adults, and became symbolic of an anti-authoritarian movement. Members of the youth movement were typically between the ages of twelve and nineteen, and it was, until 1907, an exclusively male organization. While the formation of youth movements in Germany, like those elsewhere, reflected social changes and the sense that society was unable to incorporate the needs of male youth, it took on an altruistic character that was sometimes lacking from other manifestations: groups were formed, Laqueur states, in response to the perceived lack of ‘human warmth and sincerity’ and


137 Springhall, Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements 1883-1940. p.15.

society’s ‘conventions, its artificiality and pretensions’. Conscripts to Germany youth movements coalesced from the middle classes, yet its initial formation reflected a desired connection with the perceived loss of the experience of nature.

In Clark’s artist book 1992, the connection between adolescent masculinity and the rural environment is the focus of a series of images depicting an adolescent boy interacting with the natural environment in various ways (See Figure 4. Untitled image (boy with arms raised) from Larry Clark’s artist book 1992, 1992, p.156. 7 1/8 x 10 5/8 inches, 18.1 x 26.1 cm.). The boy is shown urinating into foliage, climbing a tree, and posing by a stream. In Clark’s work these images can be understood as exemplifying the paradox of adolescent masculinity. The images typify the virile athleticism of masculinity in nature and the physicality this signifies. Equally, the images suggest the unencumbered ‘freedom’ and ‘innocence’ of childhood, of an individual whose identity is yet to be fully formed. Any concepts of what might constitute alternative versions of masculinity must be understood in relation to those of conservative, heteronormative and hegemonic masculinities. This is a crucial point in relation to the work of Clark and Van Sant since they often evoke a range of registers of adolescent masculinity that include heteronormative and hegemonic models in order to articulate possibilities for the representation of a range of alternative models of adolescent masculinity.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the concept of the adolescent became intimately connected to the burgeoning post war consumer society. The term teenager was first used in the mid

139 Ibid. p.232

140 In contrast, groups such as Boy Scouts and Boys’ Brigade, with their hierarchical structures and defined ‘teacher – student’ dynamics, served ‘to structure an adolescent individual’s social status within the wider national framework of the predominantly middle-class social culture’. With reference to English-developed youth movements, Springhall notes the shift in class-related dynamics in relation to youth movements: ‘[In] the second quarter of the twentieth century, with the extension of secondary education and mass communications reinforcing popular commitment to national norms and values, alternative forms of affirming social and political respectability became more readily available. Consequently, youth movements made less of an appeal to the upwardly mobile than before, while their role as agencies of social management became increasingly superfluous.’ As a result of which, Springhall says, during the period between the first and second world wars, the continued operation of such youth movements became the province of the ‘lower-middle classes’, since it afforded, Springhall suggests, ‘a form of vicarious identification with middle-class values’. Springhall, Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements 1883-1940, p.122.

141 These images are discussed in detail in chapter three.
1940s, and it was in the early 1950s that cultural consumer items emerged that directly addressed the culture of the teenager. Marcel Danesi frames the terms ‘adolescent’ and ‘teenager’ in relation to particular characteristics: ‘[the term teenager] generally focusing on the socio-semiotic characteristics of young people, and [adolescence] on their psychological ones.’ Throughout the industrialized world, the excess of leisure time afforded young men and women spawned a range of media and entertainment industries that engaged the new culture of the adolescent. In the United Kingdom, for instance, between 1945 and 1950, a large unmarried teenage population emerged with a rapidly increasing wage level. Adolescents were quickly targeted as an ideal consumer market, while also actively creating a range of subcultural styles that reflected their own cultural experiences. The rise in cultural visibility of the adolescent was attendant to the performed articulation of the concept of ‘coolness’ and its symbolic relationship to adolescence. Dick Pountain and David Robins state that: ‘Cool [is about] teenagers behaving with precocious maturity (especially about sex and political cynicism).’ Pountain and Robins acknowledge that the concept of coolness can be applied to a range of historical, social and cultural contexts, however they identify its manifestation as ‘a particular combination of three core personality traits, namely narcissism, ironic detachment and hedonism.’ In the 1950s in the English speaking West, the concept of coolness in relation to masculinity and adolescence was articulated and capitalised upon by the popular media as well as reviving early twentieth century concerns about deviance and delinquency as analyzed by writers such as Hall.

143 Ibid. p.6.
144 Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics. p.179.
145 Marcel Danesi describes the etymology of ‘cool’ as follows: ‘The expression cool comes out of the jazz club scene of the 1930s. When the air in the smoke-filled nightclubs of that era became unbreathable, windows and doors were opened to allow some ‘cool air’ in from the outside to help clear the suffocating air. By analogy, the slow and smooth jazz style that was typical of that late night scene came to be called ‘cool’. Cool was subsequently extended to describe physically attractive, male jazz musician or aficionado who patronized such clubs.’ Danesi, Cool: The Signs and Meanings of Adolescence. p.37.
148 Role models such as actor James Dean typified the ‘detachment’ identified by Pountain and Robins. Dean’s complex persona engaged stereotypical manifestations of teenage rebellion, while articulating a heterodox masculinity of vulnerability and sexual ambiguity. On the media-generated articulation of ‘teenagerhood’ in North America in the 1950s see Danesi, Cool: The Signs and Meanings of Adolescence. pp.17-22.
While a great deal of work had been done on the concept of the adolescent male in relation to activities such as the scouting movement and concepts of ‘boyology’, in 1942 North American sociologist Talcott Parsons developed the concept of ‘youth culture’ in order to analyze the significance of sex-roles in relation to adolescent identity formation. Parsons stated that the culture of the United States of America ‘is conspicuous for the extent to which children of both sexes are treated alike’ being especially true ‘of both privileges and responsibilities’.\(^{149}\) Parsons noted that age grading operates only within the educational system and goes on to describe a variety of examples of sex role differentiation in children and adolescents which he states is a reflection of adult sex roles. Parsons’ determination of children’s sex roles was directly informed by the dominant family culture of the United States of the 1940s and its normalized attitudes towards hegemonic masculinity. Parsons noted that there was no feminine equivalent of the term ‘bad boy’, and by invoking the normalised feminine roles of mother and housekeeper he suggested this could be ‘partially explained by the fact that it is possible from an early age to initiate girls directly into many important aspects of the adult feminine role’.\(^{150}\) Parsons’ disavowal of a female equivalent of the term ‘bad boy,’ and the suggestion that healthy youth identity is based on an experience of nature relies on particular constructions of masculinity in relation to the wilderness, as advanced by the cultures of ‘boy work’ and ‘boyology’. Owain Jones suggests that even though Romantic conceptions of nature often characterise it as feminine:

[*True*] childhood (but not children) is often, at a deep level, constructed as ‘male’, ‘natural’, and close to ‘nature’. This is reflected in iconic accounts of country childhood idylls so that [femaleness] is somehow excluded from or sits problematically within, childhood [and that] female children can partake in the

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150 Ibid. p.104.
quintessential activities of Apollonian childhood only by becoming honorary boys in the form of tomboys.\textsuperscript{151}

The connection between youth masculinity and the natural environment had desirable effects according to Parsons, who suggested that gender roles between boys and their fathers was also related to the differences between the 'natural' and 'urban' environments:

Especially in the urban middle classes, however, the father does not work in the home and his son is not able to observe his work or to participate in it from an early age. Furthermore many of the masculine functions are of a relatively abstract and intangible character, such that their meaning must remain almost wholly inaccessible to a child. This leaves the boy without a tangible meaningful model to emulate and without the possibility of a gradual initiation into the activities of the adult male role. An important verification of this analysis could be provided through the study in our own society of the rural situation. It is my impression that farm boys tend to be 'good' in a sense which is not typical of their urban brothers.\textsuperscript{152}

It is important that Parsons articulates a model that might be understood in terms of delinquency, and that he relates this to the absence of a male role model for adolescent boys in urban and suburban environments. In his work, artist Clark often posits the lack of a positive and loving parent-son relationship as a defining aspect of troubled identity formation for young men. Clark's representation of dysfunctional parent-son relationships often focuses on the relationship between a father and his son as a site of

\textsuperscript{151} Owain Jones, "Tomboy Tales: The Rural, Nature and the Gender of Childhood," \textit{Gender, Place and Culture} 6, no. 2 (1999), p.129. Jones concludes that: 'Tomboyism can be seen as a resistance to narrow and strict gender delineations, but also reveals the gendered basis of constructions of childhood. Furthermore, the problematic relationship between femaleness and childhood is evident in the way that the development of female sexuality is seen as ending a child's childhood. This cuts off the possibility of girls being 'natural' quasi boys, through the growing 'overness' of their gender.' Jones, "Tomboy Tales: The Rural, Nature and the Gender of Childhood." p.132.

\textsuperscript{152} Parsons, "Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States." p.104.
trauma without redemption. For Clark, loving acceptance for the adolescent male is found within his own peer group, or not at all.

Parsons’ suggestion of the concept of brotherhood (farm boys and their ‘urban brothers’) is significant here in its evocation of a culture of male adolescence based upon shared cultural experience rather than the specificities of individual experience. Parsons’ generalizations reinforce conservative models of identity and they relate directly to his formulation of ‘youth culture’ which he describes as ‘a set of patterns and behaviour phenomena’ that typify adolescence. Parsons’ originating conception of youth culture establishes a sense of nonconformity and opposition to the dominant adult male role as a defining aspect of male youth, manifest in the concept of juvenile delinquency, as well as defining the masculinity of youth as aligned with athleticised identity, both tropes of heavily normalized masculinity:

Perhaps the best single point of reference for characterizing the youth culture lies in its contrast with the dominant pattern of the adult male role. By contrast with the emphasis on responsibility in this role, the orientation of the youth culture is more or less specifically irresponsible. One of its dominant features is ‘having a good time’ in relation to which there is a particularly strong emphasis on social activities in company with the opposite sex. A second predominant characteristic on the male side lies in the prominence of athletics, which is an avenue of achievement and competition which stands in sharp contrast to the primary standards of adult achievement in professional and executive capacities. Negatively, there is a strong tendency to repudiate interest in adult things and to feel at least certain recalcitrance to the pressure of adult expectations and discipline.154

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153 The concept of brotherhood is also evoked by cultural historian Iain Borden in relation to the contemporary phenomenon of skateboarding. Borden writes: ‘ Vilified alternatively as a children’s play-thing or as an urban crime, skateboarding in fact represents a totalizing urban subculture, complete with its own graphic design, language, music and codes of behaviour. This subculture rejects work, the family and normative American values in favour of new relations which transcend geographic, class and race boundaries to posit a brotherhood of masculine identity.’ Iain Borden, A Performative Critique of the American City: The Urban Practice of Skateboarding, 1988-1998 (The 3Cities Project, Nottingham, 1998 [cited 2003]); available from www.nottingham.ac.uk/3cities/borden.htm.

154 Parsons, "Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States." pp.105-106.
Parsons gives the adolescent male a stereotypical ‘hard’ masculinity, one which finds its identity in athletics and heterosexual pursuits. Recent conceptualizations of the adolescent male allow a broader context for identity formation. Shamim M. Momin has stated that adolescence might be ‘better characterized as a state of being that is in flux, with multiple, simultaneous symbolic connotations, including transformation, raw desire, experimentation, vulnerability, self-destructiveness and violence’. In the 2003 contemporary art book and exhibition The Fourth Sex: Adolescent Extremes, Francesco Bonami suggests that adolescence ‘contains the existential anguish of every human being’. For Bonami, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, ‘the extreme gesture of the adolescent is that of delivering a transformed world to the adult to be’. Bonami states that:

Society looks at adolescence, in any of its ages and forms, as a state of disease, reducing it to a temporary, inevitable, unproductive moment of the individual. Society repeats its errors, underestimating the continuing need for its own transformation, refusing to understand that adolescence is not an extraneous virus, but the fever that cures the ailing body, regenerating it. Calling adolescence the fourth sex is also an attempt to represent that abstract zone of the social fabric where the present tries out the effects, including risky, irreversible ones, of its own future.

Bonami’s concept of the fourth sex is to conceptualize adolescence as a sexual identity distinct from male, female and homosexual identities. It suggests instead a transformative and mutable identity where a range of possibilities come into play. But it is important to realize that Bonami’s concept and representation of adolescence is one that takes its cue

157 Ibid. p.12.
158 Ibid. p.12.
from the highly mediatised imagery of fashion, music, and to a lesser degree contemporary art. For Bonami, adolescence is about style, an appeal to subcultural discourses about adolescence which define its aspects in relation to subcultural signifiers. He states:

Adult societies see the teenager as a transitory individual, dangerous at times, and nearly always unhappy. But these societies and their economies also see adolescence as a gold mine of potential consumption and as a laboratory for future consumers. Though disdained as civil subjects, teenagers are courted as economic subjects. In this emotional fluctuation that passes through different sexual states, unpredictable desires and needs in constant transformation, the adolescent becomes the ideal consumer, seeking the response to his own crisis through identification with different products.159

This understanding of adolescence has its origins in the consumer society of the United States of America and the United Kingdom from the mid-twentieth century onwards. The concept of subculture is key here, as are its appeals to youth and the concept of the outsider. Sarah Thornton states that:

The defining attribute of ‘subcultures’, then, lies with the way the accent is put on the distinction between a particular cultural / social group, and the larger culture / society. The emphasis is on variance from a larger collectivity who are invariably, but not unproblematically, positioned as normal, average and dominant. Subcultures, in other words, are condemned to and/or enjoy a consciousness of ‘otherness’ or difference.160

159 Ibid. p.11.
The concept of the ‘outsider’ also relates to ideas of deviation, a concept that has been used in connection with the pathologising of adolescent masculinity, particularly since the early twentieth century. Richard Mills states that:

[The word outsiders] has an established place in the study of deviance to express a subtle ambiguity in the relationship of a society and a deviant minority: members of a deviant minority may feel themselves outsiders to the ‘compact majority’, but they themselves make members of that majority feel outsiders by the private language and signs which they develop to communicate only with their own kind.  

In his influential study of youth subculture, published in 1979, Dick Hebdige analyses youth identity in relation to a set of defining stylistic modes of identity performance prevalent in the United Kingdom and the United States of America in the late 1960s and early to mid-1970s. In relation to an historical articulation of ‘youth culture’, Hebdige, referring to post-second world war Britain, states that:

The advent of the mass media, changes in the constitution of the family, in the organization of school and work, shifts in the relative status of work and leisure, all served to fragment and polarize the working class community, producing a series of marginal discourses within the broad confines of class experience. The development of youth culture should be seen as just part of this process of polarization.

Bonami’s location of adolescent identity in relation to subcultural styles and the imperatives of consumerism found its expression in his exhibition and book project, co-presented with fashion designer Raf Simons. Drawing upon fashion photography, images from popular film, images from the media, and selected contemporary art works,

Bonami’s and Simons’s book confirms normalised discourses about the adolescent as rebellious, sexualised and defined by subcultural style. The adolescent is presented as a type of celebrity or fashion icon. The book includes images from the Benetton fashion campaign, twenty-year old Mark Wahlberg on the cover of Interview magazine with the tagline ‘1/2 WILD HALF CHILD,’ and reproductions of adolescent models from the covers of fashion magazines i-D and The Face. Jeff Widener’s photograph of a young man standing in front of a line of tanks in Tianamen Square in Peking, 1989, and photographs of students traumatised by the 1999 Columbine High School shootings take are subsumed by the overall tone of the book which produces the adolescent as a stylistic effect and fashion statement. The inclusion of works by contemporary artists, including Larry Clark, suffers similarly from this context. A reproduction of Clark’s Untitled 1992 collage comprising newspaper clippings, portrait photographs of adolescent boys, a skateboard deck affixed with images of ‘Missing Children’ and a white t-shirt with the words ‘BLOW ME’ appears within the context of the book as a simple collection of artefacts and media images of male adolescence, severed from a critical context. Bonami’s conceptualisation of adolescence as a ‘fourth sex’ becomes overwhelmed by the representation of the adolescent as function of the market. His or her representation as it is presented by The Fourth Sex serves the imperatives of style at the expense of complex identity.

Momin’s 2004 exhibition Will Boys Be Boys?: Questioning Adolescent Masculinity in Contemporary Art presents a modest but more focused exploration of the representation of adolescence, and of adolescent masculinity in particular. Momin states:

In many ways, young boys and boyishness provide the perfect ambiguous subject for contemporary art to explore social norms – their maleness undiluted but still androgynous, even female in many ways, or going to the opposite extreme and exaggerating a macho masculinity in bodies not yet fully developed; their arrogance coexisting with vulnerability; their malleability of character that can be

164 Clark’s work appears in the book between pages that feature portrait images of adolescents and products of ‘teenage’ culture such as skateboards and motorbikes. Ibid. pp.290-291.
terrifying or menacing in uninflected focus; and their desire for adult harshness mitigated by the exuberance and innocence of youth.¹⁶⁵

Momin’s exhibition included a range of artists exploring concepts of adolescent masculinity in diverse methods and media. The exhibition included four works by Larry Clark, conceptually placed so as to represent Clark as a significant progenitor of explorations of adolescent masculinity,¹⁶⁶ and several works by North American artists Tim Gardner and Collier Schorr, both of whom have continued to make important contributions to the analysis of adolescent masculinity in contemporary art.¹⁶⁷

In contemporary sociological and cultural understandings of adolescence, the delineation of the end of childhood and the start of adolescence is generally marked at age thirteen.¹⁶⁸


¹⁶⁶ Momin’s exhibition included four works by Clark: *Dice 42nd Street* 1980, gelatine silver print, 14 x 11 inches, 35.5 x 27.9 cm; *Kristy McNicol and Leif Garrett (from Family 11/2/1978)* 1989, photo-collage of three black-and-white photographs, 35 x 14 1/2 inches, 88.9 x 36.83 cm, *Untitled (Corey Haim)* 1989, photo-collage of two colour photographs and one black-and-white photograph, 21 5/8 x 43 1/2 inches, 54.93 x 110.5 cm, *Untitled (Bryant Gumbel Interview with teenager)* 1992, single-channel DVD on monitor with sound. All works collection of the artist and courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York. Momin describes the inclusion of Clark’s work in the exhibition within the context of providing a major touchstone: ‘The activities and imagery of youth emerged with a certain prominence in the early 1990s, but they seem to have gained a critical mass more recently in popular culture and in art-making itself. Among these somewhat later art precedents are the ongoing, seminal explorations of youth culture by Larry Clark, including his 1980s photographic appropriations from teen magazines and his 1992 video loop of a wrestler describing his passion for the sport, which are in this exhibition.’ Ibid. Unpag.


¹⁶⁸ Raymond Montemayor, Gerald R. Adams, and Thomas P. Gullotta, *From Childhood to Adolescence: A Transitional Period?* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990). p.9. This conception is based upon sociological definitions, and therefore contrasts in motive with originating definitions of adolescence as beginning at age fourteen, as based on the ages of man as divisible into periods of seven years.
In their collected research on the transition from childhood to adolescence, editors Raymond Montemayor, Gerald R. Adams and Thomas P. Gullotta state that:

In America in the 1980s pubertal changes become noticeable in males and females at about [twelve and a half] and [eleven and a half] years respectively. Recent evidence indicates, however, that hormonal actions and biological change may occur as early as three years before they become manifest in observable physical change. Adolescence also has been defined in terms of the appearance of new cognitive abilities and psychological characteristics, such as formal operational thought, postconventional moral judgment, a differentiated and integrated self concept, and concern about one's identity, to name a few of the most frequently discussed characteristics. 169

In relation to the emerging sexual development that occurs in adolescence, Susan Moore and Doreen Rosenthal, in their 1993 study on sexuality and adolescence in Australia state that:

The nascent sexual urges which emerge at puberty must be blended with other aspects of teenagers' lives and channelled adaptively. It is especially important that the adolescent be able to integrate his or her sexual feelings, needs, and desires into a coherent and positive self identity, which contains, as one aspect, a sexual self. 170

Moore and Rosenthal conceptualize adolescence in relation to a set of normalizing data. They state that masturbation remains the most common source of orgasm in boys (who generally begin to masturbate at age fourteen), and girls (who generally begin at age twelve). According to this data, for boys, masturbation is most usually the source of first ejaculation, also, boys report more masturbatory and sexual activity than girls, and are

169 Ibid. pp.9-10.
more likely to be aroused by a wider range of sexual stimuli. Moore and Rosenthal state that:

Just as the numbers of teenagers engaging in sex have increased, at least until recently, and their age of initiation is declining, so too are they becoming more sexually adventurous. Young people are engaging in a wider variety of sexual behaviour than before and with more partners. The practice of oral sex is now widespread among adolescents and there seems to have been a shift in formerly negative attitudes to less traditional sexual practices.

Moore and Rosenthal’s scientific extrapolation of adolescence is useful for its articulation of a range of sexual practices that relate to adolescent identity formation. However, their claims about ‘less traditional sexual practices’ appear to refer to variations of heterosexual activity, rather than sexual activity that encompasses bisexual and homosexual experiences. The conceptualizing of adolescent identity in this manner acts to standardize and normalize a proscribed set of sexual behaviours. In Clark’s and Van Sant’s work, sexual identity is represented as integral to the formation and articulation of adolescent masculinity but they represent a complex and alternative sexual identity that encompasses a range of sexual behaviours that move beyond heteronormative models of identity.

Sociological studies place great importance on the psychological and physiological aspects of adolescence. Daniel K. Lapsley states that ‘separation-individuation is the principal developmental task of adolescence’ that is, the development of a firm sense

171 Ibid. pp.4, 92.
172 Ibid. pp.7-8.
173 The book includes a chapter by Mark Goggin titled ‘Gay and lesbian adolescence’ which presents biological and cultural definitions of homosexuality without offering the kind of statistical data that appears in other parts of the book. The first mention of non-heterosexual sexual identity, outside of Goggin’s chapter, states simply that: ‘Most people are heterosexual, a small but significant proportion of the population are homosexual, and for some, the focus of sexual interest will shift at various points through the life-span.’ Ibid. p.35. Normalised adolescent sexuality is plainly presented as heterosexual, and conforming to normative gender roles.
of self in relation to interpersonal relationships. Susan Harter notes that at ages ten to fifteen ‘the adolescent comes to internalize the standards by which significant others are judging the self. He or she can now directly observe and evaluate self, remaining sensitive to, yet taking over, many of the evaluative functions performed by others’.\footnote{175} This also results in a heightened sense of self awareness and self consciousness. As Harter stresses:

Thus, not only does the very nature of the self change with the emergence of adolescence, but the individuals’ interest in the self changes dramatically as the self becomes a constant object of observation and evaluation. If we fail to appreciate this fact, we will miss much of the phenomenological experience of adolescence. Clearly there are major individual differences in how torturous an experience this will become for adolescents. Many will engage in a minimum of self-reflection whereas others will agonize to the point of despair, as we suspect with many adolescents at risk for suicide.\footnote{176}

In relation to masculinity and adolescence, this period of increased self awareness also correlates with an assumptive interpretation of sex roles as Parsons noted in the 1940s. It has been suggested that the physical changes associated with puberty may result in gender specific behaviour associated with adult and peer expectations, but the influence of socialization also plays a crucial role.\footnote{177} In her discussion of gender role constructs in adolescents, Nancy L. Galambos appeals to normative definitions: ‘Masculinity may be demonstrated by the possession of instrumental traits such as showing leadership, athleticism, and independence, whereas femininity is captured in expressive traits such as


\footnote{176} Ibid. p.234

compassion, sensitivity and cheerfulness.\textsuperscript{178} However, she raises challenges to these polarized constructs, raising the concept of gender role flexibility, which:

[has been discussed in literature on adolescent development as] the capability of changing one's behaviour, regardless of gender, to meet the demands of the context. The adoption of behaviours consistent with one's gender role may restrict the individual's life choices, but gender role flexibility opens more avenues to behaviours and choices and hence is thought to be associated with more optimal psychological health.\textsuperscript{179}

While gender role flexibility is seen as desirable, Galambos notes that for adolescent boys, a concept of high masculinity, which would equate with concepts of hard, or hegemonic masculinity 'is related to high self-esteem and peer acceptance', and that societal pressures on masculine gender roles are stronger for boys than girls.\textsuperscript{180}

Normalized discourse suggests that in the period from childhood to adolescence, boys are allowed more independence than girls in social activities, and 'pubertal maturation has shown to increase parent-adolescent distance' with boys reporting 'increases in emotional and behavioural autonomy'.\textsuperscript{181} Familial relationships vary depending on the roles that mothers and fathers play within the family unit, and how much time they spend at home as opposed to working away from the home. It has been suggested that 'limited sex-role information was imparted to sons by their fathers, attributable in part to their general unavailability in the child-rearing process, leading adolescent males to rely increasingly


\textsuperscript{179} Ibid. p.235.

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid. p.242. Galambos quotes a 1986 study which 'reported that in a cross-sectional sample of individuals ranging from kindergarten to college age, participants found it more acceptable for girls than for boys to behave in a manner inconsistent with their gender role' and that 'the focus in adolescence now seems to be on gender difference in domains such as achievement, aggression and depression'. Galambos, "Gender and Gender Role Development in Adolescence." p.243.

\textsuperscript{181} Huston and Alvarez, "The Socialization Context of Gender Role Development in Early Adolescence." p.159.
on social definitions of the male role. Normalized discourse suggests that the flexibility of sex roles diminishes with the advancement of adolescence. Within this normalizing discourse, the process of sex role typing begins in early childhood and becomes consolidated during adolescence. This sociologically-based conception of adolescent identity formation leaves little room for alternative models of sexual identity, or behaviours that can be articulated outside of hegemonic masculine models. Jessica Benjamin writes of the significance of gender role identification between boys and their fathers as one confirming 'achievement of masculinity as a naturalized “male destiny”' stating that:

The boy is in love with his ideal. This homoerotic, identifactory love serves as the boy’s vehicle of establishing masculinity, both defensively and creatively; it confirms his sense of himself as subject of desire. Of course, identifactory love must be reciprocated for identification to ‘stick’ — it is not loss of love, not asymmetry, but mutuality that furthers this kind of identification. Its baseline is the father’s own narcissistic pride, when he identifies with his son and says, ‘You can be like me,’ or when the validating mother says, ‘You are just like your Dad.’

For Benjamin, in relation to the development of self identity, the boy’s identification with the father figure as an ideal fully sexualised man acts to trigger the boy’s own narcissistic fascination with his own pre- or neo-sexualised body and the possibilities of imaging a fully sexualised masculine self. The concept of ‘male destiny’ and its appeals to hegemonic cultures of masculinity is constantly challenged in Clark and Van Sant’s

182 Ibid. p.162.
183 A recent study of male friendships of boys entering into adolescence (at ages nine and eleven) confirms the increased flexibility of gender roles prior to middle adolescence, with the researchers finding that: ‘[The boys’] access to the cultural practice of “best friendship” mobilized identifications that both reinforced conventional versions of heterosexual masculinity and questioned these. In particular [the research] suggests that the boys’ friendship may have evolved “over-inclusive” gender identifications — ones that indicate the existence of boyhood masculinities that are more capacious and flexible than those hegemonic in teenage and adolescent cultures.’ Peter Redman et al., “Boys Bonding: Same-Sex Friendship, the Unconscious and Heterosexual Discourse,” Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education 23, no. 2 (2002). p.179.
representations of adolescent masculinity. For example, tensions are often present within the representations of relationships between adolescent boys and the models of masculinity practised by their fathers and other male authority figures as exemplars of masculinities that operate within normalised and institutionalised frameworks. Clark and Van Sant allow for capacious and complex articulations of masculinity that transgress restrictive formulations of masculine identity, that complicate the polarities of homo- and heterosexuality and incorporate alternative modes of expression to outward displays of athleticised physicality and normalised masculine modes of empowerment.

Connell states that a modern sense of masculinity produced since the eighteenth century in Europe and North America embraced a ‘gendered individual character, defined through an opposition with femininity and institutionalized in economy and state’, a form of masculinity that could be conceived of as hegemonic. Among various social systems that enforce hegemonic masculinities, the culture of team sports has been shown to be exemplary. Garry Whannel of the Centre for Sport Development Research in London states that sport has:

[had] a close association with the inculcation of the values of dominant masculinity, and those left marginalized, those who were oppositional, those who sought alternatives, have been relatively voiceless within the dominant masculine culture.

In their study of high school rugby at a Brisbane school in 1997-98, Richard Light and David Kirk explicate the fostering of hegemonic masculinity within the culture they examine. Since the attitudes and behaviour patterns learned during the high school years represent a significant aspect of adolescent identity formation, the extreme nature of their findings are important. They conclude that:

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[A] class specific form of masculinity connected to ideals of physical domination, competitiveness, toughness, teamwork and self-restraint continues to be produced and reproduced at (The Brisbane School). Its hegemony, however, is continually contested and forced to adapt to challenge through modification. The form of masculinity practiced at (The Brisbane School) has maintained its hegemony through ongoing adaptation and the reproduction of forms of masculinity that seek to maintain dominance over other, alternate ways of being a man. These forms are reproduced through particular corporeal and discursive regimes focused on the body that continue to characterize the practice of rugby at the school. [The] form of masculinity embedded in the habitus of the young men at (The Brisbane School) clearly legitimizes hegemonic ways of being a male and contributes to the maintenance of existing relations of power between different forms of masculinity and between men and women.\textsuperscript{187}

Nikki Wedgwood’s empiric study of high school football and hegemonic masculinity finds a less proscriptive relationship between team sport and the development of conservative masculine identity. She concludes that:

Along with community football, schoolboy football plays an important role in schooling some young men in a specific type of masculine embodiment. To learn to play football is to learn to command attention which focuses on the hardness and skilfulness of men’s bodies and their ability to dominate other bodies, thus asserting a powerful, masculine social presence. Yet schooling the body in this way is not unproblematic nor does it uniformly inculcate young men into reproducing hegemonic masculinity, despite football’s ritual celebration of male physical superiority over women.\textsuperscript{188}


Importantly, Wedgwood’s study considers the role that cultural and social family relations play in relation to the hegemonic masculinity generated by high school football. She states that:

Because the gendered embodiment and masculinities of these young men are mediated by the racial, ethnic and gender dynamics of their families, not all of the footballers in the study have constructed a hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, some play football in order to gain peer conferral of their masculine status, while constructing a different, less dominant style of masculinity without the risk of being marginalized as feminine or homosexual.[^189]

In one of the early scenes in Van Sant’s film *Elephant*, a group of boys is shown practicing football on the school grounds. Van Sant softens the ‘hard’ masculinity this athleticism commonly evokes through the use of an overlaying soundtrack, Beethoven's ‘Moonlight Sonata’[^190] and presenting the football practice moves of the boys in a languid and balletic manner.

In Clark’s work, organized sports such as football are absent as a representation of adolescent male identity construction. While this reflects the cultural milieu that Clark has focused on – his 1995 film *Kids* focused on a group of urban skateboarders, and his artist book *The Perfect Childhood* includes photographs of skateboarders, and collage works that incorporate the paraphernalia of skateboarding, it also signals an alternate masculinity from that signified by competitive team sports. Skateboarding, by its nature, does not require the group dynamic of team sports. Competitiveness is often measured according to the kudos granted by creative skateboarding skills with a focus on individual performance and the observance of individual skills by others. Iain Borden notes that ‘much skateboarding takes place collectively, young men watching each other and taking

[^189]: Ibid. p.199.

[^190]: Beethoven’s Piano Sonata no.14, c sharp minor, Op 27, no.2. This piece of music is a repeated motif in the film. As Van Sant states: ‘We were going to hire a Seattle jazz musician to compose music. One day during the shoot, [the actor Alex Frost] was playing piano in the high school cafeteria. Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata was one piece he’d learned, so we used that for the film.’ Gerald Peary, *Gerald Peary Interviews Gus Van Sant* (2003 [cited 2005]); available from http://www.geraldpeary.com/interviews/stuv/van-sant-elephant.html.
turns to perform. Skaters thus spend much time looking at photographs of other young men, emulating other young men, and displaying themselves to other young men. As a reaction to the homoeroticism implicit in this aspect of skateboarding, Borden suggests that reactions include homophobia, ‘an induction to heterosexual and homosocial masculinity and attitudes to gender’, the desire ‘to see skateboarding not as a group practice but as a solitary practice’, or the denial of sexuality in the celibacy of the ‘Straight Edge’ subculture. Borden suggests that the baggy clothes that typify the dress codes of many skaters acts to ‘mask the specific muscularity or shape of the body, and so lessen both the physiological appearance of any skater and the difference between male and female skaters’. This suggestion is at odds with the sexualisation of the adolescent male body that this style of dressing often connotes: baggy pants that reveal the underwear or pubic regions and backside of the shirtless young male

Historical, social and psychological discourses variously construct a concept of adolescent masculinity as a function of social indicators or physiological changes. Importantly, the concept of the adolescent male has been framed in relation to normalized and hegemonic discourses of masculinity. Within the articulation of male adolescence as a desiring force of ‘hard’ or ‘hyper’ masculinity, it is evident that only a minority of discourses appeal to a broader emotional and performative register of male adolescent identity. In Clark’s and Van Sant’s work, normalised constructions of adolescent masculine are constantly challenged. Historical and social constructions of adolescent masculinity are acknowledged and often deliberately challenged and deconstructed in order to set into play symbolic modes of adolescent masculinity that engage heterodox articulations of adolescent masculinity as positive and ultimately transcendent modes of expression.

192 Ibid. pp.147-150.
193 The complexities of the sexualisation of the adolescent male body in relation to this form of clothing is analysed in chapter six.
In Clark’s work the physical manifestations of puberty are often represented as symbolizing the development of the male adolescent from the boy into the man. Clark’s images draw attention to the physical manifestations of male puberty that represent hormonal change and development. In keeping with normative physicalised definitions of puberty such as those by Montemayor et al. and Moore and Rosenthal Clark’s imagery presents the visible signs of male puberty as a normalising signifier. In Clark’s artist book *1992*, a sequence identifies a boy as an early adolescent by the visibility of hair under the arms and on the upper lip, with one image in this sequence showing the boy in the shower, his genitals displayed as fully matured. The boy performs the normalized identity of the boy-child, his identity related to the environment of the rural or wilderness landscape, while also enacting the poses of hegemonic masculinity where athleticism and dominant identity traits are displayed. In one image the boy poses in front of a mirror holding a hang-gun, in others he poses with bar-bells, a car, and cigarettes. These images express the contradictory state of male adolescence: a state that exists between the ‘innocence’ of childhood and the ‘maturity’ and ‘power’ of hegemonic masculinity in adulthood.

The assumption of childhood as ‘innocent’ raises complex issues regarding representation. Anne Higonnet argues that late twentieth century artistic images of children ‘call into question children’s psychic and sexual innocence by attributing them consciously active minds and bodies’ while leaving intact concepts of ‘social innocence’, and James Kincaid notes the cultural construction of childhood as idealised, while at the same time the child is constructed as ‘empty,’ an object which ‘can be filled with adult needs or resentments’. In the work of Clark, in relation to his representation of adolescent masculinity, childhood, articulated as pre-pubertal masculinity is often constructed in relation to the physicalised manifestation of

194 See Montemayor, Adams, and Gullotta, *From Childhood to Adolescence: A Transitional Period?*
adolescent identity. Pre-pubertal masculinity for Clark serves to establish a point of contrast and transition with physicalised adolescence. It can stand for a symbolic register of innocence and purity that serves to assist the deconstruction of adolescent masculinity.

In the artist book *The Perfect Childhood*, Clark uses images from the mass media of teen celebrity magazines to enforce the eroticism of male adolescence, emphasizing the disjunction between pre-pubertal childhood, and the media-generated sexualisation of adolescence. Clark’s title *The Perfect Childhood* can be understood as eminently ironic. His articulation of ‘childhood’ is one that refers to adolescence, and reveals the complex dynamics between the ‘innocence’ of childhood and the physicalised sexuality of adolescence that Clark examines and deconstructs. His representation of adolescence is far from ‘perfect,’ instead it is defined by ambiguity, contradiction and conflict.
Chapter Three: Constructing adolescent masculinity: Larry Clark's artist books of the 1990s

This chapter examines the artist books of American artist Larry Clark in order to analyze representations of adolescent masculinity that explore conflicting constructions of young male identity. It argues that the desire for the attainment of transcendence is a defining trope of this representation. Clark has produced several artist books that present his own photographs and collages in book form, which draw upon his own experience of adolescence, his own unique representation of adolescent masculinity, and the hegemonic articulation of adolescent masculinity as presented in mainstream media. Clark produced two artist books prior to 1990: Teenage Lust, 1983, and Tulsa, 1971. These books documented the milieu of the youth culture in and around the town of Tulsa, Oklahoma, where Clark spent his childhood and adolescent years. This chapter, however, focuses on Clark's artist books of the 1990s, in which Clark presents images and collage elements from a range of sources, several of which overlap across the content of the books, and which define Clark’s visual style. Elements of Clark's 2003 artist book punk Picasso are also discussed as they relate to themes explored in his books of the 1990s. In his artist books of the 1990s Clark challenges hegemonic representations of adolescent masculinity by engaging with issues of sexual ambivalence and ambiguity, sensuality, and vulnerability. He draws upon mainstream idealized imagery of male adolescents and pits this methodology of representation against stereotypical evocations of male adolescents and media-generated violence. Clark's articulation of adolescent masculinity in his artist books 1992 and The Perfect Childhood incorporate a diverse range of normalized and alternative representations of identity. A key aspect of his representation of male adolescence is based upon the physical signs of puberty, and this is heightened in his

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108 Larry Clark, 1992 (New York and Koln: Thea Westreich and Gisela Capitain, 1992); Larry Clark and Walter Keller, The Perfect Childhood (Zurich: Scalo Verlag AG, 1995); Larry Clark, Swip Stolk, and Mark Wilson, Larry Clark (Groningen: Groninger Museum, 1999). The inclusion of additional authors to these books does not imply artistic collaboration. The Perfect Childhood is edited with Walter Keller, and Larry Clark produced to accompany an exhibition at the Groninger Museum, The Netherlands, is produced with the 'art direction' of Clark, Swip Stolk and Mark Wilson.


photographs for the book 1992. The appearance of physical maturity is of great significance for Clark in relation to peer acceptance, self identity, sexuality, and the construction of adolescent masculinity. In relation to his own sexual development, Clark has stated:

Even in [the book] Tulsa when I was photographing my friends I wanted to be my friends – anybody but myself. I was a hood, but not really. I was really just a skinny kid who picked this identity and these people to hang out with. It was a role. I’m a tag-along guy who looks real, real young; who’s fifteen and looks twelve. I didn’t reach puberty until I was almost sixteen. In [the town] Tulsa, words like ‘puberty’ were never mentioned. I never heard the word. I think the only thing I ever heard was the gym teacher said, ‘Some of you guys are old enough to use a jock strap,’ and he held one up. That was all that was ever said. I mean, you know, you got hair on your dick when you needed hair on your dick. And everybody was naked, you had to go swimming naked. And at this point my father had just come back; he came back when I was twelve, in sixth grade. He was a travelling salesman on the road. My mother always said, ‘Everybody likes your father, he is such a nice guy.’ Every fucking day of my life she said ‘how much everybody likes your father.’ And, of course, I loved my father; I wanted my father to like me. So I didn’t start puberty and he looks at me and says, ‘What did I do to deserve such a scrawny little kid?’ and quit talking to me. Then I hear whispering and in the house between my parents and they send me to a doctor to get some vitamin B-12 shots. No one says it was O.K. I remember sitting in the bathroom when I was fifteen and looking down at myself and saying if I don’t get some hair on my dick by next summer I’m going to kill myself.200

Clark’s own experience of puberty exists outside of the normalizing discourse of the ‘average’ onset of puberty (that is, according to sociological data, beginning at twelve

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200 Larry Clark interviewed by Mike Kelley, “In Youth Is Pleasure.” p.84. Citations of Clark’s words retain his original grammar.
and a half years\textsuperscript{201}, and as his admission makes clear, represents extreme anxiety and trauma for Clark in relation to his own conception of adolescent identity. In Clark’s artist books 1992 and The Perfect Childhood, the physical signs of puberty are represented as a highly desired aspect of adolescent masculinity, and many images in these books focus on these physical signs as crucial to the representation of adolescent masculinity. For Clark, pubertal maturity is crucial to a sense of socialised acceptance. Clark has stated: ‘When I started tenth grade I would have liked to have gone back and start the seventh grade. Then I would have started out on equal footing with the other guys’.\textsuperscript{202} And Clark describes a sexual fantasy ‘to be a fourteen year old kid’,

Going through puberty, you know, at fourteen, normally... you see I say ‘normally.’ You see I still think there’s something wrong with me. But to be fourteen years old, and I even know how I look. I know how much hair I have on my dick, I have a little hair on my legs, and I have just a little patch of hair under my arms and I have a sister who’s having a slumber party and she’s got five or six seventeen year old girls. I’m the younger brother...\textsuperscript{203}

In the book 1992, the sequence of photographs of a young boy in a rural setting include poses that draw attention to the hair under his arms, and his fully developed genitals. In the artist book The Perfect Childhood, the physical signs of male puberty are heightened by close-up photographs of parts of the body that show evidence of pubertal growth: hair under the arm, a soft beard around the mouth, a trail of hair from the navel to the groin. Appropriated images of teen celebrities also emphasize this aspect of adolescent masculinity, particularly a group of images of actor Jay Ferguson wearing a sleeveless t-shirt, with one arm raised to reveal newly-grown hair. In the artist book punk Picasso one page simply reproduces a scrawled note in Clark’s hand that reads: ‘Johnathon [sic] Taylor Thomas has pubic hair’.\textsuperscript{204} The American teen actor Jonathan Taylor Thomas was

\textsuperscript{201} Montemayor, Adams, and Gullotta, From Childhood to Adolescence: A Transitional Period? p.9.
\textsuperscript{202} Larry Clark interviewed by Mike Kelley, “In Youth Is Pleasure.” p.85.
\textsuperscript{203} Larry Clark interviewed by Mike Kelley. Ibid. p.85.
\textsuperscript{204} Clark, punk Picasso. Unpag. The note is dated 1995.
fourteen years of age at the time Clark wrote this note. Clark’s anxiety reflects research on early or late pubertal maturation in relation to normalized models, which states that later maturation in boys has negative effects on emotional states such as depression and low self-esteem, and causes anxiety based upon boys’ developmental stage in relation to their peers. While the experience of early pubertal maturation evokes a sense of trauma, as does that of ‘late’ pubertal maturation, Clark’s focus on the physicalised signs of puberty reflect the imperative of the desire for ‘hard’ masculinity in relation to his representation of adolescent masculinity: one signalled by the physical evidence of pubertal maturity and the athleticised, psycho-sexual identity that this entails. Clark’s attention to, and close observation of the details of pubertal maturity in boys thus reflects a close examination of a definition of adolescent masculinity that strives for normalized expression. In Clark’s work, what is at stake is the coded nature of the presence or absence of pubertal signs, in relation to the normalized discourse of the ‘correct’ timing of puberty and its implications for social acceptance and identity formation.

In Clark’s artist book punk Picasso, a double page spread includes two articles clipped from newspapers – a story from The New York Times of 1993 is headlined ‘Early or late puberty puts some at risk’, and an adjacent clipping is headed ‘Help Make Adolescence a Change for the Better’, which includes the advice ‘Don’t tease your children about how they’re changing’ and ‘Share some of your own memories of going through puberty’. Clearly, the advice provided by this article runs counter to Clark’s own experience of parental empathy during his adolescence, as Clark has quoted his father’s reaction to his late maturation as ‘What did I do to deserve such a scrawny little kid?’ The trauma expressed by Clark’s own admission of out-of-time physical maturation can be understood as symbolic of the larger degrees of trauma that characterize Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity as a whole: in the actions of his young male

\[205\] Clark’s artist books include many examples of hand-written notes, lists and quotations. While most of these are unsigned, they are consistent in handwriting style of those that bear Clark’s name.


\[208\] Larry Clark interviewed by Mike Kelley, “In Youth Is Pleasure.” p.84.
characters in his films, and in the evidence of rejection in the news stories from newspaper clippings that he collects and incorporates into his collage works. Crucially, Clark’s close observation of the signs of pubertal maturity reflects the importance of an orthodox desire for normalised identity formation.

In Clark’s work the representation of pubertal maturity often incorporates the operation of eroticized or sexualized identity; the physically mature adolescent is almost always driven by sexual desires, or creates a self-identity based on sexual maturity. The articulation of sexualized identity operates as the expression of the desire for affection and intimacy that finds articulation within peer groups, and as a contrast to the purity and innocence of pre-pubertal identity. Clark’s approach to eroticism often involves a strong sense of vulnerability. The complex articulation of physicalised puberty which represents an active and desirable hard masculinity within Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity often evokes a sense of insecurity. The bravado and exaggerated displays of strength that are a trope of normalised adolescent masculinity are deconstructed by Clark, through his interrogation of media-generated imagery of adolescent males, and in the connotative capacity of his photographs. Writing about Clark’s earlier work, Catherine Liu identifies a powerful aspect of Clark’s approach to the representation of adolescent male sexuality:

The eroticism of Clark’s photographs lies in their almost incidental quality, the radical lack of artifice and mise-en-scene exposes his subjects as they expose themselves. When their gaze meets that of the camera, they are completely open, cocks and all. The intimacy of Clark’s photographs is overwhelming. These are not your average porno shots of big dicks; these teenagers almost look like they can’t live up to their hard-ons. They are terrifyingly exposed and indifferent at the same time.²⁰⁹

José Esteban Muñoz identifies a charged eroticism in Clark’s images related to the issue of racial difference. He writes:

Dirty white boys. Gringos. Or gringitos. Snowflakes. When I see Larry Clark’s work, especially his three books of photographs, Tulsa (1971), Teenage Lust (1983) and The Perfect Childhood (1995), this is what I think about. The magical mystical white boy. [...] In this recalcitrant psychic space, these boys are as straight as they are white. My attraction to these bodies has everything to do with their unavailability. Besides that, it has something to do with childhood, the moment when one first comes to one’s own desire, to feel it as a painful and delicious secret. [...] Larry Clark’s imagescapes are brimming with these pale and messy boys, these dishevelled and numb icons. Thankfully they are now only a component of my desire, one of a few types; but still, the fantasy holds. I am held.210

Muñoz engages readings of Clark’s photographs that articulate a racially-identified operation of difference as well as a sexual appeal based upon the stylistic characteristics of Clark’s subjects. The erotic potential and complexity of Clark’s subjects is further discussed in this chapter and the possibilities for the fetishisation of adolescent male’s body are discussed in Chapter Six.

According to Clark, his attention to the physical signs of male adolescence, while incorporating the articulation of eroticism and sexualized identity, does not represent a sexualized desire, on Clark’s part, for the adolescent boys he depicts. Clark has stated: ‘My wish would be to go back and be that age and be one of those normal kids.’211 When

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210 José Esteban Muñoz, “Rough Boy Trade: Queer Desire / Straight Identity in the Photography of Larry Clark,” in The Passionate Camera: Photography and Bodies of Desire, ed. Deborah Bright (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). P.167. Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the representation and symbolic value of racial difference in the work of Clark and Van Sant under discussion. The male adolescents represented by Clark in his artist books of the 1990s, and in the film Bully are almost exclusively of ‘white’ appearance, however he has previously represented African American and Hispanic youths in his earlier photographs and films and has since returned to the representation of Hispanic youth in his 2005 film Wassup Rockerz. In Van Sant’s film Elephant the adolescent male characters are overwhelmingly ‘white’ in appearance, reflecting the socio-cultural environment in which the film is set. However, at a crucial point in the film the African American adolescent male character ‘Benny’, played by Bennie Dixon, helps another student safely escape the crisis.

211 Larry Clark interviewed by Mike Kelley, “In Youth Is Pleasure,” p.85.
interviewer Mike Kelley questioned Clark’s relationship to his adolescent subjects by suggesting that ‘the object of desire is to be the kids, not to have them’, Clark responded clearly: ‘Right, it’s to be them.’

Importantly this circumvents any overt suggestion of homoerotic desire by Clark for his subjects, foregrounding instead imperatives of identification with his subjects because of the physicalised and visible signs of sexual maturity that they exhibit. This does not however discount the representation of his subjects as desiring and desirable subjects, and that the operation of sensuality and eroticism is consciously constructed, analysed and deconstructed in Clark’s work. Writing about Clark’s work in 1992, Jim Lewis states:

So that while one is tempted to admire Clark’s work for the knowledge it imparts, what’s best about it has more to do with what remains after everything else has been shown: an account of the ethics of sheer attention, an ethic that rebounds to the observer as much as to the observed. ‘I love everybody I photograph,’ he said in an interview last year, and while the remark seems flippant in its context, I think it should be taken fairly seriously, just because attention is a part of love.

Clark’s artist book 1992, like all of his 1990s artist books, and the 2003 book punk Picasso, includes no contextualizing material, only photographic images. The absence of contextualising material such as introductory essays in Clark’s artist books acts to allow the visual material to operate in an open field without embellishment or explanation. The books operate as works of art in their own right rather than as illustrations of concepts or as records of an artists work in the manner of an exhibition catalogue. The photographs in Clark’s artist book 1992 are unembellished and straightforward in a documentary style. The 1992 book includes serialised images, and is perhaps closest in form to Clark's first book of photographs Tulsa, although, here, the sets of images are more focused and the standard format creates a powerful economy of form. A small number of images from the book appear in The Perfect Childhood as elements in larger wall collages, but 1992 has

\[212\] ibid. p.85.

an intensity and purity that operates differently to the popular cultural engagement of *The Perfect Childhood*, and the 1999 book *Larry Clark* with its sequences of images from the television. *1992* is notable for its sets of images that show teenage boys in simulated suicide scenarios, interspersed with sequences that appear more documentary in character, including images of a boy posing on the street, and a boy in a rural environment.

The cover shows an image of a boy in a rural setting, standing against bushy foliage, wearing sneakers, shorts, a bandana and a gold chain. (See Figure 5. Untitled image (boy urinating) from Larry Clark’s artist book *1992*, 1992, cover image and p.144. 10 5/8 x 7 1/8 inches, 27 x 18.1 cm.) He has a small tattoo of a crucifix on his right bicep, turned side on to face the camera, and his penis visible over the top of his shorts, as he pisses into the bushes. The image evokes the normalised representation of adolescent masculinity, but within the context of Clark’s own admissions about his late puberty, it becomes a loaded signifier of physically mature and sexually active adolescence. This boy has no shame in showing his sexually mature penis, and indeed, in urinating in public and posing for the camera as he does this. The boy has an open expression on his face, and a stance of relaxed defiance. The visual fact of his urinating in the outdoors signifies his comfort in his surroundings, and with Clark as photographer. This representation can be understood in the early twentieth century conception of the adolescent boy’s engagement with the ‘wilderness’. The image is in some senses a purely documentary one, but it also shows complicity between the subject and the photographer in its candid nature, connecting artistically with the symbolism of male urination as a trope of a form of masculinity expressed through the physicalised nature of the male body.

The focus on the penis, and on the activity of urinating is matched with the boy’s muscul arity to enforce his dominant masculinity. ‘Muscularity’, as Richard Dyer points out, ‘is the sign of power – natural, achieved, phallic.’

The complex nature of the active power of hegemonic masculinity in relation to the passive nature of being photographed is often articulated in Clark’s work, where adolescent males are depicted in

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sexualised or vulnerable situations. In this way Clark destabilizes the normative representation of masculinity as athleticised action and muscular pose, in relation to the activity of being passively observed. As Dyer has noted, ‘images of men must disavow [the] element of passivity if they are to be kept in line with the dominant ideas of masculinity-as-activity’. In Clark’s work, the passivity evoked by being photographed as a subject to be desired by the viewer is complicated by virtue of the often active articulation of sexuality exhibited by his subjects, and their collusion in his artistic project.

As a signifier of masculinity as activity, and hence a normalizing conception of masculinity in relation to physical strength and power, the activity of urinating connects with metaphoric references to masculinity: the primal and mythological act of extinguishing a fire with urine reinforces the show of strength associated with normative masculinity, but also evokes the possibility of homosexualised competition between males through the act of urinating. The articulation of hegemonic masculinity that operates in the boyhood pastime of the ‘pissing contest’ is one based on an athleticised masculinity determined by who can urinate the highest, or furthest, or for the longest duration, while also drawing attention to the physicalised and phallic identification of masculine identity. The ‘pissing contest’ enables a sanctioned forum for mutual body display between males that parallels the articulation of masculinity in competitive sport, since the act of urinating, and the association of masculine strength through the activity of the penis, symbolizes phallic masculinity. Clark’s photograph of the boy urinating articulates the mythic and phallic power of muscular masculinity while engaging concepts of homosocial eroticism, candour and boyishness.

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215 Ibid. p.66.

In Clark’s film *Kids* a scene shows a shirtless boy urinating into the toilet of a house where a party is taking place. One boy sits on the floor beside the toilet, passed out, and another lays in the bathtub smoking a joint. In the photo-book *Kids* which presents a sequence of stills from the film, this scene is represented by a double-page spread. The left-hand image shows a shirtless boy standing and urinating into the toilet, his jeans halfway down his backside, and the right-hand image shows a close-up view of his urine stream in the foreground, passing across the face of actor Justin Pierce, who is sitting in the bathtub drawing on a marijuana cigarette. The openness of the homosociality that this scene represents connects with an expression of hegemonic masculinity, while also allowing the suggestion of homoeroticism if we read the activity of urinating in a sexualized context, as the stream of urine is superimposed over the mouth of Pierce. In Clark’s film *Bully* the character Marty confesses to ‘pissing all over [himself]’ as a fearful reaction to an instance of bullying by his friend Bobby. In Clark’s film *Ken Park*, Claude’s father is shown drunkenly urinating after a night of drinking, immediately prior to his attempt at sexually assaulting his son. In each of these cases, the activity of urinating represents a hegemonic form of masculinity; however Clark complicates this reading by suggesting different degrees of shared intimacy, passivity or aggression. The outcomes of the behaviour that is signalled by this masculine activity, and its phallic symbolism, are eminently variable. The activity can be understood as symbolising innocence in *1992*, camaraderie in *Kids*, and aggressive drunken inhibition in *Ken Park*. The complexity of the symbolism of the act of urinating is context specific but in each case it appears in Clark’s work as an aspect of masculinity to be deconstructed.

The adolescent boy urinating, depicted on the cover of Clark’s book *1992* is the focus of a series of around thirty pages of photographic images. He is depicted in various rural settings, sometimes performing the activities of stereotypically innocent childhood masculinity, such as climbing a tree, sometimes acting out ‘tough’ hegemonic masculine

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218 Dialogue quoted from the films cited in the thesis has been transcribed from DVD releases.

219 The figure of the abusive father in *Ken Park* reveals a complex masculinity that is defined by outward displays of aggressive masculine identity, and confusion in the articulation of intimacy with his son. The hegemonic form of masculinity that Claude’s father exhibits involves an inner collapse where the display of affection is misguided and aggressive.
attitudes, such as posing in front of a mirror with a hand-gun, or posing on the hood of his car, or smoking or lifting weights. The boy is shown mostly shirtless, often with his arms raised to reveal the hair under his arms as evidence of his physicalised puberty, and standing naked in the shower, revealing both his physically developed genitals and soft facial hair – a visible suggestion of his identity as both boy and man. (See Figure 6.
Untitled image (boy in shower) from Larry Clark’s artist book 1992, 1992, p.158. 10 5/8 x 7 1/8 inches, 27 x 18.1 cm.)

The playfulness inherent in these images is important, as if the boy is performing a range of masculine poses for the benefit of the camera: he pokes his tongue out or makes a ‘serious’ face, poses with props including barbells, a hand-gun, a cigarette, a liquor bottle. In one image he pulls his shorts down showing his backside to the camera articulating bravado that relates to the image of him urinating.220 Each of these poses appear as performance in that they seem to engage with the expected behaviour of the ‘normal’ adolescent boy as athletic, tough and unselfconscious. Other images of the boy in this series are at odds with this outward display of hard masculinity. In these photographs, he appears more like a little boy: seated in the rafters of an outdoor picnic shed, standing pensively, climbing a tree. The contrast of these soft and sensitive articulations of adolescent identity acts to emphasise the performative aspect of the boy’s tough attitude. The representation of the identity of the boy in this sequence moves within a fluid operation of soft, boyish, innocent masculinity, and hard, active and tough masculinity. The complexity of the operation of purity is also signalled by the presence of a neck chain with a crucifix pendant, and a tattoo on his right bicep of a small crucifix, suggesting identification with the values of purity associated with Christianity. As a trope of transcendence operating within a Judeo-Christian context, this modest symbolism

220 As an articulation of defiant adolescent masculinity, the revealing of the buttocks also figures in material associated with Clark’s film Bully. During an interview with Clark included as a DVD extra, the actor Brad Renfro who plays the character Marty, mugs for the camera in the background behind Clark, taking great amusement in pulling down his pants to show his backside without Clark’s awareness. His action is clearly designed to be provocative in a playful manner while emphasising a normalised masculinity through defiance and athleticised behaviour.
suggests the belief and desire for redemption, and its identification as a part of adolescent identity formation since the boy is depicted at the stage of early to mid adolescence.²²¹

This series of photographic images reveals the powerful equation of ‘natural’ male boyhood and adolescence with the rural, or wilderness environment. In this way, it relates to the concept of male youth as an articulation of ‘outlaw’ identity prevalent in Clark’s earlier books Tulsa and Teenage Lust.²²² The representation of the adolescent male in the setting of nature engages an identity based on both the toughness of the outsider figure and the innocence of the boy in nature. Kidd describes the mythic construction of the ‘bad boy’ as celebrating ‘the pre- or early pubescent boy as irrational primitive, fiercely masculine, and attuned to nature’.²²³ Kidd notes the operation of identity formation and expression that exists between the subject and author in the ‘bad boy genre’ where ‘the boy subject is the author’s young self in thin disguise’.²²⁴ The articulation of the relationship between the author and his subject fits neatly with Clark’s relationship as photographer to his adolescent male subjects, of his stated desires to relive his youth as a ‘normal’ adolescent and his desire to ‘be the kids’ he photographs.

The opening sequence of photographs in the book 1992 depicts a dark haired ‘gothic’ boy whose presence also acts to frame the book, since a lengthy sequence featuring this boy is

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²²¹ The symbolism of Christianity appears in other contexts in Clark’s work notably in the book The Perfect Childhood, which includes a photograph of a pamphlet on identifying adolescent’s interest in the occult, which is contrasted with a flyer for athletic activities including ‘Karate for Christ’ and ‘Gymnastics for Christ’ produced by a Presbyterian Church. Clark and Keller, The Perfect Childhood. Unpag. The crucifix tattoo on the arm of the boy in Clark’s book 1992 can be understood as an identifying signifier that operates symbolically in the manner of the cross on the hobbled sweater worn by the character Nathan in Gus Van Sant’s film Elephant. The symbol operates as a signifier of the desire for spiritual purity and as a talisman, recalling the fourteenth century admonition of adolescence as a period when ‘the devil is particularly active’. Sears, The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle. p.90.

²²² Writing about Clark’s work Philip Monk states that: ‘The outlaw, whether Western gunslinger or Prohibition-era gangster, is one of the defining myths of American culture. We display a certain tolerance towards outlaws as mythic figures; larger than life, they act out forbidden desires we cannot fulfill in our daily lives.’ Monk, The American Trip: Larry Clark, Nan Goldin, Cady Noland, Richard Prince. p.15. Monk positions Clark as an outlaw himself, based on Clark’s biographic history of growing up in Tulsa, and having experience with prison, drugs and crime. In his book The Perfect Childhood Clark includes a photograph of a typed page quoting Marshall McLuhan ‘the criminal like the artist is a social explorer’ and photographs of letters from his cell mate Larry Miller. Clark and Keller, The Perfect Childhood. Unpag.


²²⁴ Ibid. p.53.
the final sequence in the book. This sequence is a complex series of images that present various facets of identity, some evidently documentary, and some performed. The boy’s attire, which might be described as a derivation of ‘punk’ establishes a masculine identity that is simultaneously normative in its appeal to the tough masculinity of punk, and transcendent in its elision or erasure of identity. Dick Hebdige states that the punks expressed an identity:

[That was] emptied and inert [and] literally ‘made up’ out of Vaseline and cosmetics, hair dye and mascara. But paradoxically, in the case of the punks, this ‘elsewhere’ was also a nowhere – a twilight zone – a zone constituted out of negativity.\textsuperscript{225}

The boy in Clark’s photographs acts out a ‘negative’ identity in the sense that there is an erasure of identity based on the performance of death: he desires to be ‘not here’. After a series of portrait images the boy is shown laying on the floor, photographed from the chest up. He is shirtless and his eyes are closed in mock death. This ‘gentle’ image of death or sleep serves as an introduction to the more intense scenarios of play-acted death and suicide to follow. In other images the boy gazes at the camera, shirtless, with one arm raised, his hand behind his head. He is wearing what appear to be white cotton under shorts, and the right leg of the shorts gapes open revealing a partial view of his genitals. There is a tension between the casual nature of the pose and the revelation of his sex, as though it is ‘accidental’. The image also communicates a sense of openness, in the frankness of his direct gaze and the unselfconsciousness of the visibility of his penis. Like the rural boy who urinates against the bush, this boy is at ease with his physically mature adolescent body, the normalized adolescent masculinity that is presented as so desirable in Clark’s work. What makes the casual revelation of pubertal physicality different in this case, however, is that the visibility of the boy’s genitals is a focal point of the many images where he acts out suicide scenarios with a noose and a hand-gun. These images create an intense conflation between adolescent masculinity, suicide and eroticism. The operation of these themes and their relationship to the construction of

\textsuperscript{225} Hebdige, \textit{Subculture: The Meaning of Style}. p.65.
adolescent masculinity are not taken lightly in Clark’s work, nor do they simply reproduce media-generated representations. Clark’s articulation of these concepts involves highly emotive and critical analyses. (See Figure 7. Untitled image (boy reclining with eyes partly open) from Larry Clark’s artist book 1992, 1992, p.236. 10 5/8 x 7 1/8 inches, 27 x 18.1 cm; and Figure 8. Untitled image (boy with gun in mouth) from Larry Clark’s artist book 1992, 1992, p.313. 10 5/8 x 7 1/8 inches, 27 x 18.1 cm.)

While analyses of the representation of Saint Sebastian highlight the sense of physicalised passivity that defines his identity – an acceptance of the fate of his body as being destroyed, and an acceptance of the redemption offered by his martyrdom, the images of the boy in Clark’s book 1992, appears, instead, inert. Any sense of ‘movement’ or ‘awakening’ in transcendence is withheld at this moment, engaging a paradox of the elision of masculinity, and the promise of transcendence in death. Two sequences of over thirty images show the boy slumped on the floor, his eyelids closed or barely open and his eyes rolled back. His body is beyond passive, it is dead, empty, evacuated of any sense of identity, the hardness of his masculinity-as-action completely elided. This ultimate passivity is not instructive or metaphoric. The power and sadness in these images lies in their convincing portrayal of the violent removal of all life and beauty. These unique images evince the seriousness of Clark’s endeavour and the consequences of the extreme nature of the desire for transcendence.

Research has shown the significance of suicide as a leading cause of mortality in adolescent males in developed countries globally. In the United States of America, suicide accounts for almost twelve percent of causes of death in youth aged ten to twenty-four years of age. Suicide is the third highest cause of male youth mortality after motor vehicle accidents and homicide, and adolescent males are more likely to successfully commit suicide than adolescent females. Clark’s images of adolescent boys enacting

[226] In 2001 in the USA, 4,243 adolescents and young adults aged ten to twenty successfully committed suicide. In this age group males have a higher suicide rate than females. In the USA from 1981 to 2001 84% of youth in this age group were male, and males continue to have higher suicide rates throughout their lifespan. National Adolescent Health Information Center NAHIC, “Fact Sheet on Suicide: Adolescents & Young Adults,” (San Francisco: University of California, San Francisco, 2004), pp.1 & 2. This reflects global trends in developed countries. One study found that: ‘Despite declining rates of death from other causes, the rates of adolescent and young adult death from [motor vehicle accidents], homicide and suicide remain high in countries throughout the world. The proportion of deaths attributable to
the scenarios of suicide reflect the reality of the issue as a defining trope of adolescent masculinity. Clark has stated:

[I am] always interested in making photographs that I haven’t seen before. Here was one more element of that, of photographing things that can’t be photographed. There is all this stuff in the papers about teenage murderers, kids killing their parents, a rash of teenage suicides. And then the teenage suicides, there were four or five or six of them on this one little area of Long Island. And naturally everybody was trying to figure out why these kids from this upper middle class neighbourhood were dying of suicide. And then it turned out that half of them weren’t suicides at all, rather accidents, caused by this auto-erotic asphyxiation process, where they were cutting off their air supply as they jerked off to get a stronger feeling when they came. Also kids killing their parents and actual suicides. How are you going to photograph that? You can hang out with kids as much as I did, or maybe even be a kid, but how are you going to be there when that happens. So I was trying to work in the studio anyway. So in dealing with those kinds of themes I started to see if I could make some photographs that might suggest that or deal with that.227

Clark has chosen to represent, and recognize, suicide as a defining aspect of adolescent masculinity; which, in his work, connects directly with ideas of eroticism, and in turn, transcendence. Albert Camus, in his essay on the philosophy of suicide states that: ‘An act like [suicide] is prepared within the silence of the heart, as is a great work of art.’228 The act of suicide is an act that articulates a desire for transcendence and the unburdening

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of pain. ‘Killing yourself’, Camus suggests, ‘amounts to confessing.’ Clark’s subjects do not ‘confess’ an inability to live and suffer, but the necessity for them to move on – to transcend – the pressures that construct identities that are oppressive. The confession of their vulnerability and failure to live up to the expectations of hegemonic young male identity is also their strength and power in its denial to accept this identification. The self-immolation that Clark represents in his subjects is a self-sacrifice that promises transcendence in deliverance. The symbolism of the act of suicide in Clark’s work, when not taken as a literal representation of fact, is the symbolic disavowal of all that normalized adolescent masculinity promises: athleticised power, physicalised heterosexuality and independence. Rather than emblematic of self-disgust, Clark’s conceptual representation of young male suicide might be understood as the configuring of a type of self-love that attempts to engage with a transcendent and divine self-immolation.

These images of Clark’s operate across a nexus of eroticism, death and transcendence. In his analysis of eroticism and death, Georges Bataille suggests that in the erotic experience is a feeling of the loss of the individual self. This concept articulates the desire for ‘continuity’, a state which characterizes the transcendent experience found in erotic experience, religious fervour and in death. The power of erotic feeling, one that is experienced first as a function of adolescence, is ultimately defining:

To begin with, the first turbulent surge of erotic feeling overwhelms all else, so that gloomy considerations of the fate in store for our discontinuous selves are forgotten. And then, beyond the intoxication of youth, we achieve the power to look death in the face and to perceive in death the pathway into unknowable and

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229 Ibid. p.4. Camus's essay bases the desire for self-imposed death on the feeling of the absurdity of life, and then goes on to suggest the appropriateness of this absurdity.

230 Discontinuity, as Bataille suggests, is the natural state of being, but our desire is for the transcendence found in experiences of continuity. Bataille states: ‘Sperm and ovum are to begin with discontinuous entities, but they unite, a consequently a continuity comes into existence between them to form a new entity from the death and disappearance of the separate beings.’ Bataille, Erotism: Death & Sensuality, p.14. Bataille suggests that our yearning for this primal sense of continuity is pursued through eroticism, and is anticipated in death.
incomprehensible continuity – that path is the secret of eroticism and eroticism alone can reveal it.\textsuperscript{231}

Bataille's analysis of eroticism is directly related to spiritual transcendence, and by implication to his own experience of adolescence. He states that 'nothing has intrigued me more than the idea of once more coming across the image that haunted my adolescence, the image of God.'\textsuperscript{232} Death is conceived as a transcendent state for Bataille:

[Divine] continuity is linked with the transgression of the law on which the order of discontinuous beings is built. Men as discontinuous beings try to maintain their separate existences, but death, or at least the contemplation of death, brings them back to continuity.\textsuperscript{233}

Self-immolation in death, then, offers the same charge as eroticism, underlying which is 'the feeling of something bursting, of the violence accompanying an explosion';\textsuperscript{234} that leads to transcendence.\textsuperscript{235}

In Clark's images of adolescent boys enacting suicide, eroticism, in the sense that Bataille conceives of it, figures as a mode of transcendence with spiritual analogies – Bataille also evokes the transverberation of Saint Therese and the relationship between 'spiritual joy and sensual emotion'\textsuperscript{236} in the pain experienced at the moment of her immolation. Eroticism functions in Clark's images in relation to Bataille's formulation of

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\textsuperscript{231} Ibid. p.24.
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid. p.8.
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid. p.83.
\textsuperscript{234} Ibid. p.93.
\textsuperscript{235} In \textit{The Tears of Eros}, Bataille's survey of eroticism in images of art from prehistory to the late 1960s he presents an overview of images in relation to human sexuality. In concert with his thesis presented in \textit{Erotism} he leads to images of immolation in death and sacrifice. He concludes: 'Religion in its entirety was founded upon sacrifice. But only an interminable detour allows us to reach that instant where the contraries seem visibly conjoined, where the religious horror disclosed in sacrifice becomes linked to the abyss of eroticism, to the last shuddering tears that eroticism alone can illuminate.' Georges Bataille, \textit{The Tears of Eros} (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1990), p.207. First published in 1961.

\textsuperscript{236} Bataille, \textit{Erotism: Death & Sensuality}. p.225.
the transcendent nature of the erotic experience and to that of the partial revelation of the body of the adolescent male. Mario Perniola states that:

In the figurative arts, eroticism appears as a relationship between clothing and nudity. Therefore, it is conditional on the possibility of movement – transit – from one state to the other. If either of these poles takes on a primary or essential significance to the exclusion of the other, then the possibility for this transit is sacrificed, and with it the conditions for eroticism. In such cases, either clothing or nudity becomes an absolute value.  

In Clark’s photographs of the boy enacting suicide scenarios in his book 1992, and in many representations of Saint Sebastian, in particular those of Guido Reni, the operation of Perniola’s definition of the aesthetics of eroticism is evident. Reni’s Sebastian (both in the Rome and Genoa versions) is neither fully clothed nor naked. His torso is fully exposed and vulnerable, and his groin is covered by a swathe of twisted drapery which hangs low on his waist revealing the top of his thigh and the descent into his crotch defined by the lower abdominal muscles. In Clark’s photographs, the boy wears a white singlet and white shorts. The shorts, made of soft cotton, are analogous to Sebastian’s loin cloth but they offer a glimpse of the boy’s genitals through a gape in the leg of the shorts. In both cases, the clothing acts to conceal the body and to promise the possibility of revelation. Clark’s choice to show the boy wearing white shorts that operate in the manner of a loose-fitting loin cloth or drapery mean that the image functions in a manner similar to that of its antecedents. The significance of movement, typified in Baroque art, becomes evident in the ‘use of the erotics of drapery or attire’. In a manner apposite to the operation of the folds of the tunic in Bernini’s Saint Theresa, the folds in the loin cloth of Sebastian and in the shorts of Clark’s boy signify a symbolic sense of eroticism. Perniola writes of the Bernini sculpture that: ‘The deep cavities formed in the


238 The clothing in this series of images operates in a specific manner as compared to clothing in other images in the book, which show boys wearing conventional boxer shorts or briefs, casual clothing or naked, and which do not facilitate the same degree of suspense of revelation.

cloth of the tunic repeat the folds of a body that continually offers itself, that invites stimulation, arousal, penetration.\textsuperscript{240}

Clark's images present a dual and paradoxical articulation of eroticism that appeals to concepts of a soft and innocent model of adolescent masculinity, and an active eroticism of athleticised masculinity and pubertal maturity. The simultaneous operation of these signifiers gives the images a kind of oscillating sense of adolescent masculinity that is in flux, and indeed, exhibits a kind of chimera quality. This sense of flux, as it pertains to the adolescent male body itself – transiting between innocence and physicalised sexuality – and to its representation across these symbolic states, acts as another manifestation of the paradox and conflict at play within Clark's representation of adolescent masculinity.

Following Bataille's conception of eroticism, its operation is bound by a desire for 'continuity', which also operates in death. This eroticism exhibits a purity of function because it seeks the transcendent quality of continuity. Bataille's concept of continuity that connects the representation of both eroticism and death then allows the sensible conflation of the two in the images of Sebastian, and in Clark's photographs: Sebastian's body pierced by arrows while his loin cloth rests loosely around his waist; Clark's boy performing the self-immolating act of suicide by gun shot while his loose cotton shorts reveal glimpses of his genitals. There is, at this register, an erotics of redemption and innocence in operation.\textsuperscript{241}

Clark's images in his artist books act to effectively critique assumptions about hard masculinity and eroticism, and in effect, deconstruct its representation. In his images of the boy in suicide poses, the revelation of his genitals serves to signify his status as a pubertal male, which in relation to his youthful appearance denote his adolescent

\textsuperscript{240}Ibid. p.255.

\textsuperscript{241}The symbolism of the effect of drapery is important here. Perniola states: 'In the second half of the sixteenth century, under the influence of the Council of Trent, the premises for a new view of drapery that would free it of preoccupations with realism were accepted. Representations of the Resurrection and even more significantly of the Ascension of Christ and the Assumption of the Virgin played a determining role in this process. The place once occupied by the naked, crucified body in Reformation spirituality was now taken by the clothed body of the triumphant Resurrection. Thus, a new erotic sensibility was born, one that saw clothing in the light of a new body redeemed from sin and innocent at last.' Ibid. p.253.
physicality. The boy’s act of self-immolation, like the images of him playing dead, effectively erase the operation of adult sexuality and return him to an idealized state of innocence. His act engages a field of transcendence, which as Sartre states ‘recovers its former limpidity’. The revelation of his genitals in the suicide images is a necessary signifier of his ability to enact adult sexualized being-ness, which in itself connotes active hard masculinity. This is an aspect of his identity which in this instance is rendered neutral. Once again, the boy, like Saint Sebastian, is passive as a masculine archetype, but active in his desire for transcendence through death.

The erasure of sexuality in these images can be understood as a deconstruction of the active masculinity, defined by sexualized identity, in the reproduction of media-produced images of teen celebrities such as Matt Dillon and Jay Ferguson, in Clark’s book *The Perfect Childhood*. (See Figure 9. Untitled double-page image (collage with ‘Teen Stars: Matt Dillon’ poster) from Larry Clark’s artist book *The Perfect Childhood*, 1995. Unpag. 18 x 11 inches, 45.72 x 27.94 cm. and Figure 10. Untitled image (collage with Jay Ferguson poster) from Larry Clark’s artist book *The Perfect Childhood*, 1995. Unpag. 18 x 11 inches, 45.72 x 27.94 cm, detail.) These images trade on a sexualized adolescent masculinity that draws attention to physical attractiveness and sexual desirability. As the subject of a photo-poster printed with the words ‘Teen Stars’ Dillon is shown shirtless in the environment of a tree-lined suburban street at dusk, the low sun casting a glow around his head. His masculinity is at once innocent and active: he is like the suburban ‘boy next door’, shirtless, perhaps from doing some yard-work; at the same time he is fully sexualized, in a pose that suggests a bodily energy that is about to spring forward in an active role. In the photo-poster of the more boyish Jay Ferguson (which proclaims ‘Superstar Teen’), innocence is contrasted with a provocative pose. Ferguson lacks the more muscular physicality of Dillon and the overt sexualized maturity signalled by Dillon’s dark hair visible under his arm and from his navel to his groin; but Ferguson reveals his pubertal status by striking a pose that reveals the light brown hair under his raised arm. Both images draw direct attention to the boys’ genital areas. Dillon’s body is slightly turned away from the camera, offering an outline of his torso that emphasises his
pectorals and abdominal muscles. The central vertical axis of the image which captures the viewer’s gaze runs from his smiling and open face, along the line of his sternum to his navel, along the trail of hair from his navel to the crotch of his denim jeans. The fly of his jeans is puckered so that the zipper itself is visible, and Dillon’s forearms and hands are held outwards from his waist in an open gesture. Ferguson is also shown within the environment of suburbia – in the garden of a suburban backyard, his body facing the camera in a slight contrapposto pose. This time the focus of movement of the viewer’s gaze is directed in a ‘S’ pattern from the top of Ferguson’s raised arm, past his under-arm and face, down along his left arm which curves to rest in the left pocket of his denim jeans, his index finger gently pointing at the bulge of his genitals. Both images, in effect, articulate an invitation or solicitation that is based on the sexualized and idealized representation of the adolescent male. In punk Picasso, Clark includes similar style images of actor River Phoenix. Two photographs of Phoenix as an adolescent represented by Clark, one a poster image from ‘Teen Beat’ magazine, show the actor shirtless with his left arm raised revealing the patch of blond hair under his arm. This revelation, in the context of Phoenix’s smooth torso and boyish face, signal his newly acquired pubertal status. The operation of solicitation that these images evoke as a constructed articulation of a homosexualised approach to looking at the body of the adolescent male recall Clark’s description of his 1980s photographs of adolescent boy hustlers on 42nd Street in New York City reproduced in his book Teenage Lust. Clark states:

[The main thing] is just about one or two pictures of the kids’ eyes, the way a kid looks at a man, and the way, when he’s looking at the camera, he’s actually looking at a man. That’s mainly what’s happening. See, I’m trying to simplify. What would be the use of showing an old man picking up a young kid and maybe having sex with him? It’s what the kid is offering, that’s what I’m getting. The picture is of what the kid is offering. The kid is offering himself. He’s selling

243 Clark, punk Picasso. Unpag.
something. It’s more a look than anything. It’s a look, right? It’s an entire attitude. It’s a way of seeing things, but it’s all polished up. It’s point of sale.244

In the poster images of Dillon, Ferguson and Phoenix, the subjects address the viewer directly with their eyes as if as a come on. There is the loaded implication of a sexual exchange between the subject and the viewer. In Clark’s re-presentation of media-generated images of male adolescent ‘stars’, he locates the feeling and attitude articulated by his earlier photographs of boy hustlers. What is added with the poster images is the articulation of the presence of pubertal signifiers. The adolescent boy’s body display and its evidence of the articulation of pubertal sexuality becomes a value that can be traded. Clark’s images signal a theoretical awareness of this value for the adolescent male subject that is based upon the concurrent and paradoxical articulation of innocence and sexualised physicality. In Clark’s work the idealized male adolescence that the poster images represent relates to the construction of the male adolescent as sexually desirable, and engages a paradoxical sense of passivity and, as Dyer states, ‘potential for action’.245

Clark’s re-presentation of the poster images of Dillon and Ferguson also serves to rupture the idealized model of adolescent masculinity that is at stake in their portrayal of adolescent masculinity. In both cases, Clark uses the photo-posters as a part of a larger photo-collage so that the clarity of constructed seduction at stake in the images of Dillon and Ferguson is problematised by disjuncture or excess.246 Clark places Matt Dillon’s idealized representation in relation to a series of Polaroids shot from the television of an unidentified adolescent boy, black and white photographs taken by Clark of a naked adolescent boy with an erect penis, and newspaper clippings showing three adolescent

244 Larry Clark, Teenage Lust (New York: Larry Clark, 1983). Unpag.

245 Dyer states that: ‘Even when not actually caught in an act, the male image still promises activity by the way the body is posed. Even in an apparently relaxed, supine pose, the model tightens and tautens his body so that the muscles are emphasised, hence drawing attention to the body’s potential for action.’ Dyer, “Don’t Look Now - the Male Pin-Up.” p.67. Clark’s appropriated images of Dillon and Ferguson trade on the passive and available nature of the adolescent male, while at the same time foregrounding their status as potentially active subjects.

246 Clark describes the process that led to the creation of his collage works as being based on the decision to work with photographic trypichs. The results of a photographic project ‘came down to three photographs that I liked out of all of them’. Clark says: ‘They told the story. So I made some trypichs. This led to the first collage, where I took a picture of Matt Dillon when he was about fifteen years old with his shirt off. Then the collages just kind of grew.’ Larry Clark interviewed by Mike Kelley, “In Youth Is Pleasure.” p.85.
boys handcuffed, and a news story about college sexual harassment. The Ferguson poster is duplicated as Clark pins four identical page images and one poster-size image together, and frames this image with photographs by Clark of the ‘suicide boy’ from the book 1992 a woman showing her genitals, and newspaper clippings about a teacher and her fifteen-year-old student plotting to murder her husband. The collage works including poster images of Dillon and Ferguson have been shown as exhibition works, the Ferguson work titled The Perfect Childhood. The perfect childhood that Clark alludes to in the title of his book is distilled in the work he has exhibited under the same title. The group of images in the collage work include references to sexuality, death and loss but focus on the alluring image of Jay Ferguson as an adolescent to be desired.

Within the context of the book The Perfect Childhood, Clark physically deconstructs the images by also reproducing them as details that further disrupt the continuity and singularity of the source imagery. This montage has the effect of disallowing the articulation of a ‘whole’ and compatible sense of adolescent masculinity, instead presenting a concept of adolescent masculinity that is inherently contradictory. This representation is at once innocent and seductive, corrupt and destructive, idealized and degenerate.

Clark’s collage style is a strategy that problematises assumptions, normative definitions, and media constructions of adolescent masculinity through a process of fracture, repetition, and comparison. Hierarchies of hegemonic, athleticised, innocent, corrupt, sexualized, incomplete, violated, and idealized versions of adolescent masculinity are presented side-by-side, drawn from diverse media sources, and created by Clark himself. The articulation of transcendence in relation to the overall strategy of Clark’s book The Perfect Childhood can be understood as taking various manifestations. Because of the powerful and insistent power of the stereotypical representations of adolescent masculinity that Clark’s image-sources signify, the possibility of transcending these

\[247\] Details of the work which includes the Dillon poster are: Untitled 1989, photocollage, collection of Gunter Forg. Details of the work which includes the Ferguson posters are: The Perfect Childhood 1991, photocollage, Straus Family Collection. Walls, “Larry Clark,” p.14. The works were exhibited in the 2005 ICP exhibition Larry Clark and presented in box frames. The exhibition checklist does not give dimensions however the works are approximately 30 x 52 inches, 76.2 x 132 cm
hegemonic models of masculinity may seem blocked. Clark uses the strategy of collage and visual disjuncture to deconstruct the integrity of what these images signify. His collage technique can be understood as engaging strategies of random, repetitive, explorative and unexpected placement of images and visual elements. In many cases Clark uses the same image or image-fragment and presents it within different, sometimes competing, symbolic frameworks, creative a heterodox visual system that reflects the disjunctive, unpredictable, and inherently paradoxical nature of adolescent masculinity as he engages it. As a metaphor for the psychological states of being of adolescent masculinity they represent, Clark’s collages ‘embody’ disjuncture, obsession, confusion and energy.

The desire for transcendence that is a driving force in Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity also makes itself known through the manifestation of the spiritual symbolism of Christianity. Beyond the allusions to Saint Sebastian in imagery in the book 1992, references to Jesus and to Satan appear in Clark’s book The Perfect Childhood. The visibility of this symbolism is, like Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity as a whole, inherently paradoxical. Clark’s borrowing of tropes of Christian symbolism as motifs serve to evoke cultural manifestations of transcendence as related to the Judeo-Christian faith, in order to allude to the broader and paradigmatic concepts of transcendence as ‘going beyond’ the normalised state of adolescent masculinity. The presence of Christian iconography and symbolism in his work and its appeal to spiritual transcendence can be understood as operating metaphorically. The inclusion in Clark’s collages of references to Christian organisations or to the symbolism of Satanism serves to deconstruct the presence of these identifying tropes within media-generated representations of adolescent masculinity. At the same time Clark’s use of Christian motifs such as the crucifix tattoo on the arm of the boy in his book 1992 serve to evoke the specifically spiritual nature of transcendence within a Judeo-Christian tradition as symbolic of transcendence as a conceptual and symbolic force embedded within the representation of adolescent masculinity.248

248 Clark’s own religious background, like much of his private life, remains unspoken in published sources. His 2003 artist book punk Picasso includes a childhood photograph presumably of Clark as a boy praying at his bedside with his sisters, and an announcement card for his son Matthew’s Bar Mitzvah, opposite a photograph of father and son. In an
Drawing upon normalized and media-generated representations of adolescence as receptive to morally unhealthy influences (a time when the ‘devil is particularly active’), Clark’s visual essay on adolescent masculinity in *The Perfect Childhood* includes several references to Satanism. As a part of his collage page-works, he includes a pamphlet from ‘The Center for the Treatment of Ritualistic Deviance’ listing the danger signs of youth occult involvement; newspaper clippings about male teen murder evoking occult interest; photographs from his video works of accused adolescent boys, including one captioned ‘Kevin: Former Satanist’, a poster for the band Metallica’s ‘Hell on Earth’ tour; and a photograph of a Manson-like figure with a pentagram on his forehead. Clark’s presentation of these signifiers is as a part of a larger matrix of images and references that include idealized celebrity representations of male adolescents, newspaper clippings and Clark’s own photographs of adolescent boys. Clark doesn’t sensationalise these elements, they are presented as a part of a cultural landscape. By including these references to the unhealthy involvement in the occult, Clark reinforces the construction of an ‘edgy’ kind of adolescent masculinity that frames stereotypical conceptions of toughness, heightened heterosexuality and the culture of the outsider. As a type of constellation of visual symbols that create a particular sense of identity, a double-page photograph of a wall collage is emblematic of Clark’s overall approach in *The Perfect Childhood*. Collage elements represent challenges to normalised society by the evocation of violence, sexuality and the culture of the outsider.\(^{249}\) At the same time, the constructed and fractured projection of identity that these elements conjure is knowingly ‘deviant’. Susan Sontag writes about the erotic potential of photograph collections which ‘can be used to

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\(^{249}\) Individual elements include: photographs of musicians Elvis Presley, Johnny Thunders, and Stiv Bators of The Dead Boys; martial arts actor Bruce Lee; Robert DeNiro in the film *Taxi Driver* mimicking holding a gun to his head; boxers Roberto Duran and Sugar Ray Leonard; an apparent crime scene; a woman in an electric chair; and photographs from the press and by Clark of men and women naked and in sexual scenarios.
make a substitute world, key to exalting or consoling or tantalizing images.\textsuperscript{230} Sontag writes:

In Cocteau’s \textit{Les Enfants Terribles}, the narcissistic brother and sister share their bedroom, their ‘secret room’, with images of boxers, movie stars, and murderers. Isolating themselves in their lair to live out their private legend, the two adolescents put up these photographs, a private pantheon. On one wall of cell No. 426 in Fresnes Prison in the early 1940s Jean Genet pasted the photographs of twenty criminals he had clipped from newspapers, twenty faces in which he discerned ‘the sacred sign of the monster,’ and in their honour wrote Our Lady of the Flowers; they served as his muses, his models, his erotic talismans.\textsuperscript{251}

Clark’s tableaux of images in his collage works, and in the overall montage quality of the book \textit{The Perfect Childhood} appeals to the romanticism of Sontag’s allusion to the invention of a psycho-sexual cosmos that describes identity. Clark projects a particular type of adolescent male identity through his collages: an identity that is deliberately constructed. As much as Clark reflects the authenticity of the content and form of his collages, he interrogates and dismantles its hegemony. In the collage works Clark uses the familiar format of the ‘pin-up’ wall, a device that carries a strong association with the representation of adolescence. As an expression of adolescent identity, Clark has used this device in his film \textit{Bully} to demonstrate the character Lisa’s heterosexual desire for media-sanctioned images of attractive men. In the film \textit{Ken Park}, the posters and images that cover Claude’s bedroom walls signify his interest in the subcultural styles of skateboarding and independent music. In \textit{The Perfect Childhood}, however, Clark uses the form of the collage to evoke and disrupt the ‘pin-up’ wall as signifier of adolescent identity. Unlike a ‘real’ adolescent’s pin-up wall, which would ideally represent the individual’s desires and projected interests in an unmediated and ‘unconscious’ manner, perhaps within a sense of personal aesthetics, Clark’s allusion to the pin-up wall is internally inconsistent, paradoxical, ironic, excessive and disruptive. In the book \textit{1992},


\textsuperscript{251} Ibid. p.162.
Clark photographed a boy enacting suicide scenarios against a backdrop of posters for the ‘heavy metal’ band Iron Maiden, playing directly upon the media’s fascination with the connection between male teenage suicide and murder and the lyrics of ‘heavy metal’ or ‘death metal’ during the 1980s.

The cover of the book *The Perfect Childhood* and the opening sequence of images show photographic still images of a television video broadcast of adolescent boys involved in criminal sex or violence scenarios. The stills are taken from edited excerpts of television programs including the *Donahue* interview program, which were exhibited by Clark as short video works and exhibited with titles including *14-Year-Old Chris Melendrez Accused of Rape*, *Boy Accused of Killing Father* both 1992. In their presentation as video works, shown on small portable-television-size monitors on plinths, their content was focused on the adolescent protagonist, the input of interviewers, psychologists and other ‘specialists’ edited out by Clark. The effect of this is that the images of the adolescent boys, continually present in head-and-shoulder shots, become signifiers of demonised adolescent masculinity, while the technology that generates their images evokes a ghostly presence that allows them a physically transcendent quality. Their images are transformed into a form of information evacuated of ‘moral’ content, since Clark has edited out of the accusations of the interviewers. Clark’s re-presentation of stills from these videos also emphasises their ghostly effect. The artist book *Larry Clark* produced to accompany an exhibition at the Groninger Museum in the Netherlands, is devoted to stills taken from the video works of boys on television. The images are textured by the striation of cathode-ray-tube transfer to video tape, which gives the images a ghostly quality that lacks a sense of clarity. Devoid of their narrative context as videos, the repetitive nature of the images acts in a manner similar to Clark’s photographs of the boy enacting suicide scenarios or ‘playing dead’ in his book *1992*, where repetition neither dulls nor enhances the effects of the content of the imagery, but seems to evacuate it of intent. While the source of these images acts to enforce a sense of adolescent masculinity as essentially corrupt, Clark’s re-presentation of his own edited versions of the videos removes all

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252 Clark stated that ‘I went out and found these posters and covered a whole wall with them.’ Larry Clark interviewed by Jutta Koether. Koether, “Larry Clark.” p.46.
sense of accusation and danger from his adolescent male subjects. The images as archetypal representations of adolescent males are muted and dissolved. The form of their presentation suggests insubstantiality and frailty, concepts at odds with normative conceptions of adolescent masculinity. In the muteness of these images the boys’ expressions are caught in silenced mid-utterance or pleading or reflection, complicating their status as victimisers. As exemplary adolescent males they are presented as perpetrators of criminal or immoral acts, stripped of an inner life. There is a paradox at stake in Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity in these images. The boys perform the service of stereotypic adolescent males whose identity is defined by violation of moral and civil law. At odds with the media construction of this defiant identity is the operation of victimization and exploitation of the boys by the media and by a society which constantly frames their identity in pejorative terms. Clark’s reproduction of the video images as still frames exposes this act of victimization and allows the possibility of the representation of an adolescent masculinity that does not conform to the codes of social stereotypes.

In Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity in his artist books of the 1990s, transcendence is central to the articulation of identity but it is always withheld. Through his own experience, and by a close analysis of the representation of the physical signs of puberty, Clark emphasizes the importance of peer acceptance found in ‘on time’ pubertal development, and his own trauma at experiencing ‘late’ puberty. In this case, the desire is to transcend the pre-pubertal body and to become a sexualized male being who is rewarded by his performance of hegemonic masculinity. Within the paradoxical state of adolescence itself, which neither fully articulates the hardness of physicalised adult sexuality, or the softness of pre-pubertal childhood, Clark articulates a desire for innocence and experience: a state of being that is further complicated by the desire for paternal affection and compassion that is constantly denied. Clark disrupts the flow of media-generated images of adolescent masculinity that produce an adolescent masculinity that is either idealized as sexually attractive and active, or decried as morally corrupt and violent. In his representation of adolescent masculinity as conditioned by suicide and death, Clark proposes the complete erasure of a sexualized, athleticised,
idealized male adolescent signifier, and thus represents the possibility of transcendence in death not as annihilation but as self sacrifice that is analogous to spiritual self-immolation. The ideal manifestation of adolescent masculinity that transcends the pain of its socialized definitions is inherently paradoxical. However, in Clark’s photographs in the book 1992, of the ‘rural’ boy standing naked in the shower; this transcendent state is alluded to: in this single image – as apart from its context – the boy is represented as ‘natural’ in spirit and in surroundings. The boy is athletic but retains the softness of childhood; he is physically sexually developed but lacks the aggressive sexuality of media-generated and pathologised adolescence. He epitomises Clark’s ideal of a variety of male adolescent beauty that signifies transcendence from socialized representation.
Chapter Four: Complex adolescent masculinities: Larry Clark’s film *Bully.*

In Clark’s 2001 film *Bully,* his analysis of adolescent masculinity focuses on a specific narrative framework within which normalised models of adolescent masculinity are deconstructed and concepts of innocence and physicalised sexuality are articulated. *Bully* centres on the friendship between the two main characters: Marty Puccio and Bobby Kent, and on Kent’s murder by Puccio and his peers. The film is based on actual events that occurred in Broward County, Florida in 1993, when both boys were twenty years of age. Clark’s representation of the characters Puccio and Kent are as exemplary normalized late-adolescent males. They are portrayed as having no interest in adult responsibility, are emotionally immature, are indulgent and fixated on short-term gratification, and exhibit the outward signs of dominant heterosexual masculinity.

While Clark’s film is based upon actual events, this chapter will analyse the film as an artistic work and does not attempt to examine the articulation of adolescent masculinity as evident from other representations of the event, or from Court records. Clark’s decision to create a film based on the events, his stylistic approach and the film’s symbolism operate as separate from the original event and will be treated as a unique filmic text to be understood in relation to Clark’s analysis of adolescent masculinity. In *Bully* Clark presents a conception of adolescent masculinity that is inherently paradoxical. Puccio and Kent are outwardly overtly heterosexual, yet both perform various articulations of sexualized identity associated with homosexuality. Both characters express a stereotypical male adolescent desire for independence, while exhibiting behaviour driven by insecurity. Puccio is constantly represented as emotionally sensitive, physically able to express grief and sadness, and desiring of compassion from any source. Puccio and Kent, and their teenage peers in the film

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253 In Clark’s film, Marty Puccio is played by nineteen year old Brad Renfro, and Bobby Kent is played by twenty-one year old Nick Stahl.

conform to the stereotypical media-generated delinquent identity type of the adolescent as overtly heterosexualised and actively sexual, they are lazy and shirking of responsibility. While the male characters in Clark’s film exhibit a range of body types, the main characters Puccio and Kent are stereotypically attractive and athleticised. The film’s narrative drive suggests that the violence that befalls Kent can be understood as a normalized and unavoidable consequence of the identity expression articulated by the adolescent masculinity represented. One aspect of Puccio’s desire to transcend his situation, which leads to the murder of Kent, results in incarceration.

Clark’s deployment of the ‘factual’ origin of the narrative can be understood within his strategy of the analysis and observation of adolescent masculinity as operating in a manner akin to his use of newspaper clippings representing real events incorporated into his collage works. The ‘evidence’ of the truthfulness of the events provides a media-generated and sanctioned representation of adolescent masculinity, one that Clark is then able to ‘incorporate’ into his work, as a part of a critical methodology. Clark’s use of collage in his artist books as a strategy to enable disjuncture and excess is translated into a specific fast-cut style of cinematic montage in the film Bully. The ‘authentication’ of Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity – as a constructed entity – relates to Clark’s use of media-generated imagery in his artist books. The idealized representation of adolescent masculinity signalled by Clark’s use of poster-images of male teenage celebrities such as Jay Ferguson and Matt Dillon is mirrored in Bully through references to the updated idealized and desired performances of masculinity exemplified by rap music, rap star Eminem, and the naturalized, athleticised and sexualized masculinity articulated in the culture of surfing. In Bully, adolescence is defined by confusion. Innocence is often signalled through the presence and actions of pre or early-adolescent male characters who act as passive observers of the destructive actions of the older adolescents. The destructive performance of adolescent masculinity is presented as the result of an undisciplined and misunderstood inner drive based upon a lack of compassion and self-awareness, complicated by societal pressures and expectations that

enforce the desirability of hard masculinity. While Clark allows for moments of
transcendence to manifest, they are at odds with the negative energy that defines the
primary performance of adolescent masculinity as a destructive force. Clark’s
representation of the nature of adolescent masculinity as open, and in a state of flux, also
promises the possibility of transcendence – of operating outside of the constrictions of
normalised pubertal definitions and hegemonic masculine models. In Clark’s work the
desire for transcendence in innocence and compassion is a driving force, but it is a desire
that is constantly thwarted and destroyed so that its manifestation can only be found in
longing and the symbolic transcendence of self-immolation.

In Bully, the friendship between Marty and Bobby as emblematic of inter-male
adolescent friendships is defined by physical and psychological abuse. The relationship
between the boys enacts masculine hardness at an extreme level in that there is a lack of
mutual understanding of compassion or affection. Marty is constantly berated by Bobby
so that Marty’s own self-identity has come to absorb and expect Bobby’s bullying, and
Bobby’s use of violence is his only means of problem solving. While Bobby’s actions are
often extreme, and in some ways he represents a psycho-pathologised representation of
normative hard masculinity, his basic demeanour represents a normalized articulation of
violence as a defining aspect of youth masculinity. William S. Pollack states:

From a widespread societal perspective, a series of self-fulfilling myths have
developed: that ‘boys will be boys,’ meaning that surges of testosterone lead
immutably to dominance hierarchies and violent posturing, if not overt violence
(no matter what the societal context we as adults may create for them) and that
adolescent males have a natural, unswerving proclivity to the toxicity of
violence.²⁵⁶

This representation of identity reflects a hegemonic register of masculinity. Pollack
suggests that the socialization of boys, ‘[often represents] the core values of the dominant

²⁵⁶ William S. Pollack, “Male Adolescent Rites of Passage: Positive Visions of Multiple Developmental Pathways,”
Caucasian European culture’ emphasizes ‘extremes of self-containment, toughness, stoicism, and separation’. The concept of adolescent masculinity as being able to incorporate any aspect of familial connection and an acceptance of nurturing is socially denied, and consequently the performance of adolescent masculinity becomes ubiquitously hard and normatively violent, reflecting hegemonic values. In Bully, Clark’s representation of Bobby Kent is defined by this aspect of socialized normative masculinity, and Bobby’s actions play out this identity to extremes. For Bobby, this behaviour, pathological or not, produces his world view, one which is based on the desire for a physicalised form of power above all else. As such, in Clark’s film, the character Bobby aspires to a display of identity that is a metaphor for the outward symbolism of hegemonic masculinity, that is ‘that most validated and vaunted maleness – the successful, athletic, intelligent, good-looking achiever’ as expressed within Bobby’s own adolescent cultural milieu, while equally articulating the effects of this identification: ‘[Gendered] individual character, defined through an opposition with femininity and institutionalized in economy and state’. Bobby’s articulation of a violent masculine identity facilitates the maintenance of his perceived power within his own peer group to reflect a normalized conception of youth masculinity based on toughness. The continual articulation of this form of power relies upon the continual use of physical and psychological violence. John Archer notes the necessity of violence in supporting the articulation of power based on toughness or strength:

Even if it becomes recognized throughout a social group (hence taking on some aspects of formal status), this form of power nevertheless emerges from individual interactions, and small-scale alliances, rather than from established structures. Power derived in this way is inherently unstable, since it is based on the ability to keep it through violence or threat of violence.

257 Ibid. p.144.


259 Connell, Masculinities, p.185.

Bobby’s articulation of masculinity reflects a socialized representation of hypermasculinity to the extent that his expression of violence includes ‘sexual violence towards women’ and ‘violent behaviour towards other men’.\(^\text{261}\)

*Bully* is a film predicated on violence. It tells of the murder of Bobby Kent, a brutally executed event that was handled clumsily. In Clark’s work, a relationship between adolescent masculinity and violence operates of many levels. In his artist books of the 1990s, various forms of violence frame the conception of adolescent masculinity as a media-generated construction. In the collage works, Clark incorporates newspaper clippings that feature stories where adolescent males are the protagonists of violence and sexualized violence against their peers and their families. Yet within Clark’s analysis and observation of adolescent masculinity it becomes evident that the apparent and obvious connection between violence and adolescent masculinity is a representation that Clark seeks to expose as eminently stereotypical. In the same manner, representations of idealized adolescent masculinity in the form of celebrity teen males such as Matt Dillon and Jay Ferguson are equally biased. In Clark’s re-presentation of images from newspapers, fan magazines and television and by presenting these images as elements within systems that present conflicting representations of adolescent masculinity, Clark reveals the violence that operates as a function of the media’s representation of adolescent boys: that these images are inherently violating. His engagement with tropes of adolescent masculinity and violence facilitates the deconstruction of hegemonic and heteronormative masculine cultures, and to engage the possibility for transcendence.

While reflecting a normalized representation of adolescent masculinity as desirously violent, tough, and powerful within a peer situation, Clark’s film complicates these assumptive constructions of identity by challenging the heteronormative aspects of the main characters behaviour and offers a single and powerful point of redemption from the narrative of violence that consumes Bobby and Marty in Marty’s relationship with his

\(^{261}\) Ibid. p.322.
younger brother. The film therefore speaks to the possibility of transcendence through the expression of love.

The film opens with a close-up shot of Marty speaking into the telephone: 'I want you suck my big dick', 'I want you to lick my balls.' The lines are separated by the off-screen voice of Marty's mother who calls him for dinner. In this scene, Marty's character is shown performing a masculinity that trades on hegemonic values insofar as it enacts a power relationship which, in this instance, is based on sexualized oppression. Even though the viewer does not yet know who Marty is talking to, his activity trades on a sense of heterosexualised and hegemonic masculine identity; he is in the position of commanding an other for his own gain. However, as the narrative of the film reveals, Marty's 'phone sex' is a service he performs for homosexual men in exchange for money. We also suspect that Marty's services are brokered by Bobby, and therefore that Marty's involvement in homosexualised activity is not based upon a self-identification with non-heterosexual identity. Even with the retrospective knowledge or assumption that Marty is speaking to another man, in this scene his status as 'straight' remains intact. Marty's performed identity in this scene is as the dominating presence in the exchange. His heterosexualised identity and its attendant power remains operative even if the other party is also male because we are led to believe that a large part of Marty's appeal is his appearance and performance of adolescent straightness and his masculinised toughness. His ability to perform a verbal homoerotic scenario with the alibi of making money retains his normative masculine identity. Clark, however, creates in Marty a character that possesses a distinctive and heterodox emotional inner life.

Clark's representation of adolescent masculinity in Bully complicates assumptions about heterosexual male identity. In the phone sex scene Marty engages in inter-male sexualised dialogue. The narrative allows for the viewer to imagine a complex dialogue of power relations between Marty and his client. The complex articulations of masochism may allow for the actual control of the situation to be under the guidance of Marty's client, for whom Marty performs a particular role. Crucially, this scene also establishes the paradoxical relationship between sexualised adult identity, and the representation of
innocence that Clark continues to explore. The voice of Marty’s mother calling him for
dinner casts him again as a ‘child’, the ideal state whose purity is gradually subsumed by
physicalised, sexualised, male identity.

This scene represents one of the many problematised registers of the representation of
adolescent masculinity that Clark portrays in the film. Marty is stereotypically attractive
as a ‘boy next door’ type – broad shouldered and sturdily built. Bobby is more tightly
muscle but both boys are represented as highly athleticised. Marty’s demeanour and
character suggests a sense of innocence or naiveté. Like the ‘rural boy’ in Clark’s artist
book 1992 the character of Marty performs the attributes of hard masculinity but is
allowed a strong sense of vulnerability. On several occasions Marty expresses his inner
feelings of hurt and his desire for affection. His sensitivity is appreciated by his mother
whose affectionate nick-name for Marty is ‘loverbug’. Marty is gentle and ‘beautiful’ as a
wounded soul. As Adrian Martin notes:

The teens in Bully are not just glamorous, they are, through Clark’s lens, sublime
gods and goddesses. Their ‘trashy’ gestures (of walking, eating, fucking) slowly
come to resemble the postures and arrangements of classical painting. Their
beauty harshly contradicts the acts they perform, and renders more deeply
mysterious their motives. Lisa is a femme fatale not from some cheap film noir,
but from a Greek or Shakespearean tragedy. In an extraordinary moment, the
camera lingers on her naked body until she utters the ambiguous line, ‘It’s Bobby’
– which, in context, could mean either that Bobby is the big problem in
everyone’s life, or that he is the father of her child (and that, whichever scenario,
he should be eliminated). Marty, too, touches a larger-than-life realm: for all his
brutish thickness, he is a soulful, sacrificial lamb, eventually bullied by fate – and
by the law enforcement system – rather than by just one good-looking creep. This
is why the ultimate freeze-frame of the movie – Marty hugging his little brother in
an intense Pieta-like pose while a text spells out the court’s death sentence upon him – is so strong.\(^\text{262}\)

Marty’s portrayal as ‘soulful’ and his status as a ‘sacrificial lamb’ allow Clark to engage a representation of adolescent masculinity that is both wilful and innocent. Marty’s articulation of adolescent masculinity is one infused with pathos; sorrow is evoked by his inability to control his situation. Unlike Clark’s ‘suicide boy’ in the book 1992 and his evocation of martyrdom, Marty is a victim of circumstances beyond his control. He is violated from without by Bobby’s bullying tactics and constrained by his inability to retaliate. Marty’s vulnerability and emotional sensitivity cast him as a poignant figure. Clark’s challenges to normalised conceptions of adolescent masculinity are strongly articulated in Marty’s powerful tenderness.

In the characterisations of Marty and Bobby in Clark’s film, male adolescent identity is defined by contradiction. Bobby’s identity as outwardly tough and hypermasculine is complicated by his ambiguous sexuality: he appears to act as a broker for Marty’s phone sex ‘services’ to men in a gay bar; and shows gay sex videos to Ali and to Derek (boasting to Derek that the video of a young man with a penis-shaped dildo was picked up by Marty and Bobby at the gay bar, and that they would make money by selling the video). Marty and Bobby do not identify as anything other than heterosexual, and Bobby even exhibits verbalised homophobic behaviour towards Marty. This is despite their ‘engagement’ with homosexuality at a variety of levels. In a scene at a gay bar early in the film, Bobby pressures Marty to participate in a ‘Teen Amateur Night’ dance contest in order to make money. Marty’s appearance contrasts with the slim bodies of the other male dancers, which are presented as self-identified gay youth. Marty’s initial reluctance to participate and his apparent awkwardness on stage, his ‘regular’ clothing of baseball shirt and gray cotton under shorts in contrast to the other boys’ posing briefs, and significantly, his outward appearance of heterosexualised identity adds currency to his

value within the context of the gay bar.\textsuperscript{263} Even as Marty's dancing on stage earns the boys three-hundred dollars which they count together the next morning, the scenario offers Bobby an opportunity to verbally taunt Marty. Bobby suggests to Marty that he enjoyed dancing at the gay bar to which Marty replies 'Hell no dude I ain't queer like those guys', and Bobby counters with 'Bullshit, I think you like dick. Don't lie to me boy, I know you like dick.'

The sexual ambiguity demonstrated by the boys reflects recent research into adolescent sexuality. Ritch C. Savin-Williams and Lisa M. Diamond state that 'the majority of adolescent same-sex behaviour occurs among youth who currently consider themselves heterosexual',\textsuperscript{264} a result they suggest of 'cultural heterocentric assumptions and active sexual prejudice against sexual minorities'.\textsuperscript{265} However, male adolescence and sexual 'experimentation' are closely correlated, with research finding that over forty percent of men who had ever had same-sex contact experienced this during adolescence; and that men who eventually identify as non-heterosexual, typically do so after experiencing same-sex contact.\textsuperscript{266} The relationship between sexuality and the representation of adolescent masculinity is problematised in Clark's film. Clearly, the boys participate in the social space of homosexuality, without self-identifying as non-heterosexual, and without sexual ambiguity impacting 'adversely' on their outward identification as

\textsuperscript{263} Marty's 'amateur' appeal within the context of the gay bar dance contest can be understood in relation to Boyd McDonald's description of an encounter with an amateur stripper. 'At a New York discoteque recently, when the male whores who had been commissioned as strippers failed to show, members of the audience were pressed into service. I asked a young man I was talking to - handsome, stolid, blue collar, even oafish in appearance and manner - if he would strip. He said no. I said, 'You know how to take your clothes off don't you?' 'Yeah, but I don't know how to dance.' But that was his charm, that he looked to be the opposite to a dancer. He was simply a man I would enjoy watching undress. Had he done so, his act would have provided a more authentic exhibitionist-voyeur experience than did the men who stripped in time to the music, which set up an artistic barrier between the viewer and the object.' Boyd McDonald, "Art from the Post-Heterosexual Age," \textit{Art & Text}, no. 20 (1986), p.46.


\textsuperscript{265} Ibid. p.214. Savin-Williams and Diamond note that 'investigations into the diverse meanings that adolescents attach to their same-sex behaviour and the degree of emotional and physical satisfaction they experience in these interactions might predict future identification. However, such investigations have not been undertaken because it is sufficiently difficult for researchers to find heterosexually identified adolescents who report same-sex behaviour, much less answer detailed questions about why they engage in such behaviour and how satisfying these experiences are.' Savin-Williams and Diamond, "Sex." p.215.

\textsuperscript{266} Savin-Williams and Diamond, "Sex." pp.214, 216. For females, same-sex contact often occurs in young adulthood rather than adolescence, and that females are more likely than males to identify as non-heterosexual before experiencing same-sex contact. Savin-Williams and Diamond, "Sex." pp.214, 216.
heterosexually masculine, part from the ineffectual slur that Lisa reports to Marty: ‘Derek thinks you guys are queer for each other.’ The question of the possibility of same-sex activity between the boys is left open, apart from the suggestion of rape in one brutal scene. At Bobby’s house, Marty and his girlfriend are having sex. Bobby enters the room from his bathroom, takes a wrestling belt and violently whips Lisa so that she moves away from Marty. Bobby then hits Marty causing him to face away from Bobby, and then says ‘I’m next.’ The aggressive nature of Bobby’s sexuality, and his ability to utilise pan-sexuality in this manner is also evident in a scene where after the suggestion of a non-threatening sexual encounter with Ali, Bobby forces her to watch gay porn as he rapes her. Bobby’s articulation of masculine identity enacts the cultural hegemony of masculinity in his deployment of aggression and power over others as defining aspects of his own identity. The possibility of challenging heteronormative masculinity through the ambiguity of Bobby’s sexuality is dampened, since Bobby’s engagement with non-heterosexualised identity is used to coerce or mock his peers, and in this way, his identity accords with normalised masculinity in its exercise of dominating power. Even if the viewer assumes that Bobby has raped Marty, this action accords with hegemonic masculine values: as David M. Halperin states ‘the underlying notion is that a conventionally masculine man who sexually penetrates a subordinate partner of either sex is acting out a conventional male role’. If Bobby’s character can be understood as representative of hegemonic masculinity taken to its extreme, as articulated through the identity of adolescent male self identity, then in Clark’s film, there is no possibility of redemption or transcendence for the performance of identity that Bobby typifies. Aside from the violent end to Bobby’s life which within the narrative of the film is clearly a result of his actions as externalising extreme masculinity, there is also the suggestion of self-loathing as he is shown violently spitting at his own naked, muscular reflection in his bathroom mirror before he assaults Lisa and Marty.

Marty, as the victim of Bobby’s bullying, exhibits an articulation of adolescent masculinity that challenges normalised models of hard masculinity on several levels. The representation of hegemonic values in Marty’s character is problematic. While he is

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outwardly ‘strong’ and physically heterosexualised, attractive and ‘desirable’, he is also the focus of victimisation, he displays an ambiguous sexuality, and often reveals a complex emotional inner life, in stark contrast to the character of Bobby. In two scenes Marty is shown confiding experiences of emotional pain to his girlfriend Lisa, and allowing the recall of that pain to be manifest through his crying. In the first instance Marty describes how he was pressured by Bobby into smoking marijuana for the first time, how the experience frightened him and he ran home and hid under his bed covers. Retelling how Bobby chased after him and tore the covers from his bed, Marty confesses to Lisa: ‘I fucking pissed all over myself.’ Later in the film Marty breaks down again as he explains to Lisa how Bobby’s bullying has characterised their relationship since they ‘were kids’. Marty’s vulnerability and his ability to express his emotional thoughts is at odds with normalised representations of the toughness that characterises constructions of adolescent masculinity as delinquent and aggressive. Marty’s identity in the film challenges the typical expressions of ‘self-containment, toughness, stoicism, and separation’ that Pollack refers to as defining the ‘boy code’, the socialisation that:

[leads] to an early loss of inner connection from the vulnerable sides of the self, a psychic inner schism between vulnerable emotions of care and empathy which are forced underground or behind a ‘mask’, and the only open common pathway of affect and the expression of affect: anger and anger-tinged expressions through action-based activities.\(^{269}\)

While Marty exhibits aspects of socialised adolescent masculinity – he is actively heterosexual and athletic – he also represents a more complex and challenging conception of it. His sexuality incorporates ambiguity, he is actively victimised, and he expresses emotional vulnerability. However, Marty is denied a strong connection with adult role models that would facilitate his own emotional growth. With a sociological context this connection, Pollack states: ‘[leads] adolescent boys to feel greater self-confidence, a clear sense of self, diminished fear, greater overall happiness, optimism and personal success’,

\(^{268}\) Pollack, “Male Adolescent Rites of Passage: Positive Visions of Multiple Developmental Pathways.” p.144.  
\(^{269}\) Ibid. pp.142-143.
where emotional ties and ongoing connection can occur within a ‘shame-free zone’..

Marty’s parents are conspicuously absent from any involvement in his emotional life. When Marty raises the issue of his discomfort, rather than responding with compassion and understanding, his father replies: ‘Marty, we can’t just quit our jobs and leave because our son’s having problems.’ Even while this statement acknowledges that Marty is experiencing some kind of difficulty (‘problems’) no attempt is made by Marty’s father to engage with these ‘problems’ or to seek a way to solve them. Marty’s father exhibits the characteristics that Clark has articulated in relation to his own father: ‘My biggest fear is turning out to be just like you. Remote, isolated, superficial, removed, unable to relate to my son.’ Marty is – as indicative of other adolescent males in Clark’s work – a ‘teen’ who ‘just wanted love’.

Marty’s complex masculinity that does not conform to ideals of hegemony, manifest as a lack of ‘masculine’ activity, is noted by Bobby’s father. In a conversation with Bobby, his father describes Marty’s pastime of surfing as ‘a game that children play at the beach’ and that Marty ‘is living a life of complete aimlessness’. His father’s goal for Bobby is his own version of hegemonic masculine power: the self-sufficiency and material security afforded by business ownership. In pressuring Bobby to aim towards the management of a stereo store, Bobby’s father states: ‘Bobby it’s the best future you can have in this country: to be your own master.’ Bobby’s father’s goal for him exemplifies the hegemonic masculine ideal of independence; and conforms to socialised models of masculinity based upon the types of gender roles put forward by Talcott Parsons in the early 1940s, reflecting expectations that boys and girls would continue to articulate the established societal hierarchies between men and women that support masculine hegemonic values. A boy’s understanding of the ‘masculine functions’ of the male role as

270 Ibid. p.146. Pollack’s study revealed that, within the ‘shame-free zone’ created as a part of his Listening to Boys’ Voices Project, boys ‘began to report the markers of a new, interdependent model of adolescent male development: new rites of passage that deconstructed the boy code, resisted societal pressures of pathological independence (false, so-called ‘self-sufficiency’), and placed connection and the expression of vulnerable feelings at its centre. Central components consisted of both same-gender and cross-gender friendships, empathy and love as an antidote to violence (boy fashion), and adult/parent mentorship and bonding/connection.’ Pollack, "Male Adolescent Rites of Passage: Positive Visions of Multiple Developmental Pathways.” p.147.


272 Headline on newspaper clipping as a part of a photo-collage. Ibid. Unpag.
performed by his father resulted in a boy's 'goodness' exemplified, for Parsons, by the rural model of masculine farm-working father and son.\textsuperscript{273} In \textit{Bully}, the fathers of both adolescent boys are ineffectual in different ways. Marty's father does not recognise or act upon Marty's need for connection and compassion and Bobby's father re-enforces the hegemonic masculine values that define Bobby's own extreme version of masculine identity. For both adolescent males, there is little opportunity for the transcendence of the pressure to conform to socialised and normalised models of masculinity in relation to the behaviour of their fathers. The possibility of transcendence as deployed by Clark in \textit{Bully} operates with regard to the relationships – distinctions and connections – between the adolescent male characters and the presence of their younger siblings and pre-pubertal manifestations of masculinity. It is within the symbolic arena of the presence of innocence that the figuring of transcendence is played out as a positive force. The move towards transcendence that is limited and arrested in the characterisation of Bobby is mobilised in the characterisation of Marty. His expressed sensitivities and vulnerabilities challenge the hyper-masculinity typified by Bobby, and by both boys' fathers in the film. It is present in Marty's characterisation as a possibility that is however ultimately thwarted.

In addition to Marty's and Bobby's fathers, the film \textit{Bully} includes another father-figure. As a part of the film's narrative, Marty's friends enlist the assistance of the character 'the hitman,' a teenager who helps them plan the logistics of Bobby's murder. 'The hitman' and his younger brother are often shown in the company of a 'gang' of younger boys. In a scene where Marty and his friends arrive at the hitman's house, beeping their car horn, the hitman's father, who is practising swings with a baseball bat in the front yard, begins to approach the car when the hitman emerges from the house and signals to his father that the visitors are his. What is significant about the role of this 'third' father is that the character is played by Larry Clark. While Clark's presence in the film as the hitman's father is equally peripheral to the lives of his sons, his characterisation in the film excludes any scene of direct confrontation between father and son as is the case with Marty and Bobby and their fathers. The character of the hitman is played by Leo

\textsuperscript{273} Parsons, "Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States." p.104.
Fitzpatrick, an actor who has worked with Clark since Clark’s 1995 film *Kids*. The significance of this fictional father-son relationship, as it appears in the film *Bully*, is in how it reflects upon the mentor relationship between Clark and Fitzpatrick in their professional and personal lives. Fitzpatrick has stated of Clark’s portrayal of his character’s father in *Bully* that: ‘I don’t think there’s anything as right as that’, adding ‘although I had two older brothers [I] didn’t really have a father figure at all. When I was sixteen – when I needed it probably the most – is when Larry stepped in and we did [the film] *Kids*.’²⁷⁴ Clark’s appearance as the hitman’s father thus doubles his actual father-figure mentoring of Fitzpatrick and could be understood as an attempt to resolve, through the fictional narrative of his film, the trauma of the absence of father-son connection in Clark’s own adolescence. However, the psychological motives for Clark’s self-portrayal in this role must remain merely suppositional.

The concept of innocence as an animating trope of transcendence within Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity is a major theme of his interpretation of the characters and narrative of *Bully*. The presence of pre-pubertal boys, in particular Marty’s young brother as observers, serves to locate the realm of innocence in relation to the construction of masculinity outside of the physicalised and sexualised articulation of adolescent masculinity that defines the actions of Marty, Bobby and their male peers. Pre-pubertal boyhood in *Bully* is presented by Clark as a state of purity, a force in itself that towards the end of the film becomes increasingly resonant as the younger boys bear witness to the consequences of the actions of the adolescent boys whose identities are set in contrast to theirs. Marty, as the physicalised and sexualised exemplar of adolescent masculinity encounters, and is observed by, his younger brother and other young boys in situations that can be understood as allegorical or symbolic. In a scene mid-way through the film, Marty is shown returning to the beach after surfing. The camera pans up from the shadow of Marty’s surfboard on the sand to take in the figure of a pre-pubertal boy who comments positively on Marty’s surfing skills. Marty says that he used to be better when he was competing, and the boy asks ‘Why’d you stop?’ Marty replies, ‘I don’t

²⁷⁴ Leo Fitzpatrick, dialogue transcribed from an interview included as an extra on the Australian DVD release of *Bully*. 
know’, then says to the boy ‘You be good little man.’ The boy watches as Marty jogs to meet Lisa who is waiting at the top of the beach, and where Marty confesses the extent of Bobby’s bullying to Lisa, breaking down as he says ‘It’s been like this since we were little fucking kids.’

The boy on the beach who admires the physical skill of Marty’s articulation of masculinity and who wonders about the cessation of the development of these skills (‘Why’d you stop?’), is met with an attitude of confusion. Marty’s reply of ‘I don’t know’ offers no sense of concrete or conscious identity development. In this instance Marty’s state of physical adolescence, which is seen as desirable or admirable by the boy, also involves a degree of disappointment and a lack of action. Marty’s admission of ‘I don’t know’ (why I stopped surfing when I was so good at it) is confounding for the boy, and it seems, for Marty himself. His decision to cease this pursuit is not presented as deliberate rather Marty himself is unsure as to why this particular aspect of his ‘directed’ self has disappeared. The ‘authority’ that physicalised adolescent masculinity holds for the pre-pubertal boy is thus dismantled and instead replaced with the construction of adolescent masculinity as defined by confusion, or more precisely, with a sense of ‘un-anchored’ identity.

If Bully, in its entirety, is an allegory of the victimisation of adolescent identity by the vagaries and lack of sympathy by society, then Marty’s exemplification of adolescent masculinity as lacking direction could be interpreted as the result of a powerful absence of adult guidance and nurturing. The paradoxical nature of adolescent masculinity itself as transitional, developmental, appealing to the contradictory needs of childhood and adulthood is, as Momin has noted, essentially defined by flux. This very ‘looseness’ of adolescent masculinity, often represented by Clark as a fractured sense of being serves to reveal the conflicting nature of adolescent masculinity as Clark represents it, invoking its paradoxical nature. Clark’s emphasis on the normative relationship between adolescent masculinity and violence allows him to reveal its artifice, and to articulate the possibilities for transcendence that might begin to operate within the construction of

275 See Momin, Will Boys Be Boys?: Questioning Adolescent Masculinity in Contemporary Art.
adolescent masculinity. The hegemonic culture of masculinity is defined by hard masculine attributes, within which adolescent masculinity must operate in terms of heterosexualised physicality and emotional constriction. Within this powerful socialising matrix, transcendence as articulated by expressions of vulnerability, creativity, sensitivity and emotional openness is denied. This closing down of the possibilities of transcendent adolescent masculinity results in the escalation of frustration, confusion and anger which leads to expressions of violence directed outwardly and inwardly, as expressed by the narrative of Bully. The culture of hegemonic adolescent masculinity creates a self-sustaining circuit where male adolescence is constantly defined by the fiction of anger and violence and emotional constriction, where alternative expressions of adolescent masculinity are continually excluded and made pejorative. The barricading of any outlet for non-hegemonic expressions of adolescent masculinity for example through the absence of nurturing, establishes an unbalanced sense of male adolescent identity where confusion and anger are inevitably expressed in the terms that socially condition the adolescent male as delinquent and destructive. In Clark’s work these constructed representations of adolescent masculinity are manifest in his complex portrayals of bullying, sexualised violence and suicide.

Marty’s admonition to the boy on the beach takes on the power of a plea. ‘You be good little man’, is the desire for a promise of the boy’s continuation of innocence, since even for Marty’s lack of clarity or ‘direction’, he knows that the state of physicalised adolescence that the boy admires is defined by confusion. To ‘be good’ implies the courage and determination to seek out an articulation of adolescent masculinity that defies the power of hegemonic masculine culture, and relies upon the presence of nurturing forces, in which Marty’s experience of adolescence are denied. The prepubertal boy on the beach, like other young boys in the film, particularly Marty’s brother, operates as a counterpoint to Marty’s experience of adolescent masculinity, and symbolically, as a counterpoint to the representation of physicalised adolescent masculinity itself. The boy is an observer of the possibility of his ‘future self’, and in symbolising a purer state, acts as a complex symbol of transcendence. The brief appearance of the boy on the beach suggests a metaphoric divine presence – like that of
an angel. The boy’s presence is fleeting and his exchange with Marty gentle. Even as Marty asks the boy where he is from, and he replies ‘Michigan’, he is established as a temporary visitor from another place. His presence in the narrative structure of the film recalls the ghostly image of the smiling boy in Clark’s artist book *Larry Clark*, whose visage appears and disappears as a superimposed image over television video stills.

In the case of the artist book images we are to assume from the context that the ‘ghost’ boy is a murder victim of one of the adolescent males who feature in the television broadcasts. The ‘ghost’ boy symbolises innocence in an extreme manner. He will be eternally pure because his life has been taken before he had entered adolescence. The boy on the beach occupies a similar space of ‘purity’. (See Figure 11. Untitled image (‘ghost’ image) from Larry Clark’s artist book *Larry Clark*, 1999. Unpag. Image 7 1/8 x 5 1/8 inches, 18.1 x 13 cm, page 11 1/4 x 9 3/8 inches, 28.57 x 23.8 cm; and Figure 12. The character Marty hugging his little brother, still image from Larry Clark’s 2001 film *Bully*.)

The representation of Marty’s younger brother in *Bully* signifies a powerful symbol of purity and the possibility for transcendence. Like the boy on the beach, Marty’s brother is not given a character name.276 Even though we know that he is Marty’s brother, his ‘anonymity’ affords a degree of symbolic openness in that his lack of naming can be understood as signifying his role as an ‘every boy’ or a being who is not anchored to the narrative by a named role that connects him to the ‘reality’ of the drama. This sense of disparateness is emphasised by his role as observer. Early in the film following the scene where Bobby assaults Lisa and Marty, Marty is having lunch with his family, and he asks his father in exasperation if the family can move house. His father replies ‘Marty, we can’t just quit our jobs and leave because our son’s having problems’ and Marty gets up and leaves the table shouting ‘Fuck it.’ During the scene, Marty’s brother, who is seated beside him, silently watches the exchange and Marty’s response to his father’s lack of emotional engagement. Towards the end of the film, in the scene where Marty is arrested, police approach the house and Marty’s brother opens the front door and watches as they

276 The film credits describe the actors Marc Pearson as ‘Marty’s Brother’ and Scott McHugh as ‘Boy at Beach.’
take Marty from his bedroom and out into the police car. As the police enter the house brandishing their weapons, they push Marty’s younger brother ahead of them, holding him by the back of the neck, before pushing him aside as they hold their weapons raised. The police lead Marty, handcuffed, from the house and into the police car. Marty’s brother emerges from the front door of the house and is shown standing silently watching as the car drives away, wearing a t-shirt with the logo ‘DARE TO RESIST DRUGS AND VIOLENCE’. The admonition of the text on Marty’s brother’s t-shirt is a challenge to the normative definition of adolescent masculinity: it suggests an alternative to the conditioning behaviour that adolescent masculinity stereotypically signifies. Marty’s brother, in the role of observer, signifies the transcendent possibilities of articulating a youthful masculinity and pre-adolescence that promises an enactment of adolescent masculinity that does not engage with these destructive forces. Like the boy on the beach, Marty’s brother’s presence in the film serves to operate outside of the centralised circuit of narrative behaviour that conditions the actions of the adolescent males in the film.\(^{277}\) In signifying the possibility of an externalised ‘positive’ force, Marty’s brother also acts as a kind of connection point for Marty that signifies the possibility of a form of salvation or rescue. The only scene in which Marty and his brother speak to each other exemplifies this. Towards the end of the film, before Marty is arrested, Marty and his brother are shown alone in the kitchen. Marty asks his brother ‘What did you do with your earring?’ and his brother explains that it fell out. Marty then takes his own ear-stud from his ear and carefully places it in the ear of his brother. Marty then hugs his brother and says ‘I love you buddy’, and his brother replies ‘Yeah I love you too.’ After Marty releases his brother from the hug, Marty’s brother is shown looking at Marty, and behind him on the kitchen wall are two rows of kitchen knives affixed to magnetic strips. In the context of the film, this image may be understood as signifying the danger of violence that is attendant to normative conceptions of adolescent masculinity, and while the knives hover on the wall behind Marty’s brother, they remain at a distance. Marty’s confession of love for his brother is a powerful signifier of his desire for the ideal pre-pubertal state that he has lost.

\(^{277}\) While it must be noted that the adolescent females in the film implicated in the drama also exhibit signs of emotional collapse, the protagonists of the drama are male: specifically Marty and Bobby.
On other occasions in the film where there is declaration of affection involving Marty, the circumstances are complicated by compromise or manipulation. After verbally and physically abusing Marty, Bobby then apologises with the words ‘You’re my best friend’ and on the two occasions where Lisa tells Marty she loves him, he remains silent or quietly replies ‘Shut up.’ Marty’s admission of love for his brother is notable for the fact that it is initiated by Marty himself, and reciprocated by his younger brother. As the film reaches its climax that leads to the court scene the presence of Marty’s brother grows stronger as a parallel movement towards the possibility of transcendence through innocence. In the courtroom, as the camera dwells on the faces of family and community members who observe Marty and his peers in the dock, the final image is of the faces of a pre-pubertal blond boy and Marty’s brother. The final sequence shows a short clip which then freeze-frames in which each of the adolescent protagonists who have been involved with Bobby’s and closes with a still image replay of Marty hugging his brother. This scene freeze-frames as the caption appears: ‘MARTY PUCCIO, DEATH BY WAY OF ELECTRIC CHAIR.’278 The image of Marty hugging his brother as the final image in the film is a poignant dramatic device precisely because it signifies the distinction between the symbolic innocence of Marty’s brother, and his own destruction as a symbolic adolescent male. Marty’s physical holding of his brother symbolises the desire for transcendence.

In *Bully*, Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity is collapsed and imploded. Reflecting the conceptual operation of Clark’s collage and artist book works, adolescent masculinity is represented as complicated, contradictory, paradoxically aggressive and passive. The possibility of transcendence within the confines of normative adolescent masculinity is demonstrated by its limits. Transcendence is held back or arrested by the lack of nurture, by normalised social identity, and by victimisation. At the same time Clark’s representation of its possibility within these constricting frameworks mobilises its power as a recognisably redemptive force. In *Bully*, transcendence animates and defines

278 At the end of the film credits it is noted that several appeals resulted in reduced sentences for the individuals on whom Clark’s characters are based, including Marty Puccio’s death sentence that was reduced to life in prison.
adolescent masculinity as a promise, but it is either left unfulfilled, or it is attained by the extreme means of self-sacrifice. The poignancy of this state has a powerful impact because of its intense evocation of loss, but this is a sense of loss tempered by that which remains activated by the possibility of alternative manifestations of adolescent masculinity, that which allows a conceptual and discursive space for the symbolic power of transcendence.
Chapter Five: Transcending space and identity: Gus Van Sant’s film Elephant

This chapter examines the 2003 film Elephant by American director Gus Van Sant as a text within which the representation of adolescent masculinity engages with concepts of transcendence on several levels. Van Sant’s film’s narrative takes as its cue the subject of high school shootings perpetrated by adolescent males. In particular, Elephant is based upon the 20 April 1999 shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, an event that received wide coverage and demonstrably demonised the actions of the perpetrators Eric Harris aged eighteen, and Dylan Klebold aged seventeen who killed thirteen and wounded twenty-one people before killing themselves. Like Larry Clark’s filmic account of the murder of Bobby Kent in the film Bully, Van Sant treats his subject matter in an interpretative manner. Van Sant’s film is an artistic response to the event, and an examination of adolescent masculinity that serves to challenge normative definitions of male adolescent identity. Van Sant employs particular stylistic devices which enhance his representation of adolescent masculinity, and which engage with notions of transcendence in various forms. Thus, as with the analysis of Clark’s film Bully, this chapter analyses Elephant as an artistic work which articulates complex levels of narrative, visual and stylistic form. It is through Van Sant’s artistic representation of, and departure from, the facts of the actual event that an analysis of adolescent masculinity and transcendence is made. To this end, various art historical and theoretical frameworks are used to analyse Van Sant’s film. Michel Foucault’s theories regarding the constricting nature of the institution – in this case the environment of the high school – and his more tentative analysis of the concept of heterotopic spatiality are relevant to Van Sant’s conceptual approach and to the analysis of registers of adolescent masculinity represented in his film.

The concept of sacrifice is also relevant as a defining trope of the attainment of a transcendence state. As has been argued with reference to Clark’s representation of adolescent males engaged in suicide scenarios, the erasure of identity implied by Clark articulates a sense of transcendence by surpassing the physical, social and emotional barriers of a constrictive male adolescent identity conditioned by
hegemonic masculine culture. In the case of Clark's work in this context, the representation of suicide offers an extreme solution that is transcendent because it involves the self-immolation of the subject. In relation to the construction of adolescent masculinity, this performance of self-immolation evokes concepts of Christian spiritual martyrdom, and the 'ecstatic' transcendent state this allows. In Van Sant's interpretation of the Columbine High School event, the act of self-immolation is turned outwards and becomes an expression of sacrifice. Van Sant's narrative departs from the 'true' telling of the event because the two male protagonists in Van Sant's film do not kill themselves. In *Elephant*, the protagonists, simply called Alex and Eric, encounter one another following their attack on their peers and on teachers at the school. Alex shoots Eric, and the final scene shows Alex confronting two students Nathan and Carrie. In Van Sant's film, this final standoff is also a symbolic one. It represents the alternative adolescent masculinity represented by the character Eric in stark contrast with the normative representation of masculinity symbolised by the character of Nathan. Throughout the course of the film, Van Sant makes clear this distinction. Nathan's character represents a normalised ideal of adolescent masculinity that is athletically and heterosexually physicalised. Eric's character articulates an alternative to this. He is portrayed as sensitive and creative, and his sexuality is suggested as being complex and less defined by conventional heterosexual structures. The operation of sacrifice – as an outward action – can be understood, within the context of *Elephant*, as articulating the desire for transcendence over the constricting nature of the hegemonic culture of adolescent masculinity.

In her discussion of the media-generated representation of the Columbine High School shootings, Mia Consalvo suggests that the identity group defined by the perpetrators can be categorised as 'subordinant' in relation to conservative or hegemonic masculinity, occupying the same register as homosexuality, which as Connell notes 'is the repository of whatever is expelled from hegemonic masculinity'. 279 Consalvo suggests that this 'subordinate category' can 'include "outcast" groups of boys in high school, who are harassed by more popular groups, and who are also, importantly, less respected (or not respected) by teachers and school

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administrators as well'. This sense of difference from the dominant culture of heterosexualised and physicalised masculinity is a major theme in Van Sant’s film, and as such, acts as a challenge to the normative values of hegemonic masculinity.

The artistic style of Van Sant’s film is intrinsic to his analysis of adolescent masculinity. Like Clark’s use of fragmentary visual and narrative structures in his collage and artist book works, his engagement with media generated imagery of adolescent males to articulate a sense of adolescent male identity in crisis, and the fast paced montage of 

_Bully_; Van Sant utilises visual style to articulate a conceptual examination of adolescent masculinity. In _Elephant_, Van Sant makes use of long tracking shots and the repetition of narrative events from different characters’ points of view in order to establish a sense of complex open movement which is analogous to his representation of adolescent masculinity. Like the inner lives of the main characters in the film which are complex, sensitive, and creative, the style of _Elephant_ is languid and poetic, atmospheric and spiritual, and as such, can be understood as bearing a symbolic relationship with the representation of adolescent masculinity it presents. 

Through the various registers of characterisation and narrative, the stylistic device of fluidity, and the engagement with theoretical motifs of spatiality and sacrifice, _Elephant_ reveals the possibilities for transcendence in relation to adolescent masculinity. Where Clark engages with concepts of innocence and purity in relation to physicalised adolescent masculinity, and reveals the tensions that operate within this framework as barriers to the possibility of transcendence, Van Sant offers concepts of sensitivity and alternative adolescent masculinity that are at odds with the normalised culture of hegemonic masculinity in order to highlight the possibility of transcendence within constructions of adolescent masculinity.

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281 The style of Elephant can be contextualized by two films which bracket it. Van Sant’s 2002 film _Gerry_, which precedes _Elephant_ in his directorial chronology, is composed of long filmic takes and follows the physical and emotional movement of two young men through a stark landscape. Van Sant’s 2005 film _Last Days_, which followed the production of _Elephant_, is composed of long filmic takes, often in ‘real time,’ and like _Elephant_, presents singular narrative events retold from the perspective of different characters. Each of the films deals with the inner life of young men, and each film ends with a highly symbolic death. Each film was acted in an intuitive and ‘naturalistic’ manner, without scripted dialogue.
Van Sant’s film takes its title from the 1988 film *Elephant*, a drama about snipers in Northern Ireland directed by Alan Clarke. Simon Hattenstone states that:

Clarke called his film *Elephant* because he saw Northern Ireland as the elephant in the living room: the taboo staring us in the face that we dare not acknowledge. Van Sant says that meaning is also applicable to his own film, but that what he had in mind when making it was the old parable about the five blind men who touch different parts of the elephant. ‘One thinks it’s a rope because he has the tail, one thinks it’s a tree because he can feel the legs, one thinks it’s a wall because he can feel the side of it, and nobody actually has the big picture. You can’t really get to the answer, because there isn’t one.’

In American historical slang, to ‘see the elephant’ meant to see combat for the first time. The allegory of the elephant, for Van Sant, reveals the complexity of the situation on which his film is based. The actions of the adolescent male perpetrators in relation to their own social and physical environment are complex and multilayered, and the reduction of their actions to stereotypical male adolescent behaviour, and consequently the demonisation of adolescent masculinity as a consequence, are challenged by Van Sant’s representation of adolescent masculinity. As Mia Consalvo describes the event that inspired Van Sant’s film:

On April 20, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris entered their high school in Littleton, Colorado, and went on a shooting spree. At the end of the day, one teacher and fourteen students were dead, including the two shooters who killed themselves before authorities could apprehend them. Police investigators found many unexploded bombs throughout the school, and also learned that the pair had been planning the attack for at least a year, to coincide with the

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283 This usage was common in ‘Old West’ slang. Email to the author from artist and researcher Antony Hamilton, 2005.
anniversary of Hitler's birthday. It was the deadliest school shooting ever to have occurred in the US, and it received extensive media coverage.\textsuperscript{284} In her analysis of the media reaction to the Columbine shootings, Consalvo argues how the media constructed the identities of Harris and Klebold, which ‘emphasised certain factors and ignored others, and so functioned to let systems such as hegemonic masculinity and school culture mostly off the hook’.\textsuperscript{285} This media-generated construction of adolescent masculinity Consalvo states, ‘set the tone for singling out and harassing “different” kids across the US who may have looked or acted in ways suddenly deemed “dangerous”’.\textsuperscript{286} Thus adolescent males become exemplars of the stereotypical construction of adolescent males as ‘outsiders’ and ‘delinquents’, reiterating socialised fears of adolescent boys who don’t conform to normative masculine models, and re-emphasising the connection between antisocial behaviour and adolescent masculinity. In representing a construction of adolescent masculinity, Harris and Klebold occupy a paradoxical state: their identities operate in terms of ‘subordinate’ masculinity in relation to the dominant culture of hegemonic masculinity, but they also enact the oppressive violence associated with extreme manifestations of hard and muscular masculinity. Anne Campbell and Steven Muncer note: ‘Violence and the male sex are virtually synonymous – the two are interwoven seamlessly in our minds as part of the natural order of things.’\textsuperscript{287} The event of the Columbine shootings exemplifies particular and dominant social constructions of adolescent masculinity. As the basis for interpretation in Van Sant’s film Elephant, this symbolism remains identifiable. However Van Sant’s interpretation departs from the original event through its fictional narrative and formal construction in order to complicate accepted symbolic readings of the subject matter. In Van Sant’s film, Eric and Alex’s articulation of violence can be understood as the manifestation of the

\textsuperscript{284} Consalvo, "The Monsters Next Door: Media Constructions of Boys and Masculinity." 27. Gerald Peary notes that Van Sant had initially wanted to make a television documentary style drama about the Columbine shootings which evolved into a feature film, the style influenced by Van Sant’s previous film Gerry. There are general references to the original event such as the failure of the initial bombs to explode, and the library and cafeteria locations of some of the shootings, and specific references such as when the character Alex drinks from a cup in the cafeteria following the shootings, a scene taken from the surveillance film of the actual event. Peary, Gerald Peary Interviews Gus Van Sant (cited 2005)).

\textsuperscript{285} Consalvo, "The Monsters Next Door: Media Constructions of Boys and Masculinity." p.28.

\textsuperscript{286} Ibid. p.28.

desire to escape the oppression of normative masculine models, and to seek
transcendence through the destruction of the symbolic framework that fosters this
model, which necessitates the sacrifice of their peers. Beyond an analysis and
interpretation of the Columbine event in itself, Van Sant’s film becomes a framework
within which to analyse issues of the representation of adolescent masculinity of and
in it.

The narrative of Van Sant’s film largely takes place within the ordered institutional
space of the high school however he continually subverts the authority of the
oppressive nature of this environment through the use of the re-telling of encounters
and events from different and multiple points of view. This serves to disrupt the
ordered flow that is the condition of the institutional environment, and also acts as a
metaphor for the contradictory and complex nature of adolescent masculinity as it is
represented in his film. Michel Foucault’s theorisation of the spatiality of the
institution, and alternatives to this spatiality articulated in his conception of
‘heterotopic spatiality’ are relevant to Van Sant’s conceptual construction of space
and its symbolism, in relation to adolescent masculinity, and to the possibility of
transcendence, in his film. Foucault notes that the institution of the school enables the
methodology of discipline. Discipline, he states, ‘proceeds from the distribution of
individuals in space’ and ‘sometimes requires enclosure, the specification of a place
heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself’. 288 John Caputo and Mark Yount
note the implicit aspect of normalisation that the institution evokes:

Normalisation keeps watch over the excessive and the exceptional, delimiting
the outcasts who threaten the order of normalcy. There are institutions to
contain these outcasts and – if possible, this is at least the idea – to redirect
their course to the latitudes of the normal. Institutions will form and well-
adjust the young into supple, happy subjects of normalisation. Institutions will
reform the abnormal who stray beyond the limits. 289

1977), p.141. Examples of such institutions cited by Foucault include secondary schools, monasteries, military
barracks and factories.

289 John Caputo and Mark Yount, "Institutions, Normalisation and Power," in Foucault and the Critique of
Institutions, ed. John Caputo and Mark Yount (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University
The operation of discipline serves to normalise behaviour and identity, and the enforcing of discipline is a characteristic of the institution such as the secondary school. This methodology serves the production of what Foucault terms ‘docile’ bodies:

Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand it turns it into an ‘aptitude,’ a ‘capacity,’ which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labour, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination.\footnote{290}

Discipline, Foucault states ‘organises an analytical space’ and does not allow bodies to exist in a fixed position, rather it ‘distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations’.\footnote{291} To effectively motivate disciplinary space, Foucault states that “[one] must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, and their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation”.\footnote{292}

In *Elephant* Van Sant articulates a spatial dynamic that operates both within and outside of the controlling aspects of the normalising space of the secondary school, resulting in a tension that ruptures the homogeneity of this space. In his film, the

\footnote{290} Foucault continues: ‘The “invention” of this new political anatomy must not be seen as a sudden discovery. It is rather a multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate one another, support one another, distinguish themselves from one another according to their domain of application, converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method. They were at work in secondary education at a very early date, later in primary schools; they slowly invested the space of the hospital; and, in a few decades, they restructured the military organization.’ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. p.138.

\footnote{291} Ibid. pp.143, 146.

\footnote{292} Ibid. p.143.
students traverse a series of corridors that control their movements within the school. One of the films unique formal and conceptual characteristics is the way in which the camera follows individual students for lengthy durations as they move through the school corridors. The school is presented in its recognisable normalising role with reference to the adolescent masculinity of its characters, they move through the designated spaces of the school environment in an orderly manner, and their productivity is structured. One classroom scene shows a discussion group in measured discussion, and the character Elias uses the school’s darkroom in a productive manner to develop the photographs he has taken of other adolescents. However, this sense of order is constantly challenged by Van Sant as subterfuge within this system, and as external to it. Van Sant multiplies and overlays the movement of the characters in the school through the device of re-telling the same event from different points of view, complicating the linear and ordered movement required of the subjects of the normalising institution, and allowing an increasing sense of individuality to his characters by acknowledging the multidimensional perception of ‘singular’ events. Within the ordered production of identity that the secondary school encourages, Van Sant presents heterodox adolescent masculine constructions. Elias’s activity as a photographic artist is at odds with the athletic ideal of adolescent masculinity represented by the character Nathan. The creative activity of making photographs also evokes the creative and sensitive pursuits of Alex, as he is shown practising a piano piece by Beethoven and his bedroom is decorated with his own art works. In the classroom scenes, one group of students is lead in a discussion about the construction of non-heterosexual identity, which challenges the institution’s role as a normalising force. It is also outside of the physical space of the school that Alex and Eric draw up their plan of attack. As Patrice Blouin suggests ‘the murderers’ room is a topographic aberration emancipated from the codes of universal circulation’ whereby ‘everything that escapes the laws of the general dynamic must necessarily become destructive and self-destruct’.293 The motivation for operating outside of this system however is the consequence of its inherent flaw. In the context of the film the system must be

293 Patrice Blouin, “Le Dernier Des Adolescents / U.S. Cinema: The End of Innocence,” Art Press 297, no. January (2004). p.53. Blouin also suggests that ‘what the film constructs is not so much specific characters as a unique space-time paradigm’ where each individual ‘is like a solitary vector carrying within themselves their personal system of x and y axes, their own rhythm and measure’. Blouin, "Le Dernier Des Adolescents / U.S. Cinema: The End of Innocence." p.53. The sense of movement is crucial to the manifestation of the characters’ identities, it is also the case, however, that Van Sant enhances the individuality of the main characters by allowing them the expression of alternative masculinities which reveal a complex inner life.
fractured and endangered precisely because of what it supports – the culture of hegemony – and of what it ignores or actively represses – a culture of alternative masculinity. Van Sant’s allowances for flexibility within the framework of the system as indicated by the discussion group on alternative sexuality and Elias’s practice within the school as an artist, can be seen as instances of institutionalised subterfuge that reflect, within limits, the heterogeneity of adolescent masculine discourse, rather than representing examples of radical reform. This is supported by the protagonists’ indiscriminate destruction of the system, since even these ‘alternative’ and ‘subordinate’ enclaves appear as indifferent to the needs of the perpetrators, and thus are incapable of absorbing their energy in order to maintain order.

The spatiality that Van Sant employs in relation to the construction of adolescent masculinity is also relevant to Foucault’s concept of ‘heterotopic’ space. Through Van Sant’s multilayering of space and movement, and its interpolation by adolescent identities and heterodox adolescent masculine identities, he challenges the normalising order, and as such articulates the conditions of the ‘heterotopia’. A condition of Foucault’s concept of heterotopic space is that it ‘is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible’ and as such, reflects the multilayering of space, and subsequent ‘parallel’ difference that Van Sant achieves in the spatial conceptualisation of Elephant. Foucault states that:

[Heterotopias] are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax that causes words or things (next to and also opposite one another) to ‘hold together’.  

In terms of heterotopias being related to spatial situations, Henry Urbach notes that:

Heterotopias are bound up with, but also turned against, the institutional underpinnings of any socio-spatial regime. They display the incoherencies, fissures and contradictions that inhere in social arrangements and expose their shaky legitimacy.²⁹⁶

Foucault also conceptualised heterotopias in relation to social being, which included the condition of adolescence. These ‘crisis’ heterotopias are ‘privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis.’²⁹⁷ Foucault suggests that these crisis heterotopias are being replaced with ‘heterotopias of deviation: those in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed’.²⁹⁸ These crisis and deviation heterotopias are defined by Foucault as sites, however, heterotopia can also be understood as operating as a modality or methodology, as an expression of heterogeneous space defined by relations ‘which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another’.²⁹⁹ The modality of heterotopia also maintains a specific value, as Urbach notes:

It represents the apparent normality of other spaces as fictitious and restrictive. It maintains heterotopic effect by concretising ways of thinking and practising space that loosen the hold of dominant codes, challenge structures of regulation and control that obtain elsewhere. However momentarily, it dissolves, destabilises and interrupts power.³⁰⁰

This can be conceptualised in a performative sense. Heterodox adolescent masculinity is heterotopic in its modalities, and heterotopic spatiality can be orchestrated through

²⁹⁷ Foucault suggests that 'crisis' heterotopias originate in 'so-called primitive societies', but persist in cultures such as the boarding school or 'military service for young men' since 'the first manifestations of sexual virility were in fact supposed to take place "elsewhere" than at home'. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces." p.24.
²⁹⁸ Ibid. p.25.
²⁹⁹ Ibid. p.23.
³⁰⁰ Urbach, "Writing Architectural Heterotopia." pp.352-353
representation and movement, and that this has social and political consequences at an individual and social level.

The operation of the construction of adolescent masculinity in Van Sant’s film takes its cue from the ordered environment of the secondary school and the systems of control that this environment implies, as articulated in Foucault’s theorisation of the spatial dynamics of the institution. Van Sant’s film complicates the construction of identity through the spatiality of discipline by invoking the related but paradoxical operation of spatiality as articulated in the conception of heterotopic space. These modes of articulation are at once complimentary and competing, they allow the ordered flow of movement and the normalising construction of identity, and at the same time allow a complex and multi-layered articulation of space, and by extension, of the operation of identity in relation to these spatial dynamics. The spatial dynamics employed by Van Sant in Elephant can be understood as representing the complex relations between orthodox and heterodox constructions of adolescent masculinity. The opening scenes of both Van Sant’s film Elephant and Clark’s film Bully establish a sense of flux and transition. In Clark’s film the character Marty is shown speaking on the telephone, engaging in a sexualised dialogue that is ambiguous. It introduces the concept of the possibility of a sexually ambivalent and ambiguous identity that is further developed throughout the film in relation to the construction of adolescent masculinity. In Van Sant’s film, the opening credit sequence establishes a sense of movement through the imaging of clouds moving across the sky as the light fades from dusk to night. The sound of football practice is laid over this imagery, pre-empting an establishing scene to follow. The motif of clouds moving across the sky and the darkening of the sky to night also acts as a metaphor where the change in weather as it builds to a storm, reflects the progression in the film’s narrative towards its violent apotheosis.

The conception of a complex and multi-layered sense of spatiality, as a metaphor for a complex representation of adolescent masculinity, is a central concern for Van Sant. The construction of the film invokes this sense of multi-layered space and time, and by extension identity, in various ways. The differentiated repetition of events in the film, and the non-sequential re-playing of events from different points of view, means that the narrative of the film loops and changes during the linear viewer-experience of
the film as it progresses. To this end, the film evokes the operation of parallel but competing dimensions, which are analogous to the complex construction of adolescent masculinity as inherently paradoxical. In their analysis of the televisual and on-line representation of the originary event of the Columbine shootings, Joshua Gunn and David E. Beard invoke the concept of what they term the ‘apocalyptic sublime’. They suggest that:

The apocalyptic sublime is an emerging form of post-modern apocalyptic that replaces the traditional sense of impending cataclysm (an ‘ending’) with a sense of never-ending crisis. It is similar to traditional apocalyptic form insofar as it is reactive in nature, but it differs in terms of its deferral of an ending and in terms of the kind of subject position it calls into being.  

In the case of the Columbine shootings, this sense of ‘never-ending crisis’ was reflected by the real time television broadcast of the event as it was unfolding. This micro-reportage was also symbolic: ‘[Events] at Columbine quickly became emblematic of a larger, social crisis of violence and troubled youth.’  

Further, Gunn and Beard suggest that the representation of the Columbine event as constructed by interactive on-line maps, sustained the ‘real time’ representation of the event and its ‘never-ending’ sense of crisis, while also evoking ‘instability of subjectivity’. It is this aspect of representation – that of an ‘interactive’ and multi-layered interface that relates to Van Sant’s conceptual approach. The figure of the interactive map and the multiple levels of subjective engagement it offers are used by Van Sant in the film as a structural device. By extension, the DVD release of Elephant incorporates an interactive menu in the form of a map of the school that allows the location of characters and events in any number of permutations, reflecting the heterotopic spatiality of the construction of the film itself. This sense of representation and its articulation in the film is important in its erasure of identity of the ‘actors’ particularly the ‘victims’, in relation to concepts of sacrifice, and its relationship to transcendence, as it animates the representation of adolescent masculinity. The interactive maps that


302 Ibid. p.205.

303 Ibid. p.206.
Gunn and Beard discuss achieve a sense of ‘the disorientation of real-time’. They
state that: ‘First, verbal cues encourage a circular or immanent temporality by
presenting the past as “now”. Second, the visual cues also encourage a sense of ever-
present crisis and, further, invite bodily movements from the spectator that include
him or her in the event.'\textsuperscript{304}

The heterotopic sense of spatiality that this evokes is mirrored in Van Sant’s concept
of temporality and spatiality in his film. In two scenes, a direct engagement with this
sense of spatiality is manifest in the actions of the adolescent male characters of Eric
and Alex. In one scene the boys play a computer game in which the player’s point of
view is that of a shooter who takes aim at anonymous figures in a featureless
landscape.\textsuperscript{305} Later in the film, Alex and Eric ‘interact’ with a map of the school as
they plan their attack. As they refer to the progression of their plan described by the
map, the scene is inter-cut with a dramatisation of the scenario as they imagine it to
unfold. The framework within which the characters operate, and as such defines their
articulation of identity, is inter-textual. It engages with the normalising space of the
institution, with the multi-layered operation of heterotopic spatiality, and evokes the
interactive possibilities of the computer game and by extension with the interactive
mapping that relates to the representation of the originary event. Like Clark’s
articulation of a constructed sense of adolescent masculinity through the devices of
collage and fast-paced filmic montage and his evocation of media-generated forms of
representation, Van Sant’s representation of adolescent masculinity is conditioned by
competing and contradictory representative registers. In order to represent a complex
concept of adolescent masculinity and to introduce the operation of the possibility of
transcendence as incorporated into this representation, Van Sant engages with
concepts of heterodox adolescent masculinity and with an interpretation of what might
be understood as spirituality.

In \textit{Elephant}, various competing articulations of adolescent masculinity are presented
which appeal to the culture of hegemonic masculinity and which challenge this

\textsuperscript{304} Ibid. pp.208-209. Gunn and Beard make the distinction between conventional crime maps, which encourage a
sequential reading of events, and interactive on-line maps, taking as their examples maps of the Columbine event
produced by \textit{USA Today} and \textit{The New York Times}, which dispense with linear narrative,

\textsuperscript{305} The game was developed specifically for the film, and its internal landscape recalls that of Van Sant’s
preceeding film \textit{Gerry}, parts of which were filmed on the salt flats of Utah.
culture through characterisation and situation. Early in the film, a scene showing a group of boys practising football introduces a normalised, athleticised representation of adolescent masculinity. Since high school football is recognised as a site of the implication of hegemonic masculinity\(^\text{306}\) this activity is recognisably related to the articulation of normative masculine models. However, Van Sant complicates the hard masculinity that this implies. As the boys engage in physical contact, they are also shown ‘huddling’ together in a more intimate form of physical contact, and the scene is overlayed with the gentle musical sound of Beethoven’s ‘Piano Sonata No.14’ which gives the action a ballet-like feel. The scene introduces the character of Nathan who wears dark green cargo pants and a dark grey t-shirt that reveals the musculature of his torso. Nathan represents a stereotypically athletic and attractive ‘college’ type. Nathan’s desirability as a heterosexualised male is signalled in the film in a scene where he passes the female characters Brittany, Jordan and Nicole in the school corridor, and one of the girls mouths the words ‘He’s so cute.’ Nathan pulls on a red hooded sweater and the camera follows him across the field and into the high school tracking him from behind as he passes along corridors, breezeways and stairwells. After he puts on the red hooded sweater it is revealed that the sweater is printed on the back with a white cross and the word ‘Lifeguard’. The connection of the symbolism of the word Lifeguard with Nathan’s normative masculine persona establishes an orthodox construction of masculinity, that of the male as a powerful and protective figure. This symbolism however is made ironic as the film’s narrative progresses. Nathan’s actions in the context of the film do not incorporate a ‘life saving’ role. The climax of the film finds Nathan and his girlfriend Carrie confronted at gunpoint by Alex, so that Nathan’s heteronormative and hegemonic articulation of masculinity is directly challenged.

Nathan’s clothing choice, as is the case with many characters in the film, is an important aspect of the construction of his identity. His sweater reflects a fashion popular with young men in the early twenty-first century, clothing bearing the logos or text of various social and cultural forms that define normative models of masculinity such as Army, Navy, Police, and Security. The cultural significance of these expressions of masculinity accord with dominant and hegemonic concepts of

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\(^{306}\) Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." p.851.
male identity as authoritative, strong, and conditioned by order and control. Neera Scott has suggested that the choice of clothing worn by the characters in the film was at their own discretion; the implication being that the characters’ choice of clothing represents to some degree, their own articulations of identity.\(^{307}\) However, the extent of this discretion is not made clear. Even if this is the case, the representation of each character’s choice of clothing, within the context of the film as an artistic representation, takes on a symbolic aspect, so that the consideration of ‘naturalness’, in this regard, is external to a conceptual reading of the film.

Clothing symbolism operates as a signifier in relation to which different registers of identity, and masculinity, can be located within the artistic framework of the film. For example, for refusing to wear clothing that reveals her body, the female character Michelle is reprimanded by her gym teacher. Michelle’s meek personality is at odds with the extroverted personality types of most of her female peers. In a scene in the girls’ locker room where she changes, she self-consciously keeps her body covered. Clothing symbolism operates as a signifier of difference and of intent. The character Elias is partly defined as an ‘artistic’ type by his wearing of home-made ‘jewelry’, and a young couple that he encounters in a natural setting near the school wear the culturally-defined ‘uniform’ of punk style clothing, separating them from the normative casual wear of the school’s students. Eric and Alex, in their ‘attack’ mode wear the recognizable militaristic camouflage pattern of army uniforms. As Hébdige has shown, the choice of clothing style as a signifier of cultural resistance has operated as an important symbol of youth rebellion against dominant modes of identity formation.\(^{308}\) In Clark’s work clothing acts as a signifier of sexualized adolescent and eroticized adolescent masculinity. His collages in the artist book *The Perfect Childhood* that incorporate teen-magazine poster images of the actor Jay Ferguson draw attention to the revelatory nature of clothing (in this case a sleeveless t-shirt that reveals the actor’s under-arm area) in order to focus on the signifying capacities of the physical signs of puberty. In Clark’s film *Bully*, the character Marty participates in a ‘strip tease’ scenario in a gay bar, complicating the assumption of his normative heterosexual masculine identity, and exploiting the erotic nature of


\(^{308}\) See Hébdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. 
undressing as a sexualizing action. For Van Sant, the overt representation of sexualized identity through clothing symbolism is replaced with the articulation of cultural symbolism – clothing serves to articulate the expression of ‘personality,’ and the expression of sexuality is framed by intellect in the case of the classroom discussion group, or suffused with a desire for emotional connection rather than physicalised desire.

As Nathan crosses the sports-field and enters the school building, the soundtrack of Beethoven’s ‘Piano Sonata No.14’ is overlaid by the ambient sounds of the school environment, which subtly begin to change, as he is shown moving up an interior stairwell. (See Figure 13. The character Nathan in an interior stairwell of the high school, still image from Gus Van Sant’s 2003 film Elephant.) The ambient sounds echo like those within a church, and sounds that suggest chanting are discernible, along with the sounds of tuning-up or practice presumably emanating from the music classes nearby. Light suffuses the stairwell emanating from a series of tall window apertures. In this context the identifying cross motif on Nathan’s sweater, and the hood that gives it the appearance of monk-like attire, and the sense of light within the stairwell suggests various registers of spirituality. The cross on Nathan’s sweater, already signifying the international ‘red cross’ symbol for aid and attendant to the word Lifesaver, casting Nathan in the normative masculine role as active protector, takes on a Christian religious significance as Nathan moves through a space ‘sanctified’ or suffused with ‘divine’ light and sound. Umberto Eco has noted how the presence of light has represented a spiritual presence:

The image of God as light had an ancient pedigree, from the Baal of Semitic paganism, from the Egyptian Ra, from the Persian Mazda – all personifications of the sun or the sun’s beneficent action – to the Platonic ‘Sun’ of the Ideal, the Good. This image passed on to neo-Platonism, Proclus in particular, and entered the Christian tradition through Augustine, and then through the Pseudo-Dionysius who constantly praised God as lumen, fire, or the fount of light.309

The metaphor of light as signifying a divine presence also occurs in the film in a scene where the student character John appears to engage in an act of ‘devotion’. It appears that the presence of light – of a particularly recognizable and symbolic form – suggests the possible engagement with a ‘divine’ state, and therefore assumes that the attendant quality of transcendence is of an inherent sensibility that has somehow been internalized, or at least, is always present. The nuanced sense of spirituality that pervades the film is recognized by Geoffrey O’Brien who states that:

_Elephant_ succeeds not as an act of analysis but as an act of mourning, a tone poem of grief in which the American high school – that locus of adolescent anguish and repression in so many movies – is transformed into a kind of holy site, suffused with a beauty that belongs only to youth.\(^{310}\)

In an early scene in _Elephant_, John is shown entering a recreation room in the high school. He softly rubs his eyes and cries, before being comforted by a female classmate. After John enters the room, he gazes upwards and fixes his eyes on an imaginary point. (See Figure 14. The character John in a moment of contemplation, still image from Gus Van Sant’s 2003 film _Elephant_.) The camera is placed, as an invisible observer, just above and to the left of his body as if it is hovering. The moment appears as though John is in a quiet moment of prayer, as if he is contemplating a sense of being beyond the everyday. His gaze is momentarily fixed as if towards some heaven, as if seeking to make connection with a transcending force or entity. This scene is not overtly religious, there is offered no sense that John is in fact in an act of worship, but there is the suggestion that he is pleading for something. Even without the knowledge and suspense afforded by the unfolding narrative of the film, John’s gesture can be read as a moment of connection with a certain form of quietude. The space of the recreation room, while within the controlled environment of the high school, appears as a sanctuary. The room is furnished in a casual, domestic manner as opposed to the ordered spatiality of the school’s corridors, classrooms, gymnasiums, and locker rooms. The room is quiet, in contrast to the ambient sounds that fill the school’s corridors. The only sound we hear as John enters the room is that of his own breathing and the soft movement of his clothing. A patch of sunlight filters

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through the curtains, recalling the numinous light that illuminates Nathan as he climbs the stairs in the glass-enclosed stairwell in an earlier scene, and signifies an attendant sense of divinity or transcendent presence. It is within this context that John’s gesture appears as an act of prayer or devotion.

Dennis Lim has noted that the camera-work in Elephant observes the action like a ‘helpless angel’, unable to intercede into the drama as it unfolds. But this evocation of an ‘angelic’ presence also alludes to the ‘angelic’ nature of the character of John. John’s striking blonde-white hair frames his soft and boyish features, and constantly sways gently around his head. His pale skin, rosy cheeks and full lips – his very softness – is at odds with normalized ideals of hard masculinity. John’s appearance and his actions accord with that of the traditional representation of angels. Up until the early Renaissance, angels were always depicted as male youths. Their reality reflected beliefs contemporary with their pre-Renaissance representation, and they acted as messengers or attendants of God, or as escorts of the soul after death. In Caravaggio’s paintings of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, his depiction of angels is almost always in the form of winged adolescent boys whose ‘realism’ often evoked a tension between their ‘divine’ status, and their more earthly corporeality. Glenn Peers has noted that within the iconography of angels in Christian art, their representation as recognizably bodily beings was a generic representation which facilitated the visual representation of beings that were essentially ‘unstable and, in the end, unknowable’, and Michel Serres notes the flux-like nature of angels. The nature of angels as inherently paradoxical in being


313 Examples include Caravaggio’s paintings: The Ecstasy of Saint Francis, c.1596, oil on canvas, 36 3/8 x 50 5/8 inches, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut. The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection; The Inspiration of Saint Matthew, 1602, oil on canvas, 9’ 8 1/2 x 6’ 2 1/2 inches, 295.91 x 189.23 cm, Contarelli Chapel, Church of San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome; and The Martydom of Saint Matthew, 1599-1600, oil on canvas, 10’ 7 1/2 x 11’ 3 inches, 323.85 x 342.9 cm, Contarelli Chapel, Church of Luigi dei Francesi, Rome. Caravaggio’s boy-angels are clearly adolescents, reminiscent of his brooding adolescent Saint John the Baptist, c.1605, oil on canvas, 68 1/4 x 52”, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, Nelson Fund.


315 Serres notes ‘In the most ancient traditions, messenger-angels don’t necessarily take on only human form; they may pass by in a breeze or a ruffling of the water, or in the heat and light of sun and stars – in short, in any of the
can also be understood as analogous to the state of adolescent masculinity as it is represented by Clark and Van Sant.

In *Elephant*, John’s actions take on a messenger role. He warns students and staff not to enter the school after he encounters Alex and Eric making their way into the building. John’s boyish appearance and his concern for others cast him as an exemplary adolescent. However, the intimation of John’s ‘goodness’ does not reflect the desires of civic leaders to impart the virtues of well-behaved youth. His angelic nature signifies a sense of purity and innocence, as well as the ability to express vulnerability, and perhaps compassion, as a state of adolescent masculinity that transcends the normalized operation of hard masculine forms.

The scene in which John cries reveals the articulation of adolescent masculinity that allows the recognition and expression of emotional vulnerability. The reason for John’s expression of emotion is not made clear; however it could be understood as signifying his own emotional sensitivity, and as a metaphor for an expression of grief in relation to the inevitable violence that lies at the films climax.

The character of Alex, who with Eric performs the shooting attack, is introduced in the film in a scene where he is bullied in class by having spit balls thrown at him by a stereotypically athletic boy in cooperation with the character of Nathan.316 In a scene that takes place in Alex’s bedroom he is shown practicing Beethoven’s ‘Fur Elise’ on the piano and the camera pans to reveal that his room is decorated with his own drawings and paintings. This scene represents the character of Alex as a creative and artistic individual, a concept at odds with normative representations of adolescent masculinity. Eric arrives, and later the two boys are shown sleeping, Alex on his bed, and Eric on the couch that lies perpendicular to the base of Alex’s bed. Eric’s sleeping pose recalls that of the traditional representation of Saint Sebastian, his arms are cross above his head at the wrists as if bound. The symbolism of this pose evokes Sebastian’s martyrdom, and, since Eric wears a sleeveless white t-shirt, reveals the

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316 This scene immediately follows a flash-forward where John encounters Alex and Eric entering the school wearing their camouflage gear.
hair under his arms. (See Figure 3. The character Eric asleep adjacent to his friend Alex, still image from Gus Van Sant’s 2003 film *Elephant.*

As has been noted with reference to Clark’s work, the significance of this pose resides in its revelation of the physical signs of puberty, which, for Clark, operates as an important aspect of his representation of physicalised adolescent masculinity and the paradoxical operation of idealization that this implies. In the case of *Elephant*, it is the transcendent symbolism of the pose itself that is at stake. By evoking the traditional representation of Saint Sebastian, the image of Eric in this pose suggests the possibility of his own martyrdom, and evokes the articulation of sacrifice as a redemptive act.

Before Alex and Eric prepare themselves for the attack on the school, they are shown engaging in an intimate interaction that challenges the normalized articulation of adolescent masculinity that might otherwise characterize their violent actions as perpetrators of the school shootings. Alex is shown entering the shower at his home, and begins to wash himself. Eric approaches, and, also naked, opens the glass shower door and enters, saying ‘I guess this is it’, referring to the enacting of their plan. Eric, facing Alex in the shower, says ‘I’ve never even kissed anybody, have you?’ and the two boys kiss and embrace. An outward reading of this interaction would suggest homosexual intimacy however; in the context of the film the boys’ gesture evokes broader readings. Alex and Eric’s gesture of intimacy suggests an expression of friendship that incorporates the outward demonstration of affection. The scene does not suggest that the boys explore their physical intimacy beyond kissing and embracing, or that they have experienced a similar situation beforehand. Their interaction that follows, as they prepare for, and carry out their plan of attack, does not suggest that their relationship has in any way changed because of this gesture. It may stand, therefore, as a poignant instance of desire for reciprocated compassion; something to be assumed within the context of the film, that they have so far been denied within the context of their family and peers. Rather than being conceptualized, recognized or intended as an expression of homosexual love, their intimacy represents a desire to feel something that they have only imagined, with the knowledge that their actions will likely disallow the possibility of compassionate intimacy. This gesture operates within the film as an example of the possibilities for transcending the
limitations of normalized adolescent masculinity as overtly heterosexual. It is a moment of transcendence that prefigures the movement towards a more extreme articulation of transcending the system to which they are expected to conform: the outward expression of largely indiscriminate violence that takes on the power and symbolism of sacrifice.

Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss define sacrifice as ‘a religious act which, through the consecration of a victim, modifies the condition of the moral person who accomplishes it or that of certain objects with which he is concerned’. 317 Royden Keith Yerkes offers a ‘secular’ definition whereby sacrifice ‘describes some sort of renunciation, usually destruction, of something valuable in order that something more valuable may be obtained’. 318 Rene Girard notes that ‘[in] many rituals the sacrificial act assumes two opposing aspects, appearing at times as a sacred obligation to be neglected at grave peril, at other times as a sort of criminal activity entailing perils of equal gravity’. 319 According to Girard, the ‘transcendent’ nature of sacrifice is central to the conceptualization of violence it allows: ‘As soon as the essential quality of transcendence – religious, humanistic, whatever – is lost, there are no longer any terms by which to define the legitimate form of violence and to recognize it among the multitude of illicit forms.’ 320 While Alex and Eric’s actions in Elephant might appear as an act of vengeance – a retaliation against the systems of control that cause them to feel trapped – the concept of sacrifice can be employed as a way to articulate the operation of transcendence. During the attack, holding Headmaster Mr. Luce at gunpoint, Eric states ‘You know there’s others like us out there too, and they will kill you if you fuck with them like you did me and Gerry.’ 321 Even as Alex’s and Eric’s attack appears indiscriminate, it can be understood that their targets are surrogate victims – necessary within the ambit of sacrifice. Girard states that ‘violence seeks

320 Ibid. p.25.
321 We are to assume that Eric’s use of the word Gerry must be a nick-name that refers to his friend Alex. It also invokes the characters’ in Van Sant’s previous film Gerry, in which both young male characters were known by this name.
and always finds a surrogate victim’ until it is appeased. The surrogate victim in Girard’s reasoning becomes a substitute for the entire community, and that the ‘surrogate victim dies so that the entire community, threatened by the same fate, can be reborn in a new or renewed cultural order’. The attack on the school should therefore purify the community it represents, in order to redeem its own animosity against Alex and Eric, and others like them. Alex and Eric know that this sacrifice of surrogate others will also involve their own sacrifice – but it is not by the operation of suicide as is the case in the originary event. Alex shoots Eric, and thereby sacrifices his friend; and in the film’s final scenes trains his gun on a trapped Nathan with his girlfriend Carrie who represent the archetypal heterosexual couple. It is significant that this confrontation is the penultimate. Nathan’s symbolic value represents a power that must be destroyed at any cost (including the death of other ‘innocents’) in order for any possibility of transcendence to become apparent. As surrogates for the community at large, the victims of Alex and Eric’s attack must be sacrificed in order to allow the possibility of that community to realize the error of its ways in the fostering of hegemony. The imagined motives for Alex and Eric’s actions become irrelevant, only the symbolic nature of their actions remains important. What is at stake for the boys is the destruction of a system of identity construction that allows no possibility for transcendence, and is inherently damaging. In order for the boys to attain any measure of transcendence and freedom, that system and its symbolism must be destroyed, and this requires the sacrifice of surrogate victims and of themselves.

323 Ibid. p.269.
Chapter Six: Consequences for the symbolic representation of adolescent masculinity and transcendence.

The preceding chapters have evoked paradigmatic conceptions of adolescent masculinity in Western culture, and, in relation to attendant theoretical frameworks, have demonstrated that the representation of adolescent masculinity in the work of artists and film-makers Larry Clark and Gus Van Sant has consistently challenged and made complex normalised constructions of adolescent masculinity and its symbolic meanings. This investigation has revealed the implication of transcendence as an animating trope of the representation of adolescent masculinity. This interpretative study of how adolescent masculinity is configured in their work raises a number of issues that require additional exploration and the implications for the symbolic representation of adolescent masculinity. The registers of transcendence that this evokes, as found to be concurrent in their work, necessitates further extrapolation. This chapter then analyses the implications for the sexualisation of the adolescent male body, as informed by the representation of adolescent masculinity in earlier chapters. It analyses the symbolic implications of the representation of adolescent male suicide, and further examines the adolescent male body as a site of conflict. Encompassing all of these registers of representation, the operation of transcendence can be understood as an overriding and intervening force which facilitates key specific symbolic effects.

The construction of adolescent masculinity is inherently contradictory, and as such, has been conditioned by a tension that reached a peak around a century ago, a tension which implicated the culture of hegemonic masculinity, and which has been steadily sustained since then. Prior to the fifteenth century, the concept of adolescent masculinity was largely determined by social mechanisms revolving around the ability to begin productive work. Pubertal evidence of adolescence was less of an issue than a workable definition that colluded with historical notions of life stages, and their inherent social meanings. As Shahar notes, 'a boy was denoted adolescens once he began to work more independently and was given greater responsibility as the
herder of his father's flocks or the apprentice of another shepherd', a conception of adolescence which also privileged a male aspect. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Europe, the stage of adolescence invoked the competing articulations of spiritual purity or danger. Adolescence was a time when 'the devil was particularly active' and when a 'vow of faith' was obligatory. This significant articulation of concern over the possible opposing spiritual directions that was typified by adolescence introduced a concept of moral vacillation that has continued to characterise adolescence, and because of the social power accorded masculine culture, this is particularly true of male adolescence. In fifteenth century Italy, the possibility of spiritual crisis in the male adolescent resulted in his representation through the symbolism of sainthood and civic virtue. Images of Saint John, and of David, as an adolescent boy were meant to serve as role models for youth of the time. The Christian values established by these 'positive' representations of male adolescents also implicated the value of transcendence through self-sacrifice, as 'the portrayed subject dutifully accepts a prescribed fate while exhibiting the most meritorious conduct'. From the fifteenth century through to the eighteenth century, the popular image of the martyr-saint Sebastian, was represented as an adolescent male youth, the depiction of his martyrdom, and the spiritual transcendence it implied, articulated a sense of passivity that allowed his representation to inspire nineteenth century appeals to youthful male beauty, and the poignancy of sacrifice within the ambit of adolescent masculinity Sebastian's representation also invoked. This articulation of passivity, as Solomon-Godeau notes, took on a character of pathos and martyrdom, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, serving to reconcile the conflicting constructions of masculinity as both athleticised and soft within the articulation of stoicism. Significantly, this construction of adolescent masculinity incorporated the apparently paradoxical polarities of masculine and feminine values within a singular identity representation, but it also served to enforce hegemonic values through the implication of the 'noble' nature of defeat and its appeals to transcending pseu-spiritual martyrdom. As such, it disallowed the actual performance of alternative

324 Shahar, Childhood in the Middle Ages. p.27.
326 Shahar, Childhood in the Middle Ages. p.27.
327 Fulton, "The Boy Stripped Bare by His Elders: Art and Adolescence in Renaissance Florence." p.33.
adolescent male identity, and rather invoked and overlaid the representation of adolescent masculinity with the idealised mythologies of classicism.

The advent of youth movements, and the articulation of the ‘boy problem’ and the operation of ‘boyology’ that was attendant to the perceived crisis defining adolescent masculinity in the late 1800s and early 1900s appealed to a desire to enforce moral values on to a male youth culture increasingly exemplified by pathology and delinquency. The significant and continuing effects of this conception of adolescent masculinity informed the psychological and social constructions of adolescence – and of adolescent masculinity in particular – exemplified by Hall’s exegesis on the psycho-social character of the adolescent, the operation of sex roles, the normalising of physical, psychological and social adolescent masculinity, all conditioned by the culture of hegemonic masculinity and to the ‘achievement of masculinity as a naturalised “male destiny”’. 328 The Western socio-cultural construction of adolescent masculinity, then, while conditioned by contradiction – encompassing an internal dynamic of hard and soft masculinities, moral fortitude and delinquent weakness, physical purity and sexualised corruption, civic work ethic and naturalised freedom – has continued to foster the constricting values of the dominant hegemonic male culture. This, then, is the foundation from which artist and film-maker Larry Clark, in his artist books and in his film Bully, and film-maker Gus Van Sant, in his film Elephant, have sought to challenge, through the excavation of sociological and media-generated constructions of adolescent masculinity, and the evocation of alternatives to hegemonic imperatives through the resurrection of the concept of transcendence in a spiritual sense, and its reformulation as the possibility of a ‘compassionate’ articulation of adolescent masculinity. The operation of transcendence within the construction of adolescent masculinity has been determined by symbolic, rather than actualised, manifestations in its deployment in Christian iconography, and in the youth movement’s appeal to the invigoration of nature. What are the implications of the manifestation of transcendence, as inaugurated in the work of Clark and Van Sant, for a contemporary conception of adolescent masculinity?

328 Benjamin, Like Subjects, Love Objects: Essays on Recognition and Sexual Difference, p.60.
In Clark’s work, the normalising aspects of pubertal development, as they serve to define adolescent masculinity, are the source of serious trauma. Clark shows that the construction of adolescent masculinity in relation to the imperatives of physical development as defined by normalised pubertal change acts as a schism between the concurrently desired states of pre-pubertal innocence and the sexualised physicality signalled by ‘normal’ puberty and its physical manifestations in body hair. Clark’s own admission of the trauma felt by his ‘late’ puberty, and his attention to its earlier physical evidence in others, claims it as a defining aspect of ‘normal’ – and therefore desirable – adolescent masculinity. In his artist book _The Perfect Childhood_, Clark draws attention to the physical manifestations of puberty through body hair, in his incorporation of media-generated images of teenage male celebrities who are posed in order to reveal these specific aspects of adolescent masculinity. Clark’s appropriated and repeated image of a teen-magazine poster of actor Jay Ferguson emphasizes the evidence of the onset of puberty revealed by the new patch of under-arm hair revealed by the young actors pose. A hand written note in Clark’s artist book _punk Picasso_ states unequivocally that the fourteen year old actor Jonathan Taylor Thomas ‘has pubic hair’, and Clark’s own retrospective fantasy involves himself experiencing normalised pubertal development at fourteen: ‘I know how much hair I have on my dick, I have a little hair on my legs, and I have just a little patch of hair under my arms’.\(^{329}\) In his artist books, Clark’s representation of an ‘ideal’ adolescent masculinity defined by normalised puberty, serves to invoke a sexually physicalised subject, but also retains an appeal to innocence. A sequence of images of a boy in _The Perfect Childhood_ suggest the performance of sexualised physical and athletic adolescent masculinity, at the same time evoking a sense of boyishness and innocence signified by the symbolism of his natural setting, his own singularity, and his masculine poses. Photographs of the boy naked in the shower reveal evidence of his physical maturity as a sexualised being, but he also displays boyish characteristics. His facial hair is still soft and wispy; he is eminently playful, climbing trees and striking poses for Clark’s camera. Clark also conveys the complexity of the transition from boyhood to adulthood, and the shift in personal identity, and expression of power, that this evokes. The boy is shown urinating into a bush, and flashing his backside at the camera, gestures that in childhood would seem innocuous and playful.

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that in adulthood might evoke the inhibitions of drunkenness or antisocial behaviour, but that in the early stages of adolescence – as is the case here – take on a complex manifestation of defiance, and of provocation that invokes the articulation of sexuality.

The articulation of adolescent masculine sexuality remains a core theme in Clark’s work, and its manifestation is constantly riven with contradiction, excess, unsurety, complex motivation and vulnerability. It is connected to experimentation, ambiguity, power and violence. The paradox at the heart of Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity is one embedded in his formulation of adolescent masculinity as at once innocent and physically sexual that expresses the cultures of soft and hard masculinities. This contradiction drives the ambiguous nature of adolescent masculinity that Clark represents. Clark sets into play a system of desire that operates in and around the adolescent male body. Its corruption through aggression is acknowledged as a construction, while at the same time established as a driving force against which an alternative can be pitched. Clark’s collage works in his artist book *The Perfect Childhood* reveal the construction of adolescent masculinity in mediatized imagery as both idealised and demonised, voraciously sexual and innocently desiring of affection. In his artist book *1992*, Clark sets up and documents a ‘play-acting’ of death by suicide, but even in this erasure of identity, and by extension the signifying capacities of hegemonic cultures of adolescent masculinity, the operation of eroticism remains as a powerful force. Catherine Liu’s observation of Clark’s photographs of adolescent males that ‘these teenagers look like they can’t live up to their hard-ons’ reveals the ambivalent nature of sexual prowess that exists in Clark’s work, and it calls into question the normative conception of confidant and aggressive male sexuality that conditions male adolescence at its extreme. While Clark’s film *Bully* provides a moral consequence of sexual aggression – the character of Bobby, who regularly initiates force as a part of his sexual expression, is punished – many of Clark’s images of adolescent boys displaying their genitals exhibit their nudity as a signifier of powerful maleness. In *The Perfect Childhood*, collages and photographs show adolescent boys with an erection, including images that focus exclusively on the spread legs and erect or tumescent penis of anonymous boys – a

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reduction of adolescent masculinity to the basic symbolism of the 'big dick'. In the opening scene of Bully, where the character of Marty says to his phone-sex 'client' on the other end of the line 'I want you to suck my big dick', he might be seen to echo one of the formational fantasies of adolescent male sex and the imagined 'sexual prowess' that this evokes. More than incorporating a sense of insecurity through overt phallic identification, Clark's 'zoning in' highlights the privileged nature of the penis within the repertoire of adolescent masculinity, the implication being its symbolism for the penetrative imperative of the formulation of hegemonic masculinity. Whether it is present in the desire for pubertal physicality, as a condition of media-generated images of adolescent males, or posited – however ambiguously – as a necessity of the expression of adolescent male identity, Clark foregrounds sexuality and implicates it to adolescent masculinity at every step. While Clark engages broadly with issues of sexuality, his interrogation of the adolescent male body as a sexualised entity is central to his work. The implication of the figuring of sexualisation and eroticism in Clark's work evokes an important consequence for the symbolic representation of adolescent masculinity that requires further analysis, that of the symbolism of the adolescent male body as a site of sexualisation.

It is necessary to establish that the analysis of the sexualisation of the adolescent male body – as a consequence of the representation of adolescent masculinity that has been investigated – does not engage the exploitative possibilities that this might engender, but rather seeks to discern their effects. Indeed, as Solomon-Godeau’s study of the ephebic male body reveals a framework of political investiture with regard to its own attendant culture of masculine hegemony, and Bataille’s investigation of eroticism is shown as a way in which to conceptualise death, the sexualisation of the male adolescent body can be understood as articulating issues of objectification which support restrictive cultures of adolescent maleness. As has been noted with respect to Fulton’s analysis of representations of adolescent masculinity in Renaissance Florence, depictions of adolescent males served the purpose of instilling a sense of civic pride in the city’s male youth. The fact that Donatello’s bronze statue of David is depicted as a naked adolescent youth was not intended to arouse erotic feelings, nor to cast the youth’s body as a sexualised trope, but rather was ‘a common juvenile
stripped bare\textsuperscript{331} appearing as an identifiably contemporary male adolescent, an imaginary peer of adolescent males who represented particular virtues. In this sense, such depictions, Fulton suggests, offered a reflective relation:

As an essentially reflective image, it might be suggested that the sensual charms of the bronze David were most likely not intended to arouse erotic desires in the genital or anaclitic sense – given the moral tenor of the Renaissance, it is quite improbable that quattrocento spectators were meant to enjoy the subject in any imaginative carnal encounter – rather, David’s physical beauty may have been developed and exposed to stimulate in the mind of the viewer a basic empathy for the portrayed subject. In the specular recognition of his self within the form of a bronze boy who appears self-absorbed, sensually aware, and gentle and beautiful in movement, the adolescent viewer becomes more keenly attuned to his own thoughts, senses, and physical attributes.\textsuperscript{332}

Such a sense of contemplative narcissism was inculcated as a defining aspect of the formation of adolescent masculine identity. Boys were urged to exercise contemplation and visualisation of their ideal self before a mirror or a painting or sculpture.\textsuperscript{333} Representations of adolescent boys shown displaying their bodies was closely linked to societal ideals, in the same way that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the naked male ephebic body signified the virtuous capacities of classical values. As such, as Solomon-Godeau notes, the possibility of what might now be understood as the operation of homosexual economies instead could better be articulated as a part of a culture of homosociality which encompassed ideas of male friendship, male beauty, and identificatory responses to representations of the naked male figure, and where the operation of eroticism was sanctioned within the concept of the female nude:

\textsuperscript{331} Fulton, "The Boy Stripped Bare by His Elders: Art and Adolescence in Renaissance Florence." p.35.
\textsuperscript{332} Ibid. p.36.
\textsuperscript{333} Fulton states that this contemplative activity was urged by the educator Pier Paolo Vergerio, and that, beyond instilling an identification with exemplary physical and social exemplars of male youth, such representations also ‘admonished adult viewers to rear their children in the image of boy-heroes’. Ibid. p.37.
[Where] the erotic address of female nudes could be readily admitted, even if to be deplored, the male nude was considered, by definition, to exist on another level entirely. Its corporeal beauty was conscripted to a different discursive order such that it would have been unthinkable to attribute to it the capacity to ‘throw the senses into turmoil’ [as Diderot wrote in 1769 of female nudes]. That this was unthinkable was not only in consequence of heterosexual presumptions, and concomitantly, homosexual proscription, but just as important, the result of an ideology that dissociated maleness from the province of sexuality.\footnote{Solomon-Godeau, \textit{Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation}. p.194.}

Even as these idealised and athleticised representations of naked male youth were directed at an almost exclusively male audience, its sexualisation was eminently symbolic of non-sexual attributes. The erotic capabilities ascribed to representations of Saint Sebastian, as expressed in the twentieth century by writer Yukio Mishima, and its attendant ‘cult of homosexuality’, as Richard A. Kaye\footnote{See Richard A. Kaye, ""A Splendid Readiness for Death": T.S. Eliot, the Homosexual Cult of St. Sebastian, and World War I," \textit{Modernity / Modernity} 6, no. 2 (1999).} puts it, has more to do with an emerging self-conception of homosexuality, for which Sebastian represented an appropriate identification with youthful male beauty, and the social implications of martyrdom. The sexualisation of the adolescent male, up to the nineteenth century, then, could be understood as sublimated to other symbolic registers. Clark’s allusions to the traditional pose of Sebastian serve as a vehicle for the revelation of the pubertal – and therefore – sexual adolescent male body, and rather than projecting either altruistic symbolic virtues, or homosexual identifications upon this body, he establishes it as capable of actively desiring – and thus implicated in a system of desire. This articulation of adolescent male sexuality, as represented in Clark’s work, is highly significant in relation to the consequences it supposes. For Clark, the adolescent male body is sexualised precisely because it is capable of sexualising itself. Even as Clark retrospectively desires a ‘normal’ adolescence and the pubertal physicality this entails, he wishes to ‘be the kids’, not to have them.\footnote{Larry Clark interviewed by Mike Kelley. Kelley, "In Youth Is Pleasure." p.85.} This distinction is crucial, because it establishes the sexualised possibility of the adolescent male within the articulation of adolescent masculinity itself, as opposed to
the projection of sexualisation by adults on to the adolescent male body. Therefore, the power of adolescent masculine sexuality is firmly located within its own construction, and, however warily or aggressively, acts as a determinant of adolescent male identity.

The publication of Hall’s 1904 psycho-social study *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* inaugurated the twentieth century’s culture of sexuality as an adolescent attribute, and as a possible problem. Hall links the outward expression of sexuality with an increased preponderance for criminality, with ‘a vicious sexual precocity characteristic of young criminals in large cities’ and emphasises the ‘sin of onanism,’ the common result of which, Hall states, ‘is a sense of unworthiness, sin, pollution, and the serious diminution of self-respect, often instinctively covered or resisted by whimnish and boisterous self-assertion, or occasionally hidden by almost morbid scrupulousness and convictions of foreboding disaster or penalty.’ Hall’s proscribed solution to this problem, rather than invoking medical or chemical solutions, is the calm advice of adult assistance in turning the youth’s attentions to other diverting forms of engagement that may be altruistic or athletic. Hall’s measured approach to adolescent sexuality, informed as it was by early nineteenth century moralistic, medical and biological frameworks, was motivated by care for the young, and did not exploit panic. However, the problem of masturbation remained a common one in the 1900s, as Laqueur notes:

[The] underlying ethical problem raised so dramatically in the early eighteenth century was still exigent; while masturbation hovered for decades between being the cause of organic disease and being the origin of psychic ill ease, it never became inconsequential. Guilt and neurosis and painful personal failure

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338 Ibid. p.439.

slowly displaced tuberculosis, wasting, and madness as the consequences of self-abuse and were construed as comparably terrible.\textsuperscript{340}

With Hall’s analysis of adolescent male sexuality, the sexualised possibility of adolescent masculinity, as well as its moral and psychological consequences, became a part of its socialising construction. The concurrent rise of youth culture and its organizations institutionalised a sanctioned realm of body display, where the normatively virile nature of the adolescent male’s encounter with nature allowed nakedness to be a part of homosociality in rites such as swimming. American painter Thomas Eakins’s photographs of male students swimming naked, and his resulting painting \textit{The Swimming Hole}, 1885, shows naked young men enjoying their natural surroundings, and each others’ company within a homosocial environment conditioned by the allowances of romantic masculine ideologies.\textsuperscript{341} In these images the adolescent male body is sexualised through virility and athleticism, its display among other young \textbf{men a function of individual pride}.

The sexualised body of the young male – athleticised and physically mature – becomes of locus of ‘showing off’ to other males, its sexualised energy an outward and competitive display of heterosexual prowess. The picture was commissioned by prominent Philadelphia land-owner Edward Coates, and Whitney Davis notes that:

\begin{quote}
[The painting] expressed the continuity of a family’s local history, at least in Coates’s case; ambivalence about the rush to suburbia; idealisation of a supposed preservation of the land; retaining the owner’s rights to move through it; respect for one’s social bonds; and a wish to memorialise dutiful manhood, whether building a railroad or a park, in the terms that city men took seriously. The Swimming Hole was at least partly an image of a place where remembered, imagined and claimed masculine innocence – about nature,
\end{quote}


property, industry, companionship, change – could be reconstructed and reflected back to a man as a picture of what, supposedly, he really wants.\textsuperscript{342}

The evocation of youthful, naked, masculinity reflected the growing physical culture of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and, importantly, implicated the necessity for the youthful male physique to be visible – predominantly by other men within a sanctioned homosocial environment – so that his body display incorporated the operation of the pose. As Whitney states:

\begin{quote}
At a place evoking ideal boyhood associations in stressful new times, they rest in fresh air and sunshine. The broad shoulders and chest of the reclining figure, the muscled arms of the thrower, and the well-developed buttocks of the standing figure show that they are physically cultured men, at least in part. As Eakins’s palpable references to sculpture suggest, they are not only resting but also posing – even though none of them, with a single exception, is looking at any other.\textsuperscript{343}
\end{quote}

The poses of these young men, displaying their physiques and their nudity, is a display for the viewer of the painting – an ambiguous display that evoked the ‘neutrality’ of the Academic nude, and the overt display of the young athleticised male body that evoked a narcissistic desire to identify with – and attain – the type of body being presented. In his preparations for the painting, in 1883 Eakins made photographs of boys swimming, and engaging in naked boxing and wrestling in a wooded setting. Each of these photographs, as Davis describes: ‘shows either seven or six “boys” (that is, young men aged between approximately fourteen and twenty years old, or what would later be called “adolescents”), apparently students and friends of Eakins’.\textsuperscript{344} These images, photographs of naked male adolescents engaged in close-proximity physical activity, and displaying their naked and athleticised bodies to the camera, articulate an erotics of display that Davis describes:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{342} Ibid. p.314.
\textsuperscript{343} Ibid. p.317.
\textsuperscript{344} Ibid. p.318.
\end{flushright}
The choreography of the boys’ play was distinctly erotic in the broad sense: they display specific attachments and attitudes in relation to one another. And it is more narrowly sexual: their eroticism, their ‘fervid comradeship,’ displays a fully visible narration of their intimacies, judgements, rivalries, piques, indifferences, humiliations, triumphs and displays, the whole ballet carried out fully naked and in close physical contact with one another. [Eakins] follows—and constructs—the events partly by keeping a centred focus on the frontal nudity best visible at each point: the maximum visibility of the boy’s genitals to the camera is essentially the same thing as the maximum visibility of social relations in their hierarchically organised, erotic and sexual aspect.\textsuperscript{345}

In its appeal to a broad symbolism of innocence, and to a reflective symbolism of the cultural value of ‘natural’ male youthfulness, Eakins’s picture is aligned with a grandiose vision of the power of adolescent masculinity as a defining cultural trope. In his analysis of Eakins’s painting, Davis evokes the responses of poet Walt Whitman to Millet’s painting \textit{The Sower}, c.1850, and John Mulvaney’s painting \textit{Custer’s Last Rally}, c1880; and Whitman’s description of observing naked boys swimming in the Harlem River around 1882. Davis states that the articulation of ‘loving comradeship,’ as Whitman describes with relation to an ideal masculine American cultural value, ‘is to be the product of an American culture of the future’. Davis continues that: ‘The swimming boys possess it naturally; Custer’s soldiers possess it to the degree that they absorb and apply it; Mulvaney’s canvas is ethical because he presumes it for the legibility of the image itself.’ The consequence, as Davis sees it, is that ‘[the] boys must learn through an image art makes of them that it is their own natural democracy and decency, their loving comradeship that sustains the national order itself. But what artist will make the first “sculpture”? On what grounds does he see in the boys what they themselves do not yet see but just are?’ Eakins, Davis suggests, ‘takes up the challenge’.\textsuperscript{346} The implicit homosexuality that Davis locates in Eakins’s photographs, and in \textit{The Swimming Hole}, operates

\textsuperscript{345} Ibid. p.323.
\textsuperscript{346} Ibid. p.308.
‘retrospectively’, ‘rerouted in metaphorical substitutes and replacements’.\textsuperscript{347}

Additionally, what Eakins’s representation of adolescent masculinity, and its appeals to physicalised – and therefore sexualised – display, introduces, in concert with the advent of the sociology of boyology, is the construction of the adolescent male as a subject to be desired, and in that desiring, to be produced as an objectified site of erotic investment. At this historical juncture, which incorporates a framework of socialising, psychologising and sexualising matrixes, the adolescent male is constructed as desiring in himself, desiring of himself as identified with his male adolescent peers, and as an object worthy of desire by other, predominantly male, observers. This complex economy of desire and display continues to inform the construction of the adolescent male as a sexualised subject.

Clark’s photographs of adolescent boys naked, in particular the series of the ‘rural’ boy in his artist book \textit{1992} strongly evoke the symbolic history of the representation of the adolescent male in natural surroundings enjoying athletic and virile pursuits. As the theorising of Eakins’s representations of the naked adolescent male attest, this register of representation can be understood as engaging an ‘innocent’ body display that operates within a sanctioned homosocial context. Clark’s images can be read in terms of these discourses that evoke layers of historical precedent. These images also engage with more complex sexualised scenarios of adolescent male body display exemplified by early to mid-twentieth century cultures of naturism and physique culture.

The connection of adolescent masculinity and virility evoked by morally practical and romantic ideologies in relation to the experience of the natural environment – as exemplified by the outward symbolism of Eakins’s art, and the social imperatives of boyology in its deployment in nature, also evoked the ideologies of naturism and its appeals to nakedness in harmony with the natural environment. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Germany, this youthful male body display was allowed an overt eroticised element. Publisher Adolf Brand’s journal \textit{Der Eigene}, published from 1896 to 1931, fostered a culture of youthful male beauty, naturism and homosexuality. Whereas late eighteenth and early nineteenth century German

\textsuperscript{347} ibid. p.332.
Romanticist culture allowed that friendship between men could be ‘seen as a form of love which could be passionate and sensual’\textsuperscript{348} Brand’s journal connected the anti-establishment values of the German youth movement with the virtues of virile, masculine expressions of homosexuality. The beauty of the youthful male body as a sexualised subject was a major part of the culture espoused by the journal. Heinrich Pudor’s article ‘Nudity in Art and Life’ published in the journal in 1906 evoked the ‘nudity’ of Ancient Greece:

[The] most important works of Greek antiquity, in spite of the Aphrodite of Melos, are representations of men and youths. For if one could still create in so much later a time such an admirably exalted work as The Praying Boy, what works must the older classical period have created, which chose for itself the powerful figures of the epics of Homer as models? Already the pediment figures of the Parthenon show wonderful works of the beauty of the male body, above all the youth symbolising Mount Athos at sunset, which reminds one of Alcibiades as he reclined next to Socrates on the couch. In the Aeginetan sculptures artistic freedom is not yet excluded, man was not yet conscious of his body, while he already coquettes with his body in the Pergamon sculptures, lets his muscles be tested, as it were, his behind turned out, with its well-known passionate possibilities.\textsuperscript{349}

The connections between the anti-establishment nature of the youth movement, its exclusively adolescent male fraternity in its first decade, and the sexualisation of the male body were exemplified by the writings of Hans Bluher, who joined the youth movement at age fourteen. Bluher, who at age twenty-two wrote the first history of the Wandervogel, had exhibited extreme right-wing tendencies, but who also represented the youth movement as a manifestation of eroticism. Laqueur notes that ‘[friendships] between boys that were not entirely asexual or purely platonic were not


rare’ among students who participated in the youth movement but Bluher ‘asserted that homoerotic friendships, fostered by same-sex segregation education in Wilhelminian Germany, were essential for the cohesion and popularity of the Wandervogel’. The effect of Bluher’s writing was confounding for the youth movement, as Laqueur notes:

Most youth leaders thought that Bluher made many young men conscious – and self-conscious – about the erotic nature of their friendships with others. And since most of them could not tolerate Bluher’s opinion that such relations were desirable, but shared the public detestation of them as unnatural and despicable, they found themselves in an unexpected moral dilemma.

Thomas Waugh notes the influence of the German Frei Korper Kultur movement, translated as Free Body Culture, which reflected the aims of the Wandervogel, but incorporated the necessity of invigorating nudism. Waugh states:

The FKK’s platform and vision were simple. The abuses of industrial capitalist civilisation could be challenged by fundamental changes in attitudes to the body, to health, and to clothing. The ritual of the male bath – in lake and sea, sun and wind – would be a therapy not only for the consumptive urban body but also for society as a whole, washing away the social corruptions of vanity, shame, hypocrisy and immorality. The naked human body, honestly revealed and celebrated, was both a symbol and icon of the FKK.

A culture of printed matter accompanied the movement, including naked images of males and females, but often, groups of young men were photographed together, their body display, like that exemplified in the works of Eakins, as discussed earlier, a symbol for an invigorating connection between nakedness, virility, and nature. Clearly

351 Oosterhuis, "Homosexual Emancipation in Germany before 1933: Two Traditions." p.123. New citation – section title?
physically mature, these men were also obviously young – at the youthful late adolescent ‘peak’ of their masculine physicality.

This burgeoning sense of youthful, athleticised body display, and its appeals to the sexualised body, was exemplified in the post second world war phenomenon of physique culture in North America. The photographs of models in the magazines generated by this culture celebrated muscularity and athleticism, often thinly veiling homoeroticised imperatives. The ‘alibi’ of body building, ‘artistic’ photography, and nudist culture allowed for sexualised images of young men to circulate with impunity. Bob Mizer’s Los Angeles based Physique Pictorial was the magazine of the Athletic Model Guild founded in 1945. The first issue of the magazine, produced in November 1951 featured photographs of young men in athletic poses, and made available photosets for order. Images of models in the August 1952 issue include photographs of a young man, standing side-on, wearing a ‘posing pouch’, with the caption: ‘Peter Gordon, Age 19, Ht 6’, Wt 170#. A former art student at U.C.L.A., he is now an U.S. Air Corps cadet’; and of a young man, naked and turned with his buttocks to the camera, with the caption: ‘Forrester Millard at 17, Ht.5’6 1/2”, Wt. 127#, Waist 27”, Neck 14”, Chest 43”, Biceps 14”, Forearm 12”, Thigh”, Calf 14”, hips 33”. Forrester is now 22 and a member of the U.S. Paratroopers. While he has gained bulk he has lost very little of his early beautiful definition which made him so popular as an artists’ model.354 These captions, with their detailed descriptions of the dimensions of various parts of the body, appealed to the imperatives of body-building, while also enabling the imaging of the subject’s body in real space – as an entity that might be measured by physical touch. Most of the models featured in Physique Pictorial were aged between eighteen and twenty-two, with small variations in either direction. A number of models are aged sixteen, and a few aged fifteen, although these models were always shown wearing briefs or posing pouches. There were a small number of unique exceptions. In the Spring 1958 issue, a photograph of a boy wearing a posing pouch, cowboy hat and boots, is identified as Jimmy Nelson, aged eleven. The caption states of Jimmy:

Being raised on a farm in Tennessee, he gets lots of hard work and even if he never touches a weight or hears about a protein pill, will probably grow up to have a magnificent build. Commercial prints not available, but please let Physique Pictorial know if you feel prints of such youthful subjects would have inspirational value to other young fellows.  

The April 1961 issue includes a photograph of an adolescent boy named as Earl Deane, described as aged fourteen, with the requisite body measurements, and captioned: ‘All-around athlete, active in football, swimming, basketball and wrestling.’ Earl is shown standing naked in the shower, turned side-on but revealing his backside to the camera. From January 1969 the models in Physique Pictorial posed nude and the graphic art became more explicitly homoerotic. During this time, many models aged seventeen and eighteen posed for the magazine and from December 1979 until its demise in 1990, many models aged eighteen and nineteen posed sporting erections. From its first nude issue in 1969 the magazine offered increasingly overt homoerotic content, no longer veiled by the ‘pure’ body display of the physical culture and muscle-building movements. Models were increasingly shown in groups of two, or posing nude in situations where the unexpected presence of nakedness causes erotic tension such as young men in the guise of cowboys or bikers. A unique example of this appears in the January 1970 issue, the second to feature nude models, where twenty-five year old Gary Edward Scott, who ‘usually works as a gas station attendant’ is photographed in a U.S. Navy sailor outfit, seated on a bench against a wall, apparently asleep with his arms folded across his chest. His pants and underpants, however, are pulled down around his ankles, his spread legs revealing his genitals to the viewer. This image, operating as it does outside of the framework of the body-display as muscle-pose, and without revealing the models’ own muscular body, also incorporates the action of undressing – either the fantasy of an unwittingly undressed subject, or of a subject deliberately exposing himself – and is therefore purposefully erotic.

The typical descriptive inclusions (now an Air Corps cadet, or a Paratrooper) fostered the imagining of these boys in an active and typically all-male environment, where homosocial interaction could feasibly become actively homosexual. Indeed, Physique Pictorial included graphic art works of exclusively homosocial environments where the promise of ‘masculine’ homoeroticism could be played out. In his introduction to the 1997 reprint of the Physique Pictorial magazines, Walter E. Stanley notes that, in addition to photographs:

[Physique Pictorial] regularly featured such non-photographic, highly erotic, male-oriented art work. [Including] the smooth-lined, oil-painted beauty of George Quaintance’s seductively handsome, dark-haired, lithe, almond-eyed, worldly young men and Harry Bush’s delicately powerful drawings of musccularly bulging, cute-faced, innocently mischievous ‘California’ boys.\(^{358}\)

The late-adolescent scenario of the college locker-room or frat-house initiation ritual provided an ideal fantasy site for sexualising the adolescent male. Typically aged eighteen to twenty-two, college boys’ ‘horseplay’ and the erotic potential of the sport change-room, appeared as a fantasy site in Physique Pictorial from 1953, an example being Fred Matthews’s graphic art work of two college boys forcibly paddling a third, who wears only white jocks and socks.\(^{359}\) Harry Bush’s graphic art works, in particular, focused on the late adolescent as a desirable and eroticised subject. First appearing in Physique Pictorial in 1965, his drawings of snub-nosed muscled boys recalling the artistic style of American popular artist Norman Rockwell, often involved high school or college themes. The cover of Physique Pictorial of January 1966 features a Bush drawing of a youthful ‘Camp Counsellor’ seated spread-legged and wearing only bulging briefs and flip-flops, casting a stern gaze at the viewer who occupies the imaginative space of the counsellor’s male teenage charge. Other of Bush’s drawings involve late-adolescents seated casually, naked, in change-rooms, masturbating, or in sexual scenarios with their ‘coach’.\(^{360}\)

\(^{359}\) Ibid. Issue volume 3, number 3, August 1953. Unpag.
\(^{360}\) The codes of heteronormative masculinity and hard masculine stereotypes engaged by the homoerotic fantasies inaugurated by photographs and drawings in Physique Pictorial establish complex economies of homosocial projection and homoerotic desire. For an analysis of physique culture in relation to the discourse of
Following this trajectory, which locates the representation of adolescent masculinity within the framework of a movement from ‘romantic’ and ‘natural’ notions of homosociality through an identification with the athletic and muscularised male body display of the physical culture movement, and its alibis for homosexual desire, images such as those in Physique Pictorial represent the adolescent male body within an economy of male homosexual desire. This reveals, in effect, a fetishisation of the adolescent male body whose homosexual value resides in its innocence, as well as its youthful athleticism. This innocence might be enjoyed by the homosexual viewer for its own sake, as a narcissistic or nostalgic prompt to reverie. It can also reveal an obsession with the sexuality of late adolescence, manifest for example in the subjectivity of the ‘twink’ which, within the fetish economy of twenty-first century gay pornography refers to actors and models who are conspicuously boyish, usually aged from eighteen to twenty-one. Michael Bronski has suggested that: ‘Youth is equated with innocence and is therefore not stereotypically gay.’361 However, the complexity of the articulation of ‘innocence’ that might be manifest in the homosociality of male adolescents, in relation to the concept of ‘gayness’, can conceivably operate so that the concept of ‘gayness’ is refused – or more simply ignored – as a general defining aspect of sexual identification. Theoretically, aside from a conscious identification with ‘being gay’, as that is culturally defined, the homosociality that since the twentieth century, has come to be a defining aspect of the representation of the adolescent male body, simply absorbs such a distinction. This absorption, in itself, can be seen to signal a transcendent aspect to masculinity, since the adolescent male – as he is represented in image and sociology since the twentieth century - articulates sexualised behaviours that incorporate an outward heterosexualised masculinity, as well as incorporating homosocial body display, performed for the benefit of his male peers.

The images in magazines such as Physique Pictorial facilitate the fantasy of homosexual desire – for the viewer of the images – as essentially normalised. The pictured subject’s body display for the male viewer engages a range of positive

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outcomes. The male viewer is invited to appreciate the muscular and youthful vigour of the adolescent male subject as an example of ‘health-full’ sensibility. The detailed captions provided for photographs in Physique Pictorial serve to articulate a pedagogic role in looking at the photographs of bodies; they act as evidence of instruction for the viewer, showing the results of physical training to be copied. This register of communication is initially based upon narcissistic identification. An adolescent male looking at photographs of other adolescent males can make a positive and desiring identification based upon vitality. In this manner, even as the detailed captions which describe measurements of various dimensions of the subject’s body draw close attention to the body’s surfaces, they serve to provide information which is instructional about physicality. At the same time, the photographs of the adolescent males in Physique Pictorial are purposefully designed to be consumed by the viewer. Beyond narcissistic projection, the bodies on display facilitate a sexualised desire that unfolds from an ‘innocent’ economy of intra-male body display as well as the imagined or remembered conception of the adolescent male (or of the self as adolescent male) as exhibiting an intensely libidinal character, of ‘discovering’ adult sexual desire. The male viewer of these images is invited to move beyond the narcissistic or nostalgic projection of wanting to emulate the subjects he looks at (Clark’s ‘to be the kids’), towards the imagining of sharing their subjective space, either as an imagined equal participating in the homosocial activities of the intramale sharing of athleticised body display, prowess and pride; or as the viewer as himself, entering the imaginative space of the image or taking the adolescent male subject from the photographic space and engaging with him in a shared imaginative space. The sexualised fantasy that is inaugurated must remain essentially personalised, and would reflect the spectrum of erotic and sexualised tastes and desires. To assume that images of adolescent males reproduced in journals such as Physique Pictorial appeal exclusively to ‘hebephiles’ or ‘ephebophiles’, men whose sexual interest is in boys aged typically from twelve to eighteen years, is to reduce the broad signifying capacities of images of athleticised and sexualised adolescent males to the functionality of catalysts of pathological desire.362 To privilege the simplified

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362 Jane Nunez offers a review of recent literature on ephebophilia, and presents case studies and treatment therapies for male ephebophiles in her article. Nunez usefully discusses the distinctions between ephebophilia and pedophilia, and notes the distinction between studies of ephebophilia based on criminology as distinct from psychology. She cites from a range of international studies, including liberal studies aimed at fostering satisfactory relationship outcomes between men and adolescent boys. See Jane Nunez, "Outpatient Treatment of the Sexually Compulsive Ephebophile," Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity 10 (2003).
economy of ephebophilia is to deny the complexity of symbolic readings such images allow.

Returning to Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity, the registers of the sexualisation of the adolescent male body operate as a physically and emotionally desired condition of ‘normaley’, evident in Clark’s close analysis of pubertal signs. But it is also played out through overt – and often aggressive – heterosexual performance. Clark’s retrospective fantasy of ‘going through puberty’ at age fourteen ‘normally’ culminates in a sexual fantasy involving his sister’s friends:

I know how much hair I have on my dick, I have a little hair on my legs, and I have just a little patch of hair under my arms and I have a sister who’s having a slumber party and she’s got five or six seventeen year old girls. I’m the younger brother. And they get me to take my clothes off and I dance around for them and they’re playing with me and I get to fuck them and they sit on my face and I’m eating their pussy and...

In Clark’s 1983 artist book *Teenage Lust*, his pubertal fantasy is intensely heterosexual, and hegemonically informed. A typed page reproduced in the book, signed and dated ‘1974 Larry Clark’, reads:

Since I became a photographer I always wanted to turn back the years, always wished I had a camera when I was a boy. Fucking in the back seat, gangbangs with the pretty girl all the other girls in the neighbourhood hated. The fat girl next door who gave me blow jobs after school and I treated her mean and told all my pals. We kept count up to about three hundred the times we fucked her in the eighth grade. I got the crabs from Babs. Albert who said ‘No I’m first, she’s my sister.’ Once when I fucked after Bobby Hood (ol’ horse dick) I was fucking hair an’ air. A little rape. In 1972 and 73 the kid brothers in the neighbourhood took me with them in their teen lust scene. It took me back.

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Like the sensationalised representations of adolescent males that Clark draws upon in his collages in *The Perfect Childhood*, this passage confirms a strongly stereotypical construction of young male identity, conditioned by the ‘hardness’ of extreme hegemonic culture. The images in the book around this quote, however, reveal the more complex ramifications for Clark’s representation of adolescent masculinity. A photograph titled ‘Self portrait with teenagers’ shows an adult Clark, naked with two naked boys, beneath a cascading waterfall; and another image shows the two boys with a naked girl. The cover image is a photograph of a naked boy and girl ‘making out’ on the back seat of a car, the couple kissing and the girl masturbating the boy. A photograph captioned ‘Teenager asleep, Oklahoma City 1975’ shows a shirtless adolescent boy reclined on a bed, his arms raised to show his under-arm hair, an erection under his jeans. And a photograph of a naked blond boy lies on a mattress on a wooden floor, one arm raised above his head, displaying his mature genitals to the camera. The boy in this picture, captioned ‘Runaway, California’ reappears in a sequence in *The Perfect Childhood*, where, over twenty-seven pages, he is fellated by an older woman. While these displays of adolescent sexuality are evidently heterosexual, Clark’s own male observance and recording of them, and the appeal to homosociality in some of the images, suggests a complex reading of sexuality that might best be described as pansexual. Rather than identify with the exclusive categories of heterosexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality – as might be the suggestion of the sexual lives of Marty and Bobby in *Bully*, for example – Clark’s representation of the sexualisation of the adolescent male body, in its own performance, and within the framework of Clark’s analysis and engagement through representation, operates across a complex, open and contradictory sexual economy.

In Clark’s book *The Perfect Childhood* the closing sequence of photographs focuses on the pubertal attributes of an adolescent male. The sequence includes close-up images of the boy’s armpit, his soft facial hair, and the trail of hair from his navel to his groin. The same boy is represented at the start of the book. He is shown shirtless in Clark’s studio with his arms raised and clutching a chain that hangs from the ceiling and in the street, his hands on his hips and his foot resting on his skateboard. In each of these pictures he wears a pair of shorts that ride low on his hips revealing the V of his lower abdominal muscles and the top of his groin area. This clothing style reflects a trend of dress worn by adolescent males in the 1990s and early twenty-first century,
one which serves to eroticise his body through the revelation and transit of undress it manifests. While the boy in Clark’s photographs wears no underwear, this form of dress often incorporates the visibility of undershorts or briefs, whose waistband is visible above the sagging pants, the wearing of which allows a further revelation of the buttocks. It is accepted that this form of dress, as worn by white male adolescents, has its origins in black American hip-hop culture of the early 1990s. Malcolm Barnard states that:

When [hip-hop artists] Run-D.M.C. appeared in their unlaced Adidas sneakers, they were making a reference to the way in which shoelaces were routinely removed from prisoners in American jails, in order to prevent inmates from hanging themselves. The fashion for oversized and baggy trousers which displayed the waistband of one’s underwear also originated in jails: belts were removed from inmates for the same reason that laces were removed, with the result that prisoner’s trousers were worn low and that they sagged, thus revealing the underwear. Taking these styles and using them outside of prison may be seen as a way of appropriating and commenting on the practices of what is perceived and suffered as an unjust system, while at the same time expressing solidarity with their incarcerated brothers.  

For non-black boys, the cultural symbolism of the genealogy of this style of dress has been lost, and it has been adopted simply as fashion, while at the same time, recuperating the casual nature of loose-fitting clothing and attitude as exemplified by surfing culture. John Irwin notes that a popular dress style for surfers in the late 1940s was to wear ‘sailor pants’ with no shirt. The loose fitting and ‘baggy’ clothing style worn by young male skateboarders as a popular fashion in the 1990s, has its origins in surfer style dress. In Clark’s 2003 film Ken Park, the adolescent male character Claude is introduced with a still frame image of him standing, shirtless, wearing low-slung pants so that his under-shorts are visible. In one scene, Claude observes his

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366 John Irwin notes that early manifestations of surfer clothing were derived from the beach environment, and thus expressed the casual nature of this environment. John Irwin, "Surfing: The Natural History of an Urban Scene," *Urban Life and Culture* 2, no. 2 (1973), p.141.
father exercising with weights. Claude’s father asks him to lift weights, and Claude declines, prompting his father to verbally assault him. Accusing Claude of being a ‘fairy,’ his father states that ‘sometimes I look at you and I feel ashamed,’ and, gesturing to Claude’s clothing style of low-slung pants and visible underwear, says ‘You can’t even wear your pants right.’ In the context of the film, Claude’s dress style can be understood as simply representing fashion, rather than as a direct affront to his father’s sensibilities, but the implication is that this style of dress compromises Claude’s ‘manliness’ as his father perceives it.

The cultural symbolism of the sagger style of wearing low slung baggy pants complicates straightforward readings of heterosexualised identification precisely because it eroticises the male body in an assumable deliberate manner, which, within the economy of heterosexual desire, is conventionally aligned with the female body. That this style of dress is taken up by adolescent boys and young men problematises simple readings of the meanings of body display in this context. In displaying the body as an athleticised site, the sagger style articulates a homosocial body display, and the inherent competitiveness and appeal to mutual admiration that this evokes. The style, therefore, enables boys to admire each others’ bodies within a culturally sanctioned network of intra-male body display. Within gay culture, along with the category of the ‘twink’, the appellation of ‘sagger’ is applied to young males who wear low-slung trousers or shorts to reveal their underwear, or who wear low-slung trousers or shorts without underwear, revealing the top of the groin from the front, sometimes with their pubic hair visible, and the top of their buttocks from behind. As an erotic category, the sagger, often represented in relation to the persona of the adolescent male skateboarder, is a definable identity type, signalled by websites such as ‘Saggerskaterz.com’ which depict boys – either paid models, or in anonymous public photographs, revealing their bodies in sagger style. The tagline of the Saggerskaterz website is ‘sag low...skate naked!’ and is also a portal for other websites that feature twinks and saggars.\(^{368}\) Unauthorized copies of Clark’s photographs have also been found on anonymous websites that feature images of skaters targeted at the gay community. In the ‘Skater’ galleries of the German website ‘YoungsterGalerie,’ images taken from various sources depict adolescent boys

\(^{368}\) See http://www.saggerskaterz.com/ [cited 2006].
performing skateboarding moves, or dressed in skater style and include uncredited images of the shirtless skater boy from Clark’s *The Perfect Childhood*.\(^{369}\) The circulation of Clark’s images in this context emphasises their erotic potential, but removes any possibility of the acknowledgement of Clark’s deconstructionist strategies in the production and presentation of his images.

It has been established that the representation of the adolescent male body as it is represented in Clark’s work incorporates eroticised sexuality because the adolescent male body is capable of sexualising itself. Clark’s desire ‘to be the kids’ is an identificatory action that resolves his own perceived lack of physicalised pubertal development and sexualised activity by allowing this in his subjects. As has also been stated with regard to images of young men in the magazine *Physique Pictorial*, there is an invitation to the (male) viewer to enter the imagined space of the photograph’s scenario and share it with the youthful male subjects it depicts. The possibilities for ‘innocent’ or eroticised imagined congress and narrative are limited only by the imagination of the viewer, and to make the assumption that the images of young men presented by *Physique Pictorial* appeal exclusively or mainly to men with ephebophilic tendencies is to restrict the complex readings the images offer and the complexity of identificatory, sympathetic, admiring, and sexualised connections viewers may bring to these images. Clark’s photographs allow an equally open and elusive relationship with their viewer, but at the same time, because they represent highly charged sexual behaviour, or dwell on details of the adolescent male body in an intimate manner, they also engage a particular libidinal economy that values the adolescent male body as a site of sexualised investment. While Clark’s images serve to challenge normative discourses and representations of puberty in adolescent males, and expose the power of media-generated images of adolescent males as sexualised subjects, his images also enter into a discourse of sexual desire by an adult man for an adolescent boy. As has been noted in Chapter Three, Clark’s re-presentation of poster images of teen stars Matt Dillon and Jay Ferguson emphasises their erotic potential. While the posters already present these young males as objects of sexual desire, Clark’s re-presentation of the images further enhances the solicitation inherent in these images. The imagined relationship between the adolescent male and the adult

\(^{369}\) See [http://www.straightboy.de/free/skater/skater_04.html](http://www.straightboy.de/free/skater/skater_04.html) and [http://www.straightboy.de/free/skater/skater_06.html](http://www.straightboy.de/free/skater/skater_06.html) [cited 2006].
male is also acknowledged by Clark in relation to his 1980s photographs of street hustlers in New York: ‘[The] way a kid looks at a man, and the way, when he’s looking at the camera, he’s actually looking at a man. [It’s] what the kid is offering, that’s what I’m getting. The picture is of what the kid is offering. The kid is offering himself.’\textsuperscript{370} This particular group of photographs represent a cultural situation where sexual relationships between adolescent males and adult males are socially accepted to a degree – within the cultural framework of street hustling. As Theo Sandfort, Edward Brongersma and Alex van Naerssen note regarding the cultural contingency of intergenerational sexual relationships: ‘As the position of boys in society and the view about sexuality change, the phenomena [of man-boy relationships] acquires different forms and contents.’\textsuperscript{371} The authors acknowledge the diversity of this phenomena and its inclusiveness, at different times, of ephebophilia or hebephilia.\textsuperscript{372} In the particular instances of Clark’s photographs of the ‘rural’ boy in the artist book \textit{1992} and the ‘skater’ boy in the artist book \textit{The Perfect Childhood} Clark’s representation of the adolescent male body can be understood as engaging with the libidinal economy of adult male sexual attraction for the adolescent male. The cooption of Clark’s image of the ‘skater’ boy on to a website designed as erotic stimulus for adult males indicates that the image has the capacity to arouse. It could be understood that these particular groups of images by Clark incorporate active triggers or signifiers that articulate sexual attractiveness without engaging the visual tropes of explicit sexual imagery or pornography. Within the economy of ephebophilic or hebophilic desire, we might understand these images as signifiers. Both boys are shown as possessing the visible signs of onset physicalised puberty: facial fuzz, newly-grown under-arm hair, and in the case of the rural boy, physically mature genitals. Clark’s camera captures details of the skater boy’s body in close-up: an armpit, a fuzzy lip, a thin trail of hair from the boy’s navel into the waistband of his low-slung shorts. The photographs are also replete with suggestive clues that allow the construction in the viewers’ imagination of personality and even physical

\textsuperscript{370} Larry Clark, \textit{Teenage Lust} (New York: Larry Clark, 1983). Unpag.
\textsuperscript{372} Sandfort et al state: ‘The diversity of the phenomena is reflected in related concepts conceiving man-boy relationships. These concepts are: pedophilia, neophilia, philopede, pederasty, ephebophilia, hebephilia, Greek love, pedagogical eros, man/boy love, and intergenerational sex. The meaning of all these terms differs slightly, partly in coherence with the age limit of the persons to whom attraction is experienced and with the gender.’ Ibid. p.7.
presence. Clark depicts the boys as physically active, playful, playing at ‘manhood’, mischievous, boy-like. He also provides sensory clues: the rural boy is shown showering and towelling dry so that the imagination of the sensation of fresh cleanliness is apparent. The skater boy’s body carries droplets of sweat, and he wears dirty white socks. Clark’s photographs, then, enact a cultural libidinal economy that involves recognisable elements particular to adult male desire for adolescent males (as in the complex symbolism of the ‘sagger’), while often amplifying the erotic potential of his subjects through the visual style he employs.

The popularity of the style of wearing low-hanging or sagging pants for adolescents may be understood as one that emphasises their own newly-found power of sexualised and athleticised identity, and enables a perceived empowerment in this gesture, one which is aligned with the acquisition of athleticism and burgeoning sexual maturity. A twentieth century image of the urban male revealing his underwear in this manner can be found in the 1948 painting Playground by North American artist Paul Cadmus.373 The painting depicts groups of male youths and one woman in an embrace with a young man, in an urban baseball practice arena. In the foreground of the picture stands a shirtless blond youth with his hands tucked into the waist of his pants and underpants. His side on stance shows that the top button of his pants is undone and the top of his white underwear is clearly visible. The top of his backside and the top of his pubic area are made visible by his gesture of hooking his thumbs into his pants and underwear. The painting articulates a theme of adolescent homosociality in that it represents a group of racially diverse boys standing with their arms around each other, one also with the top button of his pants undone. The sexualisation of the boys is signalled by the revelation afforded by the sagging pants of the blond boy, and by the phallic suggestion of a baseball bat held between the legs of another.

This style of dress also enables the possibility of objectification, of the adolescent male body presented purely as a spectacle for the investment of sexual desire by others. The implications of this are that the adolescent male body, even through an unwitting or misunderstood body display based upon the imperatives of fashion, becomes publicly available through this display, and is disempowered precisely

373 Paul Cadmus, Playground, 1948, egg tempera on pressed wood panel, 23 1/2 x 17 1/2 inches, 59.69 x 44.45 cm. Collection Georgia Museum of Art, The University of Georgia.
because it signifies an essential and sexualised value. In this instance, any sense of individual inner life is reinvested with the power of exploitation. This may be a singular effect of adolescent male body display, but it is a powerful one. Little research has been carried out on the manifestation and effects of objectification on adolescent boys and men. Within a group of men and women of the average age of nineteen years, it was found that women suffered the effects of body objectification more strongly than men, and that the self-objectification of men may stem from expectations in addition to appearance, such as achievement or activity. The powerful and subtle impact of media images has also been found as contributing to the self-objectification of women and men. For adolescent males, it can be suggested that the traumatic consequences that stem from self-objectification, while they may incorporate issues about body-image, might be more firmly rooted within the expectations of participation within the culture of hegemonic masculinity.

Clark’s depiction of suicide as a powerful trope of transcendence within the representation of adolescent masculinity engages with normalised constructions of adolescent masculinity in order to challenge and destabilise them. That his representations of adolescent male suicide engage with symbolic ramifications of the sexualisation of the adolescent male body, reveal a complex play of signification. As is evident from the critical silence that surrounds Clark’s suicide images from the artist book 1992, confusion about the effect of these images, their romanticised and aestheticised construction, and their documentary appearance, suggests that the display of these images, or their engagement in an open forum is the theoretical suggestion that Clark himself, or the images in and of themselves, act to promote, sensationalise, or romanticise male youth suicide as something to be desired.

As Bataille’s formulation of eroticism implies the desire for ‘continuity’ that is found in the erotic act, and also in death, Clark’s representation of an adolescent boy acting out suicide scenarios in his book 1992 can be understood as a metaphor for the desire for ‘continuity’ of the self – a kind of promise of ‘wholeness’. Clark’s representation


evokes the symbolism of martyrdom of Sebastian in a willing act of self-immolation. The boy's 'drapery' of white shorts and singlet invokes Perniola's symbolic conception of drapery in relation to the representation of the 'resurrected body' and suggests that, through suicide, and its promise of transcendence, the boy becomes 'innocent at last'. 376 Importantly, Clark's images of the boy enacting suicide serves both to counter the domain of adult sexuality to which he has entered by returning him to an idealised state of innocence, while allowing his body to become eroticised in this process. The representation of the act of suicide in Clark's work can be understood as a symbolic disavowal of all that normalised adolescent masculinity promises, and all the constrictions it enforces. The representation of young male suicide in Clark's work, then, pushes against the limits of transcendence as it is held in check by the culture of hegemony, and moves into the domain of transcendence through death, as it allows an escape from these very limits. In Clark's 2003 film Ken Park, the adolescent boy whose name gives the film its title, is shown in the opening scenes seating himself within the environment of a skate-park, setting up a video camera and recording the act of his own suicide - of shooting himself in the head. The apparently casual reference to suicide in Clark's confession of 'late' adolescence, too, implicates the act as an escape from the normalised sociological discourses of adolescent masculinity: 'I remember sitting in the bathroom when I was fifteen and looking down at myself and saying if I don't get some hair on my dick by next summer I'm going to kill myself.' 377 Suicide, as a major aspect of the articulation of adolescent masculinity, is deployed by Clark, but its representation is complex.

In describing Clark's artist book 1992 in the exhibition brochure accompanying the survey exhibition of Clark's work at the ICP in 2005, the curator Brian Wallis elides any mention of suicide as a subject of this group of Clark's images:

Clark's third book, 1992 (1992), presents a series of portraits that he made of five teenage boys. In trying to represent both the everyday realities and the extraordinary circumstances of violence, Clark hired these models to pose for him and invent scenes. While continuing his exploration of the boundaries of

377 Larry Clark interviewed by Mike Kelley. Kelley, "In Youth Is Pleasure." p.84.
acceptability in representing the intersection of sex, violence and youth, *1992* strips away virtually all of the narrative framework of his earlier books. While the earlier photographs in *1992* echo the look of *Teenage Lust* in their subject matter and intimate documentary style, the later portraits were posed in Clark’s studio and show the subject isolated against a background, his actions clearly directed by the photographer. Clark has said he was trying to get away from the perfect picture, so that it was more real simply to use every image in the order in which it was taken. These images are presented in the book in page after page of nearly identical frame, seriality and repetition that, alongside the clearly scripted actions of the subject, signal Clark’s move toward film.\(^{378}\)

While describing the constructed nature of these images, and how the subject is placed visually within the frame of the photograph, and even evoking ‘the extraordinary circumstances of violence’ Wallis declines to mention what the subject’s ‘actions’ are – that they depict suicide - as if this was inconsequential to the import of the images. The exhibition itself offered no explanation or extended context for this series of work as it was simply omitted and the book displayed – with its cover closed – in a display cabinet. Certainly these images of Clark’s are constructed. And, as with his collage works in the later book *The Perfect Childhood*, his representation of adolescent male suicide reveals its artificial nature, at the same time, creating a complex relationship between adolescent masculinity, suicide and eroticism in order to establish a critical analysis.

Since Clark’s work engages with the representation of adolescent masculinity in order to expose its inherently constructed nature – in the sexualisation and demonisation of the adolescent male in media-generated imagery, in the constricting definition of normalised adolescence in sociological discourse, and in the power of cultures of hegemonic masculinity – his representation of suicide must be understood within this overall deconstructionist strategy. Clark has described the artifice involved in the creation of the sequence of photographs in *1992* depicting a boy hanging himself. Clark says:

So then I tried to see what it would look like if I set up a hanging. It was very hard to do. First of all, I couldn’t rig it on the pipes in my studio because the pipes would fall. Anyway, we were just playing around, and we tried that, and I like that photograph even though it’s obviously a set-up photograph, I just like the way the kid looked.379

The suicide photographs establish a direct relationship with the viewer – they are meant to be looked at, and the viewer’s looking might extend that of Clark’s own position as photographer. His liking ‘the way the kid looked’ privileges an aesthetic response to the images, it acknowledges their status as art objects, and while they might fabricate the appearance of documentary and its attendant appeals to realism, Clark’s suicide pictures are designed to operate as signifiers. Their evocations of eroticism, beauty and violence are set into play in order to destabilise normalised and assumptive responses to the representation of suicide and by extension to adolescent masculinity itself. The images represent adolescent male suicide as a trope of adolescent masculinity to be dismantled and deconstructed, and as a significant tool for activating a sense of transit. They engage the metaphoric and physicalised transit from pre-puberty to adolescence as it is manifest in the body of the subject, the implication of the eroticisation of the adolescent male body and its articulation via the state of transit signified by the revelation of the boys’ genitals, and reinforce the concept of transcendence as an animating trope of adolescent masculinity, in this case afforded and represented by the transit from life to death.

For Van Sant, in Elephant, the drive towards the possibility of transcendence is manifest through the violent actions of the two adolescent male protagonists Eric and Alex. Their actions, which can be understood as the consequence of the pressures of the culture of hegemonic masculinity, seek out ‘surrogate victims’ who represent a normalised state, and attempt to violate the disciplinary and normalising functions of the institution which defines them – that of the American high school. It is possible to incorporate the idea of self-sacrifice into this economy, and to read it as a discursive suicidal field. The boys know that their actions will lead to their own self-immolation:

that their own deaths, or incarceration and death, will be the logical outcome of their actions, and as such, the extenuated form of self-sacrifice their actions invoke, may also be considered within the ambit of suicide as a signifying trope.

Clark and Van Sant clearly locate the operation of transcendence in relation to the body of the adolescent male. This is in contrast to the representation of youth suicide by American artist Banks Violette, for example, whose works have dealt with the relationship between youth masculinity, violence and suicide through abstract means. Banks’s *Anthem (to future suicide)* 2004, consists of a large metal ‘billboard’ structure affixed with horizontal rows of fluorescent lighting. His *Anthem (twin suicide)* 2005, consists of two metal frameworks mounted with vertical fluorescent lighting. These works conceptualise youth suicide as a purely experiential mode of expression. These structures are stripped-back, severe and imposing, while simultaneously defined by coherent internal structural values and the qualities of light itself. Violette’s structures impose a mathematical logic upon the subject of suicide, while creating a numinous or sublime effect. Clark’s representation of male youth suicide, by representing the performance of its manifestation through photography, firmly locates the act and its symbolism in the body of the individual – which is explicitly the body of the adolescent male. Van Sant establishes the body of the adolescent male as an entity that is constructed by the spatiality of his social environment, and for whom escape from the confines of this environment – as a transcendent act – implicates the sacrifice of others and of the self. Overwhelmingly, the adolescent male body is represented as a site of conflict.

Historical and sociological narratives of adolescent masculinity have continually represented its articulation and manifestation as a series of conflicts that encompass ideological, corporeal and ‘spiritual’ tropes. The advent of ‘boyology’ at the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century based its construction of adolescent masculinity upon the imperatives of ‘moral education’, an attempt to

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380 Violette’s structures evoke subtle references: the ‘basic’ hardware and electrical lighting components he uses to construct the works evokes an attendant ‘tough’ masculinity through an association with ‘blue collar’ work, as well as evoking the deconstruction of masculinity explored by artists such as Cady Noland, who has used similarly ‘raw’ and ‘masculine’ materials. Within the context of Violette’s broader practice, which has engaged with the symbolism of ‘heavy metal’ music, these structures take on the ‘spectacular’ aspect of rock-band stage sets. They also recall the transcendent aspects of work by American artist Dan Flavin (1933-1996) who used fluorescent light tubes in simple configurations and structures to evoke complex poetic and aesthetic sensations. See Banks Violette’s work at Team Gallery. [http://www.teamgal.com](http://www.teamgal.com). [cited 2006].
reconcile growing fears about unchecked youth masculinity and to provide its ideal conception. This ideal conception relied on the inculcation of the normalising values of hegemonic masculine culture. Whereas fifteenth century idealised representations of adolescent males served to obscure the troubling reality of collusive, self-satisfying adolescents in tension with the patriarchal order'\textsuperscript{381} and to promote paternal obedience and provide models of virtue, the twentieth century sociological conception of the male adolescent was based on a perceived need to actively engage adolescent males in behaviour that sought to normalise and control expressions of masculinity. The internal conflicts of adolescence were articulated by Hall in 1904:

The functions of every sense undergo reconstruction, and their relations to other psychic functions change, and new sensations, some of them very intense, arise, and new associations in the sense sphere are formed. [Sex] asserts its mastery in field after field, and works its havoc in the form of secret vice, debauch, disease, and enfeebled heredity, cadences the soul to both its normal and abnormal rhythms, and sends many thousand youth a year to quacks, because neither parents, teachers, preachers, or physicians know how to deal with its problems. Thus the foundations of domestic, social, and religious life are oftenest undermined.\textsuperscript{382}

The youth movements of the early twentieth century fused Christian morality with naturalised athleticism in an effort to develop an ideal' of young manhood, also evoking the complexities of homosocial sexualisation of the adolescent male body. The biological and sociological imperatives of pubertal development have continued to normalise physical and emotional development and as such have attempted to define adolescent masculinity in relation to set of identifiable and recognisable stages, establishing powerful normalising discourses of adolescent masculinity. The overarching operation of hegemonic masculinity – as a socio-psychological destiny' – has continued to define normative models of adolescent masculinity. In Clark's work, the underlying nature of conflict as a defining aspect of adolescent masculinity is constantly analysed and challenged so that the possibility of a transcendent

\textsuperscript{381} Fulton, "The Boy Stripped Bare by His Elders: Art and Adolescence in Renaissance Florence." p.33.
\textsuperscript{382} Hall, Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education. pp.xiv-xv.
discourse might be achieved. Clark’s own experience of pubertal development is at odds with normalised sociological data; his representation of adolescent males in his book 1992 appeals to the innocence of pre-pubertal identity while engaging with the performance of athleticised and sexualised adolescent male identities, the demonisation of adolescent males in media generated imagery is contrasted with a need for familial affection and understanding, and in Bully the distinctions between heterosexualised and homoerotic sexualisation are blurred. In Van Sant’s Elephant the imperatives of heteronormative and hegemonic masculine culture are challenged by the representation of adolescent males who exhibit a complex, creative and sensitive inner life. The controlling and normalising environment of the high school is rendered as a metaphysical space, and its own internal logic of disciplined and organised movement is pulled apart and reconstituted. For Clark and Van Sant, the imperative of sacrifice – of others and ultimately of the self – is conceptualised as a defining and necessary act for the adolescent male in its implication of transcendence and freedom. In every instance, conflict is the result of normalisation – and most significantly, of the normalising and constricting operation of the culture of hegemonic masculinity, as it seeks to define adolescent masculinity, and as such, results in damage and intense trauma.

The power of hegemonic masculine cultures to influence individual constructions of masculinity has been shown as implicit in social and psychological constructions of adolescent masculinity. Physical strength, aggression, heteronormativity, a proclivity towards violence, and the suppression of emotion and sensitivity are its outward symptoms. As Connell and Messerschmidt state: ‘The concept of hegemonic masculinity presumes the subordination of non-hegemonic masculinities’ which encompass any expression that might be perceived as feminine, soft, or creative and sensitive. Within adolescent masculinity, the ‘late’ onset of pubertal development, as well, and the innocence and softness that the pre-pubertal body evokes, can be considered as evoking a heterodox masculinity in relation to the sexualised, athleticised and ‘manly’ body of the physically developed adolescent male. Thus, the innocence represented by pre-pubertal males in Clark’s film Bully engages an alternative to the largely hegemonic masculine culture that they witness around them.

In Van Sant’s *Elephant*, the artistic, creative and sensitive pursuits of the characters of Elias and Alex, offer an alternative to the imperatives of hegemonic masculine culture, and as such, offer the possibility of transcending its limitations. The character of John, as he observes the violent actions of others, and engages in his own internal expression of devotion, also challenges the orthodox and stereotypical representation of the adolescent male.

It might appear that Clark and Van Sant’s appeal to the conflicted state of adolescent masculinity – and their interrogation of its various manifestations – evokes the articulation of loss. In Clark’s work the ‘ghost’ of innocence lost seems to haunt his articulation of adolescent masculinity. It figures in his representation of the desire for the innocence of pre-adolescence which is complicated by the equally powerful desire for the sexualised physical body of the adolescent. The evidence of soft facial hair visible on the upper lip of the boy Clark photographs standing in the shower in 1992 recalls the idealised purity of this signifying aspect of the beauty of male youth as it figures in Roman and Urdu poetry about the soft facial down of early adolescent boys’ cheeks – the *khat*. While simultaneously the image reveals the fully developed genitals of the boy as signifying his capacity for sexual action and desire – and as a sexualised subject to be desired. Clark laments the absence of his own sexualised adolescence due to his ‘late’ pubertal development, a paradoxical loss since his own pre-pubertal state was maintained while he desired the adolescent physicality afforded by a pubertally developed body. In *Bully* the character of Marty’s younger pre-pubertal brother, and the pre-pubertal boy who appears to Marty on the beach typify the innocent state that will soon be corrupted by the onset of physicalised adolescence, as demonstrated by the destructive actions of Marty and his adolescent peers. In a sequence of photographic images derived from television video footage in the artist book *Larry Clark*, the face of a pre-pubertal boy-victim is superimposed over the image of his adolescent murderer or abuser – both boys’ innocence lost. And Clark has raised the subject himself: ‘I think a lot of the work in [the books] has to do with the loss of innocence, innocence lost and what happens.’

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384 In this quote Clark is referring to his first two artist books *Tulsa* and *Teenage Lust*, however, through his stated identification with a boy in one of the images discussed but not identified in the interview, the concept of loss in relation to Clark’s identification can be applied to his later work. Larry Clark interviewed by Jutta Koether. Koether, "Larry Clark." p.41.
In Van Sant’s *Elephant* the perception of the loss of innocence is manifest in the violent actions of Alex and Eric. Their innocence is lost when they take on the role of killers, a normatively adult role. They surrender or lose their innocence through these actions and in the inevitability of their own death or incarceration within the fictive narrative space of the film, surrender or sacrifice the ‘normal’ progression of their adolescence. They are, essentially, also pre-sexualised, which emphasises their prototypical innocence. When they kiss each other before beginning their violent actions, Eric having stated ‘I’ve never even kissed anybody, have you?’ it is made clear that they are also about to sacrifice the innocence that this exchange engenders.

Judith Butler states that ‘loss must be marked and it cannot be represented; loss fractures representation itself and loss precipitates its own modes of expression’. Clark and Van Sant’s evocation of the loss of innocence that is a function of their representation of adolescent masculinity (which, all the while, conditions this innocence, and so its loss, as paradoxical – it is there and not there at once, mourned and discarded at once) is necessarily active. If loss can only be represented by what it has become, or what it is pitched against, in Clark and Van Sant’s work the innocence that is lost remains visible and actual in the figure of the pre-pubertal boy, or in the symbolic relationship of the adolescent boy to the angel as a figure defined by adolescent masculinity and transcendence. Any activation of melancholy – which would have to exist in the knowledge that innocence will inevitably be lost – becomes infused with and tempered by the overwhelming sense of the operation of transcendence. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian state that ‘melancholia paradoxically figures a certain space of delay as well as an anticipation of a place yet to come,’ which is marked in Clark and Van Sant’s articulation of adolescent masculinity as a place of transcendence.

If an air of melancholy infuses the scenarios that Clark and Van Sant create with regard to adolescent masculinity, it engages with a property of melancholy, which as


Hugo Letiche suggests, ‘isolates and destroys conformity’.\footnote{387} As Clark and Van Sant dismantle and reconstruct adolescent masculinity, they reveal at each turn its contradictions, and utilise these to challenge the power of normalising and restrictive representational paradigms. They show that the adolescent male’s capacity for the transcendence of the limitations imposed upon him are real, as are its consequences, because they draw upon the world of real events and the evidence it leaves as residue. In their work, more than the physical and psychological site of endless inner conflict, and the site of transhistorical imperative, the adolescent boy is specifically and particularly the locus of transcendence. His eroticised being, the physicality of his body, and his aggressive, passive and vulnerable states are all conditioned by the operation of transcendence. He is altogether real, a ghost, and an angel.

Conclusion

In arguing that transcendence is an identifying trope of the representation of adolescent masculinity in particular examples of visual art, this thesis reveals the stakes at play in such an assertion. Adolescent masculinity has been defined by contradiction. The operation of paradox within the construction of adolescent masculinity and in its articulation reveals a range of signifying capacities. A framework within which competing discourses of innocence and corruption, action and passivity, aggression and vulnerability continues to define the representation of adolescent masculinity so that its instability produces trauma as much as the possibility for redemption.

Historical narratives, twentieth century sociological discourses and media-generated representations of the adolescent male emphasise his delinquent and pathological tendencies. At the same time concurrent discourses in fifteenth to eighteenth century art, the youth movements of the early twentieth century and media-generated imagery of the late twentieth century construct the adolescent male as eminently innocent and pure, beautiful and sexually desirable.

In Clark’s work these paradoxical articulations of adolescent masculinity are continually re-presented, deconstructed and reconstructed in an effort to locate possibilities that might reconcile and come to terms with the conflicts these positions raise. In Van Sant’s film Elephant adolescent masculinity is scrutinised in relation to discourses of discipline and trauma in order to dismantle media-generated and sociological assumptions about the adolescent male’s behaviour and motivations.

For each of the artists, the transcendence of a range of constricting representational frameworks is a necessary and crucial outcome for the comprehension of adolescent masculinity and by extension its compassionate representation. In this sense Clark’s and Van Sant’s engagement with their subject matter is eminently responsible. Their engagement with adolescent masculinity disregards moral outcomes in order to privilege humanist ones. They seek to unravel the contradictions that define the adolescent male not only to expose the power of external social and cultural forces on
his identity construction, but to allow him a space of freedom. Their appeals to transcendence in its many forms is a transcending act in itself that has positive implications for the ways in which adolescent masculinity is assumed in the minds of those who encounter their work.

The culture of hegemonic masculinity by its nature restricts the articulation of compassion. An awareness of suffering, emotional pain and vulnerability, and a desire to resolve it is outside of the ambit of normative hegemonic masculine discourse. Clark and Van Sant seek to alleviate this situation in their appeals to heterodox articulations of adolescent masculinity.

In Clark’s work, transcendence operates in various ways. Within the corporeal and psychological manifestation of the body of the adolescent boy Clark sets into play a desire for the innocence of pre-adolescence and for the physicalised evidence of the signs of puberty and the sexual possibilities this signifies. As a young man in his mid twenties living in New Mexico, Clark’s reminiscences recall an idealised state. He writes:

So I got all the kids in the neighbourhood. They all love me. Teenagers. All the kids. I’m the guy with the moustache and the long hair living with a girlfriend in a nice house and doesn’t work and has money, and plays. I play. And I’m very healthy. So what I did all day long was play basketball. Play football, or play baseball. And I got to relive all my teenage years as a normal teenager, just a normal kid with all these real teenagers, but I’m older. So I get to relive it under these perfect conditions. And it was all real innocent and all real healthy and there was like hot springs all around and people would go.388

Absolved of the trauma of his ‘late’ pubertal maturity, Clark finds in an identification with other ‘teenagers’ an ideal and transcendent state of adolescent masculinity. This idealised state is manifest in his work through the constant deconstruction of what it is not. Clark’s re-presentation of media-generated images and cultural detritus of male adolescence and its reportage, fractured and recombined into collages and visual

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388 Clark, Teenage Lust. Unpag.
montages acts as an interrogation of, and an ongoing challenge to the normalising discourses of masculine cultural hegemony. His photographs seek out a space of openness that is not reactive to the hegemonic culture, but wishes for an articulation of adolescent male identity that rises above it. His photographs of the ‘suicide boy’ engage with conceptual understandings of sacrifice and eroticism, but they allow for a reading that encompasses a spiritual movement. Clark’s photographs of the boy standing naked in a shower, his body revealing the signs of his boyhood and developing manhood, is not nostalgic, sentimental or melancholic. While Clark understands the operation of loss and engages it in different ways in his work, the ideal and transcending state of adolescent masculinity that he appeals to must be regarded as ever-present and worthy of seeking out. This is a mission to which Clark’s work has been devoted.

The appeal to spiritual and metaphysical notions that Van Sant makes in his film Elephant engenders the adolescent male with the capacity to truly transcend the constrictions of his everyday environment. The integrity of the physical space that contains the adolescents, and the modes of order it implies is twisted upon itself and rendered soluble by Van Sant’s stylistic moves. The sacrifice that articulates an avenue for the transcendence of disciplinary control, and of the constricting expectations of identity formation is one that can be eternally played out. Like John’s angelic presence and its implications for his movement between orthodox and transcending psychological or spiritual realms, Van Sant’s motivation of heterotopic spatiality constructs his filmic space as relativity where the movement of time is fluid. Beyond the signifiers of transcendence within the films narrative, its very structure establishes a sense of freedom of movement that is eminently symbolic.

Implications for further research into aspects of the topic under discussion can be identified as a consequence of the analysis of adolescent masculinity that has been undertaken by the thesis. In surveying of the historical cultural and sociological construction of adolescent masculinity in Judeo-Christian Western culture, specific areas of research would further illuminate the topic. Fulton’s analysis of the representation of the adolescent male in Renaissance Florence provides important
insights into the cultural implications of his visual representation, and Bersani and Dutoit provide an original account of the operation of sexuality in relation to Caravaggio’s youthful subjects. However, additional research into the conventions of the representation of the adolescent male body in fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century European painting with reference to the coded symbolism of the absence of body hair would allow a more complex understanding of the articulation of adolescent masculinity as a site of innocence and sexualisation.

Despite the range of published research on Clark’s work and the 2005 survey of his art at the ICP there is a demonstrated need for a major scholarly exhibition and publication about his work that embraces its analysis of controversial representations with sensitivity and candour.

In providing an overview of the construction of adolescent masculinity in Judeo-Christian Western culture in relation to social, psychological and cultural frameworks, there is signalled the possibility for a more in-depth and wide ranging account of the development and representation of adolescent masculinity as an evolving and complex cultural formation.

Finally, what is at stake for the analysis of adolescent masculinity is the need for continued and informed exploration of the construction, representation and articulation of adolescent masculinity in order to foster a culture of understanding and compassion. As Clark and Van Sant reveal, the adolescent male is worthy of respect and love. He can be defined by beauty, is capable of articulating transcendence, and deserves the freedom that heterodox paradigms foster.

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389 Fulton, "The Boy Stripped Bare by His Elders: Art and Adolescence in Renaissance Florence."
390 Bersani and Dutoit, Caravaggio’s Secrets.
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Figure 1. Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, c.1615, oil on canvas, 57 1/2 x 44 1/2 inches, 146.05 x 113.03 cm, Galleria di Palazzo, Genoa.
Figure 2. Frederick Holland Day, *St Sebastian*, 1906, platinum print on textured paper, 9 3/4 x 7 3/4 inches, 24.75 x 19.7 cm, Library of Congress, Washington.
Figure 3. The character Eric asleep adjacent to his friend Alex, still image from Gus Van Sant’s 2003 film *Elephant.*
Figure 4. Untitled image (boy with arms raised) from Larry Clark’s artist book 1992, 1992. p.156. 10 5/8 x 7 1/8 inches, 27 x 18.1 cm.
Figure 5. Untitled image (boy urinating) from Larry Clark’s artist book 1992, 1992.
Cover image and p.144. 10 5/8 x 7 1/8 inches, 27 x 18.1 cm.
Figure 6. Untitled image (boy in shower) from Larry Clark’s artist book 1992, 1992. p.158. 10 5/8 x 7 1/8 inches, 27 x 18.1 cm.
Figure 7. Untitled image (boy reclining with eyes partly open) from Larry Clark’s artist book *1992, 1992.* p.236. 10 5/8 x 7 1/8 inches, 27 x 18.1 cm.
Figure 8. Untitled image (boy with gun in mouth) from Larry Clark’s artist book *1992, 1992.* p.313. 10 5/8 x 7 1/8 inches 27 x 18.1 cm.

18 x 11 inches, 54.72 x 27.94 cm.
Figure 10. Untitled image (collage with Jay Ferguson poster) from Larry Clark's artist book *The Perfect Childhood*, 1995. Unpag. 18 x 11 inches, 54.72 x 27.94 cm, detail.
Figure 11. Untitled image (‘ghost’ image) from Larry Clark’s artist book *Larry Clark*, 1999. Unpag. Image 7 1/8 x 5 1/8 inches, 18.1 x 13 cm, page 11 1/4 x 9 3/8 inches, 28.57 x 23.81 cm.
Figure 12. The character Marty hugging his little brother, still image from Larry Clark’s 2001 film *Bully*. This image, which becomes the final freeze-frame of the film, replays an earlier scene.
Figure 13. The character Nathan in an interior stairwell of the high school, still image from Gus Van Sant's 2003 film *Elephant*. 
Figure 14. The character John in a moment of contemplation, still image from Gus Van Sant’s 2003 film *Elephant*. 