

# VOLATILE BODIES

*Toward a Corporeal Feminism*

Elizabeth Grosz

*Indiana University Press*

Bloomington and Indianapolis

## 2

# Psychoanalysis and Psychological Topographies

NOTICE: THIS MATERIAL MAY BE PROTECTED  
BY COPYRIGHT LAW (TITLE 17, U.S. CODE)

... the repressed of today is the body, the sensory and motor body. In the era of the third industrial revolution, the revolution of information, nuclear energy, and the video, the repressed is the body.

Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego* (1990: 64)

## The Inside Out

IN THIS AND the next chapter, I propose to explore the ways in which the body's psychological interior is established as such through the social inscription of bodily processes, that is, the ways in which the "mind" or psyche is constituted so that it accords with the social meanings attributed to the body in its concrete historical, social, and cultural particularity. Psychoanalysis will be discussed in terms of its radical presumption of a correspondence or correlation between the form of the body and the forms of mind or psyche (an argument with major implications insofar as mind or psyche, until the advent of contemporary feminism, had been regarded as sexually neutral and indifferent to the particularities of the body); and conversely, that the constitution of the subject as an integrated and functional psychological totality is an active ingredient in the constitution of the body, for it provides the subject with a body which has particular, socially distinctive, and culturally determined attributes and abilities, individual idiosyncrasies and styles of behavior.

This chapter will focus on the contributions psychoanalytic theory has made to understanding how the body functions, not simply as a biological entity but as a psychological, lived relation, and the ways in which the psyche is a projection of the body's form. Given the vastness of Freud's writings and the major if largely unrecognized role of the body in his understanding of the psyche, I will have space to focus on only three aspects of his understanding of psychological functioning: his notions of the ego, his conception of sexual drives, and his accounts of psychological topography. These are at the center of his radical understanding of the body. I will also spell out the refinements, modifications, and detailed developments of his work undertaken by a number of theorists inspired by psychoanalysis, especially the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, with his formulation of

and the signifying function of the drives. Finally I will look at some of the implications a notion of the psychical body has for feminists interested in rethinking concepts of female subjectivity, sexuality and corporeality.

### Models of the Psyche

From the beginnings of psychoanalysis, Freud was fascinated with the relations between neurology and psychology. Although he soon abandoned any hope of being able to reduce psychological discourses and treatments to those of neurology or psychological terms to those of chemistry, he nevertheless retained an interest in the ways in which the two domains might interact. Perhaps without even being aware of it, Freud problematized the ways in which both the psychical and the biological have been conceived, showing that each, in its very existence and operations, implies the other. It is therefore not surprising that he returned again and again in his psychological writings to the question of the integration of psychology with biology.<sup>1</sup> He frequently relied on models and metaphors derived from biology, and his notions of energy, libido, drive, and force are clearly and directly borrowed from biological models. Yet, as I will argue, he effects a series of displacements of the biological, modifying the ways in which biology is generally conceived, showing its susceptibility to the psychological rather than assuming a rift between them, as occurs in Cartesian notions of mind and body. Rather than seeing biology or neurology as the groundwork, substratum, bedrock, or master plan for psychological models and processes, Freud transforms our understanding of biology so that it can no longer be seen as a determining factor in psychical life. Biology must be understood as psychologically pliable. If anything, a two-way determination or overdetermination, a clear interaction of the biological and the psychological, is forged in his writings.

Freud's interest in theorizing the interface between the soma and the psyche, between biology and psychology, is clear in his concern with the role of perception in psychical life (for another feminist reading and refiguring of the mind/body relation that reworks psychoanalytic theory, see Brennan, 1992). Perception is a concept that already exists in the breach between the mind and the body, being the psychical registration of the impingement of external and internal stimuli on the body's sensory receptors. It is a term, as Merleau-Ponty was to recognize (see chapter 4), that requires a transgression of the binarism of the mind/body split. It shows the ineliminable dependence of the inside and the outside, mind and matter, on each other. Freud makes perception the cornerstone of his notion of the ego and psychical agencies and, especially in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), the site of his second notion of the ego. An earlier understanding is developed in "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (1914); it forms the basis of what might be called his narcissistic model of the ego. This narcissistic model, in which the ego's origin is described in terms of the subject's ability to take itself

or part of its own body as a love object, is, contrary to the account in *The Ego and the Id*, a description of the subject's libidinal investment in its own body. In *The Ego and the Id*, however, the ego is seen as a mediator between two contradictory terms rather than the circulation of libidinal cathexes, the instinctual and corporeal strivings of the id on one hand and the demands and requirements of "reality" or "civilization" for the modification, control, or postponement of instinctual satisfaction on the other.<sup>2</sup>

Freud is curious to know how the subject becomes cognizant of thought processes and what the distinction between thought and perception is, given that endogenous sensations are not received by various sense receptors in the way exogenous stimuli are. How is consciousness of our own thoughts possible? Freud had approached this issue in a metapsychological paper, "The Unconscious" (1915a), in which he asked how a perception is successively registered in unconscious, preconscious, and conscious agencies. He asked whether one and the same perception is registered in several successive agencies in the psyche and is thus represented in a number of locations simultaneously or whether, instead, it undergoes a functional change as it proceeds from one agency to another on its path to motility, in which case it exists only in a singular but mobile location. There, as in *The Ego and the Id*, Freud eventually resorts to a linguistic model claiming that the difference between a conscious registration of a perception and its unconscious registration is not a difference in the location of the perception or a functional transformation so much as a difference between a perception which has access to linguistic expression ("word presentations") and one which has been refused access to verbalization, thus remaining purely perceptual ("thing-presentations"):

We now seem to know all at once what the difference is between a conscious and an unconscious presentation. The two are not, as we supposed, different registrations of the same content in different psychical localities; nor yet different functional states of cathexis in the same locality, but the conscious representation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone. (Freud 1915a: 201-2)

Freud presents a more complex analysis of the processes of a perception's coming to consciousness in *The Ego and the Id*. If internal processes such as thinking are to become conscious, they must first of all function like external perceptions. This occurs through memory traces. But these memory traces are themselves not (or not yet) external perceptions unless they are located close to the system Freud calls the "Pcpt-Cs" system. The memory trace differs from hallucination and perception because its cathexis is contained within the mnemonic system. The hallucination can pass itself off for a current perception only insofar as it is able to transfer its intensity to the perceptual system. (Freud 1923: 19)

memory trace function as a current perception, that is, in hallucinatory fashion? This question of the veracity of perceptual impingements is crucial if Freud is to explain how the ego is a vehicle of the adaptation of the id's impulses to the requirements of reality—which is his aim in developing his view of the ego in *The Ego and the Id*.

The conscious system automatically furnishes “indications of reality,” which Laplanche (1976: 59) likens to a bell lighting up on a pinball machine every time a certain spot is hit by the perception. When in contact with a veridical perception, the organism receives two kinds of messages, one from the sensory periphery of the nervous system, the other from consciousness, the second message confirming the veracity of the first. This means that the ego does not have direct access to reality even on this so-called “realist” view of the ego. Its function here is to discriminate between endogenous and exogenous stimuli, that is, between reality and what, being internal, passes as reality. A stimulus may present itself as a perception and be received by consciousness. This is true for internal excitations and thought processes as much as for external perception. It is for this reason that the internal excitation, the thought, must accede to language. Only by acquiring a mode of reality, not unlike that of hallucination, can thought become conscious:

The part played by word-presentations now becomes perfectly clear. By their interposition, internal thought-processes are made into perceptions. It is like a demonstration of the theorem that all knowledge has its origin in external perception. When a hypercathexis of the process of thinking takes place, thoughts are *actually* perceived—as if they came from without—and are consequently held to be true. (Freud 1923: 23)

By being expressed in language, thought processes can become perceptual contents available for consciousness. It is only through such a mode of externalization that these thoughts have any “reality,” that is, any stability, longevity, or identity. Otherwise they remain fleeting, momentary events. In asking the question of how to distinguish internal from external excitations, Freud is really asking about how to distinguish the “objective” from the “subjective,” veridical perception from hallucinatory states, mind from body. As he makes clear, however, this kind of definitive separation is never possible: the psychical cannot be unambiguously separated from the perceptual.

This issue of the achievement of some kind of unity and identity over and above the mere momentary impingements of stimuli (whether internal or external) is one of the guiding themes in Freud's theorization of the ego. Freud locates the ego at the center or nucleus of the perceptual-conscious system. I will return to the question of psychical topographies shortly but will now concentrate on the ways in which Freud understands the ego in corporeal terms.

## The Ego as Corporeal Projection

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud presents a startling, enigmatic account of the structure and form of the ego as a corporeal projection, a notion which has been frequently mentioned in the secondary literature but which nonetheless remains relatively undeveloped.<sup>3</sup> This view confirms his claims in “On Narcissism” that the subject acquires an underlying sense of unity and identity only as the end result of a series of processes which construct the ego as such. The subject only gradually acquires a sense of unity and cohesion over and above the disparate heterogeneous sensations that comprise its experiences. If the subject were merely a perceiving and experiencing being—as naive empiricism presumes—then there could be no way of unifying the subject's experiences as the experiences of a single being, no way of asserting some kind of propriety over those experiences, no way of taking responsibility for them. The subject would simply be an aggregate of otherwise disconnected perceptual events, which could give it no index of the existence of objects or the world. Objects and the world have an abiding even if changing, set of characteristics, an ongoing identity independent of but confirmable by perception. All that exists for the neonate is a whirring, ever-changing flux of experiences, which are not yet organized in terms of patterns, groupings, identities, and objects. In the preobject stage, before the advent of primary narcissism, the child is a (passive) conglomerate of fleeting experiences at the mercy of organic and social excitations to which it may respond but over which it has no agency or control.

Confirming and expanding on Freud's implicit characterization of this earliest period of development, Henri Wallon argues that the child's perceptual experiences vacillate between a phenomenalism in which only the most visible and striking features of an object are registered and a syncretism in which there is a diffused but holistic image with few or no clear-cut conceptual features. Only through a prolonged process of development does the child succeed in integrating its phenomenality with its syncretism, thus approximating what in the adult would be the perception of an object:

... two types of thought emerge that seem to be in competition, though both stem from the same causes. One is a kind of perceptual realism that retains only those aspects or features of a given thing that make particularly vivid or striking impressions on the senses, a pure phenomenalism which reduces reality to an infinite mutability of diverse forms of objects. The other is a kind of confused image, in which the part played by impressions derived directly from things and the part originating in the subject ... remain undifferentiated: the practical merges with the perceptual. Experience is no more than a succession of situations to which the subject reacts. His representation of this experience is the image of these global wholes, while specific features and details are

merely circumstances surrounding an act that have no distinct individuality of their own. . . . The opposition between phenomenalism and syncretism seems obvious; nevertheless, they alternate and coexist. (Henri Wallon, in G. Voyat 1984: 75–76)

For Freud, the ego is what brings unity to the vast and overwhelming diversity of perceptions which, to begin with, overwhelm the child. The ego is a consequence of a perceptual surface; it is produced and grows only relative to this surface. In his initial formulations, Freud argues that the ego does not result from a preordained biological order but is the result of a psychosocial intervention into the child's hitherto natural development.<sup>4</sup>

We are bound to suppose that a unity comparable to the ego has to be developed. . . . there must be something added to auto-eroticism—a new psychical action—in order to bring about narcissism. (Freud 1914: 77)

This new action engenders primary narcissism (or what Lacan calls the mirror stage) at around six months of age. It consists in the relative stabilization of the circulation of libido in the child's body, so that the division between subject and object (even the subject's capacity to take itself as an object) becomes possible for the first time. This emerges as a result of two complementary processes. First, the ego is the result of a series of identificatory relations with other subjects, particularly the mother or even its own image in the mirror. These identifications are introjected into the ego in the form of the ego ideal, the idealized model of itself for which the ego strives. And second, the ego is a consequence of a blockage or rechanneling of libidinal impulses in the subject's own body in the form of a narcissistic attachment to a part or the whole of its body. In this sense, the ego is the meeting point, the point of conjunction, between the body and the social. The narcissistic genesis of the ego entails that the subject cannot remain neutral or indifferent to its own body and body parts. The body is libidinally invested. The subject always maintains a relation of love (or hate) toward its own body because it must always maintain a certain level of psychical and libidinal investment. No person lives his or her own body merely as a functional instrument or a means to an end. Its value is never simply or solely functional, for it has a (libidinal) value in itself. The subject is capable of suicide, of anorexia (which may in some cases amount to the same thing), because the body is *meaningful*, has significance.

Schilder cites the example of the wasp and the dog. When impaired by a broken limb, both animals will gnaw off the extremity because it hampers their movements. He also notes that “according to Vexküll, a dragonfly starts to eat up its own body when its rear end is pushed between its jaws” (Schilder 1978: 195). It could be argued that the creature values life above corporeal wholeness. This of course is not entirely different from the subject who sells his or her organs for financial reasons or from the processes of self-mutilation and self-am-

putation that sometimes occur in prisons or other institutions of detention. I am reminded of an extraordinary series of mutilations and self-mutilations that occurred in New South Wales, Australia, in the late 1980s, which when reported in the newspapers seemed to intensify. In the first episode, the papers reported the discovery of an amputated penis in a public toilet. Within weeks there were daily reports of wives severing their husbands' penises, of prisoners' self-castrations, of men arriving at the hospital emergency room with a penis wrapped in ice, and so on. There was a veritable fad of adult castrations which seemed to diminish only when the press lost interest in reporting them. Nonetheless, even in these cases, it is not that the penis is without significance or value for the self-castrator; on the contrary, it is because these kinds of mutilation are considered so horrendous and disturbing that they are able to function as a mode of violent protest, resistance, or escape.

It seems likely that animals too have something like a body image, even if it is a relatively rudimentary one. Sacks, in *A Leg to Stand On*, cites the case of the dog who forgets to use its once-broken leg, in an experience analogous to Sacks's own experience of his broken leg. Every body, in order to be operational must be invested within the sociality of animal “culture” itself. This seems to be Lacan's point (and Caillois's too, as we shall soon see) regarding migratory locusts and gregarious pigeons, which do not take on an “identity” as a member of their species except through the internalization of the image of another relatively similar species:

. . . it is a necessary condition for the maturation of the gonad of the female pigeon that it should see another member of its species, of either sex; so sufficient in itself is this condition that the desired effect may be obtained merely by placing the individual within the reach of the field of reflection of a mirror. Similarly, in the case of the migratory locust, the transition within a generation from the solitary to the gregarious form can be obtained by exposing the individual, at a certain stage, to the exclusively visual action of a similar image, provided it is animated by movements of a style sufficiently close to that characteristic of the species. (Lacan 1977a: 3)

Freud claims that the genesis of the ego is dependent on the construction of a psychical map of the body's libidinal intensities. In *The Ego and the Id*, he claims that the ego is not so much a self-contained entity or thing as a kind of bodily tracing, a cartography of the erotogenic intensity of the body, an internalized image of the degrees of the intensity of sensations in the child's body. He backs up his claims with reference to the “cortical homunculus,” a much-beloved idea circulating in neurological and medical circles in the nineteenth century:<sup>5</sup>

The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego: it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface. If we wish to find an anatomical analogy for it we can best identify it with the “cortical homunculus” of Celsus and Galen.

which stands on its head in the cortex, sticks up its heels, faces backwards and as we know, has its speech-area on the left hand side. (Freud 1923: 26)

This confirms a claim Freud made in “On Narcissism” that the ego is a mapping, not of the real or anatomical body but of the degree of libidinal cathexis the subject has invested in its own body:

We can decide to regard erotogenicity as a general characteristic of all organs and may then speak of an increase or decrease of it in a particular part of the body. For every such change in the erotogenicity of libidinal zones there might be a parallel change in the ego. (Freud 1914: 84)

In spite of the apparent agreement regarding the ego as a psychological mapping of the libidinally invested body in both these papers, there is still a tension between the two positions. In the 1914 paper, Freud claims that the amount of libidinal intensity cathecting erotogenic zones parallels changes that occur at the level of the ego. If the ego is a libidinal reservoir, as he claims in this paper, its “shape” and contours vary according to its libidinal investments in other objects and according to the quantities of libidinal excitation that circulate in the body which are available for object-love through the sexual drives and find their sources in the different erotogenic zones of the body. Freud does not specify which erotogenic zones he has in mind here, although it is usually presumed that he is referring to the primacy of the pre-Oedipal psychosexual zones singled out for special attention as a result of the infant’s development. In *The Ego and the Id*, however, he is explicit in saying that the ego is a projection or map of the surface of the body, implying that it is a “skin ego” (using Anzieu’s phrase) that he has in mind. In a footnote added to the text in 1927, Freud clarifies:

The ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides, as we have seen above, representing the superficialities of the mental apparatus. (1923: 26)

We need not choose between these specialized sites of libidinal investment in deciding how this psychological map, which later becomes the site of the ego, first emerges. It is clear that elements of both the earlier and later views are necessary and that the two conceptions are compatible. Freud follows the older generation of neurologists in attributing a privileged role to the erotogenic zones, for it is clear that they play a disproportionately significant role in the formation of the sensorimotor homunculus. The homunculus, the tiny “manikin” registered in the cerebral cortex, is inverted like a mirror image. Instead of being a point-for-point projection of the outside of the body in its entirety, it stresses certain points of intensity above all others and leaves little or no room for the registration of other bodily zones. For example, the homunculus is usually regarded as highly overdeveloped in oral, manual, and genital representations, and it is significant that the

homunculus has no brain, because the brain is the object of neither motor nor sensory relations (precisely because it is the locus for the registration of sensory and motor factors).<sup>6</sup> Moreover, it is particularly significant that no mention is made of the female homunculus or the ways in which it differs from the male. In much of the relevant literature, the homunculus is *explicitly* described as male and there is no mention of what this means for women.

In spite of his manifest sexism, Gorman makes it clear that the homunculus is largely, though not exclusively, based on the information afforded by visual perception:

The homunculi . . . stimulate the eye, for their visual appearance is that of *distorted little male persons*, whose deformities are arresting to the studios as well as the curious. The face and the mouth of the homunculus are huge, his forehead is barely present, his hands gargantuan and his *genitals gross*. He has a respectably large intra-abdominal area, but he possesses not even a trace of a brain area. . . . Those parts of the body which can neither be seen nor felt do not appear in the motor homunculus and those parts which do not yield sensations of perceived touch are denied a position in the sensory homunculus. Since the brain is hidden from vision, and imperceptive of touch to its matter, we must reluctantly grant that our cherished but imaginary manikins are not able to represent our brains. (Gorman 1969: 193; emphasis added)

Gorman gives no explanation of the maleness of the homunculus and no account of the shape or form of the homunculus for women. Seeing that his view strongly privileges the information provided by vision—presumably this is why he does not accord female sexual organs any place on the homunculus—he is inconsistent, in a way that Freud is not, in assuming a universal set of homunculi for both sexes. Given the major role visual, tactile, and kinesthetic sensations provide in women’s sexual arousal, there must be some kind of psychological registration of female genitalia on the homunculus. The question is, in what terms, using what kinds of projections, are women’s bodies inscribed, and with what effects?

Although sensory information can be provided by any of the sense organs, the surface of the body is in a particularly privileged position to receive information and excitations from both the interior and the exterior of the organism. This may help explain why the orifices are especially privileged in the establishment of erotogenic zones and why the infant’s psychosexual stages are part of the process of maturation, which relies disproportionately on the cutaneous openings of the body’s surface. In any case, however, the skin and the various sensations which are located at the surface of the body are the most primitive, essential, and constitutive of all sources of sensory stimulation. The information provided by the surface of the skin is both endogenous and exogenous, active and passive, receptive and expressive, the only sense able to provide the “double sensation.” Double sensations are those in which the subject utilizes one part of the body to

touch another, thus exhibiting the interchangeability of active and passive sensations, of those positions of subject and object, mind and body. The other senses can elicit the double sensation only on the ground already set up by tactility, a point that will prove to be significant for feminist readings of Merleau-Ponty (chapter 4). This is the twisting of the Möbius strip, the torsion or pivot around which the subject is generated. The double sensation creates a kind of *interface* of the inside and the outside, the pivotal point at which inside will become separated from outside and active will be converted into passive (a line of border which is not unlike the boundary established by the duplicating structure of the mirror, which similarly hinges on the pivotal plane represented by the tain of the mirror).

This neuro- and psychophysiological process is both the precondition and the correlate of the ego's ability to distinguish between itself and others (at first developed in only rudimentary form at the mirror stage), between internal and external stimuli, and between subject and object:

... you find human beings who suffer from blindness or deafness, or no sense of smell, and this does not prevent them from living, nor from succeeding in communicating, perhaps in a somewhat more complicated way, but they do communicate. By contrast, there is no human being without a virtually complete envelope of skin. If one seventh of the skin is destroyed by accident, lesion, or burns, the human being dies. One can find a symbolic mode of communication even with a child who is both deaf and blind at birth, starting from increasingly differentiated tactile contacts. The skin is so fundamental, its functioning is taken so much for granted, that no one notices its existence until the moment it fails. (Anzieu 1990: 63–64)

The surface of the body, the skin, moreover provides the ground for the articulation of orifices, erotogenic rims, cuts on the body's surface, loci of exchange between the inside and the outside, points of conversion of the outside into the body, and of the inside out of the body. These are sites not only for the reception and transmission of information but also for bodily secretions (as will be discussed in the last chapter), ongoing processes of sensory stimulation which require some form of signification and sociocultural and psychical representation. These cuts on the body's surface create a kind of "landscape" of that surface, that is, they provide it with "regions," "zones," capable of erotic significance; they serve as a kind of gridding, an uneven distribution of intensities, of erotic investments in the body.

In *The Ego and the Id* Freud shows the ego emerging from out of the id through a gradual process of differentiation initiated by the organism's confrontation with reality. It is in contact with the external world only through the mediation of various forms of sense perception.<sup>7</sup> Freud shows the crucial role that bodily perception plays in the establishment of these agencies and in their modes of operation. The ego is only gradually distinguished from the id through the

impact of perceptual stimuli on the surface of the organism. As Freud explains it, the ego is something like a "psychical callous" formed through the use of the body, and particularly its surface, as a screen or sieve for selecting and sorting the sensory information provided by perception. But although perception is crucial in the establishment of the psychical agencies, Freud implies that the body itself, or at least certain privileged bodily zones and organs, particularly those with heightened reception of sensory inputs, is even more significant. It is in this sense that the ego must be understood as a bodily ego:

Another factor, besides the influence of the system Pcpt, seems to have played a part in bringing about the formation of the ego and its differentiation from the id. A person's own body, and above all its surface, is a place from which both external and internal perceptions may spring. It is seen like any other object, but to the touch it yields two kinds of sensations, one of which may be equivalent to an internal percept. . . . Psychophysiology has fully discussed the manner in which a person's own body attains its special position among other objects in the world of perception. Pain, too, seems to play a part in the process, and the way in which we gain new knowledge of our organs during painful illnesses is perhaps a model of the way in which in general we arrive at the idea of our body. (Freud 1923: 25–26)

The ego, then, is something like an internal screen onto which the illuminated and projected images of the body's outer surface are directed. It is the site for the gathering together and unification of otherwise disparate and scattered sensations provided by the various sense organs, in all their different spaces and registers. It is also a mapping of the body's inner surface, the surface of sensations, intensities, and affects, the "subjective experience" of bodily excitation and sensations.

This means that the ego is not a veridical diagram or representation of the empirical and anatomical body; nor is it an effect of which the body or the body's surface is a cause (this would make the ego and other relevant psychical agencies as rigidly determined by biology and biological processes as they would be if they were innate). The ego is not a point-for-point projection of the body's surface but an outline or representation of the degrees of erotogenicity of the bodily zones and organs. The ego is derived from two kinds of "surface." On one hand, the ego is on the "inner" surface of the psychical agencies; on the other hand, it is a projection or representation of the body's "outer" surface. In both cases, the surface is perceptual. Perception thus provides both the contents of the ego and, to begin with, the earliest sexual "objects" for the child. Moreover, in the establishment of the ego, perceptual processes are themselves sexualized, libidinally invested.

The ego is a representation of the varying intensities of libidinal investment in the various bodily parts and the body as a whole. Significantly, this notion of the body as a whole is dependent on the recognition of the totality of the body's

of the body of the other. The ego is thus both a map of the body's surface and a reflection of the image of the other's body. The other's body provides the frame for the representation of one's own. In this sense, the ego is an image of the body's significance or meaning for the subject and for the other. It is thus as much a function of fantasy and desire as it is of sensation and perception; it is a taking over of sensation and perception by a fantasmatic dimension. This signifiatory, cultural dimension implies that bodies, egos, subjectivities are not simply reflections of their cultural context and associated values but are constituted as such by them, marking bodies in their very "biological" configurations with sociosexual inscriptions.

Freud illustrates the blurring of the psychical and the physical, the mind and the body, with reference to hypochondria. In "On Narcissism" Freud tries to distinguish between hypochondria and organic disorders but finds that it is unclear where one can place the dividing line:

Hypochondria, like organic disease, manifests itself in distressing and painful bodily sensations, and it has the same effect as organic disease on the distribution of libido. The hypochondriac withdraws both interest and libido . . . from objects in the external world and concentrates both of them upon the organ that is engaging his attention. The difference between hypochondria and organic diseases now becomes evident: in the latter, the distressing sensations are based upon demonstrable (organic) changes; in the former, this is not so. But it would be entirely in keeping with our general conception of the processes of neurosis if we decided to say that hypochondria must be right: organic changes must be supposed to be present in it, too. (Freud 1914: 83)

It is significant, although Freud does not discuss it here, that the two neuroses traversing the mind/body split, hysteria and hypochondria, which both involve a somatization of psychical conflicts, are sexually coded, are "feminine" neuroses in which it is precisely the status of the female body that is causing psychical conflict. Why is it that women are more likely to somatize their conflicts than men? Does this have anything to do with the female body image? With the problematic rift of mind and body which women are even less able than men to live out and live with?

The ego is not simply bounded by the "natural" body. The "natural" body, insofar as there is one, is continually augmented by the products of history and culture, which it readily incorporates into its own intimate space. In this, "man" must be recognized as a "prosthetic god," approaching the fantasy of omnipotence, or at least of a body well beyond its physical, geographical, and temporal immediacy. If the ego is a mapping of the body and if the body is able to incorporate a host of instrumental supplements, the ego (or at least its ideal) aspires to a megalomania worthy of gods:

With every tool [man] is perfecting his own organs, whether motor or sensory.

forces at his disposal, which, like his muscles, he can employ in any direction; thanks to ship and aircraft neither water nor air can hinder his movements; by means of spectacles he corrects defects in the lens of his own eyes; by means of the telescope he sees into the far distance; by means of the microscope he overcomes the limits of visibility set by the structure of his retina. . . . Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent, but these organs have not grown onto him and they still give him much trouble at times. (Freud 1929: 90-92)

The once-clear boundary between the mind and the body, nature and culture, becomes increasingly eroded. The very organ whose function is to distinguish biological or id impulses from sociocultural pressures, the ego, is always already the intermingling of both insofar as it is the consequence of the cultural, that is, signifiatory effects of the body, the meaning and love of the body as the subject lives it.

### Lacan and the Imaginary Anatomy

Like Freud, Lacan claims that the ego has no a priori status. It comes into being in the mirror stage. The mirror stage provides the matrix or ground for the development of human subjectivity. Lacan describes the formative effect on the child's ego of the fascination with and introjection of an (externalized) image of its own body. For Lacan as for Freud, the ego is a kind of mapping or tracing of the subject's perceived and perceiving corporeality. It is a lived, corporeal identity that is at stake: the mirror stage functions to "establish a relation between the organism and its reality or, as they say, between the *Innere Welt* and the *Umwelt*" (Lacan 1977a: 24). And he seems to take Freud's comments about the ego being a bodily extension or projection very seriously. For Lacan, the ego is not an outline or projection of the real anatomical and physiological body but is an imaginary outline or projection of the body, the body insofar as it is imagined and represented for the subject by the image of others (including its own reflection in a mirror). The mirror stage provides the child with an anticipatory image of its own body as a *Gestalt*. The earliest recognition by the child of its bodily unity, that is, the recognition that its skin is the limit of its spatial location, is at the same time a misrecognition, insofar as the image with which the child identifies belies the child's own sensory and motor incapacities. Lacan makes it clear that the mirror stage institutes "an essential libidinal relationship with the body-image" (Lacan 1953: 1).

Lacan derives many of his insights regarding what he calls the "imaginary anatomy" from the work of a number of his predecessors and contemporaries, neurophysiologists, neuropsychologists, and psychoanalysts,<sup>8</sup> on the concept of the body image or body schema. I will return to them in more detail in the following chapter. The imaginary anatomy is a term that Lacan borrows from the



the symbolic order conceived in its generality (that is, for a culture as a whole). It is an individual and collective fantasy of the body's forms and modes of action. This, Lacan claims, helps to explain the peculiar, nonorganic connections formed in hysteria and in such phenomena as the phantom limb.

It also helps to explain why there are distinct waves of particular forms of hysteria (some even call them fashions), i.e., why hysteria commonly exhibited forms of breathing difficulty (e.g., fainting, tussis nervosa, breathlessness, etc.) in the nineteenth century which, by comparison today, have relatively disappeared (perhaps with the exception of asthma and various "allergic" reactions) and yet why, taking their place as the most "popular" forms of hysteria today, are eating disorders, anorexia nervosa and bulimia in particular.<sup>9</sup>

Anorexia, for example, is arguably the most stark and striking sexualization of biological instincts: the anorexic may risk her very life in the attainment of a body image approximating her ideal. Neither a "disorder" of the ego nor, as popular opinion has it, a "dieting disease" gone out of control, anorexia can, like the phantom limb, be a kind of mourning for a pre-Oedipal (i.e., pre-castrated) body and a corporeal connection to the mother that women in patriarchy are required to abandon. Anorexia is a form of protest at the social meaning of the female body. Rather than seeing it simply as an out-of-control compliance with the current patriarchal ideals of slenderness, it is precisely a renunciation of these "ideals."

Lacan argues that instead of observing and following the neurological connections in organic paralyses, hysterical paralyses reproduce various naive or everyday beliefs about the ways the body functions. In an hysterical paralysis, it is more likely that limbs which are immobilized are unable to move from a joint, whereas in organic paralyses, the immobilization extends farther upward and encompasses many nerve and muscular connections not apparent to the lay observer. Hysterical paralyses follow commonsense views of the way the body works, especially those based on observation, visual appearance, rather than exhibiting any understanding of the body's underlying physiology:

To call these symptoms functional is but to profess our ignorance, for they follow a pattern of a certain imaginary Anatomy which has typical forms of its own. In other words, the extraordinary somatic compliance which is the outward sign of this imaginary anatomy is only shown within certain limits. I would emphasize that the imaginary anatomy referred to here varies with the ideas (clear or confused) about bodily functions which are prevalent in a given culture. It all happens as if the body-image had an autonomous existence of its own, and by autonomous I mean here independent of objective structure. (Lacan 1953: 13)

Like Freud, Lacan refers to the notion of the cortical homunculus, seeing it as a neurological equivalent to the phenomenon of the child's mapping of the ego through the subject's identification with and internalization of the *Gestalt* of its

mirror image. Although he is, not atypically, very vague on this point and gives no references to other research in the area, he does seem to have in mind the anatomists' notion of the cortical homunculus. He attributes the origins of the "intraorganic mirror" to "Man's" specific prematurity at birth, to a foundational lack at the origin of human subjectivity and desire. He implies that there is a cortical and psychical mapping of the body:

In man . . . this relation to nature is altered by a certain dehiscence at the heart of the organism, a primordial Discord betrayed by the signs of uneasiness and motor uncoordination of the neonatal months. The objective notion of the anatomical incompleteness of the pyramidal systems and likewise the absence of certain humoral residues of the maternal organism confirm the view that I have formulated as the fact of a real *specific prematurity at birth* in man.

It is worth noting, incidentally, that this is a fact recognized as such by embryologists, by the term *foetalization*, which determines the prevalence of the so-called superior apparatus of the neurax, and especially the cortex, which psycho-surgical operations lead us to regard as the intraorganic mirror. (Lacan 1977a: 4)

Lacan does not make explicit what kinds of surgery he is referring to here. Nonetheless, his insights do seem to make sense of such peculiar phenomena as the phantom limb and some of its neurological relatives.<sup>10</sup> In the phantom limb, the diseased limb that has been surgically removed continues to induce sensations of pain in the location that the limb used to occupy. In such cases, which occur with near universality in the surgical removal of mobile limbs,<sup>11</sup> the absence of a limb is as psychically invested as its presence. The phantom can indeed be regarded as a kind of libidinal memorial to the lost limb, a nostalgic tribute strongly cathected in an attempt to undermine the perceptual awareness of its absence. It does not completely undermine the experience of the absence of the limb but results in the phantom feeling "shell-like," "empty," merely formal and abstract, different from the way other limbs feel to the subject. The subject's healthy limbs, for example, exert a certain weight or gravity which is absent when the limb is amputated. The phantom limb exhibits many curiosities and seems to follow "laws" of its own very different from those regulating the rest of the body. While I will return in more neurological detail to the phantom limb later, it is significant that the phenomenon attests to the more or less tenacious cohesion of the imaginary anatomy or body schema. Like hysteria, hypochondria, and sexuality itself (see the next section), the phantom limb testifies to the pliability and fluidity of what is usually considered the inert, fixed, passive biological body. The biological body, if it exists at all, exists for the subject only through the mediation of an image or series of (social/cultural) images of the body and its capacity for movement and action. The phantom limb is a libidinally invested part of the body phantom—the image or *Doppelgänger* of the body the

subject must develop if it is to be able to conceive of itself as an object and a body, and if it is to take on voluntary action in conceiving of itself as subject.

In the first instance, the imaginary anatomy begins to emerge only at the mirror stage, when the infant first comes to recognize itself as distinct and separate from the mother. At about six months of age, the child gradually comes to recognize its mirror reflection as an image of itself. For Lacan, this relation of imaginary identification is fraught with tensions and contradictions insofar as the child identifies with an image that both is and is not itself. It is itself in the sense that the mirror image is an inverted, virtual representation of the exterior of the body, an exteriority to which the child would have no other access except through a mirror (or through an equally problematic identification with the image of another, usually the mother).

Human subjects are able to see or feel only parts of their bodies. While the extremities are most readily visible, clearly there are many parts of the body to which the subject has no direct visual or tactile access, mainly the back. And although the subject can feel many parts of its body which are not normally visible, it can at best gain a serial notion of its own bodily parts, unless it has access to a unified and unifying image of the body as a whole. This, Lacan suggests, occurs as a result of the mirror phase. Lacan stresses that what the child sees in the mirror is a *Gestalt*, a totalized image of itself: this *Gestalt* forms the basis of an imaginary anatomy or body phantom which, although it will undergo modifications and transformations throughout the child's life, will nevertheless derive its stability (or lack of it) from the earliest stages of the child's self-representations. What it sees as a unified exteriority, however, belies the turbulence and chaos occasioned by its motor and sensory immaturity. The child feels disunified at exactly the same moment that it perceives an image of (possible) unity for itself:

The fact is that the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his powers is given to him only as *Gestalt*, that is to say, in an exteriority in which this form is certainly more constituent than constituted, but in which it appears to him above all in a contrasting size that fixes it and in a symmetry that inverts it, in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him. Thus, this *Gestalt*—whose pregnancy should be regarded as bound up with the species, though its motor style remains scarcely recognizable—by these two aspects of its appearance, symbolizes the mental permanence of the *I* at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination; it is still pregnant with the correspondences that unite the *I* with the statue in which man projects himself, with the phantoms that dominate him, or with the automaton in which, in an ambiguous relation, the world of his own making tends to find its completion. (Lacan 1977a: 2–3)

The mirror image provides an anticipatory ideal of unity to which the ego will always aspire. This image, preserved after the Oedipus complex as the ego

ideal, is a model of bodily integrity, of outsideness, which the subject's experiences can never confirm. The ego is split between two extremes: a psychical interior, which requires continual stabilization, and a corporeal exterior, which remains labile, open to many meanings. Lacan suggests that this desire for a stable identity may help explain our fascination with images of the human form.<sup>12</sup>

There is confirmation of the structure of the imaginary anatomy not only in the dreams of so-called normal (i.e., neurotic) subjects but also in the symptoms and hallucinations of psychotics, which contain residues of the pre-Oedipal body image, for example in the dreams and fantasies of the dissolution or “fragilization” of the body, which is an hallucinatory reactivation of memory traces of the primitive motor and sensory apparatus of the mirror-stage child. These reactions take their most extreme form in psychotic depersonalization, in which the subject's ego is no longer centered in its own body, and the body feels as if it has been taken over by others or is controlled by outside forces.<sup>13</sup> When autoscopy occurs the subject may see itself as it were from the outside or may be haunted by the most terrifying of images, the *Doppelgänger*.<sup>14</sup> Autoscopy is commonly preceded by depersonalization in epileptic seizures, and in this case the subject may experience itself as outside its own boundaries, looking on in a detached manner. Here the phantom appears in bright and vivid detail, and may be perceived not only visually but also in auditory and tactile terms, as if emotionally and kinaesthetically attached to the subject.<sup>15</sup>

These diverse forms of body-image disintegration or reorganization are possible only because the body image established in the mirror stage contains all the ingredients, which are stretched one way or distorted in another. They recall the complex dialectic the infant strives to resolve in its identifications, the tension that Lacan locates between the image of the body-in-bits-and-pieces, the child's reconstruction of the body fragmented and divided by its diverse and scattered experiences, and by the body's compartmentalized sensations in the earliest stages of life, in which experience is serialized, momentary, fleeting, without any ongoing unity:

Such typical images appear in dreams, as well as in fantasies. They may show, for example, the body of the mother as having a mosaic structure like that of a stained glass window. More often, the resemblance is to a jig-saw puzzle, with the separate parts of the body of a man or an animal in disorderly array. Even more significant for our purposes are the incongruous images in which strange trophies, trunks, are cut up in slices and stuffed with the most unlikely fillings, strange appendages in eccentric positions, reduplications of the penis, images of the cloaca represented as a surgical excision, often accompanied in male patients by fantasies of pregnancy. (Lacan 1953: 13)

In other words, the stability of the unified body image, even in the so-called normal subject, is always precarious. It cannot be simply taken for granted. It is

accomplished fact, for it must be continually renewed, not through the subject's conscious efforts but through its ability to conceive of itself as a subject and to separate itself from its objects and others to be able to undertake willful action. The dissolution or disintegration of the unified body schema risks throwing the subject into the preimaginary real, the domain inhabited by the psychotic.<sup>16</sup> In such a state, the sense of autonomy and agency that accompanies the imaginary and symbolic orders is lost, being replaced by the fantasies of being externally controlled, which are images of fragmentation, and being haunted by part objects derived from earlier, more primitive experiences.<sup>17</sup>

This fragmented body—which term I have also introduced into our system of theoretical references—usually manifests itself in dreams when the movement of analysis encounters a certain level of aggressive disintegration in the individual. It then appears in the form of disjointed limbs, or of those organs represented in exoscopy, growing wings and taking up arms for intestinal persecutions—the very same that the visionary Hieronymus Bosch has fixed, for all time, in painting, in their ascent from the fifteenth century to the imaginary zenith of modern man. But this form is even tangibly revealed at the organic level, in the lines of “fragilization” that define the anatomy of phantasy, as exhibited in the schizoid and spasmodic symptoms of hysteria. (Lacan, 1977a: 4–5)

The imaginary anatomy, then, is at work not only in the everyday functioning of neurotic and perverse subjects, where it operates most commonly at the level of the sexualization of parts or the whole of the body, but also in the operation of drives and their privileged objects. It is also crucial in explaining the symptomatology of psychosis. It is the precondition and raw material of a stable, that is, symbolic, identity which the child acquires as a result of the resolution of the Oedipus complex. Its reorganization or decomposition witnesses psychotic breakdown.

The constitution of the subject's imaginary identity in the mirror phase establishes a provisional identity which still requires the stabilization, ordering, and placement of the subject in a sociosymbolic position where it can engage in symbolic and linguistic exchange with others. It also creates the conditions of possibility for the child's earliest and most primitive notions of milieu, context, environment, or location. In other words, it conditions and makes possible the child's earliest notions of spatiality and temporality. Reduplicated in the specular image is the child's environment. For the first time, the child is not absorbed by its environment (which means both occupying no space at all and being all-pervasive—which amounts to the same thing in this context) but is now part of space, taking up a place or location in space. Its multifarious forms of lived spatiality are generally dominated by vision. Spatiality comes to conform to a spatiality dominated by vision, a spatiality of hierarchized perspective. This notion of spatiality and, correlatively, temporality, insofar as the mirror stage is the mid-

position between the retrospective fantasies of incompleteness and lack and anticipatory fantasies of unity and wholeness,<sup>18</sup> is a mutual condition or accompaniment of the acquisition of the body image.

In his studies of the earliest years of the child's development, Stern argues that the child's first notion of space is “buccal,” a “space that can be contained, or exploited by his [the child's] mouth. Not only the mouth but the whole respiratory apparatus gives the child a kind of experience of space. After the other regions of the body intervene and come into prominence” (Merleau-Ponty 1965: 122). In the mirror stage, the child supersedes this buccal, enclosed spatiality with the first notions of a binarized space capable of being divided into real and virtual planes. The image becomes categorized as a reflection of itself and not simply as another object located within a single and homogeneous space. It is only under this assumption that the child recognizes the frame or border dividing the real from the virtual, the image from the object:

The child knows well that he is there where his introceptive body is, and yet in the depth of the mirror he sees the same being present, in a bizarre way, in a visible appearance. There is a mode of spatiality in the specular image that is altogether distinct from adult spatiality. In the child, says Wallon, there is a kind of space clinging to the image. All images tend to present themselves in space, including the image of the mirror as well. According to Wallon, this spatiality of adherence will be reduced by intellectual development. We will learn gradually to return the specular image to the introceptive body, and reciprocally, to treat the quasi-locatedness and pre-spatiality of the image as an appearance that counts for nothing against the unique space of real things. . . . An ideal space would be substituted for the space clinging to the image, since for the child it is a question of understanding that what seems to be in different places is in fact in the same place. This can occur only in passing to a higher level of spatiality that is no longer the intuitive space in which the images occupy their own place. (Merleau-Ponty 1965: 129–30)

Lacan describes the kind of primitive spatiality that the child develops in the mirror phase as “kaleidoscopic.” He claims that this subjective or imaginary sense of spatiality is the precondition of the intersubjective or shared (social) space required for all symbolic interactions and for an objective or scientific (i.e. measurable, quantifiable) form of space. The virtual duplication of the subject body, the creation of a symmetry measured from the mirror plane, is necessary for these more sophisticated, abstract, and derivative notions of spatiality:

The notion of the role of spatial symmetry in man's narcissistic structure is essential in the establishment of the bases of a psychological analysis of space—however, I can do no more here than simply indicate the place of such an analysis. Let us say that animal psychology has shown us that the individual's relation to a particular spatial field is, in certain species, mapped socially, in a way that raises it to the category of subjective membership. I would say that it is the subjective possibility of the mirror projection of such a field into the field

of the other that gives human space its original “geometrical” structure, a structure that I would be happy to call *kaleidoscopic*. Such, at least, is the space in which the imagery of the ego develops, and which rejoins the objective space of reality. (Lacan 1977a: 27)

### Caillois and the Space of Legendary Psychasthenia

In his paper “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia” (1984), Caillois explores the notion of spatiality manifested in the phenomenon of mimicry within the natural world. His analysis is clearly a powerful influence on Lacan’s notions of the mirror stage, the order of the imaginary, and psychosis. Caillois presents a sociological and ethological analysis of the behavior of insects which mimic other insects or their own natural environment, which “feign” their surroundings or other creatures. Mimesis is particularly significant in outlining the ways in which the relations between an organism and its environment are blurred and confused—the way in which its environment is not distinct from the organism but is an active internal component of its “identity.” Caillois claims that mimicry does not serve any adaptive function. Its purpose is not to ensure the survival of the species through disguising the insect, hiding it from its predators. Mimicry does not have survival value, for most predators rely on the sense of smell rather than of vision.<sup>19</sup> Mimicry has no value in the dark. Caillois considers mimicry a “luxury” or excess over natural survival, inexplicable in terms of self-protection or species survival. He abandons naturalistic explanations to seek some kind of answer in psychology. The mimesis characteristic of certain species of insects has to do with the distinctions it establishes between itself and its environment, including other species. Mimicry is a consequence not of space but of the *representation* of and captivation by space.

Caillois likens the insect’s ability for morphological imitation to the psychosis Pierre Janet described as “legendary psychasthenia,” in which the psychotic is unable to locate himself or herself in a position in space:

It is with represented space that the drama becomes specific, since the living creature, the organism, is no longer the origin of the coordinates, but one point among others; it is dispossessed of its privilege and literally *no longer knows where to place itself*. One can recognize the characteristic scientific attitude and, indeed, it is remarkable that represented spaces are just what is multiplied by contemporary science: Finsler’s spaces, Fermat’s spaces, Riemann-Christoffel’s hyperspace, abstract, generalized, open and closed spaces, spaces dense in themselves, thinned out and so on. The feeling of personality, considered as the organism’s feeling of distinctness from its surroundings, of the connection between consciousness and a particular point in space, cannot fail under these conditions to be seriously undermined; one then enters into the psychology of psychasthenia, and more specifically of *legendary psychasthenia*, if we agree to

use this name for the disturbance in the above relations between personality and space. (Caillois 1984: 28; emphasis in original)

For Caillois, psychasthenia is a response to the lure posed by space for the subject’s identity. For the subject to take up a position as a subject, it must be able to be situated in the space occupied by its body. This anchoring of subjectivity in its body is the condition of coherent identity, and, moreover, the condition under which the subject *has a perspective* on the world, and becomes a source for vision, a point from which vision emanates and to which light is focused. In certain cases of psychosis, this coincidence or meshing of the subject and the body fails to occur. Some psychotics are unable to locate themselves where they should be. They may look at themselves from outside, as another might; they may hear the voices of others in their heads. The subject is captivated and replaced by space, blurred with the positions of others:

*I know where I am, but I do not feel as though I’m at the spot where I find myself.* To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them. . . . It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at *himself* from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, *dark space where things cannot be put*. He is similar, not similar to something, but just *similar*. And he invents spaces of which he is “the convulsive possession.” (Caillois 1984: 30; emphasis in original)

Psychosis is the human analogue of mimicry in the insect world (which may perhaps be conceived as a kind of “natural psychosis”): both represent what Caillois describes as the “depersonalization by assimilation to space” (30). Both the psychotic and the insect renounce their rights to occupy a perspectival point, abandoning themselves to being spatially located by/as others. The primacy of one’s own perspective is replaced by the gaze of another, for whom the subject is merely a point in space and not the focal point organizing space. The representation of space is thus a correlate of one’s ability to locate oneself as the point of reference of space: the space represented is a complement of the kind of subject who occupies it.<sup>20</sup>

The idea of space, the child’s notion of location and positionality, then, is acquired only gradually and through various phases of neurological and psychological development. It is both derived from and makes concrete experience possible. The disorganized and as yet unintegrated information available to the infant at the sensorimotor level provides it with a diverse series of spaces—sensorial, postural, prehensile, and locomotive—which are hierarchically subordinated to a singular space at the time when spatiality becomes independent of the bodily gestures and movements of the child. These very different modes of spatiality and spatial representation become ordered and unified according to the space of the

sion, the perspectival space that has dominated perception at least since the Renaissance. Only through the resolution of the mirror-stage dilemmas of identity, when the child becomes able to distinguish itself definitively from objects and above all from others, can this space be attained. The child's relation with others is exceedingly complex, and its confusion and identification with others remain blurred and indistinct until the resolution of a form of infantile transitivity, as outlined in the work of child psychologists. The researches of Charlotte Bühler and the Chicago school are vital here, and are carefully augmented and developed in the writings of Lacan, Wallon, Guillaume, and Spitz.

Wallon describes this as a phase of alternation, in which the child becomes not only able to distinguish the roles of agent and spectator (active and passive) but, more interesting, to play at both roles, giver and receiver, actor and audience, switching from one role to the other. This transitivity positions the child in a role of spatial reciprocity with the other, a space in which its position is attained only relative to the position of the other, yet where the position of the other is reciprocally defined by the position of the subject. From such a transitivity, the child first gains access to a notion of the social field, a field within which it is to find its identity and whose parameters, according to Lacan, are defined and guaranteed only with reference to the Other, the symbolic.

[The child] plays the active and passive roles alternately: the one who hits and the one who hides, the one who seeks; the one who throws the ball, the one who catches it. These games of role alternation allow the child to recognize himself, though still in a neutral and anonymous way. He inhabits the two poles of a single situation without yet choosing one or the other and making that his personal locus. He is no more able to identify himself consistently, than he is to identify his antagonist. He remains prey to uncertain fluctuations and full of ambivalence. All this, however, leads up to the moment when he will, in fact, take up one position or the other, often for no other reason than the need to do so. (Wallon, in Voyat 1984: 26)

A stabilized body image or imaginary anatomy, a consistent and abiding sense of self and bodily boundaries, requires and entails understanding one's position vis-à-vis others, one's place at the apex or organizing point in the perception of space (which, in turn, implies a knowledge that one could also be an object in the spatial fields of others), as well as a set of clear-cut distinctions between the inside and the outside of the body, the active and passive positions, and, as we will see, a position as a sexually determinate subject.

### Psychology and Biology

Freud's preoccupation with the relations between biology and psychology, his attempt to link the operations of bodily functions to the operation of psychical functions, is most directly expressed in the various attempts he made to pre-

number of different, sometimes incompatible, representations of the organization of the psyche,<sup>21</sup> I will concentrate here on his earliest formulations of the psychology developed in 1895 in the posthumously published "Project for a Scientific Psychology" and later elaborated in "The Unconscious" (1915a) and "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915b).

Freud makes clear in the introduction to "The Project" that his goal is "to furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science: that is, to represent psychic processes as quantitatively determinate states of specifiable material particles" (1895: 295). These elementary material particles Freud identifies as neurones. Although many have disqualified Freud's model insofar as they claim it relies on an anachronistic nineteenth-century view of neurophysiology (e.g., Reiser 1984: 95–96), others have claimed that not only is his argument's validity to be judged independently of the accuracy of nineteenth-century biology but, moreover, his views actually challenge and transform this biology so that they closely anticipate modern views (e.g., Laplanche 1976). Laplanche does not find nineteenth-century biology so problematic as Freud's inaccurate reading of nineteenth-century physics and Freud's attempt to apply a mechanistic neuronal model—a psychophysics—to biology. His working hypothesis in this neuronal model is that there are a vast number of identical neurones whose only differentiation comes from the position they occupy in the neurological system. Those nearer the periphery or surface function differently from those at the center, given the different functions each must perform. Neurones tend to divest themselves of energy as rapidly as possible. This he calls, following Fechner, the "constancy principle," which much later in his career, he will term the death drive. In deriving the death drive from Fechner's "constancy principle," Freud conflates it with the principle of inertia, and it is only through such a confusion that he "scientifically" legitimates the postulation of the death drive. There is a tendency for the organism as a whole, as well as at its most elementary level, to minimize its states of excitation retaining only the barest levels of energy. The constancy principle functions not only in the case of stimuli received from the external world but also in relation to endogenous stimuli or needs. With external stimuli, the organism has the capacity to utilize its sensory and motor skills either to psychically register the stimulus or, in the case of danger, to flee. This is of course not possible with endogenous stimuli, which require the attainment of suitable objects to satisfy those needs.

The nervous system is comprised of a vast network of identically structured neurones—like horizontal Ys webbed together—each of which is connected to three other neurones. These neurones form a system insofar as the energy received at one end of the neurone must be discharged at the other end, through a bifurcated choice of pathways. An excitation is thus transmitted through the nervous system, one neuronal pathway at a time. Because each energetic impulse has at least two possible paths of discharge, the effects of various stimuli are differ-

neurone is a contact barrier, which exerts a resistance, a kind of friction, in the automatic transmission of energy from one cell to the next. The presence of this point of resistance means that if the neurone is to discharge the energy that has been invested in it, the quantity of this energy must be greater than the quantity of resistance. When this is not the case, the energy is discharged from the neurone in trying to overcome the contact barrier but is not registered in the next successive neurone. Presumably this occurs with the vast majority of perceptual stimuli, the plethora of trivial details that do not gain access to memory systems or to consciousness. Only those stimuli which are invested with a strong enough affect and are repeated a number of times gain the force to acquire mnemonic or conscious registration.

This is the neuronal system in its absolute simplicity. Freud distinguishes two kinds of neurones, or at least two kinds of location or function for neurones. Those at the "surface," or periphery, of the nervous system, closest to sensory inputs, allow the passage of energy through them as if there were no contact barriers, exerting no resistance to energetic inputs. If they exert no resistance, they are not permanently modified by the stimulation they receive. They are permeable, serving the function of registering but not recording perceptual impressions. Perceptions pass through these neurones without predisposing them for future perceptions. This nonconscious perceptual system is distinguished from those neurones closer to the core of the neurological system which comprise the mnemonic systems, for these are impermeable. They exert considerable resistance to perceptual impingements. Thus when the quantity of energy is cathected strongly enough to traverse the contact barriers, these neurones are permanently modified and in this sense can be regarded as a mnemonic record of perceptions. Each such impermeable neurone has several contact barriers and thus creates what in Freud's later work are described as associative networks with other neurones, a trace or fraying of pathways. Here Freud identifies the permeable neurones with the brain and the impermeable neurones with gray matter (1895: 303).

For Freud, the crucial question in establishing a scientific psychology is that of translation. How are the quantitative and neurological characteristics of the neurones translated into the terms of psychological and qualitative theory?

... a place has to be found for the content of consciousness. . . . Consciousness gives us what are called *qualities*—sensations which are *different* in a great multiplicity of ways and whose *difference* is distinguished according to its relations with the external world. Within this difference, there are series, similarities and so on, but there are in fact no quantities in it. It may be asked how qualities originate and where qualities originate. (308.)

This question is crucial, for it amounts to the question of how psychical or mental qualities can emerge from purely neurological quantities of excitation. It

asks about the genesis of the psychical from the biological, which Freud himself has described as "the mysterious leap" from the body to the mind. Freud claims, following Locke, that qualities do not originate in the external world. Conscious and unconscious perceptions are qualitatively colored. If this is the case, then somewhere in between the neurological registration of perception and its conscious registration, qualities must arise. He excludes the permeable and the impermeable (perceptual and mnemonic) neuronal systems, for these systems are definition sensitive only to quantities of excitation. To account for the genesis of qualities, Freud postulates a third neuronal system, beyond perception and memory, which is excited along with perception but not along with reproduction of memory and whose states of excitation give rise to qualities, i.e., conscious sensations (308). In Freud's conception this third neuronal system is the result not only of the transmission of quantities of energy but also of their frequency periodicity. This periodicity, which is unaffected by contact barriers or resistances, originates, Freud claims, in the sense organs, in which qualities are also represented by "different periods of neuronal motion" (310).

It is only by means of such complicated and far from perspicuous hypotheses that I have hitherto succeeded in introducing the phenomenon of consciousness into the structure of quantitative psychology. No attempt, of course, can be made to explain how it is that excitatory processes in [the third neuronal perceptual system] brings consciousness along with them. It is only a question of establishing a coincidence between the characteristics of consciousness that are known to us and processes in [the third neuronal system] which vary in parallel with them. (311)

Although Freud resorts to a psychophysical parallelism in which consciousness is not identified with the third neurological system but simply accompanies it, his own hypotheses allow him a stronger claim: that consciousness or the perception of qualities is the result of a particular modality of quantitative excitations, that it *is*, and not just accompanies, the periodicity of excitations. This third neuronal system is capable of distinguishing between perceptions which arise directly from the sense organs and indirectly from the external world and ideas, which are endogenous in origin, through "the indication of reality" which Freud later calls "reality testing." While this indication of reality breaks down in the case of an hallucinatory reactivation of a memory trace, the discharge through consciousness and the action of the energy traversing the psychical systems demonstrate the congruence of the perceptual contents of consciousness with the world from which the perception arose.

In this earliest topographical account of the psyche, Freud has outlined the progression of a perceptual impingement from its first neurological registration, through its facilitation of mnemonic systems, on its path to conscious registration. This model, which also accounts for the functioning of the ego and the mechanisms of psychical defense,<sup>22</sup> leaves relatively unclear the interrelationships

agencies between the memory systems and consciousness. This Freud has elaborated in considerably more detail in chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). He augmented this model in “The Unconscious” (1915a), where he claims that, interceding between the mnemonic systems and consciousness, are the two psychical systems of the unconscious and the preconscious, divided by the barrier of censorship. The transformation of quantitative to qualitative excitations thus occurs well before the conscious registration of the perception. The movement occurs in the translation of terms between the mnemonic systems, which involve quantitative transformations of the neurone, and the unconscious, which is composed of nothing but perceptions which strive for conscious expression, i.e., wishes. This is thus the threshold point between neurological and psychological processes, the point at which the outer material impingements deflect into an internal, psychical order.

Freud denies any causal relation between the physiological process and the psychological process. This is clear, he claims, because if the cause is logically and temporally distinct from its effects (this is part of the very definition of causation), physiological processes do not cease when the psychological processes emerge. Instead, physiological causes have their own physiological effects. Rather than causal relations, he sees a relation of correspondence or parallelism.<sup>23</sup> But it is not clear that this isomorphism is a necessary postulate: it places psychoanalysis firmly in the tradition of Cartesian dualism, which Freud’s work seems at other places to strongly contest. His assault on dualism is perhaps most readily perceived in his notion of sexual drives, the drive being a concept that lies midway between the mind and the body, irreducible to either. In understanding how his notion of the drives resists the imperatives of dualism, we may be in a better position to understand the processes of translation between quantity and quality that distinguish neurological from psychological processes while nevertheless maintaining their intimate connections. As Freud says, the instinct or drive is “a concept at the frontier between the mental and the somatic” (1915b: 122).

### Drives and Instincts

In “Instincts and their Vicissitudes” (1915b), Freud returns to the neurological model he elaborated in “The Project.” The most elementary postulate is that the nervous system functions to rid itself of excitations. Freud claims that instincts function in quantitative rather than qualitative terms (1915b: 123); and he distinguishes between exogenous and endogenous stimuli. He lists three characteristics which differentiate the endogenous excitations arising from instincts or drives from the exogenous perceptions arising from the external world. First, an instinct/drive arises from internal rather than external sources; second, whereas a perceptual or sensory stimulus is a momentary force, an instinct/drive exerts a constant, relentless pressure; and third, this pressure ceases only when

the appropriate objects put an end to the internal source of stimulation—in words, unlike an external stimulus or perception, an instinct/drive requires an object of satisfaction. Rather than chart the progress of perceptual stimulation through the various psychical exigencies, as Freud does in “The Project” elsewhere, in “Instincts” he focuses on the psychical mechanisms and processes involved in dealing with an endogenous force.

The notion of the sexual drive is close to, but needs to be differentiated from, the notion of biologically determined instincts. If the instinct can be defined as a biologically universal, preformed set of processes and behaviors, of endogenous origin and necessary for the maintenance of life (in its simplest form it is usually represented on the model of the reflex),<sup>24</sup> then it can be argued that even apparently incontestable processes such as hunger, thirst, and the need to urinate/defecate—which are generally regarded as instincts par excellence—are not biologically fixed but are amenable to a psychosymbolic takeover, in which the instinct is retraced, taken over, as sexualized drives. From the moment this sexualization occurs, instincts can no longer remain purely programmed: the drive transcends and transcends the instincts.

In *The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Freud proposes general characteristics which define all sexual drives (infantile and adult). He refers to the oral drive and its relation to the hunger instinct, and he acknowledges that some non-organ-based drives do not conform to this model: “the drives of scopophilia, exhibitionism and cruelty, which appear in an area independently of erotogenic zones” (1905: 191).

Our study of thumb-sucking or sensual sucking has already given us the essential characteristics of an infantile sexual manifestation. At its origin it *taches itself* to one of the vital somatic functions [i.e., instincts]; it has as no sexual object, and is thus *auto-erotic*; and its sexual aim is dominated by an *erotogenic zone*. (1905: 182–83)

The drives are thus attached to biological processes; they are autoerotic and regulated by an erotogenic zone. The notion of propping, or *anaclisis*, is what seems to interest Laplanche the most: this movement of propping<sup>25</sup> describes the complex derivation and departure of drives from biological instincts. The drive leans upon the instinct, is supported by it, or, more accurately, retraces the neurological and biological pathways across the subject’s body that the instinct and biological processes took, thus mimicking them and taking on the same attributes of preformed instincts (this may explain why the sexual drives are assumed to be instinctive in popular imagination). The drive, however, deviates from the instinct insofar as it takes for itself not a real object—food—but a fantasmatic object, an object defined primarily through the lack or absence of a real object. Freud describes this in the advent of sensual sucking, the first (oral) sexual drive to emerge out of the hunger instinct. Sensual sucking emerges at that r



where milk is no longer the sought-after object; instead the child now seeks the pleasure of the sucking movements themselves, a repetition of the processes (or some of them) involved in feeding, in the absence or as a displacement of the need for food. The child will now suck on a wide variety of objects, none of which can satisfy its hunger:

In orality . . . two phases may be delineated: one consisting in sucking of the breast, and a second, quite different from the first, which is characterized as “sensual sucking.” In the first phase, breast-sucking for nourishment—we are faced with a function or . . . with a total instinctual pattern of behavior, one which is, in fact, so complete . . . that it is precisely hunger, the feeding pattern, which the “popular conception” assumes to be *the model of every instinct*. . . Simultaneous with the feeding function’s achievement of satisfaction in nourishment, a sexual process begins to appear. Parallel with feeding there is a stimulation of lips and tongue by the nipple and the flow of warm milk. The stimulation is initially modelled on the function, so that between the two, it is at first barely possible to distinguish a difference. (Laplanche 1976: 17)

The drive is able to imitate or prop itself on the instinct because it is able to borrow the sites, sources, and aims of the instincts, inserting a new fantasy object in place of the object of need, enervating the circuit or flow between the external object, the bodily erotogenic source, and the fantasmatic link between them. This is possible only because the erotogenic zone functions both as a biological and as a sexual organ. But this is true not only of the mouth and digestive system but of every one of the biological processes and all organs, which, through the processes necessary for the preservation of life (instincts) or perhaps through some accident or organic disorder, may function to provide a biologically registered marking of the body. Freud describes this as “somatic compliance,” by which he means that by being singled out as different from, as significant relative to, other biological processes or organs, an organ becomes susceptible to a psychical takeover. If, for example, the subject breaks a limb, undergoes an operation, or is subjected to recurring illnesses, the region of the body most affected, depending on the point in the subject’s life history when it occurs, may become loaded with significances which make it ripe for sexualization.

It may be for this reason that Freud claims that every orifice, every external organ, and possibly even the internal organs—including the brain itself—are capable of becoming an erotogenic zone.<sup>26</sup> Any part of the body is capable of sexualization, although which parts become eroticized is determined by the individual’s life history (and especially the history of its corporeality). There is a complete plasticity in the body’s compliance with sexual meanings.

Sexuality insinuates itself in the various biological and instinctual processes because there is, as it were, a space which it can occupy, an incompleteness at the level of instincts that it can harness for its own purposes. Lacan links this incompleteness to biological prematurity at birth, in other words, to the failure

riod. The child’s instincts are unable to support the child’s needs because of its sensory and motor incapacities. It is naturally dependent, not only for its well being but also for its barest survival, on the active good will of others. In this sense, paradoxically, human subjects are biologically social, social out of biological necessity. A lack at the level of instincts distinguishes the advent of human desire from animal need. This lack requires the augmentation of language and representation understood more broadly: when the child is unable for many years to fend for and to take care of itself, it is able to supplement its needs, indeed to replace them or cover them over, with its capacity for representation.

Any corporeal process, event, or experience is capable of sexualization. Freud regards sexuality as a “concomitant effect” (his very phrase in discussing psychophysical causality) of a vast range of bodily experiences:

Sexual excitation arises as a concomitant effect as soon as the intensity of those processes passes beyond certain quantitative limits. What we have called the component drives of sexuality are either derived directly from these internal sources or are composed of elements both from those sources and from the erotogenic zones. (Freud 1905: 204–5)

The sexual drives displace the reality of the objects, aims, and bodily sources of the instincts and biological processes. In the case of orality, for example, there is a metonymic shift from the biological orientation to milk to a sexual orientation which takes the breast, thumb, or their potentially infinite substitutes as sexual objects. This is true of all the sexual drives. The biological processes or instincts seem to provide the ground or preconditions for the emergence of sexual impulses, but they must not be too closely identified with them: without these biological processes tracing a path through the body, the raw materials for sexuality would not exist. But these biological processes are not enough. What must be added to them is a set of meanings, a network of desires which, in the first instance, emanate from and are transmitted by the mother or nurturer. These desires and significances impose a set of (pliable and usually inarticulate) meanings on the child’s bodily processes. In this sense, it is not surprising that in the case of so-called wild children, children raised outside the constraints and significances, there is neither sexual drive nor language.<sup>27</sup>

Sexual drives result from the insertion of biological or bodily processes into networks of signification and meaning; through this immersion, they become bound up with and intimately connected to the structure of individual and collective fantasies and significations. The drive is a result of corporeal significances, the binding of bodily processes and activities to systems of meaning.<sup>28</sup> This signifying and fantasmatic dimension is necessary for the sexual to emerge as such and for the establishment of desire. The domain of sexual drives is doubly implicated in representation and signification. On one hand, it is bound up with the signifying order of parental desire and meanings, which are produced out of the



out. But the child must be seen not only as a passive victim of this imposition (a powerful tendency in many current feminist preoccupations with child abuse and incest) but also as an active agent trying to find its place in the web of meanings into which it is born. On the other hand, the child's sexuality as it is subjectively experienced is a retracing, a psychological transcription, of biological processes, organs, and pathways. The body is quite literally rewritten, traced over, by desire. Desire is based on a veritable cartography of the body (one's own as well as that of the other). The sexual is able to displace the biological only because there is a lack at the level of the biological. Sexuality, contrary to popular opinion, is thus not the result of (a pubertal) exuberance or excess of biological processes; it is a consequence of an insufficiency, an inadequate match between the child and its "nature."<sup>29</sup>

We may now return to the radical notion of psychological topography Freud theorized, to indicate the kinds of subversion of the mind/body dualism his model effects. In the same way that sexuality is derived from instinctual processes through a deviation from and retranscription of their modes of corporeality, so too the psyche is not identical with or merely the correlate of physiological and neurological processes but is their retracing and retranscription. Neither simply in continuity with the neurological (as reductionism implies) nor radically divided from it by an unbridgeable chasm (as dualism implies), the psychological agencies are the translation into different terminology of a "language" of neuronal activity. Lacan has plausibly reinterpreted Freud's neurological model in the terms of Saussurean linguistics: if the neurone is a metaphor of the signifier (and as a material, this time an energetic rather than a graphic or auditory trace, this is not an implausible supposition) and if the relation between cathected neurones and facilitated pathways is a metaphor of the signifying chain, then neurology is always already a mode of signification (Lacan suggests as much in his claim that even the chromosomal structure can be regarded as a form of linguistic double articulation, a primitive or elemental language).<sup>30</sup> The psyche is, then, the transliteration of neurological structures. Neurology and biology do not provide a base for a psychological superstructure: a base exists independent of a superstructure rather than in a relation of mutual influence or dependence. Rather, they are the material constraints from which psychological and sexual phenomena are the deviation and completion. This neurological model finds its closest analogy and material illustration (ironically, in terms of the charge of anachronism leveled at Freud's neurology) in the digital or binarized functioning of the computer. The bifurcated neuronal pathways, the various "paths" traced across the neural system, represent the various "choices" or "decisions" functioning in the computer.

Sexuality, in effect, leaves life out of its field of operation, borrowing from it only prototypes of its fantasies. The ego, on the contrary, seems to take over

the model of a living being with its level, its homeostasis, and its constancy principle. In addition, it assumes charge of the vital order by virtue of the fact that it replaces and compensates for the vital functions. (Laplanche 1976: 83)

## Masculine and Feminine

The question of biology and of the mind/body relation is raised once again and in a most crucial and complex fashion, in Freud's account of the difference between the sexes. This is clearly the location of the most controversial and, in feminist terms, most contested elements of his work. Yet even here, in spite of Freud's clear biologism, there are also concepts and ideas which indicate a considerably more sophisticated understanding of sexual difference than many views commonly attributed to him. This is not, of course, to deny that there are still major problems from a feminist point of view regarding his understanding of the differences between the sexes, and particularly female sexuality. Although this cannot be examined in any thoroughgoing detail, it is nevertheless worthwhile indicating some of the major areas of feminist concern as well as those places in Freud's writing where his position entails much that could be of value to feminist theory regarding the body and sexual difference.

Considerable feminist labor has already been devoted to an analysis and interrogation of Freud's account of the Oedipus complex and of the psychological implications of anatomical sex differences, and I do not want to rehearse those arguments again.<sup>31</sup> Whether feminists evaluate Freud's work with critical commitment, as in the case of de Lauretis, Silverman, Gallop, and Irigaray, or with wholehearted acceptance, as in the case of Mitchell, Ragland Sullivan, and others, they seem to agree that his account of sexual difference, with its references to the phallic mother, the castration complex, and the Oedipus complex provides an accurate description of the processes which produce masculine and feminine subjects within our Western, patriarchal, capitalist culture. Their disagreements arise regarding the universality of Freud's account and its value in the prognosis of future social relations—that is, regarding the necessity of the domination of the phallus.

Freud's account of the acquisition of masculine and feminine psychological positions can be interpreted plausibly as an account of the ways in which the male and female bodies are given meaning and structured with reference to their relative social positions. While it is clear that Freud himself is not really concerned with the question of anatomy per se, seeking instead the psychological implications of anatomical differences, and while it is also clear that he nevertheless justifies his claims regarding the order of psychological events with recourse to a kind of confrontation the child has with (the meaning of) anatomy, his position can be understood in terms of how meanings, values, and desires construct male and female bodies (and particularly how their differences are represented). His psy-

alysis and explanation of the social construction of women's bodies as a lack and the correlative (and dependent) constitution of the male body as phallic.

The notions of phallic and castrated are not simply superimposed on pre-given bodies, an added attribute that could, in other cultural configurations, be removed to leave "natural" sexual differences intact. Rather, the attribution of a phallic or a castrated status to sexually different bodies is an internal condition of the ways those bodies are lived and given meaning right from the start (with or without the child's knowledge or compliance). There is no natural body to return to, no pure sexual difference one could gain access to if only the distortions and deformations of patriarchy could be removed or transformed. The phallus binarizes the differences between the sexes, dividing up a sexual-corporeal continuum into two mutually exclusive categories which in fact belie the multiplicity of bodies and body types.<sup>32</sup>

I have already outlined the ways in which pre-Oedipal forms of sexuality are a retracing of biological zones and tracts. There is no reason to believe that the processes of retracing do not occur in all the psychosexual stages and with all bodily organs and activities. Moreover, although most psychoanalysts do not attribute sexual difference and specificity to the pre-Oedipal stages and most theorists of and experimenters on the body image do not discuss the question of the sex of the body image or the ways in which the body image does or does not include the sex of the body, it seems incontestable that the type of genitals and secondary sexual characteristics one has (or will have) must play a major role in the type of body image one has and that the type of self-conception one has is directly linked to the social meaning and value of the sexed body. Indeed, an argument could be made that the beloved category of "gender," so commonly used in feminist theory to avoid the problems of essentialism, could be understood not as the attribution of social and psychological categories to a biologically given sex but in terms that link gender much more closely to the specificities of sex. Gender is not an ideological superstructure added to a biological base. Masculine or feminine gender cannot be neutrally attributed to bodies of either sex. Therefore, in agreement with Gatens (1990), it becomes clear that the "masculinity" of the male body cannot be the same as the "masculinity" of the female body, because the kind of body inscribed makes a difference to the meanings and functioning of gender that emerges.

Lacan says explicitly what is implied in Freud's understanding of sexual difference: while it makes perfect sense for the young boy, before he understands the anatomical differences between the sexes, to see others (animate and inanimate), as in the case of Little Hans,<sup>33</sup> on a model derived from his own body morphology, it makes no sense at all to claim, as Freud and Lacan do, that the girl too sees the whole world on a model derived from the boy's experience. This makes no sense, and indeed it is the site of an amazing blindness on the part of these founding fathers of psychoanalytic feminism, to explain why both the boy

and the girl regard themselves, each other, and the others in their world as phallic unless the phallus has an a priori privilege in the constitution of the body image. This is precisely Lacan's claim:

All the phenomena we are discussing [that is, the various manifestations of the body image in psychological life] seem to exhibit the laws of *Gestalt*; the fact that the penis is dominant in the shaping of the body image is evidence of this. Though this may shock the sworn champions of the autonomy of female sexuality, such dominance is a fact and one moreover which cannot be put down to cultural influences alone. (Lacan 1953: 13)

Among Lacan's most deliberately provocative statements (in a body of work that abounds in provocation), it is unclear that the "laws of *Gestalt*" entail the dominance of the penis in the body image *unless* female sexuality is already, even in the pre-Oedipal stages when the body image is being formed according to the "laws of *Gestalt*," construed as castrated. Now, in one sense this is true. If patriarchy requires that female sexual organs be regarded more as the absence of male organs than in any autonomous terms, then for the others in the child's social world, the child's female body is lacking. But for the child herself to understand her body as such requires her to accept castration long before the castration complex. What Lacan says is clear for the boy: insofar as the body image is a unified, externalized, and totalizing representation of the body and insofar as the penis is "part" of the male body, it clearly plays some role, even not yet a dominant one, in shaping the boy's body image. But how it does so in the case of the girl is entirely obscure. When the penis takes on the function of the phallus, which is only possible as a result of the Oedipal classification of female sexuality as castrated, as lacking the phallus, only then can it be said to be dominant in the shaping of the body image for girls as well as boys. And even then, whether penis or phallus—Lacan seems to confuse them here—it does not have the same meaning for the girl as it does for the boy. At best, for the girl it represents a form of nostalgic fantasy for her pre-Oedipal and pre-castrated position; but for the boy it represents the social valorization of the penis, an actual and not simply a fantasized part of the body.

Why is it that both Freud and Lacan adopt only the boy's point of view? Is it simply an effect of their ignorance and lack of interest in the specificities of female morphology and sexuality—an effect of their misogyny? Or is it motivated by a desire to represent female sexuality and anatomy according to its current-day social position? And why is it that the mother's status must shift from phallic to castrated? The phallic mother must be understood as a fantasy, as the (boy's) fantasy of omnipotence and omniscience. She is represented by psychoanalytic theory as sexually neutral, insofar as the questions of sexual difference and sexual specificity make no sense for the pre-Oedipal child. Freud implies that the child (boy) becomes on the one hand the phallus for the mother and on the other

idealizing them in the process. It is for this reason, apparently, that Freud describes her as phallic. But given that even the boy is not yet aware of his own position as phallic, it is not simply that the boy accords the mother a genital organ like his own (although this seems confirmed by the case of Little Hans [1911]); children of both sexes, he claims, attribute to the mother a position in which she holds the power of life and death. The phallic mother is the fantasy of the mother who is able to grant the child everything, to be its object of desire. And, in turn, the child of either sex desires to be the mother's object of desire. But if Freud simply means that the mother is construed as all-powerful, it is not clear why he describes her as phallic. This description is hardly a sexually neutral characterization of her position, and if Freud wanted to insist on her sexually indifferent status, she could just as readily and much less contentiously be described as all-powerful. Something more is at stake here.

It is only on condition that the mother's all-powerful phallic status is transferred to the (symbolic) father that the child is able to abandon its intensive attachment to her and turn instead to the father. He is the heir to her phallic position, and it is not clear where the child's idea of his (castrating, all-powerful) position comes from, if not on loan from the mother. The child's resolution—or lack of it—of the Oedipus complex, his or her position as masculine or feminine, depends on the way in which this transference of status is effected, and particularly on the alignment of maleness with the powerful and femaleness with the powerless positions that results from this transfer. In short, the condition under which patriarchy is psychically produced is the constitution of women's bodies as lacking.

If women do not lack in any ontological sense (there is no lack in the real, as Lacan is fond of saying), men cannot be said to have. In this sense, patriarchy requires that female bodies and sexualities be socially produced a lack. This, in some social contexts, is taken literally<sup>34</sup> but also occurs at an imaginary and symbolic level, that is, at the level of the body's morphology and the body image. Psychoanalysis describes how this mutilated body image comes about, thus explaining the socially authorized social and sexual positions and behaviors appropriate to and expected from women; but it is unable to explain how this occurs (because it not only unable to see that its analyses find their context in patriarchal culture and not just neutral "civilization" but above all because it is unable to see that its own pronouncements and position are masculine).

What psychoanalytic theory makes clear is that the body is literally written on, inscribed, by desire and signification, at the anatomical, physiological, and neurological levels. The body is in no sense naturally or innately psychical, sexual, or sexed. It is indeterminate and indeterminable outside its social constitution as a body of a particular type. This implies that the body which it presumes and helps to explain is an open-ended, pliable set of significations, capable of being rewritten, reconstituted, in quite other terms than those which mark it,

and consequently capable of reinscribing the forms of sexed identity and psychical subjectivity at work today. This project of rewriting the female body as positivity rather than as a lack entails two related concerns:<sup>35</sup> reorganizing and reframing the terms by which the body has been socially represented (a project in which many feminists are presently engaged in the variety of challenges feminism poses in literary, visual, and filmic representational systems) and challenging the discourses which claim to analyze and explain the body and subject scientifically—biology, psychology, sociology—to develop different perspectives that may be able to better represent women's interests.