Volume 4, Number 1

differences

JUDITH BUTLER

The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary[1]

The Lacanians' desire clearly to separate phallus *from* penis, *to control the meaning of the signifier* phallus, *is precisely symptomatic of their desire to have the phallus, that is, their desire to be at the center of language, at its origin. And their inability to control the meaning of the word* phallus *is evidence of what Lacan calls symbolic castration. (Gallop,* Thinking *126)*

All sorts of things in the world behave like mirrors. (Lacan, Seminar *2: 49/65)*[2]

After such a promising title, I knew that I could not possibly give a satisfying paper, but perhaps the promise of the Phallus is always dissatisfying in some way. I would like, then, to acknowledge that failure from the start and to work that failure for its uses and to suggest that something more interesting than satisfying the phallic ideal may come of the analysis that I propose. Indeed, perhaps a certain wariness with respect to that allure is a good thing. What I would like to do instead is make a critical return to Freud, to the essay "On Narcissism: An Introduction," and consider the textual contradictions he produces as he tries to define the boundaries of erotogenic body parts. It may not seem that the lesbian Phallus has much to do with much of what you are about to read, but I assure you (promise you?) that it could not have been done without it.

The essay, "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (1914), is an effort to explain the theory of libido in terms of those experiences which seem at first to be most improbably conducive to its terms. Freud begins by a consideration

of bodily pain and asks whether we might understand the obsessive self-preoccupation on the part of those who suffer physical illness or injury to be a kind of libidinal investment in pain. And he asks further whether this negative investment in one's own bodily discomfort can be understood as a kind of narcissism. For the moment I want to suspend the question of why it is that Freud chooses illness and then hypochondria as the examples of bodily experience that narcissism describes, indeed, why it seems that narcissism seems to be negative narcissism from the start; I will, however, return to this question once the relationship between illness and erotogenicity is established. In the essay on narcissism, then, Freud first considers organic disease as that which "withdraws libido from love objects, [and] lavishes libido on itself" (82). As the first example in what will become a string of examples, he cites a line of poetry from Wilhelm Busch's "Balduin Bahlamin" on the erotics of the toothache: "concentrated is his soul . . . in his molar's [jaw-tooth's] aching hole" (82).[3]

According to the theory of libido, the concentration eroticizes that hole in the mouth, that cavity within a cavity, redoubling the pain of the physical as and through a psychically invested pain – a pain of or from the soul, the psyche. From this example of libidinal self-investment, Freud extrapolates to other examples: sleep and then dreams, both considered as exercises in sustained self-preoccupation, and then to hypochondria. The example of physical pain thus gives way, through a textual detour by way of sleep, dreams, and the Imaginary, to an analogy with hypochondria and then to an argument that establishes the theoretical indissolubility of physical and imaginary injury. This position has consequences for delimiting what it is that constitutes a body part at all, and as we shall see, what it is that constitutes an erotogenic body part. In the essay on narcissism, hypochondria lavishes libido on a body part, but in a significant sense, that body part does not exist for consciousness prior to that investiture; indeed, that body part is delineated and becomes knowable for Freud only on the condition of that investiture.

In 1923, in *The Ego and the Id*, Freud will state quite clearly that bodily pain is the precondition of bodily self-discovery. He asks there how one can account for the *formation* of the ego, that bounded sense of self, and concludes that it is differentiated from the id partially through pain: "Pain 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 by which in general we arrive at the idea of our own body" (25-26). In a move that prefigures Lacan's argument in "The Mirror Stage," Freud connects the formation of one's ego with the externalized idea one forms of one's own

body. Hence, Freud's claim, "the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface" (26).[4]

What is meant by the imaginary construction of body parts? Is this an idealist thesis, or one which asserts the indissolubility of the psychic and physical body? Curiously, Freud associates the process of erotogenicity with the consciousness of bodily pain: "Let us now, taking any part of the body, describe its activity of sending sexually exciting stimuli to the mind as its 'erotogenicity' " ("Narcissism" 84). Here, however, it is fundamentally unclear, even undecidable, whether this is a consciousness which imputes pain to the object, thereby delineating it, as is the case in hypochondria, or whether it is a pain caused by organic disease which is retrospectively registered by an attending consciousness. This ambiguity between a real and conjured pain, however, is sustained in the analogy with erotogenicity, which seems defined as the very vacillation between real and imagined body parts. If erotogenicity is produced through the conveying of a bodily activity through an idea, then the idea and the conveying are phenomenologically coincident. As a result, it would not be possible to speak about a body part that precedes and gives rise to an idea, for it is the idea that emerges simultaneously with the phenomenologically accessible body, indeed, that guarantees its accessibility. Although Freud's language engages a causal temporality that has the body part precede its "idea," he nevertheless confirms here the indissolubility of a body part and the phantasmatic partitioning that brings it into psychic experience. Later in the first *Seminar*, Lacan will read Freud along these latter lines, arguing in his discussion on "The Two Narcissisms" that "the libidinal drive is centred on the function of the imaginary" (122/141).

Already in the essay on narcissism, however, we find the beginnings of this later formulation in the discussion of the erotogenicity of body parts. Directly following his argument in favor of hypochondria as anxiety-neurosis, Freud argues that libidinal self-attention is precisely what delineates a body part as a part: "Now the familiar prototype [*Vorbild*] of an organ sensitive to pain, in some way changed and yet not diseased in the ordinary sense, is that of the genital organ in a state of excitation . . ." ("Narcissism" 84).

Clearly there is an assumption here of a singular genital organ, the sex which is one, but as Freud continues to write about it, it appears to lose its proper place and proliferate in unexpected locations. This example at first provides the occasion for the definition of *erotogenicity* I already cited, "that activity of a given bodily area which consists in conveying sexually exciting stimuli to the mind." Freud then proceeds to communicate as already

accepted knowledge "that certain other areas of the body – the *erotogenic* zones – may act as substitutes for the genitals and behave analogously to them" (84). Here it seems that "the genitals," presumed to be male genitals, are at first an example of body parts delineated through anxiety-neurosis, but as a "prototype," they are examples of that process whereby body parts become epistemologically accessible through an imaginary investiture. As an examplar or prototype, these genitals have already within Freud's text substituted *for* a variety of other body parts or types, and have substituted for the effects of other hypochondriacal processes. The gaping hole in the mouth, the panoply of organic and hypochondriacal ailments are synthesized in and summarized by the prototypical male genitals. This collapse of substitutions performed by these genitals is, however, reversed and erased in the sentence that follows in which the erotogenic zones are said to act as substitutes *for* the genitals. In the latter case, it seems that these self-same genitals – the result or effect of a set of substitutions – are that *for which* other body parts act as substitutes. Indeed, the male genitals are suddenly themselves an originary site of erotogenization which then subsequently becomes the occasion for a set of substitutions or displacements. It seems at first logically incompatible to assert that these genitals are at once a cumulative example *and* a prototype or originary site which occasions a process of secondary exemplifications; in the first case, they are the effect and sum of a set of substitutions, and in the second, they are an origin for which substitutions exist. But perhaps this logical problem symptomizes a wish to understand these genitals as an originating idealization, that is, as the symbolically encoded Phallus.

The Phallus, which Freud invokes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, is considered the privileged signifier in Lacan, that which originates or generates significations, but is not itself the signifying effect of a prior signifying chain. To offer a definition of the Phallus, indeed, to attempt denotatively to fix its meaning is to posture as if one *has* the Phallus and, hence, to presume and enact precisely what remains to be explained (Gallop 126). In a sense, Freud's essay enacts the paradoxical process by which the Phallus as the privileged and generative signifier is itself generated *by* a string of examples of erotogenic body parts. The Phallus is then set up as that which confers erotogenicity and signification on these body parts, although we have seen through the metonymic slide of Freud's text the way in which the Phallus is installed as an "origin" to suppress the ambivalence produced in the course of that slide.

If Freud is here endeavoring to circumscribe the Phallic function, and proposing a conflation of the penis and the Phallus, then the genitals would necessarily function in a double way: as the (symbolic) ideal that offers an impossible and originary measure for the genitals to approximate, and as the (imaginary) anatomy which is marked by the failure to accomplish that return to that symbolic ideal. Insofar as the male genitals become the site of a textual vacillation, they enact the impossibility of collapsing the distinction between penis and Phallus. Note that I have consigned the penis, conventionally described as "real anatomy" to the domain of the Imaginary. I will pursue the consequences of this consignment (or liberation) toward the end of this essay.

As if foundering in a set of constitutive ambivalences out of his control, Freud follows his paradoxical articulation of the male genitals as prototype and origin by adding yet another inconsistent claim to the list: "We can decide to regard," he claims, "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" ("Narcissism" 84).

In this last remark which, it seems, Freud must force himself to make – as if pure conviction will issue forth its own truth – reference to the temporal or ontological primacy of any given body part is suspended. To be a property of all organs is to be a property necessary to *no* organ, a property defined by its very *plasticity*, *transferability*, and *expropriability*. In a sense, we have been following the metonymic chain of this roving property from the start. Freud's discussion began with the line from Wilhelm Busch, "the jaw-tooth's aching hole," a figure that stages a certain collision of figures, a punctured instrument of penetration, an inverted vagina dentata, anus, mouth, orifice in general, the spectre of the penetrating instrument penetrated.[5] The tooth, as that which bites, cuts, breaks through, and enters is that which is itself already entered, broken into, and thus figures an ambivalence that, it seems, becomes the source of pain analogized with the male genitals a few pages later. This figure is immediately likened to other body parts in real or imagined pain, and is then replaced and erased by the prototypical genitals. This wounded instrument of penetration can only suffer under the ideal of its own invulnerability, and Freud attempts to restore to it its imaginary power through installing it first as prototype and then as originary site of erotogenization.

In the course of restoring this phallic property to the penis, however, Freud enumerates a set of analogies and substitutions that rhetorically affirm the fundamental transferability of that property. Indeed, the Phallus is

neither the imaginary construction of the penis nor the symbolic valence for which the penis is a partial approximation. For that formulation is still to affirm the Phallus as the prototype or idealized property of the penis. And yet it is clear from the metonymic trajectory of Freud's own text, the ambivalence at the center of any construction of the Phallus belongs to no body part, but is fundamentally transferable and is, at least within his text, the very principle of erotogenic transferability. Moreover, it is through this transfer, understood as a substitution of the psychical for the physical – the metaphorizing logic of hypochondria – that body parts become phenomenologically accessible at all. Here we might understand the pain/pleasure nexus that conditions erotogenicity as partially constituted by the very idealization of anatomy designated by the Phallus.

On this reading, then, Freud's textualized effort to resolve the figure of the jaw-tooth's aching hole into the penis as prototype and then as Phallus, rhetorically enacts the very process of narcissistic investment and idealization that he seeks to document, overcoming that ambivalence through the conjuring of an ideal. One might want to read the psychic idealization of body parts as an effort to resolve a prior, physical pain. It may be, however, that the idealization produces erotogenicity as a scene of necessary failure and ambivalence, one which then prompts a return to that idealization in a vain effort to escape that conflicted condition. To what extent is this conflicted condition precisely the repetitive propulsionality of sexuality? And what does "failure to approximate" mean in the context in which every body does precisely that?

One might also argue that to continue to use the term Phallus for this symbolic or idealizing function is to prefigure and valorize which body part will be the site of erotogenization; that is an argument that deserves a serious response. To insist, on the contrary, on the transferability of the Phallus, the Phallus as transferable or plastic property, is to destabilize the distinction between *being* and *having* the Phallus, and to suggest that a logic of non-contradiction does not necessarily hold between those two positions. In effect, the "having" is a symbolic position for Lacan which institutes the masculine position within a heterosexual matrix, and which presumes an idealized relation of property which is then only partially and vainly approximated by those marked masculine beings who vainly and partially occupy that position within language. But if this attribution of property is itself improperly attributed, if it rests on a denial of that property's transferability, (i.e., if this is a transfer into a non-transferable site or a site which occasions other transfers, but which is itself not transferred from anywhere) then the

repression of that denial will constitute that system internally and, therefore, pose as the promising spectre of its destabilization. Insofar as any reference to a lesbian Phallus appears to be a spectral representation of a masculine original, we might well question the spectral production of that "origin," one which, we have seen, is constituted in Freud's text through a reversal and erasure of a set of substitutions.

It seems that this imaginary valorization of body parts is to be derived from a kind of eroticized hypochondria. Hypochondria is an imaginary investment which, according to the early theory, constitutes a libidinal projection of the body-surface which in turn establishes its epistemological accessibility. Hypochondria here denotes something like a *theatrical* delineation or production of the body, one which gives imaginary contours to the ego itself, projecting a body which becomes the occasion of an identification which in its imaginary or projected status is fully tenuous.

But something is clearly awry in Freud's analysis from the start, for how is it that the self-preoccupation with bodily suffering or illness becomes the analogy for the erotogenic discovery and conjuring of body parts? In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud himself suggests that to figure sexuality as illness is symptomatic of the structuring presence of a moralistic framework of guilt. In this text, Freud argues that narcissism must give way to objects, and that we must finally love in order not to fall ill. Insofar as there is a *prohibition on love* accompanied by threats of imagined death, there is a great temptation to refuse to love, and so to be taken in by that prohibition and contract neurotic illness. Once this prohibition is installed, then, body parts emerge as sites of punishable pleasure and, hence, of pleasure and pain. In this kind of neurotic illness, guilt is manifest as pain that suffuses the bodily surface, and can appear as physical illness. What follows if it is this kind of bodily suffering which is, as Freud claimed of other kinds of pain, analogous to the way in which we achieve an "idea" of our own body?

If prohibitions in some sense constitute projected morphologies, then reworking the terms of those prohibitions suggests the possibility of variable projections, variable modes of delineating and theatricalizing body surfaces that do not guarantee heterosexual exchange, and which become sites of transfer for properties that no longer belong properly to any anatomy. I will make almost clear what this means for thinking through alternative imaginaries and the lesbian Phallus, but first a cautionary note on Freud.

The pathologization of erotogenic parts in Freud calls to be read as a discourse produced in guilt, and although the imaginary and projective possibilities of hypochondria are useful, they call to be dissociated from the

metaphorics of illness that pervade the description of sexuality. This is especially urgent now that the pathologization of sexuality generally, and specific description of homosexuality as the paradigm for the pathological as such, are symptomatic of homophobic discourse on AIDS.

Insofar as Freud accepts the analogy between erotogenicity and illness, he produces a pathological discourse on sexuality which allows figures for organic disease to construct figures for erotogenic body parts. This conflation has a long history, no doubt, but it finds one of its contemporary permutations in the homophobic construction of male homosexuality as always already pathological – an argument recently made by Jeff Nunokawa – such that AIDS is phantasmatically construed as the pathology of homosexuality itself. Clearly, the point is to read Freud not for the moments in which illness and sexuality are conflated, but, rather, for the moments in which that conflation fails to sustain itself, and where he fails to read himself in precisely the ways he teaches us to read ["Commenting on a text is like doing an analysis" (Lacan, *Seminar* 1: 73)].

Prohibitions, which include the prohibition on homosexuality, are enforced by the pain of guilt, and Freud himself offers this link at the end of his essay when he accounts for the genesis of conscience, and its self-policing possibilities, as the introjection of the homosexual cathexis. In other words, the ego-ideal which governs what Freud calls the ego's self-respect requires the prohibition of homosexuality, a prohibition which *is* homosexual desire turned back on itself; the self-beratement of conscience *is* the reflexive rerouting of homosexual desire. If then, as Freud contends, pain may be one way in which we come to have an idea of our body at all, it may also be that gender-instituting prohibitions work through suffusing the body with a pain which culminates in the projection of a surface, that is, a sexed morphology which is at once a compensatory fantasy and a fetishistic mask. And if one must either love or fall ill, then perhaps the sexuality that appears as illness is the insidious effect of a such a censor. Freud offers something like a map of this problematic, but without following through on the analysis that it requires.

If this effort to rethink the physical and the psychical works well, then it is no longer possible to take anatomy as a stable referent that is somehow valorized or signified through being subjected to an imaginary schema. On the contrary, the very accessibility of anatomy is in some sense dependent on this schema and coincident with it. As a result of this coincidence, it is unclear to me that lesbians can be said to be "of" the same sex or that homosexuality in general ought to be construed as love of the same.

For one point of this discussion of the indissolubility of the psychic and the corporeal is to suggest that any description of the body, including those which are deemed conventional within scientific discourse, takes place through the circulation and validation of such an imaginary schema.

But if the descriptions of the body take place in and through an imaginary schema, that is, if these descriptions are psychically and phantasmatically invested, is there still something we might call the body itself which escapes this schematization? At least two responses can be offered to this question. First, psychic projection confers boundaries and, hence, unity on the body, so that the very contours of the body are sites which vacillate between the psychic and the material; hence, bodily contours and morphology are not merely implicated in an irreducible tension between the psychic and the material but *are* that tension. Hence, the psyche is not a grid through which a pre-given body appears; that formulation would figure the body as an ontological in-itself which only becomes available through a psyche which establishes its mode of appearance as an epistemological object.

That Kantian formulation of the body calls to be reworked, first, in a more phenomenological register as an imaginary formation and, second, through a theory of signification as an effect and token of sexual difference. As for the first, which is sustained in the second, we might understand the psyche in this context as that which constitutes the mode by which that body is given, the condition and contour of that givenness. This brings me to the second point: the materiality of the body ought not to be conceptualized as a unilateral or determinate *effect* of the psyche in any sense that would reduce that materiality to the psyche or make of the psyche the monistic stuff out of which that materiality is produced and/or derived. This latter alternative would constitute a clearly untenable form of idealism. It must be possible to concede and affirm an array of "materialities" that pertain to the body, that which is signified by the domains of biology, anatomy, physiology, hormonal and chemical composition, illness, age, weight, metabolism, life, and death. None of this can be denied. But the undeniability of these "materialities" in no way implies what it means to affirm them, indeed, what interpretive matrices condition, enable, and limit that necessary affirmation. That each of those categories has a history and a historicity, that each of them is constituted through the boundary lines that distinguish them and, hence, by what they exclude, that relations of discourse and power produce hierarchies and overlappings among them and challenge those boundaries, implies that they are both persistent and contested regions. We might want to claim that what persists within these contested domains is the "materiality" of the body. But

perhaps we will have fulfilled the same function, and opened up some others, if we claim that what persists here is *a demand in and for language*, a "that which" prompts and occasions, say, within the domain of science, explained, described, diagnosed, altered; or within the cultural fabric of lived experience, fed, exercised, mobilized, put to sleep: a site of enactments and passions of various kinds. To insist upon this demand, this site, as the "that without which" no psychic operation can proceed, but also as that on which and through which the psyche also operates, is to begin to circumscribe that which is invariably and persistently the psyche's site of operation; not the blank slate or passive medium upon which the psyche acts, but, rather, the constitutive demand that mobilizes psychic action from the start, that is that mobilization, and, in its transmuted form, as Nietzsche insists, is that psyche.

"Are Bodies Purely Discursive?"

The linguistic categories that are understood to "denote" the materiality of the body are themselves troubled by a referent that is never fully or permanently resolved or contained by any given signified. Indeed, that referent persists only as a kind of absence or loss, that which language does not capture, but, instead, that which impels language repeatedly to attempt that capture, that circumscription – and to fail. This loss takes its place in language as an insistent call or demand that, while *in* language, is never fully *of* language. To posit a materiality outside of language is still to posit that materiality, and the materiality so posited will retain that positing as its constitutive condition. To posit a materiality outside of language, where that materiality is considered ontologically distinct from language, is to undermine the possibility that language might be able to indicate or correspond to that domain of radical alterity; hence, the absolute distinction between language and materiality which was to secure the referential function of language undermines that function radically.

This is not to say that, on the one hand, the body is simply linguistic stuff or, on the other, has no bearing on language. It bears on language all the time. Indeed, the materiality of language, of the very sign that attempts to denote "materiality," suggests that it is not the case that everything, including materiality, is always already language. On the contrary, the materiality of the signifier (a "materiality" that comprises both the signs and its significatory efficacy) implies that there can be no reference to a pure materiality except via materiality. Hence, it is not that one cannot get outside of language in order to grasp materiality in and of itself; rather, every effort to refer to

materiality takes place through a signifying process which, in its phenomenality, is always already material. In this sense, then, language and materiality are not opposed, for language both is and refers to that which is material, and what is material never fully escapes from the process by which it is signified.

But if language is not opposed to materiality, neither can materiality be summarily collapsed into an identity with language. On the one hand, the process of signification is always material; signs work *by appearing*, and appearing through material means, although what appears only signifies by virtue of those non-phenomenal relations, i.e., relations of differentiation, that tacitly structure and propel signification itself. Relations, even the notion of *différance*, institute and require relata, terms, phenomenal signifiers. And yet what allows for a signifier to signify will never be its materiality alone; that materiality will be at once an instrumentality and deployment of a set of larger linguistic relations. The materiality of the signifier will signify only to the extent that it is impure, contaminated by the ideality of differentiating relations, the tacit structurings of an illimitable linguistic context.[6] Conversely, the signifier will work to the extent that it is also contaminated constitutively by the very materiality that the ideality of sense purports to overcome. Apart from and yet related to the materiality of the signifier is the materiality of the signified as well as the referent approached through the signified, but remains irreducible to the signified. This radical difference between *referent* and *signified* is the site where the materiality of language and that of the world which it seeks to signify is perpetually negotiated. This might usefully be compared with Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh of the world.[7] Although the referent cannot be said to exist apart from the signified, it nevertheless cannot be reduced to it. That referent, that abiding function of the world, is to persist as the horizon and the "that which" which makes its demand in and to language. Language and materiality are fully embedded in each other, chiasmic in their interdependency, but never fully collapsed into one another, i.e., reduced to one another, and yet neither fully ever exceeds the other. Always already implicated in each other, always already exceeding one another, language and materiality are never fully identical nor fully different.

But what then do we make of the kind of materiality that is associated with the body, its physicality as well as its location, including its social and political locatedness, and that materiality that characterizes language? Do we mean "materiality" in a common sense, or are these usages examples of what Althusser refers to as modalities of matter?[8]

To answer the question of the relation between the materiality of bodies and that of language requires first that we offer an account of how it is that bodies materialize, that is, how they come to assume the *morphe*, the shape by which their material discreteness is marked. The materiality of the body is not to be taken for granted, for in some sense it is acquired, constituted, through the development of morphology. And within the Lacanian view, language, understood as rules of differentiation based on kinship relations, is essential to the development of morphology. Before we consider one account of the development of linguistic and corporeal morphology, let us turn briefly to Kristeva, to provide a contrast with Lacan, and a critical introduction.

Insofar as language might be understood to emerge from the materiality of bodily life, that is, as the reiteration and extension of a material set of relations, language is a substitute satisfaction, a primary act of displacement and condensation. Kristeva argues that the materiality of the spoken signifier, the vocalization of sound, is already a psychic effort to reinstall and recapture a lost maternal body; hence, these vocalizations are temporarily recaptured in sonorous poetry which works language for its most material possibilities (134-36). Even here, however, those material sputterings are already psychically invested, deployed in the service of a fantasy of mastery and restoration. Here the materiality of bodily relations, prior to any individuation into a separable body or, rather, simultaneous with it, is displaced onto the materiality of linguistic relations. The language that is the effect of this displacement nevertheless carries the trace of that loss precisely in the phantasmatic structure of recovery that mobilizes vocalization itself. Here then it is the materiality of that (other) body which is phantasmatically reinvoked in the materiality of signifying sounds. Indeed, what gives those sounds the power to signify is that phantasmatic structure. The materiality of the signifier is thus the displaced repetition of the materiality of the lost maternal body. Materiality is constituted in and through iterability. And to the extent that the referential impulse of language is to return to that lost originary presence, the maternal body becomes, as it were, the paradigm or figure for any subsequent referent. This is in part the function of the Real in its convergence with the unthematizable maternal body in Lacanian discourse. The Real is that which resists and compels symbolization. Kristeva redescribes and reinterprets the Real as the semiotic, that is, as a poetic mode of signifying that, although dependent on the Symbolic, can neither be reduced to it nor figured as its unthematizable Other.

For Kristeva, the materiality of language is in some sense derived from the materiality of infantile bodily relations; language becomes some-

thing like the infinite displacement of that *jouissance* that is phantasmatically identified with the maternal body. Every effort to signify encodes and repeats this loss. Moreover, it is only on the condition of this primary loss of the referent, the Real, understood as the maternal presence, that signification – and the materialization of language – can take place. The materiality of the maternal body is only figurable within language (a set of already differentiated relations) as the phantasmatic site of a de-individuated fusion, a *jouissance* prior to the differentiation and emergence of the subject.[9] But insofar as this loss is figured *within language*, i.e., appears as a figure in language, that loss is also denied, for language both performs and defends against the separation that it figures; as a result, any figuration of that loss will both repeat and refuse the loss itself. The relations of differentiation between parts of speech which produce signification are themselves the *reiteration* and extension of the primary acts of differentiation and separation from the maternal body by which a speaking subject comes into being. Insofar as language appears to be motivated by a loss it cannot grieve, and to repeat the very loss that it refuses to recognize, we might regard this ambivalence at the heart of linguistic iterability as the melancholy recesses of signification.

The postulation of the primacy of the maternal body in the genesis of signification is clearly questionable, for it cannot be shown that a differentiation from such a body is that which primarily or exclusively inaugurates the relation to speech. The maternal body prior to the formation of the subject is always and only known by a subject who by definition postdates that hypothetical scene. Lacan's effort to offer an account of the genesis of bodily boundaries in "The Mirror Stage" (1949) takes the narcissistic relation as primary, and so displaces the maternal body as a site of primary identification. This happens within the essay itself when the infant is understood to overcome with jubilation the obstruction of the support which presumably holds the infant in place before the mirror. The reification of maternal dependency as a "support" and an "obstruction" signified primarily as that which, in the overcoming, occasions jubilation, suggests that there is a discourse on the differentiation from the maternal in the mirror stage. The maternal is, as it were, already put under erasure by the theoretical language which reifies her function, enacting the very overcoming that it seeks to document.

Insofar as the mirror stage involves an *imaginary* relation, it is that of psychic projection, but not, strictly speaking, in the register of the Symbolic, i.e., in language, the differented/ing use of speech. The mirror stage is not a *developmental* account of how the idea of one's own body comes into being. It does suggest, however, that the capacity to project a *morphe*, a shape, onto

a surface is part of the psychic (and phantasmatic) elaboration, centering, and containment of one's own bodily contours. This process of psychic projection or elaboration implies as well that the sense of one's own body is not (only) achieved through differentiating from another (the maternal body), but that any sense of bodily contour, as projected, is articulated through a necessary self-division and self-estrangement. In this sense, Lacan's mirror stage can be read as a rewriting of Freud's introduction of the bodily ego in *The Ego and the Id* as well as the theory of narcissism. Here it is not a question of whether the mother or the imago comes first, or whether they are fully distinct from one another, but, rather, how to account for individuation through the unstable dynamics of sexual differentiation and identification that take place through the elaboration of imaginary bodily contours.

For Lacan, the body or, rather, morphology is an imaginary formation,[10] but we learn in the second *Seminar* that this *percipi* or visual production, the body, can be sustained in its phantasmatic integrity only through submitting to language and to a marking by sexual difference: "the percipi of man [sic] can only be sustained within a zone of nomination" ("C'est par la nomination que l'homme fait subsister les objets dans une certaine consistance") (*Seminar* 2: 177/202). Bodies only become whole, i.e., totalities, by the idealizing and totalizing specular image which is sustained through time by the sexually marked name. To have a name is to be positioned within the Symbolic, the idealized domain of kinship, a set of relationships structured through sanction and taboo which is governed by the law of the father, i.e., the prohibition against incest. For Lacan, names, which emblematize and institute this paternal law, *sustain* the integrity of the body. What constitutes the integral body is not a natural boundary or organic telos, but the law of kinship that works through the name. In this sense, the paternal law produces versions of bodily integrity; the name, which installs gender and kinship, works as a politically invested and investing performative. To be named is thus to be inculcated into that law and to be formed, bodily, in accordance with that law.[11]

Rewriting the Morphological Imaginary

Consciousness occurs each time there is a surface such that it can produce what is called an image. That is a materialist definition. (Lacan, Seminar *2: 49/65)*

There is something originally, inaugurally, profoundly wounded in the human relation to the world . . . that is what comes out of the theory of narcissism Freud gave us, insofar as this framework introduces an indefinable, a no exit, *marking all relations, and especially the libidinal relations of the subject. (*Seminar *2: 167/199)*

The following selective reading of Lacan will explore the consequences of the theory of narcissism for the formation of the bodily ego and its marking by sex. Insofar as the ego is formed from the psyche through projecting the body, and the ego *is* that projection, the condition of reflexive (mis)knowing, it is invariably a bodily ego. This projection of the body, which Lacan narrates as the mirror stage, rewrites Freud's theory of narcissism through the dynamics of projection and misrecognition (*méconnaissance*). In the course of that rewriting, Lacan establishes the morphology of the body as a psychically invested projection, an idealization or "fiction" of the body as a totality and locus of control. Moreover, he suggests that this narcissistic and idealizing projection that establishes morphology constitutes the condition for the generation of objects and the cognition of other bodies. The morphological scheme established through the mirror stage constitutes precisely that reserve of *morphe* from which the contours of objects are produced; both objects and others come to appear only through the mediating grid of this projected or imaginary morphology.

This Lacanian trajectory will be shown to become problematic on (at least) two counts: 1) the morphological scheme which becomes the epistemic condition for the world of objects and others to appear is marked as masculine and, hence, becomes the basis for an anthropocentric and androcentric epistemological imperialism (this is one criticism of Lacan offered by Luce Irigaray and supplies the compelling reason for her project to articulate a feminine Imaginary[12]); 2) the idealization of the body as a center of control sketched in "The Mirror Stage" is rearticulated in Lacan's notion of the Phallus as that which controls significations in discourse, "The Meaning of the Phallus" (1958).[13] Although Lacan explicitly denounces the possibility that the Phallus is a body part or an imaginary effect, that repudiation will be read as constitutive of the very symbolic status he confers on the Phallus in the course of the later essay. As an idealization of a body part, the

phantasmatic figure of the Phallus within Lacan's essay, undergoes a set of contradictions similar to those which unsettled Freud's analysis of erotogenic body parts. The lesbian Phallus may be said to intervene as an unexpected consequence of the Lacanian scheme, an apparently contradictory signifier which, through a critical mimesis (Schor 48) calls into question the ostensibly originating and controlling power of the Lacanian Phallus, indeed, its installation as the privileged signifier of the symbolic order. The move emblematized by the lesbian Phallus contests the relationship between the logic of non-contradiction and the legislation of compulsory heterosexuality at the level of the Symbolic and bodily morphogenesis; consequently, it seeks to open up a discursive site for reconsidering the tacitly political relations that constitute and persist in the divisions between body parts and wholes, anatomy and the Imaginary, corporeality and the psyche.

In his *Seminar* of 1953, Lacan argues that "the mirror stage is not simply a moment in development. It also has an exemplary function, because it reveals some of the subject's relations to his image, in so far as it is the *Urbild* of the ego" (*Seminar* 1: 74/88). In "The Mirror Stage," published four years earlier, Lacan argues that "we have . . . to understand the mirror stage *as an identification* . . . ," and then slightly later in the essay suggests that the ego is the cumulative effect of its formative identifications.[14] Within the American reception of Freud, especially in ego psychology and certain versions of object relations, it is perhaps customary to suggest that the ego preexists its identifications, a notion confirmed by the grammar that insists that "an ego identifies with an object outside itself." The Lacanian position suggests that identifications not only *precede* the ego, but the identificatory relation to the image establishes the ego. Moreover, the ego established through this identificatory relation is itself a relation, indeed, the cumulative history of such relations. As a result, the ego is not a self-identical substance, but a sedimented history of relations which locate the center of the ego outside itself, in the externalized *imago* which confers and produces bodily contours. In this sense, Lacan's mirror does not reflect or represent a preexisting ego, but, rather, provides the frame, the boundary, the spatial delineation for the projective elaboration of the ego itself. Hence, Lacan claims, "the image of the body gives the subject the first form which allows him to locate what pertains to the ego [*ce qui est du moi*] and what does not" (*Seminar* 1: 79/94). Strictly speaking, then, the ego cannot be said to identify with an object outside itself; rather, it is through an identification with an imago, which is itself a relation, that the "outside" of the ego is first ambiguously demarcated, indeed, that a spatial boundary that negotiates "outside" and "inside" is estab-

lished in and as the Imaginary: "the function of the mirror stage [is] a particular case of the function of the *imago*, which is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality – or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*" (*Écrits* 4).[15] The specular image that the child sees, that is, the imagining that the child produces, confers a visual integrity and coherence on his own body (appearing as other) which compensates for his limited and pre-specular sense of motility and undeveloped motor control. Lacan goes on to identify this specular image with the ego-ideal (*je-idéal*) and with the subject, although these terms will in his later lectures be distinguished from one another on other grounds.[16]

Significantly, this idealized totality that the child sees is a mirror-image: one might say that it confers an ideality and integrity on his body, but it is perhaps more accurate to claim that the very sense of the body is generated through this projection of ideality and integrity. Indeed, this mirroring transforms a lived sense of disunity and loss of control into an ideal of integrity and control (*la puissance*) through that event of specularization. Shortly, we will argue that this idealization of the body articulated in "The Mirror Stage" reemerges unwittingly in the context of Lacan's discussion of the Phallus as the idealization and symbolization of anatomy. At this point, it is perhaps enough to note that the imago of the body is purchased through a certain loss; libidinal dependency and powerlessness is phantasmatically overcome by the installation of a boundary and, hence, an hypostasized center which produces an idealized bodily ego; that integrity and unity is achieved through the ordering of a wayward motility or disaggregated sexuality not yet restrained by the boundaries of individuation: "the human object [*l'objet humain*] always constitutes itself through the intermediary of a first loss – nothing fruitful takes place in man [*rien de fécond n'a lieu pour l'homme*] save through the intermediary of a loss of an object" (*Seminar* 2: 136/165).[17]

Lacan remarks in the second *Seminar* that "the body in pieces [*le corps morcelé*] finds its unity as in the image of the Other, which is its own anticipated image – a dual situation in which a polar, but non-symmetrical relation, is sketched out" (54/72). The ego is formed around the specular image of the body itself, but this specular image is itself an *anticipation*, a subjunctive delineation. The ego is first and foremost an object which cannot coincide temporally with the subject, a temporal *ek-stasis*; the ego's temporal futurity, and its exteriority as a *percipi*, establish its alterity to the subject. But this alterity is ambiguously located: first, within the circuit of a psyche which constitutes/finds the ego as a mistaken and decentering token of itself (hence,

an interior alterity); second, as an object of perception, like other objects, and so at a radical epistemic distance from the subject: "The ego . . . is a particular object within the experience of the subject. Literally, the ego is an object – an object which fills a certain function which we here call the imaginary function" (*Seminar* 2: 44/60).[18] As Imaginary, the ego as object is neither interior nor exterior to the subject, but the permanently unstable site where that spatialized distinction is perpetually negotiated; it is this ambiguity that marks the ego as imago, that is, as an identificatory relation. Hence, identifications are never simply or definitively *made* or *achieved*; they are insistently constituted, contested, and negotiated.

The specular image of the body itself is in some sense the image of the Other. But it is only on the condition that the anticipated, ambiguously located body furnishes an *imago* and a boundary for the ego that objects come into perception.

> *The object is always more or less structured as the image of the body of the subject. The reflection of the subject, its mirror stage [*image spéculaire*], is always found somewhere in every perceptual picture [*tableau perceptif*], and that is what gives it a quality, a special inertia.* (Seminar *2: 167/199)*

Here we not only have an account of the social constitution of the ego, but the modes by which the ego is differentiated from its Other, and how that imago that sustains and troubles that differentiation *at the same time* generates objects of perception. "On the libidinal level, the object is only even apprehended through the grid of the narcissistic relation" (*Seminar* 2: 167/199). And this is made all the more complex when we see that the reflexive relation to/of the ego is always ambiguously related to the "Other." Far from being a merely narcissistic precondition of object genesis, this claim offers instead an irreducible equivocation of narcissism and sociality which becomes the condition of the epistemological generation of and access to objects.

The idealization of the body as a spatially bounded totality, characterized by a control exercized by the gaze, is lent out to the body as its own self-control. This will become crucial to the understanding of the Phallus as a privileged signifier that appears to control the significations that it produces. Lacan suggests as much in the second *Seminar*:

> *The issue is knowing which organs come into play in [*entrent en jeu dans*] the narcissistic imaginary relation to the Other whereby*

> *the ego is formed,* bildet. *The imaginary structuration of the ego forms around the specular image of the body itself, of the image of the Other. (94-95/119)*

But some parts of the body become the tokens for the centering and controlling function of the bodily *imago*: "certain organs are caught up in [*sont intéressés dans*] the narcissistic relation, insofar as it structures both the relation of the ego to the Other and the constitution of the world of objects" (*Seminar* 2: 95/119). Although these organs are not named, it seems that they are, first of all, organs (*les organes*) and that they enter into play in the narcissistic relation, they are that which act as the token or conjectured basis for narcissism. If these organs are the male genitals, they function as both the site and token of a specifically masculine narcissism; moreover, insofar as these organs are set into play by a narcissism which is said to provide the structure of relations to the Other and to the world of objects, then these organs become part of the imaginary elaboration of the ego's bodily boundary, token and "proof" of its integrity and control, and the imaginary epistemic condition of its access to the world. By entering into that narcissistic relation, the organs cease to be organs, and become imaginary effects. One might be tempted to argue that in the course of being set into play by the narcissistic Imaginary, the penis becomes the Phallus. And yet, curiously and significantly, in Lacan's essay on "The Meaning of the Phallus," he will deny that the Phallus is either an organ or an imaginary effect; it is instead a "privileged signifier" (82). We will turn to the textual knots that those series of denials produce in Lacan's essay, but here it is perhaps important to note that these narcissistically engaged organs become part of the condition and structure of every object and Other that can be perceived.

"What did I try to get across with the mirror stage? . . . The image of [man's] body is the principle of every unity he perceives in objects . . . all the objects of his world are always structured around the wandering shadow of his own ego" ("c'est toujours autour de l'ombre errante de son propre moi que se structureront tous les objets de son monde") (*Seminar* 2: 166/198). This extrapolating function of narcissism becomes phallogocentrism at the moment in which the aforementioned organs, engaged by the narcissistic relation, become the model or principle by which any other object or Other is known. At this point, the organs are installed as a "privileged signifier." Insofar as falling in love takes place within the orbit of this emerging phallogocentrism: "*Verliebtheit* [being in love] is fundamentally narcissistic. On the libidinal level, the object is only even apprehended through the grid

of the narcissistic relation [*la grille du rapport narcissique*]" (*Seminar 2*: 167/199).

Lacan claims that the organs are "taken up" by a narcissistic relation, and that this narcissistically invested anatomy becomes the structure, the principle, the grid of all epistemic relations. In other words, it is the narcissistically imbued organ which is then elevated to a structuring principle which forms and gives access to all knowable objects. In the first place, this account of the genesis of epistemological relations implies that all knowable objects will have an anthropomorphic and androcentric character.[19] Secondly, this androcentric character will be phallic.

At this juncture it makes sense to ask after the relation between the account of specular relations in "The Mirror Stage" – the argument that morphology preconditions epistemological relations – and the later move in "The Meaning of the Phallus" which asserts that the Phallus is a privileged signifier. The differences between the language and aims of the two essays are marked; the former essay concerns epistemological relations which are not yet theorized in terms of signification; the latter appears to have emerged after a shift from epistemological to significatory models (or, rather, an embedding of the epistemological within the symbolic domain of signification). And yet, there is another difference here, one which might be understood as a reversal. In the earlier essay, the "organs" are taken up by the narcissistic relation, and become the phantasmatic morphology which generates, through a specular extrapolation, the structure of knowable objects. In the latter essay, there is the introduction of the Phallus which functions as a privileged signifier, and which delimits the domain of the signifiable.

In a limited sense, the narcissistically invested organs in "The Mirror Stage" serve a function parallel to that of the Phallus in "The Meaning of the Phallus": the former establish the conditions for knowability; the latter establish the conditions for signifiability. Further, the theoretical context in which "The Meaning of the Phallus" occurs is one in which signification is the condition of all knowability, and the image can be sustained only by the sign (the Imaginary within the terms of the Symbolic) it appears to follow that the narcissistically invested organs in the former essay are in some way maintained in and by the notion of the Phallus. Even if we were to argue that "The Mirror Stage" documents an imaginary relation, whereas "The Meaning of the Phallus" is concerned with signification at the level of the Symbolic, it is unclear whether the former can be sustained without the latter and, perhaps more significantly, the latter, i.e., the Symbolic, without the former. And yet this logical conclusion is thwarted by Lacan himself in his insistence that

the Phallus is neither an anatomical part nor an imaginary relation. Is this repudiation of the anatomical and imaginary origins of the Phallus to be read as a refusal to account for the very genealogical process of idealizing the body that Lacan himself provided in "The Mirror Stage"? Are we to accept the priority of the Phallus without asking into the narcissistic investment by which an organ, a body part, has been elevated/erected to the structuring and centering principle of the world? If "The Mirror Stage" reveals how, through the synecdochal function of the Imaginary, parts come to stand for wholes and a decentered body is transfigured into a totality with a center, then we might be led to ask which organs perform this centering and synecdochal function. "The Meaning of the Phallus" effectively refuses the question that the former essay implicitly raised. For if the Phallus in its symbolic function is neither an organ nor an imaginary effect, then it is not constructed through the Imaginary, and maintains a status and integrity independent of it. This corresponds, of course, to the distinction that Lacan makes throughout his work between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. But if the Phallus can be shown to be a synecdochal effect, if it both stands for the part, the organ, and is the imaginary transfiguration of that part into the centering and totalizing function of the body, then the Phallus appears *as symbolic only* to the extent that its construction through the transfigurative and specular mechanisms of the Imaginary is denied. Indeed, if the Phallus is an imaginary effect, a wishful transfiguration, then it is not merely the *symbolic* status of the Phallus that is called into question, but the very distinction between the Symbolic and the Imaginary. If the Phallus is the privileged signifier of the Symbolic, the delimiting and ordering principle of what can be signified, then this signifier gains its privilege through becoming an imaginary effect that pervasively denies its own status as both imaginary and an effect. If this is true of the signifier that delimits the domain of the signifiable within the Symbolic, then it is true of all that is signified as the Symbolic; in other words, what operates under the sign of the Symbolic may be nothing other than precisely that set of imaginary effects which have become naturalized and reified as the law of signification.

"The Mirror Stage" and "The Meaning of the Phallus" follow (at least) two very different narrative trajectories: the first follows the premature and imaginary transformation of a decentered body – a body in pieces (*le corps morcelé*) – into the specular body, a morphological totality invested with a center of motor control; the second follows the differential "accession" of bodies to sexed positions within the Symbolic. In the one instance, there is narrative recourse to a body before the mirror; in the other, a body before the law. Such a discursive reference is one which, within Lacan's own terms, is

to be construed less as a developmental explanation than as a necessary heuristic fiction.

In "The Mirror Stage," that body is figured "in pieces," "une image morcelée du corps"[20]; in Lacan's discussion of the Phallus, the body and anatomy are described only through negation: anatomy and, in particular, anatomical parts, are *not the Phallus, but only that which the Phallus symbolizes*: "Il est encore bien moins l'organe, pénis ou clitoris, qu'il symbolise" (690). In the former essay, then (shall we call it a "piece"?), Lacan narrates the overcoming of the partitioned body through the specular and phantasmatic production of a morphological whole; in the latter essay, that drama is enacted – or symptomatized – by the narrative movement of the theoretical performance itself, what we will consider briefly as the performativity of the Phallus. But if it is possible to read "The Meaning of the Phallus" as symptomatizing the specular phantasm described in "The Mirror Stage," it is also possible, and useful, to reread "The Mirror Stage" as offering an implicit theory of "mirroring" as a signifying practice.

If the body is "in pieces" before the mirror, it follows that the mirroring works as a kind of synecdochal extrapolation by which those pieces or parts come to stand (in and by the mirror) for the whole or, put differently, the part substitutes for the whole and thereby becomes a token for the whole. If this is right, then perhaps "The Mirror Stage" proceeds through a synecdochal logic that institutes and maintains a phantasm of control. It makes sense to ask, then, whether the theoretical construction of the Phallus is such a synecdochal extrapolation. By changing the name of the penis to "the Phallus," is the part-status of the former phantasmatically and synecdochally overcome through the inauguration of the latter as "the privileged signifier"? And does this name, like proper names, secure and sustain the morphological distinctness of the masculine body, sustaining the *percipi* through nomination?

In Lacan's discussion of what the Phallus is, to be distinguished from his discussion of who "is" the Phallus, he quarrels with various psychoanalytic practitioners about who is entitled to name the Phallus, who knows where and how the name applies, who is in the position to name the name. He objects to the relegation of the Phallus to a "phallic stage" or to the conflation and diminution of the Phallus to a "partial object." Lacan faults Karl Abraham in particular for introducing the notion of the partial object, but it is clear that he is most strongly opposed to Melanie Klein's theory of introjected body parts and with Ernest Jones's influential acceptance of these positions. Lacan associates the normalization of the Phallus as partial object

with the degradation of psychoanalysis on American soil [". . . la dégradation de la psychanalyse, consécutive à sa transplantation américaine . . ." (*Écrits* 77/687)]. Other theoretical tendencies associated with this degradation are termed "culturalist" and "feminist." In particular, he is opposed to those psychoanalytic positions which consider the phallic phase to be an effect of repression, and the phallic object as a symptom. Here the Phallus is negatively defined through a string of attributes: not partial, not an object, not a symptom. Moreover, the "not" which precedes each of these attributes is "not" to be read as a "refoulement" (repression); in other words, negation *in these textual instances* is not to be read psychoanalytically (*Écrits* 79/687).

How, then, can we read the symptomatic dimension of Lacan's text here? Does the rejection of the phallic phase and, in particular, of the figuration of the Phallus as a partial or approximative object, seek to overcome a degradation in favor of an idealization, a specular one? Do these psychoanalytic texts fail to mirror the Phallus as specular center, and do they threaten to expose the synecdochal logic by which the Phallus is installed as privileged signifier? If the position for the Phallus erected by Lacan symptomatizes the specular and idealizing mirroring of a decentered body in pieces before the mirror, then we can read here the phantasmatic rewriting of an organ or body part, the penis, as the Phallus, a move effected by a transvaluative denial of its substitutability, dependency, diminuitive size, limited control, partiality. The Phallus would then emerge as a symptom, and its authority could be established only through a metaleptic reversal of cause and effect. Rather than the postulated origin of signification or the signifiable, the Phallus would be the effect of a signifying chain summarily suppressed.

But this analysis still needs to take into account why it is that the body is in pieces before the mirror and before the law. Why should the body be given in parts before it is specularized as a totality and center of control? How did this body come to be in pieces and parts? To have a sense of a piece or a part is to have in advance a sense for the whole to which they belong. Although "The Mirror Stage" attempts to narrate how a body, for the first time, comes to have a sense of its own totality, the very description of a body before the mirror as being in parts or pieces takes as its own precondition an *already* established sense of a whole or integral morphology. If to be in pieces is to be without control, then the body before the mirror is without the Phallus, symbolically castrated; and by gaining specularized control through the ego constituted in the mirror, that body "assumes" or "comes to have" the Phallus. But the Phallus is, as it were, already in play in the very description of the body in pieces before the mirror; as a result, the Phallus governs the descrip-

tion of its own genesis and, accordingly, wards off a genealogy which might confer on it a derivative or projected character.

Although Lacan claims quite explicitly that the Phallus "is not an imaginary effect,"[21] that denial might be read as constitutive of the very formation of the Phallus as privileged signifier; that denial appears to facilitate that privileging. As an imaginary effect, the Phallus would be as decentered and tenuous as the ego; in an effort to recenter and ground the Phallus, it is elevated to the status of the privileged signifier, and it is offered at the end of a long list of improper usages for the term, ways in which the term has gotten out of hand, signified where it ought not to have and in ways that are wrong:

> *In Freudian doctrine, the phallus is not a fantasy, if what is understood by that is an imaginary effect. Nor is it an object (part, internal, good, bad, etc . . .) in so far as this term tends to accentuate the reality involved in a relationship. It is even less the organ, penis or clitoris, which it symbolizes. And it is not by accident that Freud took his reference for it from the simulacrum which it represented for the Ancients. For the phallus is a signifier. . . . ("Meaning" 79)*[22]

In this last pronouncement, Lacan seeks to relieve the term of its catachrestic wanderings, to reestablish the Phallus as a site of control (as that which is "to designate as a whole the effect of there being a signified"), and hence to position Lacan himself as the one to control the meaning of the Phallus. As Jane Gallop has argued (to cite her is thus to transfer the Phallus from him to her, but also then affirms my point that the Phallus is fundamentally transferable): "And their inability to control the meaning of the word *phallus* is evidence of what Lacan calls symbolic castration" (126).

If not being able to control the significations that follow from the signifier, Phallus, is evidence of symbolic castration, then the body "in pieces" and out of control before the mirror may be understood as symbolically castrated, and the specular and synecdochal idealization of the (phallic) body may be read as a compensatory mechanism by which this phantasmatic castration is overcome. Not unlike Freud, who tried to put a stop to the proliferation of erotogenic body parts in his text, parts which were also sites of pain, Lacan stalls the sliding of the signifier into a proliferative catachresis through a preemptive assertion of the Phallus as privileged signifier. To claim for the Phallus the status of a privileged signifier performatively produces and effects this privilege. The announcement of that privileged signifier is its performance. That performative assertion produces and enacts the very process of

privileged signification, one whose privilege is potentially contested by the very list of alternatives it discounts, and the negation of which constitutes and precipitates that Phallus. Indeed, the Phallus is not a body part (but the whole), is not an imaginary effect (but the origin of all imaginary effects); these negations are constitutive; they function as disavowals that precipitate – and are then erased by – the idealization of the Phallus.

The paradoxical status of the negation that introduces and institutes the Phallus becomes clear in the grammar itself. "Il est encore moins l'organe, pénis ou clitoris, qu'il symbolise." Here the sentence suggests that the Phallus, "even less" than an imaginary effect, is not an organ. Here Lacan suggests gradations of negation: the Phallus is more likely to be an imaginary effect than an organ; if it is either one, it is more of an imaginary effect than an organ. This is not to say that it is not at all an organ, but that the "copula" – that which asserts a linguistic and ontological identity – is the least adequate way of expressing the relation between them. In the very sentence in which the minimization of any possible identity between penis and Phallus is asserted, an alternative relation between them is offered, namely, the relation of *symbolization*. The Phallus *symbolizes* the penis; insofar as it symbolizes the penis, retains the penis as that which it symbolizes, it *is* not the penis. To be the object of symbolization is precisely not to be that which symbolizes. To the extent that the Phallus symbolizes the penis, it is not that which it symbolizes. The more symbolization occurs, the less ontological connection there is between symbol and symbolized. Symbolization presumes and produces the ontological difference between that which symbolizes – or signifies – and that which is symbolized – or is signified. Symbolization depletes that which is symbolized of its ontological connection with the symbol itself.

But what is the status of this particular assertion of ontological difference, if it turns out that this symbol, the Phallus, always takes the penis as that which it symbolizes?[23] What is the character of this bind whereby the Phallus symbolizes the penis to the extent that it differentiates itself from the penis, where the penis becomes the privileged referent to be negated. If the Phallus *must* negate the penis in order to symbolize and signify in its privileged way, then the Phallus is bound to the penis, not through simple identity, but through determinate negation. If the Phallus only signifies to the extent that it is *not* the penis, and the penis is qualified as that body part that it must *not be*, then the Phallus is fundamentally dependent upon the penis in order to symbolize at all. Indeed, the Phallus would be nothing without the penis. And in that sense in which the Phallus requires the penis for its own constitution, the identity of the Phallus includes the penis, that is, a relation of

identity holds between them. And this is, of course, not only a logical point, for we have seen that the Phallus not only opposes the penis in a logical sense, but is itself instituted through the repudiation of its partial, decentered, and substitutable character.

The question, of course, is why it is assumed that the Phallus requires that particular body part to symbolize, and why it could not operate through symbolizing other body parts. The viability of the lesbian Phallus depends on this displacement. Or, perhaps more accurately phrased, the displaceability of the Phallus, its capacity to symbolize in relation to other body parts or other body-like things, opens the way for the lesbian Phallus, an otherwise contradictory formulation. And here it should be clear that the lesbian Phallus crosses the orders of *having* and *being*; *it* both wields the threat of castration (and in that sense a mode of "being" the Phallus, as women "are") and suffers from castration anxiety (and so is said to "have" the Phallus, and to fear its loss).[24]

To suggest that the Phallus might symbolize body parts other than the penis is compatible with the Lacanian scheme. But to argue that certain body parts or body-like things other than the penis are symbolized as "having" the Phallus is to call into question the mutually exclusive trajectories of castration anxiety and penis envy.[25] Indeed, if men are said to "have" the Phallus symbolically, their anatomy is also a site marked by having lost it; the anatomical part is never commensurable with the Phallus itself. In this sense, men might be understood to be both castrated (already) and driven by penis-envy (more properly understood as Phallus envy).[26] Conversely, insofar as women might be said to 'have' the Phallus and fear its loss (and there is no reason why that could not be true in both lesbian and heterosexual exchange, raising the question of an implicit heterosexuality in the former, and homosexuality in the latter), they may be driven by castration anxiety.

Although a number of theorists have suggested that lesbian sexuality is outside the economy of phallogocentrism, that position has been critically countered by the notion that lesbian sexuality is *as* constructed as any other form of sexuality within contemporary sexual regimes. Of interest here is not whether the Phallus persists in lesbian sexuality as a structuring principle, but *how* it persists, how it is constructed, and what happens to the "privileged" status of that signifier within this form of constructed exchange. I am not arguing that lesbian sexuality is only or even primarily structured by the Phallus, or even that such an impossible monolith like "lesbian sexuality" exists, but I do want to suggest that the Phallus constitutes an ambivalent site of identification and desire that is significantly different from

the scene of normative heterosexuality to which it is related. If Lacan claims that the Phallus only operates as "veiled," we might ask in return what kind of "veiling" the Phallus invariably performs. And what is the logic of "veiling" and, hence, of "exposure" that emerges within lesbian sexual exchange around the question of the Phallus? Clearly, there is no single answer, and the kind of culturally textured work that might approximate an answer to this question will doubtless need to take place elsewhere; indeed, "the" lesbian Phallus is a fiction, but perhaps a theoretically useful one, for there does seem to be a question of imitation, subversion, and the recirculation of privilege that a psychoanalytically-informed reading might attend.

If the Phallus is that which is excommunicated from the feminist orthodoxy on lesbian sexuality as well as the "missing part," the sign of an inevitable dissatisfaction that is lesbianism in homophobic and misogynist constructions, then the admission of the Phallus into that exchange faces two convergent prohibitions: the Phallus signifies the persistence of the "straight mind," a masculine or heterosexist identification and, hence, the defilement or betrayal of lesbian specificity; the Phallus signifies the insuperability of heterosexuality and constitutes lesbianism as a vain and/or pathetic effort to mime the real thing. Thus, the Phallus enters lesbian sexual discourse in the mode of a transgressive "confession" conditioned and confronted by both the feminist and misogynist forms of repudiation: it's not the real thing (the lesbian thing) or it's not the real thing (the straight thing). What is "unveiled" is precisely the repudiated desire, that which is abjected by heterosexist logic, and that which is defensively foreclosed through the effort to circumscribe a specifically feminine morphology for lesbianism. In a sense, what is unveiled or exposed is a desire that is produced through a prohibition.

And yet, the phantasmatic structure of this desire will operate as a "veil" precisely at the moment in which it is "revealed." That phantasmatic transfiguration of bodily boundaries will not only expose its own tenuousness, but will turn out to *depend on* that tenuousness and transience in order to signify at all. The Phallus as signifier within lesbian sexuality will engage the spectre of shame and repudiation delivered by that feminist theory which would secure a feminine morphology in its radical distinctness from the masculine (a binarism that is secured through heterosexual presumption), a spectre delivered in a more pervasive way by the masculinist theory which would insist on the male morphology as the only possible figure for the human body. Traversing those divisions, the lesbian Phallus signifies a desire that is produced historically at the cross-roads of these prohibitions, and is never fully free of the normative demands that condition its possibility and that it

nevertheless seeks to subvert. Insofar as the Phallus is an idealization of morphology, it produces a necessary effect of inadequation, one which, in the cultural context of lesbian relations, can be quickly assimilated to the sense of an inadequate derivation from the supposedly real thing, and, hence, a source of shame. But precisely *because* it is an idealization, one which no body can approximate adequately, it is a transferable phantasm, and its naturalized link to masculine morphology can be called into question through an aggressive reterritorialization. That complex identificatory fantasies inform morphogenesis, and that they cannot be fully predicted, suggests that morphological idealization is both a necessary and unpredictable ingredient in the constitution of both the bodily ego and the dispositions of desire. It also means that there is no one necessary imaginary schema for the bodily ego, and that cultural conflicts over the idealization and degradation of specific masculine and feminine morphologies will be played out at the site of the morphological Imaginary in complex conflicted ways. It may well be through a degradation of a feminine morphology, an imaginary and cathected degrading of the feminine, that the lesbian Phallus comes into play, or it may be through a castrating occupation of that central masculine trope, fueled by the kind of defiance which seeks to overturn that very degradation of the feminine.

Important to underscore, however, is the way in which the stability of both "masculine" and "feminine" morphologies are called into question by a lesbian resignification of the Phallus which depends on the crossings of phantasmatic identification. If the morphological distinctness of "the feminine" depends on its purification of all masculinity, and if this is instituted in the service of the production of morphologies in line with the laws of a heterosexual Symbolic, then that repudiated masculinity is *presumed* by the feminine morphology, and will emerge either as an impossible Ideal which shadows and thwarts the feminine or as a disparaged signifier of a patriarchal order against which a specific lesbian-feminism defines itself. In either case, the relation to the Phallus is constitutive, an identification is made which is at once disavowed. Indeed, it is this disavowed identification that enables and informs the production of a "distinct" feminine morphology from the start. It is doubtless possible to take account of the structuring presence of cross-identifications in the elaboration of the bodily-ego, and to frame these identifications in a direction beyond a logic of repudiation by which one identification is always and only worked at the expense of another. For the "shame" of the lesbian Phallus presumes that it will come to represent the "truth" of lesbian desire, a truth which will be figured as a falsehood, a vain imitation or

derivation from the heterosexual norm. And the counter-strategy of confessional defiance presumes as well that what has been excluded from dominant sexual discourses on lesbianism thereby constitutes its "truth." But if the "truth" is, as Nietzsche suggests, only a series of mistakes configured in relation to one another, or, in Lacanian terms, a set of constituting *méconnaissances*, then the Phallus is but one signifier among others in the course of lesbian exchange, neither the originating signifier nor the unspeakable outside. The Phallus will thus always operate as both veil and confession, a deflection from an erotogenicity that includes and exceeds the Phallus, an exposure of a desire which attests to a morphological transgression and, hence, to the instability of the imaginary boundaries of sex.

Conclusion

If the Phallus is an imaginary effect (which is reified as the privileged signifier of the symbolic order), then its structural place is no longer determined by the logical relation of mutual exclusion entailed by a heterosexist version of sexual difference in which men are said to "have" and women to "be" the Phallus. This logical and structural place is secured through the move that claims that by virtue of the penis, one is symbolized as "having": that structural bond (or bind) secures a relation of identity between the Phallus and the penis that is explicitly denied (it also performs a synecdochal collapse of the penis and the one who has it). If the Phallus only symbolizes to the extent that there is a penis there to be symbolized, then the Phallus is not only fundamentally dependent upon the penis, but cannot exist without it. But is this true?

If the Phallus operates as a signifier whose privilege is under contest, if its privilege is shown to be secured precisely through the reification of logical and structural relations within the Symbolic, then the structures within which it is put into play are more various and revisable than the Lacanian scheme can affirm. Consider that "having" the Phallus can be symbolized by an arm, a tongue, a hand (or two), a knee, a thigh, a pelvic bone, an array of purposefully instrumentalized body-like things. And that this "having" exists in relation to a "being the Phallus" which is both part of its own signifying effect (the phallic lesbian as potentially castrating) and that which it encounters in the woman who is desired (as the one who, offering or withdrawing the specular guarantee, wields the power to castrate). That this scene can reverse, that being and having can be confounded, upsets the logic of non-contradiction that serves the either-or of normative heterosexual

exchange. In a sense, the simultaneous act of de-privileging the Phallus, removing it from the normative heterosexual form of exchange and recirculating and reprivileging it between women deploys the Phallus to break the signifying chain in which it conventionally operates. If a lesbian "has" it, it is also clear that she does not "have" it in the traditional sense; her activity furthers a crisis in the sense of what it means to "have" one at all. The phantasmatic status of "having" is redelineated, rendered transferable, substitutable, plastic; and the eroticism produced within such an exchange depends on the displacement from traditional masculinist contexts as well as the critical redeployment of its central figures of power.

Clearly, the Phallus operates in a privileged way in contemporary sexual cultures, but that operation is secured by a linguistic structure or position which is not independent of its perpetual reconstitution. Inasmuch as the Phallus signifies, it is also always in the process of being signified and resignified; in this sense, it is not the incipient moment or origin of a signifying chain, as Lacan would insist, but part of a reiterable signifying practice and, hence, open to resignification: signifying in ways and in places which exceed its proper structural place within the Lacanian Symbolic and contest the necessity of that place. If the Phallus is a privileged signifier, it gains that privilege through being reiterated. And if the cultural construction of sexuality compels a repetition of that signifier, there is nevertheless in the very force of repetition, understood as resignification or recirculation, the possibility of de-privileging that signifier.

If what signifies under the sign of the Phallus are a number of body parts, discursive performatives, alternative fetishes, to name a few, then the symbolic position of "having" has been dislodged from the penis as its privileged anatomical (or non-anatomical) occasion. The phantasmatic moment in which a part suddenly stands for and produces a sense of the whole or is figured as the center of control, in which a certain kind of "phallic" determination is made by virtue of which meaning appears radically generated, underscores the very plasticity of the Phallus, the way in which it exceeds the structural place to which it has been consigned by the Lacanian scheme, the way in which that structure, to remain a structure, has to be *reiterated* and, as reiterable, becomes open to variation and plasticity.[27] When the Phallus is lesbian, then it is and is not a masculinist figure of power; the signifier is significantly split, for it both recalls and displaces the masculinism by which it is impelled. And insofar as it operates at the site of anatomy, the Phallus (re)produces the spectre of the penis only to enact its vanishing, to reiterate and exploit its perpetual vanishing as the occasion of the Phallus. This opens

up anatomy – and sexual difference itself – as a site of proliferative resignifications.

In a sense, the Phallus as I offer it here is both occasioned by Lacan and exceeds the purview of that form of heterosexist structuralism. It is not enough to claim that the signifier is not the same as the signified (Phallus/penis), if both terms are nevertheless bound to each other by an essential relation in which that difference is contained. The offering of the lesbian Phallus suggests that the signifier can come to signify *in excess* of its structurally mandated position; indeed, the signifier can be repeated in contexts and relations that come to *displace* the privileged status of that signifier. The "structure" by which the Phallus signifies the penis as its privileged occasion exists through being instituted and reiterated, and, by virtue of that temporalization, is unstable and open to subversive repetition. Moreover, if the Phallus symbolizes only through taking anatomy as its occasion, then the more various and unanticipated the anatomical (and non-anatomical) occasions for its symbolization, the more unstable that signifier becomes. In other words, the Phallus has no existence separable from the occasions of its symbolization; it cannot symbolize without its occasion. Hence, the lesbian Phallus offers the occasion (a set of occasions) for the Phallus to signify differently, and in so signifying, to resignify, unwittingly, its own masculinist and heterosexist privilege.

The notion of the bodily ego in Freud and that of the projective idealization of the body in Lacan suggest that the very contours of the body, the delimitation of anatomy, is in part the consequence of an externalized identification. That identificatory process is itself motivated by a transfigurative wish. And that wishfulness proper to all morphogenesis is itself prepared and structured by a culturally complex signifying chain that not only constitutes sexuality, but endows sexuality as a site where bodies and anatomies are perpetually reconstituted. If these central identifications cannot be strictly regulated, then the domain of the Imaginary in which the body is partially constituted is marked by a constitutive vacillation. The anatomical is only "given" through its signification, and yet it appears to exceed that signification, to provide the elusive referent in relation to which the variability of signification performs. Always already caught up in the signifying chain by which sexual difference is negotiated, the anatomical is never given outside its terms, and yet it is that which exceeds and compels that chain, an insistent and inexhaustible demand.

If the heterosexualization of identification and morphogenesis is historically contingent, however hegemonic, then identifications, which are

always already imaginary, as they cross gender boundaries, reinstitute sexed bodies in variable ways; in crossing these boundaries, such morphogenetic identifications reconfigure the mapping of sexual difference itself. The bodily ego produced through identification is not *mimetically* related to a preexisting biological or anatomical body (that former body could only become available through the imaginary schema I am proposing here, so that we would be immediately caught up in an infinite regress or vicious circle). The body in the mirror does not represent a body that is, as it were, before the mirror: the mirror, even as it is instigated by that unrepresentable body "before" the mirror, produces that body as its delirious effect.

In this sense, to speak of the lesbian Phallus as a possible site of desire is not to refer to an *imaginary* identification and/or desire that can be measured against a *real* one; on the contrary, it is simply to promote an alternative *Imaginary* to a hegemonic Imaginary and to show, through that assertion, the ways in which the hegemonic Imaginary constitutes itself through the naturalization of an exclusionary heterosexual morphology. In this sense, it is important to note that it is the lesbian *Phallus* and not the *penis* that is called for here, for what is needed is not a new body part, as it were, but a displacement of the hegemonic Symbolic of (heterosexist) sexual difference, and the critical release of alternative imaginary schemas for constituting sites of erotogenic pleasure.

The task, then, is not simply to disjoin the Phallus from the penis, but to underscore the Phallus as a transferable property, indeed, one that does not remain proper to itself in the transfer, and is thus only a token of the propriety that it confers. The Phallus is not an original which is then substituted *for* by a series of substitutes, but, as we saw in Freud, the Phallus is itself established through a series of substitutions summarily denied. Indeed, in Freud it was clear that the Phallus is an *incitement* to substitution and proliferation, such that modes of penetrability and penetration, control and submission, are "properties" that have no proper substances and belong to no proper positions, but which are fundamentally plastic and transferable. Insofar as penetrability and penetration are invertible figures, they are properties that belong properly nowhere, but which denote the plasticity of erotogenicity. On the basis of this analysis, then, it is possible to conclude either that notions of penetration and penetrability and of erotogenicity more generally need to be pursued outside of the domain of the Phallic, or that the Phallus is always already plastic and transferable.

JUDITH BUTLER teaches in the Humanities Center at Johns Hopkins University. She is the author of *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and co-editor with Joan W. Scott of "Feminists Theorize the Political," forthcoming from Routledge.

Notes

1 A version of the first part of this paper was given as "The Lesbian Phallus: Does Heterosexuality Exist?" at the Modern Language Association Meetings in Chicago, December 1990.

2 Citations from the English and French versions of Lacan's texts will be noted throughout the text on either side of the "/" respectively following the title in English. Both sets of pagination are given only for those citations in which reference to the French might significantly clarify the meaning of the phrase. On occasions in which the translation appears straightforward, the English text is the only one cited.

3 "Einzig in der engen Höhle . . . des Backenzahnes weilt die Seele" ("Einführung" 148-49), "Alone in the narrow hole of the jaw-tooth dwells the soul"; my translation.

4 Freud then supplies a footnote: "I.e. 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 . . . representing the superficies of the mental apparatus" (26). Although Freud is here giving an account of the development of the ego, and claiming that the ego is derived from the projected surface of the body, he is inadvertently establishing the conditions for the articulation of the body *as morphology*.

5 This figure of the threatening mouth recalls Freud's description of Irma's mouth in *Interpretation of Dreams*. Lacan refers to that mouth as "this something which properly speaking is unnameable, the back of this throat, the complex unlocatable form, which also makes it into the primitive object *par excellence*, the abyss of the feminine organ from which all life emerges, this gulf of the mouth, in which everything is swallowed up, and no less the image of death in which everything comes to its end . . ." (*Seminar* 2: 164).

6 This illimitability of context marks off a poststructuralist account of linguistic relations from a structuralist one. See Derrida, "Signature."

7 See Merleau-Ponty on the flesh of the world and the intertwining of touch, surface, and vision in "Intertwining."

8 ". . . an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material. Of course, the material existence of the ideology in an apparatus and its practices does not have the same modality as the material existence of a paving-stone or a rifle. But, at the risk of being taken for a Neo-Aristotelian (NB Marx had a very high regard for Aristotle), I shall say that 'matter is discussed in many senses,' or rather that it exists in different modalities, all rooted in the last instance in 'physical' matter" (Althusser 166).

9 Irigaray prefers to formulate this primary material relation in terms of material contiguity or proximity. See "The Power of Discourse" in *This Sex* (75).

10 In "the mirror stage" the Imaginary is not yet sufficiently distinguished from the Symbolic.

11 One might read Wittig's strategy with respect to renaming in *The Lesbian Body* as a reworking of this Lacanian presumption. The name confers morphological distinctness, and names which explicitly disavow the patro-

nymic lineage become the occasions for the disintegration of the (paternal) version of bodily integrity as well as the reintegration and re-formation of other versions of bodily coherence.

12 See Whitford's recent excellent discussion on Irigaray and the feminine Imaginary in her *Luce Irigaray*.

13 The English translation provided here is that of Rose. The title of the essay substitutes the word "meaning" for "signification," suggesting a more phenomenological and less structuralist reading of the term. The "signification" of the Phallus suggests that it is a linguistic process by which various meanings are produced; the translation of "meaning" for "signification" unfortunately elides this crucial distinction between linguistic process and denotation.

14 "Il y suffit de comprendre le stade du miroir *comme une identification* au sens plein que l'analyse donne à ce terme: à savoir la transformation produite chez le sujet quand il assume une image – dont la prédestination à cet effet de phase est suffisement indiquée par l'usage, dans la théorie, du terme antique d'*imago*" (Lacan, "Le stade du miroir," *Écrits* 1: 90). From the introduction of the *imago*, Lacan then moves to the jubilant assumption of the infant of his "image spéculaire," an exemplary situation of the symbolic matrix in which the "je" or the subject is said to be precipitated in a primordial form, prior to the dialectic of identification with an other. Failing to distinguish here between the formation of the "je" and the "moi," Lacan proceeds in the next paragraph (91), with a further elucidation of "cette forme" as that which might rather be designated as the "*je-idéal*," the ego-ideal, a translation which effects the confusing convergence of the "je" with the "moi." To claim that this form could be termed the "je-idéal" is contingent upon the explanatory uses that such a term authorizes. In this case, that provisional translation will put in a known register, "un registre connu," that is, known from Freud, that phantasmatic and primary identification which Lacan describes as "la souche des identifications secondaires. . . ." Here it seems that the social construction of the ego takes place through a dialectic of identifications between an already partially constituted ego and the Other; the mirror stage is precisely the primary identification, pre-social and determined "dans une ligne de fiction," along a line of fiction (imaginary, specular), which precipitates the secondary (social and dialectical) identifications. Later this will become clear when Lacan argues that the narcissistic relation prefigures and shapes social relations as well as relations to objects (which are also social in the sense of linguistically mediated). In a sense, the mirror stage *gives form* or *morphe* to the ego through the phantasmatic delineation of a body in control; that primary act of form-giving is then displaced or extrapolated onto the world of other bodies and objects, providing the condition ("la souche": the trunk of a tree which, it appears, has fallen or has been cut down but which serves as fertile ground) of their appearance.

15 "La fonction du stade du miroir s'avère pour nous dès lors comme un cas particulier de la fonction de l'*imago* qui est d'établir une relation de l'organisme à sa réalité – ou, comme on dit, de l'*Innenwelt* à l'*Umwelt*" (*Écrits* 1: 93).

16 Lacan later comes to disjoin the ego from the subject, linking the ego with the register of the Imaginary, and the subject with the register of the Symbolic. The subject pertains to the symbolic order and that which constitutes the structure/language of the unconscious. In *Seminar I* he writes, "the ego is an imaginary function, but it is not to be confused with

the subject. . . . The unconscious completely eludes that circle of certainties by which man recognizes himself as ego. There is something outside this field which has every right to speak as I. . . . It is precisely what is most misconstrued by the domain of the ego which, in analysis, comes to be formulated as properly speaking the I" (193). In *Seminar II*, he continues: "The ego . . . is a particular object within the experience of the subject. Literally, the ego is an object – an object which fills a certain function which we here call the imaginary function" (44). And later: "The subject is no one. It is decomposed, in pieces. And it is jammed, sucked in by the image, the deceiving and realised image, of the other, *or equally*, by its own specular image" (54, emphasis added).

17 The identification with this *imago* is called "anticipatory," a term that Kojève reserves for the structure of *desire* (4). As anticipatory, the *imago* is a futural projection, a proleptic and phantasmatic idealization of bodily control that cannot yet exist and that in some sense can never exist: "this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction . . ." (2). The identificatory production of that boundary – the effect of the bounded mirror – established the ego as and through a fictional, idealizing, and centering spatial unity; this is the inauguration of the *bodily* ego, the phenomenological access to morphology and to a bounded or discrete sense of the "I." Of course, this constitutes a *méconnaissance* precisely by virtue of the incommensurability that marks the relation between that fictional, projected body and the decentered, disunified bodily matrix from which that idealizing gaze emerges. To re-paraphrase Freud along Lacanian lines, then, the ego first and foremost mis-recognizes itself outside itself in the *imago* as a bodily ego.

This image not only *constitutes* the ego, but constitutes the ego as *imaginary* (Lacan refers time and again to the "imaginary primary and secondary identifications constituted in the imaginary"). In other words, the ego is an imaginary production, one which takes place foremost through the projection/production of a bodily ego, and which is necessary for the functioning of the subject, but which is equally and significantly *tenuous* as well. The loss of control that in the infant characterizes undeveloped motor control persists within the adult as that excessive domain of sexuality that is stilled and deferred through the invocation of the "ego-ideal" as a center of control. Hence, every effort to inhabit fully an identification with the *imago* (where "identification with" converges ambiguously with "production of") fails because the sexuality temporarily harnessed and bounded by that ego (one might say "jammed" by that ego) cannot be fully or decisively constrained by it. What is left outside the mirror frame, as it were, is precisely the unconscious that comes to call into question the representational status of what is shown *in* the mirror. In this sense, the ego is produced through *exclusion*, as any boundary is, and what is excluded is nevertheless negatively and vitally constitutive of what "appears" bounded within the mirror.

18 Note the precedent for the formulation of the ego as estranged object in Sartre's *Transcendence*.

19 For a fine analysis of how phallomorphism works in Lacan, and for an elucidation of Irigaray's trenchant critique of that phallomorphism, see Whitford (58-74, 150-52). Whitford reads Lacan's essay on the mirror stage through Irigaray's critique, and argues not only that the mirror stage is itself dependent upon the prior presumption of the maternal as ground, but that the phallomorphism that the essay articu-

lates authorizes a "male imaginary [in which] male narcissism is extrapolate[d] to the transcendental" (152). Whitford also traces Irigaray's efforts to establish a female Imaginary over and against the male Imaginary in Lacan. Although I am clearly in some sympathy with the project of deauthorizing the male Imaginary, my own strategy will be to show that the Phallus can attach to a variety of organs, and that the efficacious disjoining of Phallus from penis constitutes both a narcissistic wound to phallomorphism and the production of an anti-heterosexist sexual Imaginary. The implications of my strategy would seem to call into question the integrity of either a masculine or a feminine Imaginary.

20 ". . . le *stade du miroir* est un drame dont la poussée interne se précipite de l'insuffisance à l'anticipation – et qui pour le sujet, pris au leurre de l'identification spatiale, machine les fantasmes qui se succèdent d'une image morcelée du corps à une forme que nous appellerons orthopédique de sa totalité – et à l'armure enfin assumée d'une identité aliénante, qui va marquer de sa structure rigide tout son développement mental" (*Écrits* 1: 93-94). It is interesting that the piecemeal character of the body is phantasmatically overcome through the taking on of a kind of armor or orthopedic support, suggesting that the artificial extension of the body is integral to its maturation and enhanced sense of control. The protective and expansive figural possibilities of armor and orthopedics suggest that insofar as a certain phallic potency is the effect of the transfigured body in the mirror, this potency is purchased through artificial methods of phallic enhancement, a thesis with obvious consequences for the lesbian Phallus.

21 "In Freudian doctrine, the phallus is not a fantasy, if what is understood by that is an imaginary effect . . ." ("Meaning" 79).

22 "Le phallus ici s'éclaire de sa fonction. Le phallus dans la doctrine freudienne n'est pas un fantasme, s'il faut entendre par là un effet imaginaire. Il n'est pas non plus comme tel un objet (partiel, interne, bon, mauvais etc . . .) pour autant que ce terme tend à apprécier la réalité intéressée dans une relation. Il est encore moins l'organe, pénis ou clitoris, qu'il symbolise. Et ce n'est pas sans raison que Freud en a pris la référence au simulacre qu'il était pour les Anciens. . . . Car le phallus est un signifiant . . ." ("Signification" 690).

23 Clearly, Lacan also repudiates the clitoris as well as an organ that might be identified with the Phallus. But note that the penis and the clitoris are always symbolized differently; the clitoris is symbolized as *penis envy* (not having), whereas the penis is symbolized as the castration complex (having with the fear of losing) ("Meaning" 75). Hence, the Phallus symbolizes the clitoris as not having the penis, whereas the Phallus symbolizes the penis through the threat of castration, understood as a kind of dispossession. To have a penis is to have that which the Phallus *is* not, but which, precisely by virtue of this not-being, constitutes the occasion for the Phallus to signify (in this sense, the Phallus requires and reproduces the diminution of the penis in order to signify – almost a kind of master-slave dialectic). Not to have the penis is already to have lost it and, hence, to be the occasion for the Phallus to signify its power to castrate; the clitoris will signify as penis envy, as a lack which, through its envy, will wield the power to dispossess. To "be" the Phallus, as women are said to be, is to be both dispossessed and dispossessing. Women "are" the Phallus in the sense that they absently reflect its power; this is the signifying function of the lack.

And those female body parts which are not the penis fail, therefore, to have the Phallus, and so are precisely a set of "lacks." Those body parts fail to phenomenalize precisely because they cannot properly wield the Phallus. Hence, the very description of how the Phallus symbolizes (i.e., as penis envy *or* castration) makes implicit recourse to differentially marked body parts, which implies that the Phallus does not symbolize penis and clitoris in the same way. The clitoris can never be said to be an example of "having" the Phallus.

24 For a very interesting account of castration anxiety in lesbian subjectivity, see de Lauretis's discussion of the mannish lesbian, especially her discussion of Radcliffe Hall "before the mirror" in her forthcoming manuscript, "Practice."

25 In another essay, "Phantasmatic," I attempt to argue that the assumption of sexed positions within the Symbolic operates through the threat of castration, a threat addressed to a male body, a body marked as male prior to its "assumption" of masculinity, and that the female body must be understood as the embodiment of this threat and, obversely, the guarantee that the threat will not be realized. This Oedipal scenario which Lacan understands as central to the assumption of binary sex is itself founded on the threatening power of the threat, the unbearability of demasculinized manhood and phallicized femininity. Implicit to these two figures, I argue, is the spectre of homosexual abjection, one which is clearly culturally produced, circulated, contested, and contingent.

26 See Torok in this issue. Torok argues that penis envy in women is a "mask" which symptomatizes the prohibition on masturbation and effects a deflection from the orgasmic pleasures of masturbation. Inasmuch as penis envy is a modality of desire from which no satisfaction can be gained, it masks the ostensibly more prior desire for auto-erotic pleasures. According to Torok's highly normative theory of female sexual development, the masturbatory orgasmic pleasures experienced and then prohibited (by the mother's intervention) produce first a penis envy which cannot be satisfied and then a renunciation of that desire in order to rediscover and reexperience masturbatory orgasm in the context of adult heterosexual relations. Torok thus reduces penis envy to a mask and prohibition which presumes that female sexual pleasure is not only centered in auto-eroticism, but that this pleasure is primarily *unmediated* by sexual difference. She also reduces all possibilities of cross-gendered phantasmatic identification to a deflection from the masturbatory heterosexual nexus, such that the primary prohibition is against unmediated self-love. Freud's own theory of narcissism argues that auto-eroticism is always modeled on imaginary object-relations, and that the Other structures the masturbatory scene phantasmatically. In Torok, we witness the theoretical installation of the Bad Mother whose primary task is to prohibit masturbatory pleasures and who must be overcome (the mother figured, as in Lacan, as obstruction) in order to rediscover masturbatory sexual happiness with a man. The mother thus acts as a prohibition that must be overcome in order for heterosexuality to be achieved and the return to self and wholeness that that purportedly implies for a woman. This developmental celebration of heterosexuality thus works through the implicit foreclosure of homosexuality or the abbreviation and rerouting of female homosexuality as masturbatory pleasure. Penis envy would characterize a lesbian sexuality that is, as it were, stalled between the irrecoverable memory of masturbatory bliss and the heterosexual recovery of that

pleasure. In other words, if penis envy is in part code for lesbian pleasure, or for other forms of female sexual pleasure that are, as it were, stopped along the heterosexual developmental trajectory, then lesbianism is "envy" and, hence, both a deflection from pleasure and infinitely unsatisfying. In short, there can be no lesbian pleasure for Torok, for if the lesbian is "envious," she embodies and enacts the very prohibition on pleasure that, it seems, only heterosexual union can lift. That this essay is found useful by some feminists continues to surprise and alarm me.

27 Here it will probably be clear that I am in agreement with Derrida's critique of Lévi-Strauss's atemporalized notion of structure. In "Structure" Derrida asks what gives structure its structurality, that is, the quality of being a structure, suggesting that that status is endowed or derived and, hence, non-originary. A structure "is" a structure to the extent that it *persists* as one. But how to understand how that persistence inheres in the structure itself? A structure does not remain self-identical through time, but "is" to the extent that it is reiterated. Its iterability is thus the condition of its identity, but because iterability presupposes an interval, a difference, between terms, identity, constituted through this discontinuous temporality, is conditioned and contested by this difference from itself. This is a difference constitutive of identity – as well as the principle of its impossibility. As such, it is difference as *différance*, a deferral of any resolve into self-identity.

Works Cited

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review, 1971. 127-86.

Butler, Judith. "Phantasmatic Identification and the Question of Sex." Unpublished ms.

de Lauretis, Teresa. "The Mannish Lesbian." "The Practice of Love." Bloomington: Indiana UP, forthcoming.

Derrida, Jacques. "Signature, Event, Context." *Limited, Inc.* Chicago: Northwestern UP, 1977. 1-23.

_____. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*. Ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1972. 247-72.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Ego and the Id*. 1923. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. Vol. 19. London: Hogarth, 1961. 1-66. 24 vols. 1953-74.

_____. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. 1900. *The Standard Edition*. Vols. 4-5.

_____. "On Narcissism: An Introduction." 1914. *The Standard Edition*. Vol. 14. 67-104. Trans. of "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus." *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 10. London: Imago, 1946. 137-70.

Gallop, Jane. *Thinking Through the Body*. New York: Columbia UP, 1988.

Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Assembled by Raymond Queneau. Trans. James H. Nichols. Ed. Alan Bloom. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980.

Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gorz, Alice Jardine, and Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1980.

Lacan, Jacques. "The Meaning of the Phallus." 1958. *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*. Trans. Jacqueline Rose. Ed. Juliet Mitchell and Rose. New York: Norton, 1985. 74-85. Trans. of "La signification du phallus." *Écrits*. Vol. 2. Paris: Seuil, 1971. 103-15.

_____. "The Mirror Stage." 1949. *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1977. 1-7. Trans. of "Le stade du miroir." *Écrits*. Vol. 1. Paris: Seuil, 1971. 89-97.

_____. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-54*. Trans. John Forrester. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton, 1988. Trans. of *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre I: Les écrits techniques de Freud*. Paris: Seuil, 1975.

_____. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-55*. Trans. John Forrester. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton, 1988. Trans. of *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre II: Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse*. Paris: Seuil, 1978.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "The Intertwining – The Chiasm." *The Visible and the Invisible*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Ed. Claude Lefort. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1968. 130-55.

Nunokawa, Jeff. "*In Memoriam* and the Extinction of the Homosexual." *ELH* 58 (1991): 427-38.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*. Trans. and intro. Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick. New York: Noonday, 1957.

Schor, Naomi. "This Essentialism Which Is Not One: Coming to Grips with Irigaray." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 1.2 (1989): 38-58.

Torok, Maria. "The Meaning of 'Penis Envy' in Women (1963)." Trans. Nicholas Rand. *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 4.1 (1992): 1-39.

Whitford, Margaret. *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Wittig, Monique. *The Lesbian Body*. Trans. David Le Vay. New York: Morrow, 1975.