ECCE BUTCH

THE SEXUALITY POLITICS, AND AESTHETICS, OF A MIMETIC IMAGE

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores in some depth the relations between the production and promotion of certain cinematic images and the construction and regulation of sexual subjects, within a fraternal-patriarchal culture.

Chapter One, **Mirror Staging: Terms and Contexts**, traces Jacques Lacan's formulation of the Mirror Stage from its roots in the early work of Freud, and Alexandre Kojève's reading of Hegel. Other major concepts and terms are explained and placed within a context of pertinence to the arguments of this thesis. Chapter Two, **Serious Fictions: Ideology and the Sexuality Politics of Subjectivity**, begins by examining the sexual politics involved in the status of the phallus in Lacanian theory. Turning to interrogate the role of ideology in the production of gendered subjects, the chapter proceeds to argue that some images might be particularly subversive of this role, nominating as an example, those of the sexually ambiguous figure of *butch*. The third chapter, ***Travesty, Camouflage, Intimidation: Butch* Mimesis: Towards *Phallic* Nemesis**, analyses the politics of aesthetics, what can and cannot be seen, focusing on cinematic images of *butch*, especially those of Australian powerlifter and bodybuilder Bev Francis in the semi-documentary film, *Pumping Iron II—The Women* (George Butler, USA 1985), and Mercedes McCambridge in *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, USA 1958).

For Hilary Gibson

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CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

> What is the trace? The trace is like this: whenever you construct any kind of a discourse, describing feminism, describing the slave experience, describing being white, describing whatever, . . . if you look at it you will see that at the beginning of the discourse there was something like a two-step. The two-step was necessary to say that a divided is whole. You start from an assumption which you must think is whole in order to be able to speak. There is no one who can speak if she does not presuppose that there is something at the beginning which is a unit. If you look carefully, you will see that this unit is itself divided from something it seems to repeat. This leaves something like a mark, a thumb print, a little design at the beginning of a discourse which is covered over; that is the trace.
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> Gayatri C. Spivak[1]

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[1]Gayatri C. Spivak, "A Response to *The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory*," in E. Meese and A. Parker, eds., The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: 1989), 211. This passage is the first part of a description of the deconstructive method. Spivak was the first to translate the work of Jacques Derrida from French into English, and thus introduce his philosophy to the English speaking academic world. See Derrida, Of Grammatology, translated with Preface by Gayatri C. Spivak (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

Loving the Enemy

> We are written by a narrative which is bigger than we are; that is our subject position and there is no loss in accepting that.
>
> Gayatri C. Spivak[2]

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes of feminists engaged in fashioning the discipline, feminism: "A discipline produces disciples, appropriate feminists, vessels for the task of producing another generation of disciples. *Our* discipline would produce feminists, in other words, who can teach."[3] In marrying feminism to critical theory, passionate feminists "realize that we are marrying our passion to an alien, an alienating disciplinary formation," thereby coming to occupy a subject position productive of a "site of contradiction that cannot be spoken."[4]

> What we cannot speak, the passionate feminists, is that we are involved in a contradiction that not only can we not avoid, but we don't want to avoid. That is the difference for those of us who are passionate feminists, not just speaking *o n* feminism: we speak from within this contradiction that we cannot avoid. This is our subject position.[5]

Eschewing the reduction of "subject position" to what she calls "confessional attitudinizing," (such as, "I'm white," "I'm black," "I'm male,"

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[2]Spivak, "A Response to *The Difference Within*, 218.

[3]Ibid., 207-8.

[4]Ibid., 208.

[5]Ibid.

"I'm bourgeois," "I'm homosexual") Spivak turns to Michel Foucault, changing the gender of the pronouns in his text:

> So the subject of the statement should not be regarded as identical with the author of the formulation. . . . [It does not matter if the author is white or male or bourgeois or black or Indian or a feminist or anything.] She is not in fact the cause, origin or starting-point of the phenomenon of the written or spoken articulation of a sentence. . . . it is not the constant, motionless, unchanging focus of a series of operations. . . . It is a particular, vacant place that may in fact be filled by different individuals. . . . If a proposition, a sentence, a group of signs can be called "statement," it is not therefore because, one day, someone happened to speak them or put them into some concrete form of writing; it is because the position of the subject can be assigned.[6]

"Assigned" means "that it can and must become a sign; not for the person who speaks, but for the person who listens, not for the person who writes, who can say what she likes about who she is, but for the person who reads."[7] In this sense, authorship becomes an act of surrender. Spivak writes:

> When, in fact, the responsible reader reads the sign that is the subject position of the speaker or the writer, it becomes the sign, let us say, of an ethno-politics, of a psychosexual reality, of an institutional position, and this is not under the control of the person who speaks. She cannot diagnose herself; we are given over to our readers.[8]

Thus while it might be of interest for my reader(s), that I string together a number of those "confessional" terms, in what Judith Butler

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[6]Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 95; quoted in Spivak, "A Response to *The Difference Within*," 208. (Parentheses within text are Spivak's.)

[7]Spivak, "A Response to *The Difference Within*," 208.

[8]Ibid.

describes as a "horizontal trajectory of adjectives,"[9] to describe-produce myself as white, working-class, butch,[10] and lesbian, ultimately my reader(s) will examine my work *as a discourse*, and "assign" a subject position by "determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if she is to be the subject of it."[11]

All this is not to avoid responsibility for what I might or might not say, but rather, to be responsible to the contradictions that *are* the relations between desire, consent, and discourse. As Spivak says: "It is time for me to remind myself that I want to be quiet. These contradictions that I critique I myself inhabit. I am speaking because of a contract; I have accepted a fee; I am in an institution. If I could speak my desire, I would not speak."[12] "The institution" is the academy: "Whatever our color, whatever our gender, whatever our national origin, this is an authoritative, Western-European structure within which, whether we *want* to or not, we are *willingly* placing

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[9]Judith Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 1989), 143.

[10]For those who are new to the term, if you consult your dictionary, you will encounter something like this: "*adj & n -adj.* masculine; tough-looking. *-n.* **a** a mannish woman. **b** a mannish lesbian." This is from the Concise Oxford. I use *butch* as both noun and adjective, sometimes as a verb. In the context of this thesis, I am holding to the association of butch with lesbian sexuality. I do perceive the term as problematic, given its suggestion that there is an "is-ness" that is *butch*, "The butch," or "the essential butch." *Butch* is a fiction, albeit a serious one. I am forever grateful to Mary Bryson for her vigorous critique of my early "the butch" character.

[11]This is from a sentence which continues on from the Foucauldean passage quoted above. Spivak quotes the sentence in full, still changing gender in Foucault's pronouns: "'To describe a formulation *qua* statement does not consist in analyzing the relations between the author and what she says (or wanted to say, or said without wanting to); but in determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if she is to be the subject of it.'" Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, 95-6; quoted in Spivak, "A Response to *The Difference Within*, 208-9.

[12]Spivak, "A Response to *The Difference Within*," 216.

our passion."[13] My own contract with the academy demands the production of a thesis in return for the granting of a degree.

Being caught between a rock and a hard place is exascerbated by the knowledge that I have chosen to be here. Within the academy, there is no lofty moral ground from which to critique "the institution," or "the patriarchy." The academy is an institution, and what in the course of this work I shall come to call "fraternal-patriarchal order,"[14] finds its ideal form in the hierarchical structure of an institution. Feminists camped within the academy, especially in Women's Studies departments, are part of the academic institution—it supplies the site for the production of feminist discipline. Feminism thus uneasily inhabits a structure of fraternal-patriarchal order.

Turning to Spivak's discussion of the "trace" (quoted at the opening of this Introduction), she explains that "a deconstructive philosopher" decides to read the trace as the mark, or sign, of an absent presence: "I cannot, as a deconstructive philosopher start my discourse if I don't assume that it is the sign of something else."[15] Deconstruction notices how "truths" are produced, "that we as communicating subjects must produce meaning, that in fact there *is* always something *like* reference."[16] She writes:

> when you are looking at yourself and distinguishing yourself from others to say that you are better, stop a minute, unload and listen, listen and look at your subject position. If you are distinguishing yourself from that other thing through hatred, stop a minute, remind yourself that the only way in

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[13]Ibid., 209.

[14]See the first section of chapter Two.

[15]Spivak, "A Response to *The Difference Within*," 212.

[16]Ibid., 214.

> which you can deconstruct is to love the thing you are critiquing. You know it so well, that you cannot *not* make the structures of that thing the structures of your own discourse. . . .
>
> . . . You must learn to know your enemy so well that you borrow the very structures of his discourse. This is, *in fact*, our relationship to patriarchy. We must deconstruct it because we "love" it in that broader sense; without it we are not in fact able to utter.[17]

Spivak notes that in the "first wave of deconstruction," Jacques Derrida suggested that "deconstruction was 'guarding the question,' keeping the question alive.'"[18] Thus for critics not outside the system (and ultimately, who could be outside the system?), "it could lead to the following position: everything you do, you pause and you ask this question—what did I do in collaboration with the enemy in order to attitudinize? That's guarding the question."[19] This is why deconstruction cannot by itself be a political position: "Political stands can be taken only after it has been acknowledged that deconstruction by itself cannot be a politics, yet without it all politics mire themselves in a self-congratulation that the period of struggle only imperfectly postpones."[20]

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[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., 215. Spivak adds: "Deconstruction is like the skull in the corner of the drawing room which reminds you that you must die."

Psychoanalysis, *Butch*, and the Politics of Aesthetics

> I came to a puddle. I could not cross it. Identity failed me. We are nothing, I said, and fell. I was blown like a feather, I was wafted down tunnels. Then, very gingerly, I pushed my foot across. I laid my hand against a brick wall. I returned very painfully, drawing myself back into my body over the grey, cadaverous space of the puddle. This is life then to which I am committed.
>
> Virginia Woolf[21]

> Cultural critics who investigate the interplay of identity and ideology have argued convincingly that identities are formed through representations.
>
> Martha Gever[22]

"Loving the enemy" makes for queer bedfellows. Here is a small narrative. My *butch* lesbian self abhorred the "maternal" clutches of much 1980s feminism.[23] The feeling was pretty mutual. For such feminists, *butch* has occupied a position of abjection—as "male identified," an unmitigated

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[21]Virginia Woolf, The Waves (London: 1931), 43.

[22]Martha Gever, "The Names We Give Ourselves," in Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures, eds. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West, Foreword by Marcia Tucker, Images selected by Félix González-Torres (New York, Cambridge Mass., London, England: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, The MIT Press, 1990), 199.

[23]At least one other person seems to have had a similar response. British feminist Elizabeth Wilson writes: "I certainly never longed for 'the power of woman bonding.' That suggested something too maternal, too suffocating; . . . I did not want to be bathed, drowned in the great tide of womanliness." See her "Forbidden Love," Feminist Studies 10, No.2 (Summer 1984), 219.

embodiment of that to which feminists might fear to be seen to aspire—a walking case of "penis envy."[24]

In the academy it was not the work of Andrea Dworkin or Catherine McKinnon, but that of Jane Gallop, Jacqueline Rose, Teresa de Lauretis, Elizabeth Grosz, Kaja Silverman, and the writings of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, to which I turned to begin to make sense of not only my experience of masculinity within my feminist self, but what I perceived as the absence of representations of *butch*.

I have elected to use psychoanalysis as the chief theoretical discourse through which to articulate my thesis. Psychoanalysis links the process of subject formation with representation, the assumption of a sexual identity, and negotiation of the laws of culture and the Law of language.[25] However, my work is also *about* psychoanalysis: I attempt to "guard the question" even as I am engaged in it. This is tricky, and I have probably not succeeded to the degree that I had intended. The trickiness is itself mirrored in the paradox of the

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[24]Much has been recently published on the topic of butch and femme and feminism. See Joan Nestle, ed., The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1992); Leslie Feinberg, Stone Butch Blues (Ithaca, New York: Firebrand Books, 1993); also, on the wider topic of what has come to be known as the "sexuality debates," see Carole S. Vance, ed., Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality (London: Pandora, 1989), esp. Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," Amber Hollibaugh, "Desire for the Future: Radical Hope in Passion and Pleasure," and Alice Echols, "The Taming of the Id: Feminist Sexual Politics, 1968-83," and Carole S. Vance, "More Danger, More Pleasure: A Decade after the Barnard Sexuality Conference"; and Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds., Desire: The Politics of Sexuality (London: Virago, 1984). While it is outside the scope of this present work, I do not want to deny validation to lesbian configurations other than butch and femme. On the topic of butch and butch relations see Linnea Due, "Dyke Daddies"; Jackie Weltman, "Confessions of a Dyke Daddy"; and Pat Califia, "Butch Desire," all in Lily Burana, Roxxie, and Linnea Due, eds., Dagger: On Butch Women (Pittsburgh: Cleis Press, 1994).

[25]This is an articulation of the Lacanian psychoanalytic project, although, as Lacan always said, and as I shall show in chapters One and Two, the germs of these ideas can be traced to Freud.

strategic "serious fiction" of identity, where Spivak's "two-step" is necessary in order to see "that a divided is whole." Actually, critiquing the very place from which one stands in order to speak is more demanding than a "two-step," it's a bit more like running on the spot.

According to video artist and theorist, Laura Kipnis, feminist recourse to psychoanalysis comes at a particular theoretical juncture: "one marked primarily by the experience of political catastrophe and defeat. The political appropriation of psychoanalysis appears to signal, then, a lack—of mass movement or of successful counterhegemonic strategies."[26] As examples of events which have preceded what she calls "detours" through the psychoanalytic, she cites the absorption of the European working-class movements into fascism, and the decline of the political fortunes of feminism (outside the university).[27] Something must account for people's failure to act in their own best interests. Kipnis writes:

> The political use value of psychoanalytic theory would thus seem to be its updated account of the organization or etiology of *consent* to patriarchal or capitalist orders, which, as with the formation of the symptom, can now be seen to have its own characteristic form and specificity comparatively independent of its genesis. It indicates a theoretical shift away from the Gramscian "spontaneous consent" obtained in civil society, a conscious and rational acting-out of interest, and toward a theory of unconscious structures of consent negotiated in the suturing effects of various processes of signification, in the specularity of ideology, or in the very construction of gendered subjects.[28]

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[26]Laura Kipnis, "Looks Good on Paper: Marxism and Feminism in a Postmodern World," in her Ecstasy Unlimited: On Sex, Capital, Gender, and Aesthetics, Foreword by Paul Smith (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 103.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., 103-4. I want to provide a couple of brief explanatory notes. First, in psychoanalytic theory the formation of the symptom occurs as a "psychical working out" of what has been repressed. It is the "return of the repressed."

Kipnis notes that where there is a vehement political rejection of psychoanalytic theory—as in American radical feminism, which, repudiating psychological explanations of women's behaviour, stresses instead that such behaviour is "'always and only a rational, self-interested response to their immediate material conditions, i.e. their oppression by men'—it appears to coincide with a denial of consent as a political factor, in favor of an insistence on coercion as the truth of political oppression."[29] She adds that a persistent criticism of cultural feminism, (radical feminism's successor) has been its "focus on coercion and its emphasis on women's status as victim."[30]

Psychoanaltyic theory analyzes a literary or cinematic text as a *representation* in a discourse. "As with all representations, there is an appearance of transparency . . . : the textual operations of its own production

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Second, Antonio Gramsci makes a distinction between "civil society," and "the State." He writes: "These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the State and 'juridicial' government." He summarizes these two functions:

"1. The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

"2. The apparatus of state coercive power which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed." Selections from the Prison Notebooks, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London and New York: Lawrence & Wishart, International Publishers, 1971), 12.

[29]Kipnis, "Looks Good on Paper," 104. Kipnis is quoting Ellen Willis, "Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism," in The 60s without Apology, ed. Sohnya Sayres et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 97.

[30]Kipnis, "Looks Good on Paper," 104. In a footnote Kipnis clarifies what she means by "cultural feminism": "The term . . . refers to a position within American feminism based on a belief in an immutable male and female sexual essence, or nature, most often held to be biologically determined rather than culturally constructed. It equates women's liberation with the establishment and practice of a female counterculture based on 'female values' such as reciprocity, intimacy, nurturance, and nonviolence," 296-7.

and organization of meaning are effaced."[31] The discursive field in which representations occur is structured by its absences and its repressions: "What emerges in the constitution of the theoretical object, then, is a dialectic of the representable and the nonrepresentable, or, in other words, an aesthetics."[32]

"Cultural feminism," on the other hand, favors a "realist" (Lukácsian) aesthetics, where a cultural object "is required to reflect or disclose an anterior reality and is held responsible for how it does or doesn't disclose that reality."[33] This has led to

> images-of-women criticism and the positive-images-of-women campaigns; the feminist appropriation of the realist novel and its project of inventing woman as full speaking subject; and the politics of the antipornography movement, which relies on an aesthetics of reference to constitute its political object.[34]

However, this aesthetics fails to account for the workings of symbolic processes.

Let me turn to recent work of Joan B. Landes for an example of such workings.[35] Landes examines the relationship between the role of women, and their representation in France before, during, and after the Revolution. She documents how *women* actually lost social freedoms and power, while *images*

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[31]Ibid., 105.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid. On the aesthetics of Georg Lukács see his History and Class Consciousness, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1971); The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1962); and The Historical Novel, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Boston: 1963).

[34]Kipnis, "Looks Good on Paper," 105.

[35]Joan B. Landes, Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988).

of woman were used to represent "Liberty." This is an instance of what Barbara A. Babcock has theorized as how that which is "socially peripheral is often symbolically central."[36] Thus while "there *is* always," as Spivak says, "something *like* reference," it is twisted in the dialectic of identity and difference that is representation. Getting at the ways in which this "*like*" functions for the subject, is what psychoanalysis is "about."

Now I want to argue that this dialectic can work to the advantage of marginalized groups. Here is another example. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White write of the symbolic import of Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, outside the entrance to the U.S. Cruise Missile Base near Newbury in Berkshire, England:

> The women at Greenham Common in their precarious and vulnerable condition by the roadside entrance to a vast military installation, "On the perimeter" . . . , occupy a very powerful symbolic domain despite and because of their actual social marginalization. . . .
>
> . . . The exorbitant contrast between the closed, monumental, classical body of the multi-million dollar American Military Complex and the open, muddy, exposed huddle of higgledy-piggledy polythene tents is a scandal to hegemonic dignity which it can scarcely sustain. It is indeed wonderful that so little can make so great a difference.[37]

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[36]Barbara Babcock, "Introduction," The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society, ed. B. Babcock (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 32.

[37]Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 23-25. There is an irony in the choice of this group as an example of a symbolic process for which cultural feminism cannot account, for having been a "Greenham woman" myself, off and on from 1983-84, I know that "we," composed as "we" were, of a wild mix of women, including hippies, punks, Quakers, liberals and socialists, represented the "return of the repressed" of not only a society supportive of such a military installation, but, realizing that "cultural" feminism as Kipnis defines it is a north American phenomenon, on some (international?) level, of "cultural" feminism itself. Hardly consistent with a "realist aesthetics," a repeated action in which I participated at Greenham, was "singing down the wire." This consisted of women's complete encirclement of the perimeter fence, facing in towards the base, holding hands and screaming. The wind carried this eerie sound in waves. The soldiers said they hated this more than anything.

The women of Greenham Common are of symbolic importance both because, and in spite of, their abject social status.

Peggy Phelan has recently suggested that there is indeed a power in remaining "unmarked" by culture. She argues that in the rush by marginalized groups—"communities of the hitherto under-represented"—to engage in "'identity politics' with its accent on visibility," they seem to have forgotten those problems of visibility "so successfully articulated by feminist film theorists in the 1970s and 1980s."[38] Visibility carries with it the risk of being a target: Phelan lists the dangers: "it summons surveillance and the law; it provokes voyeurism, fetishism, the colonialist/imperial appetite for possession."[39] Thus for Phelan the *terms* of such visibility, or in the words of Teresa de Lauretis the "conditions of visibility,"[40] must be interrogated.

Working within the problematic of lesbian representation in cinema, a problematic concerned with precisely how to represent female homosexuality in a system whose coherence depends upon the representation of "woman" as signifier of hetero-sexual difference, it occurred to me that images of female masculinity, of *butch*, besides serving as my own identificatory mirrors, might also work to shift the focus of the problematic from the image of "woman," to what might be called the "sexuality politics" of representation—its sexual aesthetics of visibility, if you like.

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[38]Peggy Phelan, Unmarked: The Politics of Performance (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 6-7. See for example Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, " Screen 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975): 6-18; and Judith Mayne's review essay, "Feminist Film Theory and Criticism," Signs vol. 11, no. 1 (1985): 81-100.

[39]Phelan, Unmarked, 6.

[40]Teresa de Lauretis, "Film and the Visible," in How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video, eds. Bad Object-Choices (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 223.

This is to argue with de Lauretis, whose project for some years has also been to locate and promote the cinematic representation of lesbianism "as *a question of representation, of what can be seen.*"[41] For de Lauretis it is important that,

> lesbianism is not merely a theme or a subtext of the film, nor simply a content to be represented or "portrayed," but is the very problem of its form: how to represent a female, lesbian desire that is neither masculine, a usurpation of male heterosexual desire, nor a feminine narcissistic identification with the other woman.[42]

Within the terms of de Lauretis's critique, representation of *butch*, when taken seriously, renders lesbian desire invisible: what is *seen* is a "man." On the other hand, Sapphic love as what I would call "femme-femme action," by far the most common rendering of lesbianism, fails to represent any sexual difference.[43] In psychoanalytic terms, both women are on the same "side" of desire. De Lauretis thus opts for a camp aesthetic, reducing *butch* to parodic performance.[44]

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[41]De Lauretis, "Guerrilla in the midst: women's cinema in the 80s," Screen 31: 1 (Spring 1990), 22; see also her "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation," Theatre Journal 40, no. 2 (May 1988): 155-177; and "Film and the Visible."

[42]de Lauretis, "Guerrilla in the midst," 22. One film which de Lauretis believes to be successful in doing this (and this quotation is from her discussion of it) is *She Must Be Seeing Things* (Sheila McLaughlin, USA 1987).

[43]A list of all the films featuring "femme-femme action" would fill the page, and would include straight porn with its femme-femme encounters before the main event. I have my partner, Susan Stewart (herself a femme), to thank for the evocative phrase in quotation marks.

[44]See de Lauretis, "Film and the Visible," esp. 243-9. De Lauretis uses the work of Sue-Ellen Case, who argues that the butch-femme couple "inhabit the subject position together." See Case, "Towards a Butch-Femme Aesthetic," Discourse 11, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 1988-89): 56.

Now for me the problem with the notion of *butch* as (only) parodic performance is that it undoes the power of this mimetic image. This is not to say that I do not appreciate the strategic value of what Judith Butler calls "gender parody,"[45] her notion of which,

> does not assume that there is an original which such parodic identities imitate. Indeed, the parody is of the very notion of an original; . . . gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is itself an imitation without an origin. To be more precise, it is a production which, in effect, that is, in its effect, postures as an imitation.[46]

On the contrary. I do want to insist, however, that *butch* not be undermined through being relegated to a kind of camp posturing. Making a distinction between *performance*, and *enactment*, I want to suggest that there is a self-consciousness about performance, and more of a psychic investment involved in enactment.[47] The tension between the two enables what Spivak calls "the persistent critique of what one cannot not want."[48]

In a thesis that is primarily a theoretical one, I shall argue that *butch*, although of social peripherality, is of symbolic importance, and that

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[45]I am not sure at all that anything much is gained from use of the category "gender," other than perhaps a term to describe those certain behaviours which are conventionally seen as linking a particular sex with a particular sexuality. Thomas Laqueur writes that "almost everything one wants to say about sex—however sex is understood—already has in it a claim about gender." I shall not use the term in my work, although it may make a guest appearance, as it does here in the quotation from Butler. See Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, Massachussetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1990), 11.

[46]Judith Butler, "Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse," in Feminism/Postmodernism, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 338.

[47]My own investment, as a "self-identified" *butch*, is obvious.

[48]Spivak, in an interview with Howard Winant, "Gayatri Spivak on the Politics of the Subaltern," Socialist Review 20 (1990): 93.

representations of *butch* work in a number of ways, through processes of identification and phantasy at the level of the subject, to blur the rigid dichotomy of heterosexual difference; and furthermore, that this "blurring" has effects throughout the symbolic system upon which fraternal-patriarchal order depends.

The images I have sought are not those where women might let go of traditionally "feminine" characteristics, taking on some traditionally "masculine" attributes —muscles, for example, as in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (James Cameron, USA 1991)—or appendages, such as weapons, as in, again *Terminator 2*, also *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, USA 1991), but who remain distinguishably female.[49] Neither are they those of obvious diegetic femininity punctuated, indeed enhanced by the donning of male attire, as evidenced in those celebrated cinematic moments of transvestism, such as Louise Brooks in *Beggars of Life* (William Wellman, USA 1928), Marlene Dietrich in *Morocco* (Josef von Sternberg, USA 1930), or Judy Davis in *Impromptu* (James Lapine, USA 1989). Rather, they are images whose appearance and manner make diegetic redemption impossible.

I have chosen to focus on Australian weightlifter turned bodybuilder, Bev Francis, in *Pumping Iron II—The Women* (George Butler, USA 1985), although this is supplemented by attention to Mercedes McCambridge, in

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[49]For an excellent reading of *Thelma and Louise*, which is more about what might be called "butchy femmes," see Cathy Griggers, "*Thelma and Louise* and the Cultural Generation of the New Butch-Femme," in Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, and Ava Preacher Collins, eds., Film Theory Goes to the Movies (New York: Routledge, 1993), 129-141. (Thank you Mary Bryson for the term "butchy femme.")

Touch of Evil (Orson Welles, USA 1958), and reference to a number of other images.[50]

Thesis Organization

Setting out the pertinent terms and contexts of psychoanalytic theory, chapter One traces Lacan's formulation of the mirror stage from its roots in Alexandre Kojève's reading of the Hegelian dialectic, and Lacan's "return to Freud," then through the other major influences, to discussion of the Lacanian account of identity and subject formation. The chapter outlines the relation of the subject to language, closing with a question of what I call a "sexuality politics of subjectivity."

Chapter Two takes up this question, exploring the relation between phantasy and ideology in the production of a "normative" subject. Examining the production and promotion of a binary sexual system organized around the having and not having of the phallus, this chapter is in a dialogue with recent work by Kaja Silverman, who argues for the subversive possibilities of what she calls "non-phallic masculinity."[51] Silverman resurrects Louis Althusser's Lacanian theory of ideology, and argues for a distinction between subjection to a particular cultural order, such as Western fraternal-patriarchy, and subjection to the Law of language. The chapter concludes with a proposal for ideological

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[50]This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather suggestive of further work.

[51]Kaja Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

intervention at a phantasmatic level, nominating images of *butch* as being of particular subversive value.

Chapter Three preludes analysis of images of *butch* with discussion of the workings of the processes of negation and mimesis, drawing on the writings of Jacques Derrida, and Roger Caillois. The image of Bev Francis is the subject of a lengthy discussion of a particular kind of sexual politics of aesthetics, a discussion which puts psychoanalysis into dialogue with the critical work of Roland Barthes. Concluding the chapter, and indeed, the thesis, gleaned critical terms are used in an exploration of relations between image and subject.

CHAPTER ONE

MIRROR STAGING: TERMS AND CONTEXTS

> The term origin does not mean the process of becoming of that which has emerged, but much more, that which emerges out of the process of becoming and disappearing. The origin stands in the flow of becoming as a whirlpool . . . ; its rhythm is apparent only to a double insight.
>
> Walter Benjamin[1]

> Experience is a staging of experience.

> To feel one is from an origin is not a pathology. It belongs to the group of groundings, mistakes that enable usto make sense of our lives. But the only way to argue for origins is to look for institutions, inscriptions and then to surmise the mechanics by which such institutions and inscriptions can stage such a particular style of performance.
>
> Gayatri C. Spivak[2]

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[1]Walter Benjamin, from *Gesammelte Schriften*, cited by Susan Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: The MIT Press, 1989), 8.

[2]Gayatri C. Spivak, "Asked to Talk About Myself . . . ," Third Text 19 (Summer 1992): 9.

Master and Slave: A Dialectic

> The limits of tyrants are prescribed
> by the endurance of those whom
> they oppress.
>
> Frederick Douglass[3]

Jacques Lacan's formulation of *the mirror stage* is a synthesis.[4] It owes as much to Alexandre Kojève's reading of Hegel's parable of the master and the slave (or the Lord and the Bondsman),[5] as it does to Lacan's reading of Freud, (notably his papers "On Narcissism: An Introduction," "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," "The Ego and the Id," and "The Uncanny"[6]), something to Henri

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[3]Frederick Douglass, quoted but not referenced in Anthony Wilden, System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange (London and New York: Tavistock, 1980), 471.

[4]Commentators are divided on the motivation behind Lacan's blatant failure to acknowledge the influence of the work of many of his predessors and contemporaries. Martin Jay notes that Lacan attended Henri Wallon's lectures from 1928 to 1934, yet mentions him only in passing in his essay on the mirror stage. Jay writes that David Macey "claims that the slighting of Wallon in the presentation of the mirror stage was typical of Lacan's self-mythification, which underplayed the importance of his predecessors." On the other hand, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen argues that Lacan's honest plagiarism is a performative instantiation of his claim that the self is always constituted by the incorporation of the other. See Martin Jay, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993), 343; David Macey, Lacan in Contexts (London: 1988); and Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, Lacan: The Absolute Master, trans. Douglas Brick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

[5]Relevant texts are: Alexandre Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, trans. James H. Nichols (New York and London: Basic Books, 1969); G.W.F. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Spirit (1807), trans. A.V. Miller with analysis of the text and foreward by J.N. Findlay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), esp. 104-119; also Vincent Descombes, Modern French Philosophy, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J.M. Harding (Cambridge University Press: 1980); Judith Butler, Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Robert C. Solomon, Continental Philosophy Since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 56-71; and Elizabeth Grosz, Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 1-38.

[6]Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction,"(1914) The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey, 25 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-66) XIV. References to The Standard Edition will

Wallon's work on early child development,[7] and that of Roger Caillois on mimesis.[8]

Hegel's parable of master and slave is presented in an early mid-section of his massive 1807 text *The Phenomenology of Spirit* , a section discussing self-consciousness and desire. The parable tells a story of two "self-conciousnesses," how they meet and almost immediately become locked in a fight to the death. Historian of philosophy Robert C. Solomon describes the sense of the parable:

> Each tries to "cancel" the other because his [*sic*] consciousness threatens the other's view of himself as free and independent. But each one is also trying to "prove" himself, and recognizes that the actual death of the other would eliminate the only witness to that proof. So the winner lets the loser live and becomes the master, the loser the slave. The master becomes "a consciousness existing on its own account which is mediated with itself through another consciousness."[9]

There is thus a twist in the plot: the master becomes dependent on the slave, not only for his material comforts, but for what Solomon calls his "self-image,"

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henceforth be abbreviated as SE; "The Uncanny" (1919), SE XVII; "Beyond the Pleasure Principle"(1920), SE XVIII; "The Ego and the Id"(1923), SE XIX.

[7]See Henri Wallon, "Comment se développe chez l'enfant la notion du corps propre," Journal de Psychologie (1931): 715-48, cited by Anthony Wilden in Jacques Lacan, Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis, trans., with notes and commentary by Anthony Wilden (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press,1968), 159; also *Les Origines du caract`ere chez l'enfant* (1949), cited and discussed in Elizabeth Grosz, Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 36-7.

[8]See Roger Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia" (1935), trans. John Shepley, October 31 (Winter, 1984): 17-32. I discuss Caillois in chapter Three. This list of influences on Lacan is not intended to be exhaustive, but there seems to be a consensus among his commentators that these works were major influences on Lacan's formulation of the notion of the mirror stage. Caillois was certainly one writer whose influence Lacan repeatedly acknowledged.

[9]Solomon, Continental Philosophy, 67, 68.

the master is only master if he is regarded as such by the slave. Yet how dispicable it is to be dependent upon one who does not seem to rebel, who seems to go "through the motions of absolute obedience."[10] As both master and slave notice this, the power shifts "until the slave becomes the 'self-existent,' and the master the dependent one."[11]

This movement described in the parable constitutes the Hegelian dialectic, here neatly defined by Richard Boothby as being,

> founded upon the idea that the essential character of every determination of being contains implicitly within itself the shadow of its contrary. Every being-for-itself, or being *für sich*, is conditioned by an internal relation to an otherness that remains implicit or *an sich*. Every positivity is thus maintained by a force of internal negation.[12]

It is in the movement of the dialectic (of dialectic defined as movement) that this conditioning relation is brought to light: the "positive is itself submitted to negation. What is merely implicit and sunken in otherness emerges into its own positivity and explicit being."[13]

What is of interest to my concerns in this summary of Hegel's parable of the dialectic, is that the slave is not without power: it is in the interests of the master that the slave be in a state of struggle, of oscillation between absolute obedience and rebellion: the slave must swing between the two in order to serve the master. The master can maintain "self-image" and power only if the

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[10]Ibid., 68.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Richard Boothby, Death and Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud (New York and London: Routledge,1991), 188.

[13]Ibid.

slave is a worthy witness, rebellious and subdued. Thus the slave must feel as though "he" has *some semblance* of autonomy, but it is imperative for the master that the slave also believe that "he" has no real power.

Within the context of his *opus*, the parable is, for Hegel, the laying of the groundwork for his "teleological" philosophy of history (the progressive realization of freedom), and for his general theory of society and ethics wherein "some less confrontational and more stable social arrangement must replace the master-slave relationship."[14] Following his optimistic forecast, Marx made use of Hegel's model in his explanation of the conflict between the economic master and the servile classes, and its "inevitable" resolution. Then, in a dialogue with the early Marx's theories of labour, alienation, class struggle and the politics of consciousness, Alexandre Kojève "generalized his conclusion, claiming that the struggle for recognition forms the dynamic principle of all historical progress."[15] Elizabeth Grosz writes that in the life and death struggle,

> It is only when one of the antagonists values autonomy and freedom, prestige and recognition more highly than animal life, when the subject is prepared to risk life itself; and when the other in turn values life above freedom—that is, when one vanquishes the other in the struggle for pure prestige—history "begins."[16]

Kojève emphasizes the implicit Hegelian point that history is made by the slave, not by the master: "The complete, absolutely free man [*sic*], definitively

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[14]Solomon, Continental Philosophy, 68.

[15]Butler, Subjects of Desire, 64. Besides Lacan, Kojève's lectures had an "enormous impact" on other Continental thinkers whose ideas are among those with which this thesis is concerned, Roland Barthes, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Claude Lévi-Strauss. Others whom his work influenced are Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Georges Bataille, and Pierre Klossowski. See Grosz, Sexual Subversions, 2.

[16]Grosz, Sexual Subversions, 3.

and completely satisfied by what he is, the man who is perfected and completed in and by this satisfaction, will be the Slave who has 'overcome' his Slavery."[17]

Hegel's parable also has application in both inter-personal[18] and intra-personal, or psychic relationships, for it is also about the origins of subjectivity and desire. Hegel's ontology inherits much from the Platonic view that human existence is fundamentally flawed, a yearning for all that "man" lacks. Elizabeth Grosz (who is also an interpreter of Lacan) points out that the Platonic understanding of desire is born of "*penia* (poverty) and *poros* (wealth), of inadequacy and excess together," that desire is "both a shortcoming and a vindication of human endeavour." Not enough and too much. Thus it is with Hegel that desire becomes a unique lack, one that unlike other lacks, can function only if it remains unfilled.[19] It becomes a *structuring* lack. This is so because rather than the Cartesian self-knowing subject (the *cogito*), Hegel "introduces into the plenitude or givenness of the cogito the notion of a negativity or alterity as its necessary condition."[20] For Hegel, "self-consciousness in general is Desire,"[21] by which, explains Judith Butler, he means,

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[17]Kojeve, Introduction to Hegel, 20.

[18]For one interesting feminist analysis of a Hegelian derived notion of inter-subjective power relations, see Jessica Benjamin, The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problems of Domination (New York: Pantheon, 1988).

[19]Elizabeth Grosz, "Refiguring Lesbian Desire," in Laura Doan, ed. The Lesbian Postmodern (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 70.

[20]Grosz, Sexual Subversions, 235 note 1.

[21]Hegel, Phenomenology, 105; cited in Butler, Subjects of Desire, 7. (Hegel discusses "Desire" in Phenomenology, 104-119.)

> that desire signifies the reflexivity of consciousness, the necessity that it become other to itself in order to know itself. As desire, consciousness is outside itself; and as outside itself, consciousness is *self-consciousness*. . . . (D)esire . . . is always the desire-for-reflection, the pursuit of identity in what appears to be different. The permanent irony of the Hegelian subject consists of this: it requires mediation to know itself, and knows itself only as the very structure of mediation; in effect, what is reflexively grasped when the subject finds itself "outside" itself, reflected there, is this very fact itself, that the subject is a reflexive structure, and that movement out of itself is necessary in order for it to know itself at all.[22]

Consciousness thus "creates" the other. However, it is not simply the other that is desired, for that would fill the lack. Instead, it is the desire of the other that is itself desired. Elizabeth Grosz puts this most concisely:

> The only object desire can desire is an object that will not fill the lack or provide complete satisfaction. To provide desire with its object is to annihilate it. Desire desires to be desired. Thus, for Hegel, the only object that both satisfies desire yet perpetuates it is not an object but another desire. The desire of the other is thus the only appropriate object of desire.[23]

There are three main points I want to underline. First, Kojève's reading of Hegel makes links between individual psychic subjectivity, inter-personal relations, and "socio-political, cultural and historical development - the 'private' and the 'public', the 'psychical' and the 'social.'"[24] Second, history is produced by the "slave's" struggle for self-determination. Third, *struggle* is the operative word, for Kojève puts the screws on Hegel, shifting Hegel's

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[22]Butler, Subjects of Desire, 7-8. This point about the Hegelian subject requiring mediation to "know" itself is developed from Lacan's concept of the Imaginary by Louis Althusser, as the workings of ideology, and I discuss this at length in chapter Two.

[23]Grosz, "Refiguring Lesbian Desire," 71.

[24]Grosz, Sexual Subversions, 5.

emphasis on redemption as the movement of the dialectic, to the violence in the Hegelian link between identity and alterity, i.e., how the subject is *bound* to the existence of the other through the lack that is desire at the centre of subjectivity.

It is this movement that Lacan develops as the splitting of the "self" occurring in and as the mirror stage. I have more to say about that later. But for now, before outlining the major Freud-Lacanian links, let me just note that all the features encountered here with Kojève's reading of Hegel—lack, desire, domination, violence, consent, identity, alterity, subjectivity, and some form of inter and intrasubjective (mis)recognition—are involved in what Lacan formulates as the mirror stage.

Narcissistic Ego and Fort-Da

> The idea of a genesis of the ego
> is laden with ambiguity.
> J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis[25]

Throughout his working life, Freud put forward two conflicting and competing views of the ego. One view, that which Grosz calls "the realist ego," is the one most clearly outlined in "The Interpretation of Dreams,"[26] and "The Ego and the Id." Briefly, the realist ego is "the biological result of the interaction of psychical and social relations with the surface of the organism," a fairly stable entity, natural, or innate, identified with "the self," and which acts to modify the pleasure-seeking id, "influencing it in accordance with the dictates of the reality principle."[27]

Turning here, for just a moment, to psychoanalytic practice, this "realist" view of the ego is the one adopted by the "neo-Freudian orthodoxy," those ego-psychologists, such as Karl Abraham and Heinz Hartmann (Lacan's own analyst) and Ernst Kris, for whom Lacan has so much contempt, for their version of psychoanalytic therapy is as a mode of transmission of normative ideals, it is about adjusting the ego to make for a socialized human being. Indeed, Lacan's concern about "ego psychology" is that the treatment deepens the very imaginary relationships of the ego that lie at the root of the patient's greatest conflicts. As historian of ideas Martin Jay puts it, for Lacan the

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[25]Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, The Language of Psychoanalysis, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1973), 140.

[26]Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams" (1900), SE IV & V.

[27]Grosz, Jacques Lacan, 24-6.

"therapeutic goal of a strong, integrated ego . . . is misguided, for rather than proving an escape from the vicissitudes of alienation, it is itself the greatest alienation of all."[28]

Thus it is the other view of the ego that is the one which more concerns Lacan by far (although, as we shall see, there are embedded in his formulation of the mirror stage shards of the realist ego from "The Ego and the Id"). Appropriately, the first of Freud's papers where this other ego appears is "On Narcissism: An Introduction." In this view there is no id and no reality principle. Rather, the narcissistic ego is a kind of envelope or boundary constructed to surround a "libidinal reservoir," and as such, is able to take itself or a part of its body as a libidinal object. "The narcissistic ego," writes Grosz,

> is an entirely fluid, mobile, amorphous series of identifications, internalizations of images/perceptions invested with libidinal cathexes . . . . It is not an entity, agency, or psychical content, for the ego is constituted by relations with others. . . . [and] is governed by fantasy, and modes of identification, and introjection, which make it amenable to the desire of the other.[29]

The condition, or shape of this ego is dependent on the condition of the libidinal economy. Freud's "hydraulic" model draws on the image of an amoeba, specifically its plastic capacities to incorporate or introject its objects, on being in love, and/or illness, to give examples of the flow of libidinal reserves, the fluctuations between projection and introjection.[30]

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[28]See Jay, Downcast Eyes, 348. See also Boothby, Death and Desire, 37.

[29]Grosz, Jacques Lacan, 28, 29, 31.

[30]Fluctuations which are seen in their most extreme in "Mourning and Melancholia," (1917) SE XIV, wherein Freud distinguishes between the condition of mourning, where there is a gradual process of disinvesting or de-cathecting the lost object, and melancholia, where "the object has not perhaps actually died, but has

But Freud still puzzled over the genesis of the ego (for which the realist view of the ego cannot account). In an oft cited passage he writes: "a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start; the ego has to be developed. . . . (T)here must be something new added to auto-eroticism—a new psychical action—in order to bring about narcissism."[31] It is this "something new," Lacan argues, that constitutes the mirror stage. Lacan reads the narcissistic ego's ability to take itself as object as a fundamental splitting, a cleavage which occurs at the genesis of the ego, indeed, *as* the genesis of the ego. Meanwhile, Jean Laplanche argues that Freud's thesis, "if we were to condense it and, in a sense, radicalize it,"

> would consist in three propositions: narcissism is a libidinal investment of the self, a *love of the self* - a thesis which is anything but surprising; but this libidinal cathexis of self occurs in man [sic] necessarily through a *libidinal cathexis of the ego*; and—the third thesis—this libidinal cathexis of the ego is inseparable from the very *constitution* of the human *ego*.[32]

What Laplanche suggests agrees with what Lacan always insisted, that his was a "return" to Freud, that the ideas which he developed and amplified were already distilled in Freud.

Before moving on to Henri Wallon, and then discussing the mirror stage in detail, there is one further Freudian idea, referred to in psychoanalytic parlance as the "fort-da,"that is crucial to Lacan's development of the mirror

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become lost as an object of love," thus is not "consciously perceive(d)," and cannot be consciously mourned. What results is the ego's "melancholic inhibition."

[31]Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction," 77.

[32]Jean Laplanche, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, trans. with an Introduction by Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1985), 67.

stage. (Indeed, Wilden remarks that "if Freud had not reported the *Fort! Da!*, it would have been necessary to invent it, since it plays the role of the necessary 'myth of origins' in Lacan's theory."[33]) From "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" come Freud's observations of an eighteenth month old boy (his eldest grandson) and his game with a cotton-reel. The child had a wooden reel with string wound round it, which he would throw over the side of his cot,

> so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive "o-o-o-o." He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful "*da*." This, then, was the complete game—disappearance and return. As a rule one only witnessed its first act, which was repeated untiringly as a game in itself, though there is no doubt that the greater pleasure was attached to the second act.[34]

Freud interprets the "o" vowel sound to mean "gone!" (*Fort!* in German) and the "a" vowel sound to mean "here!" (*Da!* in German). Further, and of significance to Lacan, Freud writes in a footnote that,

> One day the child's mother had been away for several hours and on her return was met with the words "Baby o-o-o-o!" . . . It soon turned out . . . that during this long period of solitude the child had found a method of making *himself* disappear. He had discovered his reflection in a full-length mirror which did not quite reach to the ground, so that by crouching down he could make his mirror-image "gone."[35]

Freud observes that the child plays the first part, the departure, as a game by itself far more frequently than he does "the episode in its entirety, with its

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[33]Wilden, in Lacan, Speech and Language, 191.

[34]Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," 15.

[35]Ibid., 15, footnote 1.

pleasurable ending."[36] This leads Freud to question the primacy of the "pleasure principle," or the idea that "the course of [mental] events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension, and that it takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension—that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure."[37]

I want to draw out three things in relation to "fort-da" and the mirror stage: the child's desire to control the movements of his mother and his inability, due to his age, to do so in ways other than through phantasy[38]; the structuring lack of the child's desire for the desire of the (m)other; and the absolute imbrication of desire and control, or power, in the production of pleasure and pain.[39]

But for Lacan there is also the tremendous importance of "fort-da" as it leads him to link the sounds uttered by the child in its "mastery over its abandonment" with "the birth of the symbol."[40] He writes: "These are the acts of occultation which Freud, in a flash of genius, revealed to us so that we might recognize in them that the moment in which desire becomes human

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[36]Ibid., 16.

[37]Ibid., 7. Freud develops his ideas about this in another paper written in the same year, "A Child is Being Beaten: A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions," (1919) SE XVII.

[38]In a later section of this chapter, I discuss the function of *phantasy*, and the *phantasmatic*.

[39]I return to and elaborate upon this last point below.

[40]Lacan, "The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis," in Ecrits: A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, London: W.W. Norton: 1977), 103.

is also that in which the child is born into language."[41] Of supreme import for Lacan, then, is the relationship Freud notes between both the image or representation, its presence, and its negation, its absence, and articulation of desire in (symbolic) language.

Henri Wallon's work was published in 1931, eleven years after Freud published "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," and together with that, and the interest of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and other phenomenologists in the role of mirrors in the development of perception, the idea of something of the order of the mirror stage would seem to have been in the air. Grosz uses Merleau-Ponty's discussion of Wallon's work,[42] wherein Wallon links mirror, voice, and self-recognition: an infant smiles in recognition of its father's image in the mirror, but, comments Merleau-Ponty,

> when the father speaks to the child, the child seems shocked and turns from the image towards the father supporting him. . . . Wallon argues that to begin with the child responds to the specular image of others rather than to its own mirror-reflection. This is largely because it is easier to recognize the differences between the two visual experiences of the other (one virtual, the other real) than it is to compare their correlates in the self.[43]

Merleau-Ponty points to the child's growing sense that "he" can be seen by an external witness "*at the very place at which he feels himself to be* with the same visual appearance that he has from the mirror."[44] There is in this

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[41]Ibid.

[42]See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, ed. James M. Edie (Northwestern University Press, 1964), esp. 125-151.

[43]Grosz, Jacques Lacan, 36-7.

[44]Merleau-Ponty, Primacy of Perception, 129.

description of Wallon's discussion an echo of the desire of the other. Indeed, following a passage about Lacan's 1949 version of the mirror stage, Merleau-Ponty brings up Wallon's discussion of the work of Charlotte Bühler, who observes the "master and slave" relationships between children where there is a difference in age of three or more years. Merleau-Ponty writes:

> As Wallon observes, what really counts, in order for a despotic relation to be established, is not that one party be stronger or more clever than the other; it is that the other recognize that he is weaker, less clever. What the master seeks, following Hegel's famous description of the relation between the master and the slave, is recognition by the slave, the consent of the slave to be a slave. The master is nothing without the humiliation of the slave; he would not feel alive without the debasement of the other. The master exists through the recognition of his lordship by the slave, and the slave himself has no other function than to be there to admire and identify with the master.[45]

Mirror Stage I

> Lacan may not have had any idea
> other than that of the mirror stage.
> Catherine Clément[46]

Lacan first proposed the mirror stage at the 1936 Marienbad International Congress of Psycho-Analysis.[47] If it seems strange that I outline

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[45] Ibid., 142.

[46] Catherine Clément, Lives and Legends of Jacques Lacan, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 100-1. She goes on to say, "This was a true discovery. . . . In this discovery we find all his future work in embryonic form."

[47] The first version had this catchy title: "The Mirror Stage. Theory of a Structuring and Genetic Moment in the Constitution of Reality, Conceived in Relation to Psychoanalytic Experience and Doctrine." I assume this to be Martin Jay's translation

some theories pertinent to Lacan's formulation of the mirror stage in advance of a presentation of his formulation itself, let me note that hesitation about where to begin a presentation of the mirror stage is an "acting out" of the the peculiar *maelstrom*, the temporal-spatial dialectic of anticipation and retroaction, that is a defining characteristic of the mirror stage itself.[48] Indeed, in a further acting out of its aspects, I have found it necessary to "split" my discussion into two parts (of which this is the first). In a way Lacan does the same, for his initial presentation of the *mirror stage* takes place over two texts, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience" (1949), and "Aggressivity in psychoanalysis" (1948).[49] Saving fuller analysis of the implications of such reflexive "self" generation until later, what I want to do here is lay down a groundwork of the mechanics of the mirror stage, showing how it meshes with other psychoanalytic concepts crucial to my argument.

The mirror stage is often presented as a narrative about the development of the human child, who feels its body to be in bits and pieces, its motor mechanisms unco-ordinated, and who gains a sense of itself as a totality through identifying with the image, co-ordination, and movement of an other (its own image in the mirror, or the form of a parent, usually the mother). Similarly, and as mentioned above, Wallon purports that it is only through

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of the title, see Jay, Downcast Eyes, 341-2.

[48] See Jane Gallop, Reading Lacan, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), esp. 74-7, for her account of the chronological confusion which haunts the publishing and citational history of this text.

[49] Both are in Ecrits: A Selection. It is interesting to consider Freud's "splitting of the ego" into its two versions, the "realist" and the "narcissistic" egos, as his own "acting out" of his own "mirror stage."

recognition of a familiar face in the mirror that the child understands to recognize its own face. Lacan, however, certainly seems to intend the mirror stage not to be read purely as a developmental process for toddlers.[50] What distinguishes Lacan's mirror stage[51] from the more simple projective transitivism of Henri Wallon's child before the mirror, is the profound pessimism that Lacan inherits from Kojève. The mirror stage leads to no classic Hegelian redemption. Rather, the dialectic of desire remains in motion.[52]

In the very first paragraph of "The mirror stage," Lacan makes it clear that the "experience" of the mirror stage directly undermines any assumption of a Cartesian subjectivity, identical to itself.[53] Further into the text he specifically criticizes, too, the (then very) "contemporary philosophy of being and nothingness" for its drawing on and "borrowings from psychoanalytic experience," yet its contradictory positing of "a self-sufficiency of consciousness" that exists prior to the dialectic of desire.[54] He writes:

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[50]I want to point out something which will inform my readers' understanding of Lacan's relationship with what are often seen as the developmental aspects of his theory. Alice A. Jardine reports that Lacan's primary hypothesis, repeated in the early pages of his *Séminaire XX: Encore*, is that "Men, women and children, these are only signifiers." See Jardine, Gynesis. Configurations of Woman and Modernity (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 162.

[51]For the sake of clarity I shall sometimes make shorthand reference to "Lacan's mirror stage" without (necessarily) meaning Lacan's own experience of the mirror stage.

[52]I take up the relationship between developmental process and the "trauma" of the "temporal dialectic" in the section on The Future Anterior.

[53]Lacan, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience," Ecrits: A Selection, 1. Hereafter I shall refer to this paper as "The mirror stage."

[54]Ibid., 6. Lacan is obviously referring to the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. See, The Search For a Method, trans. H. E. Barnes (New York: Vintage Books, 1968); Critique of Dialectical Reason, trans. A. Sheridan-Smith (London: New Left Books, 1976); and

> the important point is that [the ideal formed in the mirror stage] situates the agency of the *ego*, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, which will only rejoin the coming-into-being (*le devenir*) of the subject asymptotically, whatever the success of the dialectical syntheses by which he [*sic*] must resolve as *I* his discordance with his own reality.[55]

Even Lacan's infamously less than lucid prose cannot obscure his meaning: what is taken as the self, *before its social determination*, is nothing other than a(n "irreducible") fiction.

Lacan sums up the mirror stage in the following key passage:

> The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation—and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic—and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development.[56]

What occurs in the mirror stage is an identification—indeed, it is the blueprint for all identifications. [57] In his Seminar of 1953-1954, Lacan says of the mirror

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Being and Nothingness (London: Methuen, 1977).

[55]Ibid., 2. With regard to the term "asymptotically," the Oxford English Dictionary advises that it means "not meeting," or something that can never be more than approximated, that "Language, in relation to thought, must ever be regarded as an asymptote."

[56]Ibid., 4.

[57]Laplanche and Pontalis define identification as a "process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides." Language of Psychoanalysis, 205. They write of the mirror stage: "What happens is that the infant perceives in the image of its counterpart—or in its own mirror image—a form . . . in which it anticipates a bodily unity which it still objectively lacks . . . it identifies with [this] image." Language of Psychoanalysis, 251.

stage: "This is the original adventure through which man [*sic*], for the first time, has the experience of seeing himself, of reflecting on himself and conceiving of himself as other than he is—an essential dimension of the human, which entirely structures his fantasy life."[58]

The subject comes into being through identifying with an image. As such, the relation forms what Lacan terms the *Imaginary*.[59] In his translator's notes to the English edition of Lacan's *Ecrits*, Alan Sheridan writes that the Imaginary is "the world, the register, the dimension of images, conscious and unconscious, perceived or imagined. In this respect, 'imaginary' is not simply the opposite of 'real': the image certainly belongs to reality . . . ."[60] With typical clarity, Elizabeth Grosz describes the Imaginary as, "the narcissistic structure of investments which transforms the image of otherness into a representation of the self."[61] It is thus a term which pertains to the relation to itself as other by which a subject comes into being, and by which, through repetition, a subject must constantly re-assert that being (re-constitute itself). For of course, since *ego* is fundamentally *fictive*, (the illusion of) constancy must be produced (and enforced) through repeated enactment.

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[58]Lacan, "The topic of the imaginary," in The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-1954, trans. with notes by John Forrester (New York and London: Norton, 1988), 79.

[59]I have chosen the use of capitals when referring specifically to Lacan's three realms, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, only because I will also be discussing symbolic function in a more general sense, and need some way of making a distinction between the two. Lacan himself does not capitalize, and regarding the practice among his commentators, there seems to be a pretty even split, so to speak.

[60]Alan Sheridan, "Translator's Note," Ecrits: A Selection, ix.

[61]Grosz, Sexual Subversions, xviii.

Phantasy and the Phantasmatic

through fantasy, we learn
"how to desire."

Slavoj Zizek[62]

Phantasy life is thus entirely structured by the ambivalence of identity and alterity in the mirror stage (conceiving of self as other), and it is a "psychic category," the *phantasmatic* (a term very important to the vocabulary I am building here) which "organizes and regulates unconscious desire."[63] Although the *phantasmatic*[64] pertains directly to desire, subjectivity and sexuality, at this point I want to focus only upon its relation to desire and subjectivity.[65] Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis describe the concept based on Freud's various notions of (the German word) "phantasie," and they note that the term "cannot fail to evoke the distinction between imagination

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[62]Slavoj Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology (London, New York: Verso, 1989), 118.

[63]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 3.

[64]Disagreeing with a proposal by Susan Isaacs, "that the two alternative spellings *fantasy* and *phantasy* should be used to denote 'conscious daydreams, fictions and so on' and 'the primary content of unconscious mental processes' respectively," on the grounds that such a distinction would do injustice to the complexity of Freud's views, and be subject to arbitrary interpretation, Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis leave the door open for (consistent) use of either spelling. I have simply *chosen* to employ "phantasmatic." See Language of Psycho-Analysis, 314-315, and 318, second footnote. See also, Susan Isaacs, "The Nature and Function of Phantasy," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXIX, (1948): 73-97.

[65]Later, however, (in chapter Two) in the light of further explication of psychoanalytic concepts, I shall return to not only implicate sexuality and its politics in the discussion, but to delve more deeply into the workings of the phantasmatic. I have chosen to split my discussion in this way because there are other concepts which must be explained first.

and reality (perception),"[66] or unconscious and conscious life. They write: "An explanation of the stability, efficacity and relatively coherent nature of the subject's phantasy life is precisely the goal to which Freud's efforts, and the efforts of psycho-analytic thought as a whole, are directed."[67] Given this, and Freud's findings, that

> in [diverse] imaginary formations and psycho-pathological structures () it is possible to meet with an identical content and an identical organisation irrespective of whether these are conscious or unconscious, acted out or imagined, assumed by the subject or projected on to other people,[68]

it is not surprising that Laplanche and Pontalis came up with the term *phantasmatic*, to refer to the "structuring action" of phantasies. The *content* and *organization* of phantasies can be *identical*. In order to begin to see how this might work, it must be remembered that it is the image of the other, the self in the "mirror" of the mirror stage, that sets up the *original* phantasy. In a

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[66]Laplanche and Pontalis, Language of Psychoanalysis, 315.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Ibid., 317. This pertains to Jeffrey Masson's controversial claim that Freud reversed his theory from one which argued that female children were "seduced" by their fathers, that Victorian fathers consistently sexually abused their children, to one which argued that incest was a fantasy common to children. Masson shows evidence of Freud's change of mind in letters from Freud to Wilhelm Fleiss. However, what Masson misses is Freud's profound ambivalence throughout his writings, his struggle with both his observations and theories, and the moral and cultural climate in which he worked. Besides, as work on Freud's theories of phantasy has shown, Freud did not completely refute the reality of the sexual seduction of children, although he did develop a theory of phantasy that made the direct, unmediated line between such reality and the elaboration of memory problematic. See Jeffrey Masson, The Assault on Truth. Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984); The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1904, trans. and ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985); and Laplanche and Pontalis, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," reprinted in Victor Burgin, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan eds. Formations of Fantasy (London and New York: Methuen, 1986).

similar way, the mother's breast functions as a phantasy, as does anything which is *imagined* to be part of the self.[69] Thus what they term *phantastmatic* functions as a kind of (magnetic or force)*field* which structures phantasies, and patterns material. They write:

> As the [psychoanalytic] investigation progresses even aspects of behaviour that are far removed from imaginative activity, and which appear at first glance to be governed solely by the demands of reality, emerge as emanations, as "derivatives" of unconscious phantasy. In the light of this evidence, it is the subject's life as a whole which is seen to be shaped and ordered by what might be called, in order to stress this structuring action, "a phantasmatic" . . . . This should not be conceived of merely as a thematic—not even as one characterised by distinctly specific traits for each subject—for it has its own dynamic, in that the phantasy structures seek to express themselves, to find a way out into consciousness and action, and they are constantly drawing in new material.[70]

The implications of this claim made by Laplanche and Pontalis are quite staggering: *phantasmatic* is their term describing the process by which "unconscious phantasy" comes to *shape and order* "the subject's life as a whole." It is a term which might apply to the structuring enquiry, or meaning, of an entire life, for it refers to the structuring of desire.

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[69]As shall be seen later, the penis comes to function in the same way.

[70]Laplanche and Pontalis, Language of Psychoanalysis, 315.

Temporal Dialectic: The Future Anterior

> What is realized in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming.
>
> Jacques Lacan[71]

> It is the present which polarizes the event into fore- and after-history.
>
> Walter Benjamin[72]

> Like history, the subject can only be read backwards.
>
> Anthony Wilden[73]

Jane Gallop writes that the mirror stage is "the founding moment of the imaginary mode, the belief in a projected image."[74] She reiterates its peculiar temporality:

> What appears to precede the mirror stage is simply a projection or a reflection. There is nothing on the other side of the mirror . . . . The specific difficulty in thinking the temporality of the mirror stage is its intricacy of anticipation and retroaction. In other words, the self is

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[71]Lacan, "The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis," in Ecrits: A Selection, 86.

[72]Walter Benjamin, "N [Theoretics of Knowledge; Theory of Progress]," (Konvolut N 7a, 8), trans. Leigh Hafrey and Richard Sieburth The Philosophical Forum, XV, nos. 1-2 Fall-Winter (1983-84), 18.

[73]Anthony Wilden, "Lacan and the Discourse of the Other," in Lacan, Speech and Language, 166.

[74]Gallop, Reading Lacan, 81.

> constituted through anticipating what it will become, and then this anticipatory model is used for gauging what was before . . . what occurs in the mirror stage is the formation of what in the future will be an antecedent, what grammatically can be called a "future anterior."[75]

What will have been. Gallop proposes that the mirror stage itself be read according to the *future anterior,* because it is an event which must be understood retroactively in order to be understood at all. An identity arises as a future anterior phantasy, and as such, its aetiology is simply a desiring phantasy of itself as unified: a unity with a phantasy. Thus the *domestic* mirror stage cuts a phantasmatic template for "subsequent" identifications. As Lacanian feminist Kaja Silverman remarks, one of the compelling advantages of reading the mirror stage through the future anterior, or future perfect, is that it enables getting around "the theoretical difficulty of positing an initial identification which somehow stands outside the 'social determination' of later identifications."[76]

Lacan writes that the mirror stage "is experienced as a temporal dialectic that decisively projects the formation of the individual into history."[77] Gallop notes that although "development," "lived," and "formation" imply a "natural progression, a succession of present or past moments," for Lacan the mirror stage is "decisive."[78] She writes:

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[75]Ibid., 80-1.

[76]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 20. This has bearing on chapter Two, in relation to the subject in ideology.

[77]Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," 4.

[78]Gallop, Reading Lacan, 83. A "decisive" moment is one where other options are killed off.

> It is a turning point that "projects" the individual into "history," that is into the future perfect. The individual is no longer living a natural development, a chronological maturation. She is projected, thrown forward, in an anticipation that makes her progress no longer a natural development but a "history," a movement doubly twisted by anticipation and retroaction. Yet the difficulty in thinking the temporality of the mirror stage is that it is nonetheless a moment in the natural maturation process, a moment which projects the individual out of that process. It is the moment in a chronology that violates that very order.[79]

The mirror stage is a moment *within* a developmental process which contradicts, negates, "violates" that process. It is thus a *dialectical* moment.

The subject is projected into "history," the future perfect, or future anterior—*what will have been*. The subject *will* itself *have been*. Gallop notes that for Lacan, the mirror stage is "high tragedy: a brief moment of doomed glory, a paradise lost."[80] It is both a lost originary moment and a birth into history.[81]

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[79]Ibid. One of Gallop's strategies in Reading Lacan is to change pronominal gender throughout the book.

[80]Gallop, Reading Lacan, 85.

[81]Ibid.

Aggressivity

> The notion of aggressivity as a correlative tension of the narcissistic structure in the coming-into-being (*devenir*) of the subject enables us to understand in a very simply formulated function all sorts of accidents and atypicalities in that coming-into-being.
>
> Jacques Lacan[82]

The origins of human aggression and the nature and function of what he called the superego, or the regulator of aggression, greatly concerned Freud. It was not until he had worked on the difficult question of masochism and sadism, resolving that masochism is the more primary impulse, that sadism is the turning outward of masochism,[83] that Freud made the revolutionary proposal that all aggression and destructiveness in human beings is based in self-destructiveness.[84] As psychoanalytic commentator Richard Boothby points out, this means that aggression is neither a self-defensive reaction, nor based in an innate disposition to brutishness, but "an expression of an internal conflict of the individual human being with itself."[85] This aggressiveness is

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[82]Lacan, "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," in Ecrits: A Selection, 22.

[83]Recall Freud's observations about his grandson's pleasure in undergoing the pain of separation from mother and self in the games with the cotton reel and the mirror—the *fort da* of "Beyond the Pleasure Principle."

[84]See Freud, "The Ego and the Id"; "Civilization and Its Discontents" (1930), SE XXI; "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" (1933), SE XXII; and "An Outline of Psychoanalysis," (1938), SE XXIII. For commentary, see Boothby, Death and Desire, 4-5; Laplanche, Life and Death.

[85]Boothby, Death and Desire, 5.

conceptualized by Freud as the death drive, and (towards the close of his life) he placed it at the center of his theory.

The notion of a death drive was abhorrent to many of Freud's followers, who perhaps found its proposed centrality to be in direct conflict with their sense of the healing purpose of psychoanalysis, or a morbid obsession of Freud's (or even a little scary in the light of their own advancing years). In his "return" to Freud, Lacan saw that life and death are the ultimate terms of the Freudian dialectic. He writes: "To ignore the death instinct in [Freud's] doctrine is to misunderstand that doctrine completely."[86]

Lacan uses Freud's concept of the death drive to link aggressivity with narcissism. Boothby quotes Lacan on aggressivity:

> the ego as an imaginary function of the self, as a unity of the subject alienated from itself, of the ego as that in which the subject can recognize itself at first only in abolishing the alter ego of the ego, which as such develops the very instinct dimension of aggression that is called from now on: aggressivity.[87]

Thus, it is clear that aggressivity is thoroughly mirrored in the mirror stage. From the French edition of Lacan's *Ecrits* Boothby further quotes: "The notion of aggressivity corresponds . . . to the splitting of the subject against himself [*sic*]."[88] For Lacan aggressivity is the other side of the dialectic which constitutes the self in the image of the ego. "The subject," writes Grosz,

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[86]Lacan, "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious," in Ecrits: A Selection, 301.

[87]Lacan, "Le Symbolique, l'imaginaire, et le réel," unpublished text of conference paper presented on July 8, 1953, trans. and quoted in Boothby, Death and Desire, 38.

[88]Lacan, quoted in Boothby, Death and Desire, 39.

"recognizes itself at the moment it loses itself in/as the other."[89]

Boothby writes: "The aggressivity that interests Lacan is not a defense of an ideal unity of the self but a rebellion against it. Aggressivity is a drive toward violation of the imaginary form of the body that models the ego."[90] Of course the "imaginary form of the body that models the ego" is (firstly) the image of the self as other and other as self, the unified body. Aggressivity arises within the *ambivalence* of the alienating narcissistic structure of the ego, the coming-into-being of the subject—the sense of me and not me. Boothby notes that a maximum aggressiveness would be produced through one's confrontation with an exact replica of oneself.[91]

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[89]Grosz, Jacques Lacan, 41.

[90]Boothby, Death and Desire, 39.

[91]Ibid.

Spatial Dialectic: Ideal Ego and Ego-Ideal

> The continuity of the ego is a myth.
> Bertolt Brecht[92]

In the subject's assumption of the image it is clear that in spite of its notion of a *realist* ego, Lacan does glean something from "The Ego and the Id" for his mirror stage: "The ego," writes Freud," is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but it is itself the projection of a surface."[93] Based on the image of the body as itself a *projection* of a perceived surface, the ego as a unity is a phantasy, it is an *ideal ego*. Such is the *Imaginary* nature of the mirror stage: like the movement of the Kojèvian dialectic, it is a *misrecognition* (*méconnaissance*).

However, as Rosalind Coward and John Ellis note:

> There are two simultaneous moments implicit in the narcissistic identification of the mirror-phase, and these correspond to the distinction between the ideal ego and the ego-ideal. The first, the ideal ego, is the imaginary identification of the . . . corporeal image as a unified image. The second, the ego-ideal, involves the fact that in order to see its fragmentary being in the place of the image that confronts it, the child sees its being in relation to otherness.[94]

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[92]Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 15. For a brief but informed account of the influence of Freud's work on both Brecht and Benjamin, see Susan Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute (New York: Free Press, 1977).

[93]Freud, "The Ego and the Id," 26.

[94]Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject (London, Henley and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 110.

These two "moments" are what I am describing as the two movements of the spatial dialectic of the mirror stage. The first moves to identify with a (phantasy) unified image; the second involves an identification with the *position* of a phantasmatic other. Slavoj Zizek, following Jacques-Alain Miller,[95] sees the ideal ego as an Imaginary identification, and the ego-ideal as a Symbolic identification, or "constituted" and "constitutive" identification respectively. "To put it simply," he writes,

> imaginary identification is identification with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves, with the image representing "what we would like to be," and symbolic identification, identification with the very place from where we are being observed, from where we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves likeable, worthy of love.[96]

Thus it is in the realm of the Symbolic that the subject identifies with the *place from where* the other sees it: identification is with the *desire of the (O)ther.*

Like the dialectical workings of Hegel's master-slave parable, the subject desires to be the desire of the other, for such brings recognition: but what distinguishes Lacan's dialectic of desire from Hegel's "alienation of a consciousness-of-self," is Lacan's development of the idea of the "field" or "discourse" of the Other[97]—the Symbolic. In the words of Jacques-Alain

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[95]Jacques-Alain Miller is Lacan's son-in-law, and editor of much of Lacan's work, including The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1978); Seminar I; and The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli, with notes by John Forrester (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1988). He is probably the closest there is to an "official," or "authorized" Lacanian commentator.

[96]Slavoj Zizek, The Sublime Object, 105.

[97]In his lengthy commentary on Lacan's 1956 "Rome Discourse," Anthony Wilden writes: "It is not possible . . . to define the Other in any definite way, since for Lacan it has a functional value, representing both the 'significant other' to whom . . .

Miller, the Lacanian subject is "born in, constituted by, and ordered in a field that is exterior to him [*sic*]."[98] Very briefly now, (for examination and critique of symbolic function is a major focus of my work) the Lacanian Symbolic is derived from the notion of the symbolic function in human society as revealed through the anthropological work of Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss.[99] Elizabeth Grosz writes: "In place of the dyadic structure of identifications supporting the imaginary, the symbolic initiates triadic social relations, relations which are founded on exchange . . . ."[100] For Lacan, the Symbolic

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demands are addressed (the appeal to the Other), as well as the internalization of this Other (we desire what the Other desires) and the unconscious subject itself or himself [*sic*] (the unconscious is the discourse of—or from—the Other). In another context, it will simply mean the category of 'Otherness,' a translation Lacan has himself employed. Sometimes 'the Other' refers to the parents: to the mother as the 'real Other' (in the dual relationship of mother and child), to the father as the 'Symbolic Other,' yet it is never a *person*. Very often the term seems to refer simply to the unconscious itself, although the unconscious is most often described as 'the locus of the Other.' . . .

"What is surely essential to keep in mind about Lacan's use of the terms 'unconscious' and 'Other' is . . . the position of both unconscious and Other as third terms in any dual situation. Like Lévi-Strauss, Lacan seeks to rebut the notion of the unconscious as an individual, intrapsychic entity, and to restore it as a function to the collectivity which in fact creates and sustains it." Wilden, "Lacan and the Discourse of the Other," Speech and Language, 263-5. (Lacan's "Rome Discourse" [*Discours de Rome*], was published in French in 1956. Wilden was first to translate it, in 1968, and it appears as "The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis," along with Wilden's commentary, "Lacan and the Discourse of the Other," in Speech and Language. Another translation, by Alan Sheridan, appears in 1977 as "The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis," in Ecrits: A Selection.)

[98]Lacan agrees with Jacques-Alain Miller, when at the close of one of Lacan's seminars, Miller asks Lacan: "Do you not wish to show, all the same, that the alienation of a subject who has received the definition of being born in, constituted by, and ordered in a field that is exterior to him, is to be distinguished radically from the alienation of a consciousness-of-self? In short, are we to understand—Lacan *against* Hegel?" See Lacan, "The Subject and the Other: Alienation," Four Fundamental Concepts, 215.

[99]See Marcel Mauss, The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen and West, 1970); and Claude Lévi-Strauss, Elementary Structures of Kinship (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969); Structural Anthropology, trans. Claire Jacobson (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967); and Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss, trans. Felicity Baker (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987).

[100]Grosz, Sexual Subversions, *xxiii*.

already always is. Each child is born into an already existing social order, an order that regulates social *exchange*. The business of exchange entails mediation and ordering, the operation of which requires a third party, that which authorizes, and makes or organizes exchange—the law. A social order depends on repression of certain nominated relations (in Western culture, primarily, incestual, inter-racial, and homosexual[101]), and thereby the promotion and enforcement of others, (primarily, regulated heterosexual). This order lives in and by language—the "rule-governed system of signification, organised with reference to the 'I,' the speaking subject."[102] The notion of exchange is present in both language and social order, or *the law.* Indeed for Lévi-Strauss, as for Lacan, "Human law, sociality, is identified as identical to the order of language."[103] In this sense, the Symbolic can be said to structure the unconscious, indeed as Grosz remarks, this may explain why Lacan claims that the unconscious is structured like a language.[104]

For Lacan, the relationship between the Imaginary relationship with the self and Symbolic identification with the desire of the other "pre"figures,

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[101] These terms were not employed by Lacan, but they can be used to describe those relations which must be repressed for the coherence of a social order such as that of Western culture.

[102] Grosz, Sexual Subversions, *xxiii*. I shall, of course, return to discuss this in far greater detail and breadth. Briefly though, Michel Foucault disputes Freud's "repressive hypothesis," arguing instead for what might be called a productive hypothesis. Fertile discussion of his critique, such as that of Judith Butler, shows the powerful links between prohibition and promotion, repression and production (and in my view, though probably not Butler's, underlining the value of a dialectical approach). See Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1990); and Butler, Gender Trouble .

[103] Coward and Ellis, Language and Materialism, 114.

[104] Grosz, Sexual Subversions, *xxiii*. Lacan makes this famous claim in "The Subject and the Other: Alienation," Four Fundamental Concepts, 203.

or, given the logic of the future anterior, retroactively anticipates the relationship of the subject to the Symbolic. In this sense the mirror stage is a metaphor for movements and relationships which occur throughout Lacan's theory. He writes:

> This jubilant assumption of his [*sic*] specular image by the child . . . would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject.[105]

Silverman, following Gallop, points out that the "jubilation" of which Lacan speaks is one based on an illusory unity, "upon an *anticipation* of self-mastery and a unified identity."[106] At this point I want to underline the link, within the process of subjectivity, between illusion and anticipation. The fictional ideal totality is fractured by the subject's entry into language, the Symbolic. "But," write Coward and Ellis, "the ego-ideal is a function by which that image of ideal unity is taken back by the subject after the entry, but invested with new properties, that is 'admonitions of others' or the 'awakening of his [*sic*] own critical judgment.'"[107]

This double aspect of the mirror stage shows how the ego preserves its self-regard. It also raises the politically important question of what happens when such movements are inhibited, when the maintenance and promotion of the self-regard of some "egos" is dependent on the suppression of the

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[105] Lacan, "The mirror stage," 2.

[106] Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 7.

[107] Coward and Ellis, Language and Materialism, 110-111. Brief quotations within the text are from Freud, "On Narcissism."

functioning of others.

Mirror Stage II

> The fundamental, central structure of our experience really belongs to the imaginary order.
>
> Jacques Lacan[108]

> What seems fairly clear is that the *stade du miroir* never "occurs" at all—any more than the genesis of the ego does.
>
> Anthony Wilden[109]

So it is through the mirror stage that subjectivity is undertaken. The child, identifying with the image, imagines itself to be all-powerful (master), only to apprehend, through the "fort-da" recognition of the desire of the other, its impotence. Silverman notes that every separation—from the breast, the faeces, a loved blanket, the mother's voice, to the (*mirror*)image—is "carved out of the subject's own flesh," attesting "with unusual force to the terms under which the subject enters the symbolic—to the divisions through which it acquires its identity, divisions which constitute the world of objects out of the subject's own self."[110] These *objets petits autres* (objects with only a little "otherness") are linked through inheritance to the *objet a*, the object, whatever

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[108]Lacan, "The symbolic universe," in Seminar II, 37.

[109]Wilden, "Lacan and the Discourse of the Other," Speech and Language, 174.

[110]Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror, 7.

it might be, which stands for the subject's loss of being, explaining why such loss is always "bound to the orifices of the body."[111]

For each and every subject, the construction of a cultural identity is necessarily dependent upon the recognition of and separation from itself as object. Identifying with the image the subject constructs an identity, through *irretrievable* separation from *its self* as object. Subjectivity and the assumption of cultural identity thus entails an always already "castration," in the sense that a price of adherence to cultural law is demanded upon entry to culture, language, the Symbolic.[112]

Lacan holds desire as ultimately the unsatisfiable longing for being, for unity with the self. But where Lacan's dialectic of desire differs from the Hegel-Kojèvian alienation of self-consciousness (*consciousness*, in psychoanalytic terms) has to do with the subject's "being born into, constituted in, and regulated by a field external to him [*sic*]."[113] *That field is language.* It is a "closed field of signification."[114]

Following Roman Jakobson's work on the correlation between psychoanalysis and linguistics, Lacan's understanding of the symbolic function of language is based on a conception inspired by the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and the semiotics and ontology of Charles Sanders

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[111] Lacan, "Seminar of 21 January 1975," in Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the *école freudienne*, eds., Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose ,trans. J. Rose (New York and London: Norton, 1982), 164. Cited in Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror, 7.

[112] Use of the term "castration" here pre-empts later discussion of sexual difference.

[113] J.-A. Miller in conversation with Lacan, quoted by Coward and Ellis, Language and Materialism, 108.

[114] Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror, 8.

Peirce.[115] As Lacan appropriates the work of de Saussure, the resulting schema of the structure of language can be summarized, notes Boothby, in five points: it is transcendent, diacritical, comprehensive, conventional, and binary.[116] I will briefly sketch these out, as each aspect is important.

The first (transcendent) I have already mentioned, that language is an already existing, closed field of signification, or in Lacan's words, "Language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his [*sic*] mental development makes his entry into it."[117] The second (diacritical) has to do with language being a structure of internal relations "in which the meaning of each of its signifying elements is determined by its interconnectedness with the organization as a whole."[118] The third point, about the comprehensiveness of language, is not so much that there is a word in every language that is specific to every possible denotation, but more that as a system of meanings in which each element is dependent for its signification upon other elements in the system, language is always able to produce new

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[115] I can only briefly outline some main points of influence, but for those interested in this fascinating area see Roman Jakobson, Selected Writings, vols. I-IV (The Hague: Mouton, 1971); Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics (London: Fontana, 1974); C.S. Peirce, Collected Papers, vols. I-VIII, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-1958); and for commentary seeWilden, System and Structure, esp. 1-30, 47-62, 265-273; Boothby, Death and Desire, 120-129. In relation to cinema there is a vast amount that has been written, but perhaps for starters see Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (Oxford University Press, 1983); Teresa de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't. Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); and Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Beyond (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

[116] Boothby, Death and Desire, 120.

[117] Lacan, "The agency of the letter," in Ecrits: A Selection, 148.

[118] Boothby, Death and Desire, 121.

meanings, even if a specific word is lacking. Fourthly, language is of a conventional character, or, in Saussure's terms, there is an arbitrary relation between the linguistic signifier and that which it signifies. This point is strongly linked to that of language as a diacritical system: "Because it constitutes a system defined in and through itself, the signifying network of language can theoretically be posed in its independence from the entirety of the signified."[119] Thus, as Lacan writes, "We are forced, then, to accept the notion of an incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier,"[120] and what is *conventional* within any given community is what Lacan comes to call "'anchoring points'" or "'*points de capiton*'" (quaintly, in the manner of upholstery buttons, or quilting points), privileged points that function to stop the sliding, to congeal meaning.[121] Lastly, for Lacan the most elemental components of language are binary in structure.

For Freud the position of "the father" breaks up the dual relation between "the mother" and "the child."[122] "The father with whom Lacan is concerned," writes Grosz, "is the father Freud invokes in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13) as the 'dead father,' the 'father of individual prehistory,' whose death leads to the prohibition of incest."[123] Lacan takes this paternal position as a

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[119] Ibid., 122.

[120] Lacan, "The agency of the letter," 154.

[121] "Congeal" because there can be no final guarantee or securing of language. I clarify this later.

[122] Remember that these are *signifiers.*

[123] Grosz, Jacques Lacan, 68. She continues: "The real father's authority is never so strong as in his absence or death. The dead father, murdered by the primal fraternal horde, founds an inexorable law, more powerful and effective than his supervising presence: 'if this murder [of the father] is the fruitful moment of the debt through which the subject binds himself for life to the Law . . . the symbolic father, in so far as he signifies this Law, is certainly the dead Father'." Grosz, Jacques Lacan, 68-9.

metaphor for the signifying system or field that is itself the third term which breaks up the dual (Imaginary) subject-object relation. The subject's entry into language effects a certain release from "enthrallment with the objects of imaginary identification."[124] Upon entering this field the subject sacrifices *being* for *meaning*. However, as Silverman points out, "such losses are experienced only retroactively from a position within the symbolic,"[125] and we can see how a temporal-spatial aspect is thus imposed upon the relationship (one of both conflict and interdependence) between the Imaginary and the Symbolic through the articulation, the *symbolization* of loss—"castration" as negation. For Lacan, this is what the phallus represents. It mediates presence and absence (and as we shall see, this bears strongly on sexual difference). It comes to stand for the law (of the [dead] father).[126]

The world inhabited by the cultural subject is one of representation—for language is a system of representation. Lacan links the symbolization of language, where words come to *stand* for objects, (Freud's *fort-da*, the play of presence distinguished in relation to absence), with the representation in(as)

The quote from Lacan is from Ecrits: A Selection, 199. See Freud, "Totem and Taboo," SE XIII. Of course not everyone locates "the debt" with the law of the [dead] father. Luce Irigaray argues that a deeper debt is deliberately undervalued and overlooked—the debt to the mother. Grosz translates an important passage: ". . . in order to become men, they continue to consume . . . [the mother], draw on her resources and, at the same time, they deny her or disclaim her in their identification with and their belonging to the masculine world. They owed their existence, their body, life and they forget or misrecognize this debt in order to set themselves up as powerful men, adults busying themselves with public affairs . . . " Irigaray, "Etablir un généalogy de femmes," Maintenant 12 (28 mai 1979): 44; translated and quoted in Grosz, Sexual Subversions, 121.

[124] Boothby, Death and Desire, 124.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Early in the next chapter I will return to elaborate upon this infamously privileged Lacanian signifier.

the mirror, which *stands* for the subject's self.[127] The price paid for entry into this world is being and the phenomenal realm—what Lacan calls the Real. The Real is the third realm which, with the Imaginary and the Symbolic, co-exists and intersects in the subject. It is the "lack of the lack [that] makes the real."[128] Grosz writes:

> The Real is the order preceding the ego. . . . It is an anatomical, "natural" order (nature in the sense of resistance rather than positive substance), a pure plenitude of fullness. The Real cannot be experienced as such: it is capable of representation or conceptualization only through the reconstructive or inferential work of the imaginary and symbolic orders. . . It is what is "unassimilable" in representation, the "impossible." Our distance from the Real is the measure of our socio-psychical development. The Real has no boundaries, borders, divisions, or oppositions; it is a continuum of "raw materials." The Real is not however the same as reality; reality is lived as and known through imaginary and symbolic representations.[129]

Lacan's formulation of the mirror stage undermines the self-satisfaction of a *cogito*. In the words of Alice Jardine, "the Lacanian subject is not the knowing self but itself an imaginary construct launched by desire and trapped between the real and the symbolic."[130] "(A)lthough signification takes the place of the real," writes Silverman, "it is in no way reflective of what it supplants. The signifier is a non-representative representation."[131] Indeed, "Lacan conveys

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[127] This point is developed later in relation to the ideas of Louis Althusser.

[128] Lacan, "Preface to the English-Language Edition," Four Fundamental Concepts, ix.

[129] Grosz, Jacques Lacan, 34.

[130] Jardine, Gynesis, 121. Jardine cautions, "The Real must be treated carefully. For not to handle it carefully is to misjudge the force of Lacan's twisting of the dialectic and to return to a nineteenth-century Freud through the back door," 122.

[131] Silverman, Acoustic Mirror, 8.

the extremity of the opposition between language and the phenomenal realm when he describes it as a choice between meaning and life."[132] To be a subject in culture is to "choose" meaning.[133]

So, how does a price paid by all subjects come to be taken from (firstly) woman's purse?

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[132] Ibid.

[133] Terry Eagleton writes of the Lacanian subject's "Hobson's choice between meaning and being." See Eagleton, Walter Benjamin, or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism (London: Verso, 1981), 35.

CHAPTER TWO

SERIOUS FICTIONS

IDEOLOGY AND THE SEXUALITY POLITICS OF SUBJECTIVITY

> Meaning indicates the direction
> in which it fails.
>
> Jacques Lacan[1]

By way of introduction to the "sexuality" politics of subjectivity, and in order to begin to make links between psychoanalytic theory and political and social theory, I want to briefly outline pertinent aspects of Carole Pateman's work on social and sexual contract.[2] Contract theory is a political underwriting of the culture in which we live, and Pateman reveals that the political myth of the *social* contract rests on the repressed story of the *sexual* contract. Pateman traces the tale of the social contract back to the seventeenth century, when a "theoretical battle" occurred between the patriarchalists and the social contract

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[1]Lacan, "A Love Letter (Une Lettre D'Âmour)," in Feminine Sexuality, 150.

[2]Carole Pateman, The Sexual Contract (London: Polity Press, 1988). Pateman argues that, contrary to conventional understanding, women are excluded from active participation in social contracts, such as work, prostitution and marriage, in that the social contract rests upon the sexual contract, whereby men's rights to women's bodies precede (and preclude) women's rights to their own bodies. See also Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in Toward an Anthropology of Women, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975); and Elizabeth Cowie, "Woman as Sign," m/f, No. 1 (1978).

theorists, where the former claimed that political power was paternal power and the latter claimed that such was not the case, that *contract* was the basis of political right.[3] In the contract theorists' version of the story, the freedom of the "sons" is won by their casting off "their natural subjection to their fathers and [replacing] paternal rule by civil government."[4] Pateman points out that this new civil order appears to be anti-patriarchal or post-patriarchal, that contract and patriarchy appear to be opposed. However, the crucial omission in this story is that the social contract is made between or among men (the sons, or brothers) and that part of the contract is their right of sexual access to women's bodies. "Contract," writes Pateman, "is far from being opposed to patriarchy; contract is the means through which modern patriarchy is constituted."[5] Thus the term "patriarchal" can be seen to not necessarily refer to "father rights," or to a promise made by father to son regarding rights of access to women's bodies, but to an already always contract made *between men* regarding such rights. Pateman writes:

> Political right originates in sex-right or conjugal right. Paternal right is only one, and not the original, dimension of patriarchal power. A man's power as a father comes after he has exercised the patriarchal right of a man (a husband) over a woman (wife) . . . Patriarchy ceased to be paternal long ago. Modern civil society is not structured by kinship and the power of fathers; in the modern world, women are subordinated to men *as men*, or to men as a fraternity.[6]

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[3]Pateman, Sexual Contract, 3.

[4]Ibid., 2.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., 3.

Contract theory viewed without feminist analysis suggests that all human beings have equal rights within its terms, but Pateman shows that only men *can* have those rights because the assumption is that in order to take part in a contract an individual must *own* their own body, and in the terms of the sexual contract women's bodies are already always under the "patriarchal" rights of men. In short, social contract is based on sexual contract: it is a structure built on the exclusion of women from active participation, other than as reproducers of this very system.

Psychoanalysis in the Freudian tradition tells a parallel story—an oedipal story—that upon threat of castration, brought into play for *boy* when he witnesses female genitals, what he perceives as *lack* of a penis, son gives up (actually, sublimates) desire for *mother*. Such acquiescence is part of an exchange. On the authority of *father*, there is a promise that another woman will be provided for son. Then he can repeat the exchange with his own son, and so on. The oedipal story of *girl* is more complex: for both children mother is first love, but while boy can continue to love (a substitute) mother, girl must first perceive mother as degraded, or devalued, then switch alliegance to father.[7] Thus, while the male oedipal moment is one of threat, the female oedipal moment is one of realization: she is *always already castrated*.

Lacan does not wholly agree with Freud's universal claims about the oedipus complex.[8] He sees the incest taboo as an historical instance of cultural

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[7]One of the most moving accounts of this violent transition is to be found in Luce Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. Gillian G. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). See also Silverman's discussion of Speculum in The Acoustic Mirror. See also Margaret Whitford, Luce Irigaray: philosophy in the feminine (London: Routledge, 1991).

[8]Lacan writes: "I have often taken a stand against the risky way in which Freud interpreted sociologically the capital discovery for the human mind that we owe

law, thus shifting emphasis of the oedipal crisis from one of concentration on incest taboo, to one of comprehension of, and accedence to the (sexual) rules of a society, and he links this with the Law of the Symbolic order—the Law of Language. He writes:

> The primordial Law is therefore that which in regulating marriage ties superimposes the kingdom of culture on that of nature abandoned to the law of copulation. The interdiction of incest is only its subjective pivot . . . . This law, therefore, is revealed clearly enough as identical to an order of Language.[9]

Lacan identifies "the guiding myth of psychoanalysis,"[10] Freud's oedipus complex,[11] with the formative moment of subjection to the Symbolic order: it is thus another staging of enculturation, a staging analogous to entry into language.

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to him [in the discovery of the Oedipus complex]. I do not think that the Oedipus complex appeared with the origin of man (if indeed it is not completely senseless to try to write the history of that moment), but rather at the dawn of history, of 'historical' history, at the limit of 'ethnographic' cultures. Obviously the Oedipus complex can appear only in the patriarchal form of the institution of the family—but it has a no less incontestable value as a threshold, and I am convinced that in those cultures which exclude it, its function must be or have been fulfilled by initiation experiences, as ethnology in any case still permits us to see this fact today, and the value of the Oedipus complex as a closing-off of a psychic cycle results from the fact that it represents the family situation, insofar as by its institution this situation marks the intersection, in the cultural sphere, of the biological and the social." Quoted by Wilden in Lacan, Speech and Language, 126 note 94.

[9]Lacan, "The function of language in psychoanalysis," in Speech and Language, 40.

[10]This descriptive phrase is from Boothby, Death and Desire, 140.

[11]I discuss the politics of Freud's favoring of the "positive" version of the oedipus complex below.

As for the case of women's "missing" penis, Jacqueline Rose points out that something can only be *seen* to be missing "according to a pre-existing hierarchy of values ('there is nothing missing in the real'). What counts is not the perception but its already assigned meaning—the moment therefore belongs in the symbolic."[12] Like the workings of the future anterior on the subject in the mirror stage, and as meaning is read into experience from a position within language, the Symbolic, so women are seen to be "missing" a penis from a position within an order which values possession of one.

"The problem" of female subjectivity and desire in psychoanalytic theory can be traced to Freud's infamous question: "What does woman want?"[13] His puzzlement is based on a view of woman as *object* of (male) desire, therefore seemingly incapable of subjective desire. Lacan asserts that *The* woman does not exist. Understandably, such a claim has earned Lacan reproaches,[14] but a few feminists, notably Rose, Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, Grosz,[15] and Jardine, go to some pains to explain that Lacan is not speaking about *women*, but about an absolute category—*The* woman (like, or rather, not like *The* man). *The* woman does not exist in that she is "defined purely against

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[12]Jacqueline Rose, "Introduction II," in Lacan, Feminine Sexuality, 42. Rose is quoting an unidentified member of Lacan's school, from a paper written by them, entitled "The Phallic Phase and the Subjective Import of the Castration Complex," and included in Feminine Sexuality, 113. This point connects with one of Silverman's, noted earlier, that losses are experienced only from a position within the symbolic.

[13]I have also encountered this translated from the German "Was will das Weib?" as "What does a woman want?" and "What does the woman want?"

[14]See, for example, Stephen Heath, "Difference," Screen 19:3 (Fall 1978).

[15]Given that her book is a feminist introduction to Lacan, Grosz does take care to represent Lacan's ideas clearly, and she discusses the views of feminist commentators both Lacanian, such as Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, and critical of Lacan, such as Luce Irigaray.

the man (she is the negative of that definition—'man is not woman'),"[16] for the positions of both man and woman are organized by their relation to what Lacan calls "the phallus."

In the first place this refers to an imaginary organ, a *phantasmatic* organ, precisely "the detachable penis, the penis that the child believes the mother to possess."[17] Secondly, "as a result of the castration complex and the child's acknowledgement of the mother's castration, the phallus is no longer a detachable organ, but a signifier which makes an absence present."[18] As the "threshold term for the child's access to the symbolic order,"[19] it works in three related ways. It is the *signifier of desire:*

> it is insofar as he *has* the phallus that man is the object of woman's desire; and it is insofar as she *is* the phallus that a woman is a man's object of desire. . . Second, as a signifier it is the pivotal term in the child's acceptance of the law and name of the father, the term with reference to which the child positions itself as male or not-male.[20]

Thirdly, for the child it breaks the two term relation and initiates the order of exchange: it represents the exchange of being for meaning—a position of speaking subject. Grosz writes that for Lacan "It is thus the 'signifier of signifiers,' the emblem of the law of language itself, the term which guides the

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[16]Rose, "Introduction II," Feminine Sexuality, 49.

[17]Grosz, Sexual Subversions, *xx*.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid. See Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," Feminine Sexuality, 74-85. I return to the "problem" of this privileged signifier at various points throughout the remainder of this thesis.

child to its place as an 'I' within the symbolic."[21] Through the phallus, then, Lacan links cultural sexual order with the Law of Language.

Phallic Politic I

> Th(e) problem of dealing with
> difference without constituting
> an opposition may just be what
> feminism is all about (might even
> be what psychoanalysis is all about).
>
> Jane Gallop[22]

The phallic logic of *to have and have not* organizes cultural order, including sexual order. It is the logic of absence and presence, of dichotomy, of "castration." Nancy Jay provides a very useful account of the oppressive effects of the binary logic of the function of dichotomous structures.[23] She describes the three most basic, "'inescapable,'" laws of logic, "'formulated by Aristotle,'" "'which dominate all our intellectual life.'"[24] She writes: "They are the Principle of Identity (if anything is A, it is A); the Principle of Contradiction (nothing can be both A and Not-A); and the Principle of the Excluded Middle

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[21]Ibid., *xxi*.

[22]Gallop, The Daughter's Seduction. Feminism and Psychoanalysis (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), 93.

[23]Nancy Jay, "Gender and Dichotomy," Feminist Studies 7 No. 1 (Spring, 1981): 38-56.

[24]Jay is quoting anthropologist Emile Durkheim, applying his descriptions of "categories of understanding" to the basic laws of logical thought. She criticizes Durkheim for never questioning dichotomous structures. See Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: The Free Press, 1915).

(anything, and everything, must be *either* A *or* Not-A)."[25] Within the binary structure only one term has positive value. The second term, defined as a negation of the first, the absence or privation of those characteristics defining the first, is not seen to have any value of its *own*.[26] The "Excluded Middle" determines that the two terms are mutually exhaustive, there is no middle ground between them. Also, as Jay points out, there is the function known in logic as "the infinitation of the negative," by which the category that is Not-A includes *everything* that is not in the defined category of A. Thus, for example, the infinitation of the negative "and the consequent lack of internal boundaries in Not-A, is the logical structure behind the 'contagion' of pollution."[27]

For Lacan cultural values are *already always* in place upon the entry of each subject. He uses the image of two identical doors, one labelled "Ladies," the other "Gentlemen," his point *not* being that all *men* must choose "Gentlemen" and all *women* "Ladies," but that "Any speaking being whatever"[28] must line up on one side *or* the other. And, for Lacan, the door labelled "Ladies," like the category *The* woman, is one defined by its "lack."

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[25]Jay, "Gender and Dichotomy," 42.

[26]Unlike a relation such as that of A and B, where both terms have positive reality. Jay writes, "A and B are mere contraries, not logical contradictories, and continuity between them may be recognized without shattering the distinction." Ibid., 44.

[27]Ibid., 44-45. The notion of woman as polluted is one to which many feminists have turned attention. Mary Douglas's excellent study on this subject has been recently re-printed. See Douglas, Purity and Danger. An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (London and New York: Routledge, 1966; repr., 1993); also Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

[28]Lacan, "A Love Letter," 150.

Thus is the tyranny of a binary system. For Lacan the phallus is the privileged signifier which marks the point of intersection between the Imaginary and Symbolic orders, it is the signifier of lack marking castration. Rose writes that "For Lacan, it takes on this value as a function of the androcentric nature of the symbolic order itself."[29] This seems to beg the question of the fine line between psychoanalysis as descriptive and as prescriptive, a question which bears relation to belief in the commensurability of the penis and the phallus. As Jane Gallop succinctly puts it,

> The question of whether one can separate "phallus" from "penis" rejoins the question of whether one can separate psychoanalysis from politics. The penis is what men have and women do not, the phallus is the attribute of power which neither men or women have. But as long as the attribute of power . . . can be confused . . . with a penis this confusion will support a structure in which it seems reasonable that men have power and women do not.[30]

Here lies the heart of the problem: always in a symbolic system based on a logic of absence and presence there will be a privileged term, and always the system will itself support the privileged term. Thus in a fraternal-patriarchal order penis can function as phallus. In order to begin to analyse how this works (and ultimately to assess and formulate intervention) I want to look at the mechanics by which the illusion of the penis-phallus equation is maintained.

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[29]Rose, "Introduction II," Feminine Sexuality, 38.

[30]Gallop, Daughter's Seduction, 97.

Phallic Politic II

> The woman has to undergo no more or less castration than the man.
>
> Jacques Lacan[31]

> (T)he penis is walking around too much for its role to be taken literally.
>
> Gayle Rubin[32]

Going back to 1953, and Lacan's first English presentation of his theory of the mirror stage, he is to be found linking the "autonomous existence" of the body-image and the "autonomy" of the penis.[33] He has this to say:

> the fact that the penis is dominant in the shaping of the body-image is evidence of [an autonomous, non-biological imaginary anatomy]. Though this may shock the champions of the autonomy of female sexuality, such dominance is a fact and one moreover which cannot be put down to cultural influences alone.[34]

Lacan does not win many feminist friends with this statement. Nor with this comment: "one might say that this signifier is chosen as what stands out as

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[31]Lacan, "Seminar of 21 January 1975," in Feminine Sexuality, 168. This paper was published in Ornicar? 3 (1975).

[32]Rubin, "The Traffic in Women," footnote, 190.

[33]Lacan, "Some Reflections on the Ego," International Journal of Psychoanalysis 34 (1953): 11-17. The paper was read to the British Psycho-Analytical Society on 2 May, 1951.

[34]Ibid., 13. I return to what is only hinted at here, the important issue of the relation of the metaphor of penile plasticity "becoming" form, and the "turgidity" of the phallus, in greater depth in chapter Three.

most easily seized upon in the real of sexual copulation."[35] To be fair, however, what he is getting at is that the structuring of desire in the unconscious is to be explained in terms of the positioning of the subject with respect to the presence or absence of the phallus as an *imaginary* object. The dichotomous Imaginary construes anatomy in such a way that it might be said to *favor* certain configurations of sexual identity.

Commentators (particularly feminist ones) differ on the issue of the penis-phallus conflation. While Juliet Mitchell, co-editor (with Jacqueline Rose) of *Feminine Sexuality*, argues that psychoanalysis provides a *description* of patriarchal power relations and is not *prescriptive* of them,[36] stressing the "structural neutrality"[37] of the phallus in positioning sex and subjectivity, Rose has a more sophisticated understanding, and more of a sense of the politics of the phallic function. She writes,

> The phallus can only take up its place by indicating the precariousness of any identity assumed by the subject on the basis of its token. Thus the phallus stands for that moment when prohibition must function, in the sense of whom may be assigned to whom in the triangle made up of mother, father and child, but at the same moment it signals to the subject that "having" only functions at the price of a loss and "being" as an effect of division.[38]

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[35]Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," 82. Note that Lacan distances himself from the claim he articulates, "one might say . . . ."

[36]See Mitchell's early work, Psychoanalysis and Feminism (London: Allen Lane, 1974), which played an important role in the reclamation of psychoanalysis for feminism.

[37]This delightful phrase is from Grosz, Jacques Lacan, 124.

[38]Rose, "Introduction II," Feminine Sexuality, 40.

By definition, the *subject* must acknowledge "that there is no ultimate certainty or truth, and that the status of the phallus is a fraud (this is, for Lacan, the meaning of castration)."[39] This involves recognizing the desire, or lack in the place of what Lacan calls "the Other," and Rose argues that "only if this is dropped from the account can the phallus be taken to represent an unproblematic account of male privilege."[40]

For Lacan the Other is the site of language to which the speaking subject necessarily refers.[41] Rose writes, "The Other appears to hold the 'truth' of the subject and the power to make good its loss. But this is the ultimate fantasy."[42] For there is, as Lacan writes, "'no Other of the Other,'" no final guarantee or securing of language. It is, however, this doubly phantasmatic position which the phallus assumes. Rose asks the crucial question: "why that necessary symbolisation and the privileged status of the phallus appear as interdependent in the structuring and securing (never secure) of human subjectivity?"[43] This is a question that Kaja Silverman tackles.

Silverman argues that it is specifically through the privileging of the site of the construction of *sexual* difference—castration specific to sex—that a denial, or disavowal occurs,[44] *which serves to protect the male from*

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[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid.

[41]As Wilden comments, "not even an apparent monologue can take place without the mediation of 'Otherness.'" "Lacan and the Discourse of the Other," 264.

[42]Rose, "Introduction II," Feminine Sexuality, 32-33.

[43]Ibid., 56.

[44]Laplanche and Pontalis define "Disavowal (Denial)": "Term used by Freud in the specific sense of a mode of defence which consists in the subject's refusing to

acknowledging the castration all subjects undergo in the construction of their very subjectivity. She travels back to note Freud's insistence, in spite of his acknowledgement of the loss of faeces and the act of birth as the prototype of all castration, the roots of the complex, that the "term 'castration complex' ought to be confined to those excitations and consequences which are bound up with the loss of the penis."[45] She writes:

> I would like to suggest that this refusal to identify castration with any of the divisions which occur prior to the registration of sexual difference reveals Freud's desire to place a maximum distance between the male subject and the notion of lack. To admit the loss of the object is also a castration would be to acknowledge that the male subject is already structured by absence prior to the moment at which he registers woman's anatomical difference—to concede that he, like the female subject, has already been deprived of being, and already marked by the language of the Other.[46]

Lacan retains a dialectic of presence and absence, basing it in sexuality. Reading linguistic theory into Freud, he links the lack at the origin of language, the lack that is desire, with woman's "lack" of a penis. Thus "woman" comes to represent lack on two counts: as a subject she represents the lack at the origin of language; and as a woman she is castrated, she lacks a penis. She is defined in terms of what she lacks, indeed, *as* lack, and for Silverman, that definition is symptomatic of male disavowal of *his own* primordial splitting. Woman comes to signify her own castration, and, as Susan Lurie writes, "the

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recognise the reality of a traumatic perception—most especially the perception of the absence of the woman's penis." See Language of Psychoanalysis, 118-121. I return to the intricacies of this term shortly.

[45]Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror, 15.

[46]Ibid.

castration fear her sight inspires in males generates the blessedly invulnerable symbolic phallus."[47] Silverman argues that, through the double movement of male disavowal and projection,[48] the woman of "sexual difference" is brought to bear male lack in an "orchestrated displacement() [that has as its] final goal the articulation of a coherent male subject."[49] He is holding onto his penis in a desperate desire to be: a kind of *I have a penis therefore I am*, or rather, the more convoluted logic of *You don't have a penis therefore I am.*

However, if, as Lacan argues, all subjects are constructed in lack, then that would suggest, as Silverman encourages us to see, that rather than masculinity, it is *femininity* that is the model for subjectivity. Surely then, it is this "lack," this *femininity*, or subservience before the law, that the male subject seeks to disavow. Like negation, disavowal is possible only where its opposite is also true. In other words, in order for the male subject to disavow his "lack" he must first acknowledge it: he must acknowledge absence as a presence.[50]

"The phallus and the penis can only be aligned if there are those who lack it," writes Grosz.[51] She continues, "It is assumed only on the basis of

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[47]Susan Lurie, "The Construction of the 'Castrated Woman' in Psychoanalysis and Cinema," Discourse No. 4 (Winter, 1981-82): 53.

[48]Laplanche and Pontalis write that in the properly psychoanalytic sense projection is the "operation whereby qualities, feelings, wishes or even 'objects,' which the subject refuses to recognise or rejects in himself [*sic*], are expelled from the self and located in another person or thing." This is their definition in brief. For an extended discussion see Language of Psycho-Analysis, 349-356.

[49]Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror, 10.

[50]It is towards suggesting a strategy aimed at enabling this that my work proceeds.

[51]Grosz, Jacques Lacan, 122.

division and dichotomy, represented by the lack attributed to women."[52] Thus the conflation of the penis and the phallus authorizes the double movement by which the male "subject" *avoids* subjection to the law: he has woman stand in for him.[53] This is why the phallus (like the Wizard of Oz) "can only play its role as veiled."[54] Woman is token in the exchange which grants the male subject position and privilege in the Symbolic. It is the psychoanalytic version of the sexual contract: as long as woman functions as the phallus for him, he enjoys privilege without risk.

Linking the politics of sexuality with those of sex, Judith Butler lays out the dialectics of sexual difference and the phallus:

> "Being" the Phallus and "having" the Phallus denote divergent sexual positions, or nonpositions (impossible positions, really), within language. To "be" the Phallus is to be the "signifier" of the desire of the Other and *to appear* as this signifier. In other words, it is to be the object, the Other of a (heterosexualized) masculine desire. This is an Other that constitutes, not the limit of masculinity in a feminine alterity, but the site of masculine

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[52]Ibid.

[53]This double movement of disavowal and projection by which the male subject maintains his privilege is close kin to that involved in the one perversion Freud asserted was not open to women—fetishism. Freud held the view that women could not practice fetishism because a woman has no *pound of flesh*, the threat of the loss of which would drive her to construct a fetish: women have "nothing" to lose—except in the imagination. See Freud, "Fetishism" (1927), SE XXI. Fetishism has gained the status of a cultural discourse, and understandably so. An excellent anthology has been recently published, which includes a range of different uses of *fetishism*: see Emily Apter and William Pietz, eds., Fetishism as Cultural Discourse (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). The movement involved in fetishism is the same as the one which Freud develops in a paper written, according to Ernest Jones, in 1937, and published posthumously in 1940, "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence," SE XXIII. See Ernest Jones, Sigmund Freud: Life and Work, vol. 3 (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 255. Interestingly, "Splitting of the Ego" was probably written while the much younger Lacan was putting together his theory of the mirror stage. As yet, I have been unable to ascertain whether Freud attended the 1936 Marienbad conference where Lacan presented his theory.

[54]Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," 82.

> self-elaboration. For women to "be" the Phallus means, then, to reflect the power of the Phallus, to signify that power, to "embody" the Phallus, to supply the site to which it penetrates, and to signify the Phallus through "being" its Other, its absence, its lack, the dialectical confirmation of its identity.[55]

So women are said to "be" the phallus in that they have the power to reflect or represent the "'reality' of the self-grounding postures of the masculine subject,"[56] women must *be* "(in the sense of 'posture as if they were') precisely what men are not, and in their very lack, establish the essential function of men."[57]

Men can *have* the phallus only as long as women (consent to) *be* it (for them).[58] This relation recalls both the failed reciprocity of the Hegelian master and slave and the failure of self-identity that characterizes the mirror stage. As Butler notes, Lacan casts these dramas in a phantasmatic domain: "Every effort to establish identity within the terms of the binary opposition of 'being' and 'having' returns to the inevitable 'lack' and 'loss' that ground their

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[55]Butler, Gender Trouble, 44. Here, Butler is using the term "Other" in its capacity to denote that category, (in this case "women") which within a binary system functions as the "negative" which holds the "positive," (in this case "man") in place. Remember Nancy Jay's discussion of A and Not-A.

[56]Ibid., 45.

[57]Ibid. I realize that I am speaking of women and not *woman*—for that term denotes the very position (woman as not-man) that I seek to dissolve.

[58]For Lacan, sexuality is in the realm of masquerade. Women masquerade as "being" the phallus, men masquerade as "having" the phallus. I return to this in chapter Three. See Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus"; see also Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," Formations of Fantasy, 35-44.

phantasmatic construction and mark the incommensurability of the Symbolic and the real."[59]

As currently constructed, *sexual difference* is not a relation of difference, but one of contradiction, indeed, of binary opposition. As such, it serves to mask the ontological "castration" all subjects must undergo, simultaneously providing the link ("lack") between the penis-phallus and language and representation. Moreover, the binary logic that takes form in *sexual difference* also works to *regulate* sexuality and sexual relations as those which occur between women and men. Differences in sex and sexuality are thus understood as *hetero*sexual difference,[60] whereas *sexuality itself is not fixed*, for Freud or for Lacan. Both are convinced that there is nothing biologically fixed or determined about sexual identity. Indeed, in true dialectical fashion it is the very existence of *homosexuality* that leads to Freud's and Lacan's conviction of sexuality's "vicissitudes." For example, in his "Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," Freud writes: "In addition to their manifest heterosexuality, a very considerable measure of latent or unconscious homosexuality can be detected in all normal people."[61]

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[59]Butler, Gender Trouble, 44.

[60]Note, for example, that Pateman's scrutiny of the social contract reveals that it rests on the sexual contract but she fails to notice that the sexual contract itself presupposes heterosexuality.

[61]He also writes: "The literature of homosexuality usually fails to distinguish clearly enough between the questions of the choice of object on the one hand, and of the sexual characteristics and sexual attitude of the subject on the other, as though the answer to the former necessarily involved the answers to the latter. Experience, however, proves the contrary: a man with predominantly male charateristics and also masculine in his erotic life may still be inverted in respect to his object, loving only men instead of women. A man in whose character feminine attributes obviously predominate, who may, indeed, behave in love like a woman, might be expected, from this feminine attitude, to choose a man for his love-object; but he may nevertheless be heterosexual, and show no more inversion in respect to his object than an average normal man. The same

This rejoins what Kaja Silverman has uncovered as what might be termed the politics of the oedipus complex. Basically, the *positive* oedipus complex, generally referred to as *the* oedipus complex, is the path which supposedly leads to (normative) heterosexuality. Freud writes:

> (O)ne gets the impression that the simple Oedipus complex is by no means its commonest form, but rather represents a simplification or schematization which, to be sure, is often enough justified for practical purposes. Closer study usually discloses the more complete Oedipus complex, which is twofold, positive and negative, and is due to the bisexuality originally present in children: that is to say, a boy has not merely an ambivalent attitude towards his father and an affectionate object-choice towards his mother, but at the same time he also behaves like a girl and displays an affectionate feminine attitude to his father and a corresponding jealousy and hostility towards his mother.[62]

Although, as Laplanche and Pontalis comment, "the two versions are to be found in varying degrees in what is known as the *complete* form of the complex," Silverman notes that in Freud's later works the notion of a negative oedipus complex is all but erased.[63]

Regulation of vicissitude involves promotion and prohibition. While it is immediately obvious that something must be identified in some way in order to be promoted, it is more implicit that something must be coherent, or articulated, in order to be prohibited. The normativity of heterosexuality can be

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is true of women." Freud, "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman" (1920), SE XVIII, 170; also *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), SE VII; and "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915), SE XIV. See Lacan, Feminine Sexuality, esp. "The Meaning of the Phallus."

[62]Freud, "The Ego and the Id," 33. See Lampl-de Groot, "The Evolution of the Oedipus Complex in Women," International Journal of Psychoanalysis vol. IX (1928), 332-345; Laplanche and Pontalis, Language of Psychoanalysis, 282-287.

[63]Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror, 120-121; and Laplanche and Pontalis, Language of Psychoanalysis, 283.

seen to be dependent on the articulation *and* prohibition of homosexuality. Discussing such dependence, Judith Butler deploys a Foucauldian understanding of dialectical functioning: "For heterosexuality to remain intact as a distinct social form, it requires an intelligible conception of homosexuality, and also requires the prohibition of that conception in rendering it culturally unintelligible."[64] As the notion of the unconscious both gives meaning to the idea of consciousness and functions to undermine certainty of unified ego, "homosexuality" functions both to define "heterosexuality" and to undermine belief in its normalcy. Thus as with the *un*conscious, it can be said of homosexuality that it is *negated*. Consider Freud's definition: "Negation (*Verneinung*) is a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting (*Aufhebung*) of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed."[65]

Just as *man* is constructed as dominant within the dichotomy *man-woman*, so heterosexuality is constructed as dominant in the dichotomy heterosexuality-homosexuality. The importance for the maintenance of the position of the phallus, of the production and perpetuation of sexual difference as specifically *heterosexual difference*, and the equal importance of the conflation of the penis with the phallus for the continuing dominance of a fraternal-patriarchal order, demands investigation of specific enabling processes. After all, men are not a problem; their privilege is. Heterosexuality

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[64]Butler, Gender Trouble, 77.

[65]Freud, "Negation"(1925), SE XIX, 235-6. Freud's definition is close in meaning to that of Hegel's term *aufheben*, which Hannah Arendt notes has a "threefold meaning: to preserve, to elevate, to cancel." (Arendt in an editor's note, in Walter Benjamin, Illuminations. Essays and Reflections, ed. with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 263.)

is not a problem; its normativity is. It is time to look at the prohibitive and promotional role of ideology in the sexual (in the senses of both sex and sexuality) *captation* of subjects.[66]

Mirror, Mirror

> But what, concretely, is this uncriticized ideology if not simply the "familiar," "well-known," transparent myths in which a society or an age can recognize itself (but not know itself), the mirror it looks into for self-recognition . . . ?
>
> Louis Althusser[67]

Using recent work by Kaja Silverman,[68] I want to show how it comes to be that by raising the ontological and sexual stakes which demand *belief* in

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[66]By "captation" I interpret Silverman to mean a kind of artful interpellation. The Webster dictionary defines "captation" as "an attempt to achieve or acquire something (as favor or applause) especially artfully," and the Oxford offers, "A catching at, an endeavour to get especially by address of art."

[67]Althusser, "'The Piccolo Teatro': Bertolazzi and Brecht: Notes on a Materialist Theatre" (1962), in For Marx, 144.

[68]Briefly, Silverman argues that in North America the historical trauma of World War II and the immediate postwar situation leads to a radical loss of belief in the conventional premises of masculinity, and that this is evidenced in certain cinematic texts. She then traces what she identifies as this "wounded" male figure through a number of literary and cinematic works. I do not reproduce Silverman's argument in full. To do so would use up too much of what space remains to me in this present work. I have taken what I consider to be necessary to my argument, and have added some ideas not present, or not explicit in Silverman's work. I do urge my readers to consult Silverman's important work for themselves. See Silverman, Male Subjectivity.

what Silverman terms, after Jacques Rancière, "the dominant fiction,"[69] ideology facilitates subjective accommodation to a fraternal-patriarchal order.

For the most part, Silverman bases her understanding of ideology and its function on her reading of the work of Louis Althusser, (whose own theory is developed from that of Marx, through the ideas of Antonio Gramsci and Lacan).[70] Althusser's essay from 1970, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," is divided into two parts, a division which Michèle Barrett argues to be "not merely one of convenience; it reflects the profoundly divided and contradictory nature of the argument Althusser was attempting to make."[71] She is referring to the difficult task of aligning Marxism and psychoanalysis, and Althusser's contradictory position in relation to this.[72] His struggle with two models, Marx's class dialectic and the Freud/Lacan dialectic of

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[69]Ibid., 30. See Jacques Rancière, "Interview: The Image of Brotherhood," trans. Kari Hanet, Edinburgh Magazine, no. 2 (1977): 28.

[70]See Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)" (1970), in John G. Hanhardt ed. Video Culture: A Critical Investigation (New York: Peregrine Smith, 1986), it is from this publication of the essay that I am quoting; also in Lenin and Philosophy (London: NLB, 1971). Also see Karl Marx, with Frederich Engels, The German Ideology (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1969); Gramsci, Prison Notebooks; and Selections from the Political Writings 1910-20, ed. Q. Hoare (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1977); Paul Q. Hirst, "Althusser and the theory of ideology," Economy and Society 5 (1976): 385-412; Coward and Ellis, Language and Materialism, esp. 61-121; and Michèle Barrett, "Althusser's Marx, Althusser's Lacan," in The Althusserian Legacy, ed. E. Ann Kaplan and Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 1993), 169-182.

[71] Barrett, "Althusser's Marx, Althusser's Lacan," 169.

[72]One place where Silverman's work can be situated is within the ongoing theoretical "conversation" about the relationship between Marxism and psychoanalysis. For some other discussion of this issue see Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism; Rose, Sexuality in the Field of Vision (London and New York: Verso, 1986), esp. 85-103; Zizek, Sublime Object; Ernesto Laclau, New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time (London and New York: Verso, 1990); Andreas Bjornerud, "Psychoanalysis and Marxism: Towards Suture?" New Formations 17 (Summer, 1992): 157-63; and Teresa Brennan, History After Lacan (London & New York: Routledge, 1993).

the unconscious, (both to a large extent developed from Hegelian ideas) leads him to contradiction, but as Silverman shows, such contradiction itself leads into interesting places.

In the first part of "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Althusser calls attention to the importance of understanding "reproduction," in particular, how a social formation must *reproduce* itself over time.[73] The second part of the essay deals with ideology and subjectivity, arguing that "ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects," that "the existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of subjects are one and the same thing."[74] Indeed, *subjects come into being* through being interpellated by ideology.[75] "Successful interpellation," comments Silverman, "means taking as the reality of the self what is in fact a discursive construction, or to state the case differently, claiming as an ontology what is only a point of address."[76] In his theory of ideology, Althusser is, in fact, *specifically developing the mirror stage as something which occurs on a mass level as well as an individual one.*[77] This is where Gramsci's notion of hegemony works for Althusser, as

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[73]An important development in Marxist thought, since, as Barrett reports, "classical Marxism had concentrated almost exclusively on production, in both its sociological analysis and its workplace-based political practice, Althusser's argument hit a raw nerve and moved the discussion in Marxism away from the 'productivism' that had defined European Marxism from the Second International onwards." See "Althusser's Marx, Althusser's Lacan," 169.

[74]Althusser, "Ideology and ISAs," 87.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 21.

[77]Such a move is supported by the work of Lacan, whose notion of the unconscious, the discursive field of the Other, extends beyond the level of the individual, to that of the collectivity. See Lacan's "Rome Discourse," and Wilden's commentary in Speech and Language.

Laura Kipnis observes: "Hegemony isn't imposed, it's won."[78] Silverman notes, "(h)egemony hinges upon identification; it comes into play when all the members of a collectivity see themselves within the same reflecting surface."[79] Thus, in the passage quoted at the opening of this section, Althusser is suggesting that an entire society might be said to undergo a kind of *collective captation*, indeed *it is that captation which constitutes the society as such.* Social concensus is not, then, "a matter of rational agreement," writes Silverman, "but of imaginary affirmation. And . . . that affirmation is synonymous with the very constitution of the subject."[80]

In support of this claim, Silverman quotes an Althusserian passage from an essay of 1965, "Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle":

> Ideological representation . . . makes *allusion* to the real in a certain way, but . . . at the same time it bestows only an *illusion* on reality. . . . ideology gives men [*sic*] a certain "knowledge" of their world, gives them a certain "recognition"; but at the same time ideology only introduces them to its *misrecognition. Allusion—illusion* or *recognition-misrecognition*—such is ideology from the perspective of its relation to the real.[81]

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[78]Kipnis, Ecstasy Unlimited, 29.

[79]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 24.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Althusser, quoted in Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 24. See Althusser, "Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle" (1965), trans. James H. Kavanagh, in Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists & Other Essays, ed. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 1990), 29. I discuss below the difference between Althusser's and Lacan's notions of the real and the imaginary.

She notes that in this passage, "Althusser insists that ideology constitutes not only the subject, but the world, and that the latter is as much an imaginary construction as the former."[82] Furthermore, since hegemony depends upon the maintenance of what is at least to some extent a shared universe, both common identification and shared *reality* are implied, and both of these are subordinate to a principle of simultaneous recognition and misrecognition.[83] Silverman asks "what is the agency through which this double *méconnaissance* is effected?"[84] She posits that although Althusser primarily maintains that hegemony is instituted through Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), which are themselves unified beneath the ideology of the ruling class, thereby implying that every member of a given society inhabits the conceptual universe of that ruling class, that it is finally class which is most "real" for the subject, he also indicates that ideology may provide an important site of class *struggle*, that hegemony is thus not the automatic result of one class's preeminence.[85]

Silverman cites a further passage from "Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation," where, she writes, "Althusser acknowledges that the bourgeoisie, petty-bourgeoisie, and working class may all inhabit different ideological 'worlds,' and presumably recognize themselves within competing images," thus problematizing the notion "that the ideology of the ruling class

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[82]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 24.

[83]Ibid.

[84]Ibid., 25.

[85]Ibid.

by very definition commands general belief."[86] Contradictory "realities," representations, or images must thus be elaborated, notes Silverman, "within the 'language' of the presiding ideology. Hegemony resides in this 'language,' or—as Althusser calls it—this 'structure.'"[87]

Turning next to an Althusserian essay written eleven years later, "The Transformation of Philosophy" (1976), which provides "a more supple model for understanding how ideology can be at the same time the site of contestation and the mechanism through which a society is made to cohere,"[88] Silverman notes that in spite of the fact that the final sentence in the passage reverts to a more classic Marxist paradigm, the first two sentences suggest that hegemonic ideology must articulate itself in relation to "what already exists."[89] Here is the passage:

> It is not simply a question of manufacturing a dominant ideology because you have need of one, by decree, nor simply of constituting it in a long history of class struggle. It must be constructed at the basis of what already exists, starting from the elements, the regions, of existing ideology, from the legacy of the past, which is diverse and contradictory, and also through the unexpected events that constantly occur in science as well as politics. An ideology must be constituted, in the class struggle and its contradictions

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[86]Ibid. I shall focus discussion on the notion of "belief" shortly.

[87]Ibid., 25-6. As shall become clear, there is a crucial distinction between the "language" or "structure" of the presiding ideology, and language as the Symbolic order.

[88]Ibid., 26.

[89]Silverman comments that these two sentences from Althusser describe the process whereby a social consensus is manufactured in very similar terms to those recently proposed by Chantal Mouffe in "Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci," in Gramsci and Marxist Theory, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge, 1979). Silverman writes: "Mouffe claims that a class is hegemonic only 'when it has managed to articulate to its discourse the overwhelming majority of ideological elements characteristic of a given social formation.'" See Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 27; and Mouffe, "Hegemony and Ideology," 195.

> . . . which transcends all those contradictions, an ideology unified around the essential interests of the dominant class in order to secure what Gramsci called its hegemony.[90]

Unfortunately, in this passage Althusser fails to elaborate to any great extent upon what he means by the category "what already exists," although the "diverse" and "contradictory" "legacy of the past," and the "constantly" occurring "unexpected events" do suggest, as Silverman puts it, "representational and signifying elements which are not the sole preserve of any one class, but which constitute a kind of *vraisemblance*."[91] She argues that within the ideological domain, class struggle "implies at the most profound level a struggle over this prior 'reality,' which is in the strictest sense the 'always already.'"[92]

The collective mirror about which Althusser writes provides each subject with more than an image of *self*; "It also depicts the surrounding environment, the *vraisemblance* which the captated subject inhabits."[93] It is towards understanding what constitutes this context, this *vraisemblance*, that Silverman deploys Rancière's notion of a society's "dominant fiction," which represents "primarily a category for theorizing hegemony." She writes, "Rancière defines hegemony as 'the privileged mode of representation by which the image of the social concensus is offered to the members of a social

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[90]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 26-7. See Althusser, "The Transformation of Philosophy" (1976), trans. Thomas E. Lewis, in Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists, 258.

[91]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 27.

[92]Ibid., 28.

[93]Ibid., 24.

formation and within which they are asked to identify themselves.'"[94] For Rancière, hegemony's representational uses are as "'a reserve of images and manipulator of stories for the different modes of configuration (pictoral, novelistic, cinematic, etc.).'"[95] For an example of a "dominant fiction," Rancière points to America's story of national origin, "the birth of a nation," which is staged in a number of different ways, all of which hinge upon binary opposition, upon the adversarial relation of whites to Indians, North to South, and law to outlaw. Thus a "dominant fiction" consists of stories and images through which a society figures consensus; images and stories which cinema, fiction, popular culture and other forms of mass representation presumably both draw upon and help to shape. "Finally," writes Silverman, "Rancière insists that a community is 'able to recognize itself as such' only 'by *recognizing* its Law.'"[96] Her emphasis of recognition is to draw attention to what should by now be evident, that "there is no ideological recognition which is not at the same time a misrecognition."[97] Thus, she argues, the dominant fiction can be theorized as a reserve or "'bank' of representations for inducing a *méconnaissance* of the Law, or to state the case somewhat differently, for establishing an imaginary relation to it."[98]

While for Rancière "the Law" means something like "the Law of the Land," Silverman asks "what Law can be said to govern an entire society,

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[94]Ibid., 30. The quotation from Rancière is from "Interview," 28.

[95]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 30.

[96]Ibid. The quotation from Rancière is from "Interview," 26.

[97]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 31.

[98]Ibid.

irrespective of class and other divisions?"[99] For her, the "definitive answer" is provided in this crucial (and very Lacanian) passage from "Ideology and ISAs":

> Everyone knows how much and in what way an unborn child is expected. Which amounts to saying, very prosaically, if we agree to drop the "sentiments," i.e. the forms of family ideology . . . in which the unborn child is expected: it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father's Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the child is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is "expected" once it has been conceived. I hardly need add that this familial ideological configuration is . . . highly structured, and that it is in this implacable and more or less "pathological" . . . structure that the former subject-to-be will have to find "its" place, i.e. "become" the sexual subject (boy or girl) which it already is in advance.[100]

In a footnote, Silverman acknowledges that "not surprisingly" there is some confusion in the passage about the status of this "configuration," or "structure," that at some points he distinguishes it from ideology, but at other times he collapses the two.[101] Such confusion is not surprising because it has to do with the fact that the Symbolic order—brought forth in this passage through the Name of the Father, and through the notion of an "implacable and more or less 'pathological' . . . structure"—occupies as determinative a role within Lacanian psychoanalysis as mode of production does within a historical materialist paradigm, and operates with a different temporality than does mode

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[99]Ibid.

[100]Althusser, "Ideology and ISAs," 88. Also in Lenin and Philosophy, 176; quoted in Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 31-2.

[101]Ibid., footnote no. 41, 396. To me what *is* surprising about this is Silverman's relegation of this important comment to a footnote.

of production.[102] Nevertheless, argues Silverman, since in this passage that "implacable and more or less 'pathological' . . . structure" can be disclosed only if "the forms of family ideology" are dropped, that this structure would seem to lie behind or beyond them, that there is indeed a *distinction* between them, Althusser seems to be suggesting that the Symbolic provides the Law about which Rancière speaks.[103] Silverman finds further evidence in support of this proposition in another of Althusser's essays, "Freud and Lacan" (1964), wherein he not only acknowledges that the Symbolic Law plays a pivotal role in the constitution of the subject and the formation of the unconscious, but traces it back to the "beginning of social existence—makes it, indeed, the very point of origin. He thereby gives it a transcendental position in relation to Marxism's privileged category 'mode of production.'"[104]

At this point let me briefly explain the different meaning Althusser attaches to the basically Lacanian terms, "Real" and "Imaginary."[105] Whereas for Lacan the Real is being (as a process) and the phenomenal realm, in the Althusserian scheme the real is (like the Lacanian Symbolic order) a field of relationships. It refers to "the complex of economic 'facts' which obtain at any given moment of history—to 'the relations of production and class

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[102]The unconscious, like the Symbolic, knows no time. For a very interesting retake on this seeming impasse between psychoanalysis and Marxism see Brennan, History After Lacan.

[103]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 32.

[104]Ibid., 33. See Althusser, "Freud and Lacan" (1964, corrected 1969), in Lenin and Philosophy, 194-6. Note that Silverman, although using the same edition of the text as am I, cites different page numbers.

[105]Making a gesture towards what I hope to be clarity, I shall use lower case when referring to the Althussarian "real," and "imaginary."

relations.'"[106] Althusser's version of the imaginary is invested with aspects of both the Lacanian Imaginary and Symbolic—a fusion which no doubt pertains to their differing views on the extent to which culture overdetermines subjectivity. When Althusser uses the term "imaginary" he means identifications which have been culturally initiated, and for him there is no outside of culture, no outside of the symbolic. Thus for him the term "imaginary" describes the relations of the subject to the real and the symbolic, since there is no *outside* the symbolic.

Returning to "Ideology and ISAs," and Althusser's distinction between the symbolic Law and the "forms of family ideology," Silverman writes:

> Significantly, Althusser associates the process of interpellation more definitively with family ideology than with the Law, as if to suggest that the subject can no more be directly inserted into the symbolic order than into the reality of a particular mode of production, but requires an imaginary mediator or facilitator.[107]

In so doing, Althusser is advancing a formulation very similar to the one with which Rancière defines the dominant fiction. Like the movement of recognition-misrecognition of the (domestic) mirror stage, individuals recognize-misrecognize themselves as subjects within the social mirror, *but furthermore*, "the human subject recognizes-misrecognizes the symbolic Law in the mirror of ideology."[108] This makes sense of the famous Althusserian pronouncements that "ideology is a matter of the *lived* relation between men

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[106]Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics, 216.

[107]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 34.

[108]Ibid.

[*sic*] and their world,"[109] and, "What is represented in ideology is . . . not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live."[110]

Silverman wants to extend such Imaginary mediation beyond what Althusser would deem "forms of family ideology," into an order that masquerades as *the* symbolic, an order gathered under the authority of the Name of the Father. In other words she wants to effect a break between the the Symbolic order—the Law of language (together with what she calls, after Lévi-Strauss, the "Law of Kinship Structure," the invariable element of which is the incest taboo[111]), and what has been referred to as the "Name-of-the-Father," or what I have described as fraternal-patriarchal culture.[112] As she writes:

> To insist upon the non-equivalence of the Name-of-the-Father and the symbolic order is to isolate what is irreducible about the second of those categories from what is purely provisional—to separate the Laws of Language and Kinship Structure from their variable articulation. It is thus to grasp both what can and what cannot be changed within our present symbolic order.[113]

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[109]Althusser, "Marxism and Humanism" (1965), in For Marx, 233.

[110]Althusser, "Ideology and ISAs," 80.

[111]See Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 33-39. I do not reproduce in detail this portion of Silverman's argument as for my purposes it would serve as gloss.

[112]Although she makes no comment regarding this, Silverman is implying Althusser's own participation, in his analysis of its very workings, in the recognition-misrecognition of what is and what is not Imaginary. Actually, I suspect this is one thing Althusser is getting at when he writes: "the men who would use an ideology purely as a means of action, as a tool, find that they have been caught by it, implicated by it, just when they are using it and believe themselves to be absolute masters of it." See "Marxism and Humanism," 234.

[113]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 41.

In the Althusserian schema subjective interpellation by ideology performs a function similar to that of the (positive) oedipal matrix and the tyranny of the phallus in sexually positioning the subject within the Freud/Lacanian schema. Silverman writes:

> By making the phallus the central cultural signifier, and by universalizing the Oedipal experience (in short, by making it synonymous with culture), Freud and Lacan effectively eliminate the category of the ideological. Culture is seen as the product of the incest taboo, and is therefore necessarily patriarchal.[114]

Any conflation of the Law (of language) with law(s) of fraternal-patriarchal culture is dependent upon a(n imaginary symbolic) conflation of penis with phallus. Whereas Lacan equates the Name-of-the-Father with the Symbolic, characterizing the phallus as a historically transcendent signifier, Silverman argues that it is the ideological interpellation at work in promoting belief in the dominant fiction which itself promotes belief in oedipal prescription and the commensurability of the penis and the phallus. "It is . . . difficult to sustain the distinction between the dominant fiction and the positive Oedipus complex," writes Silverman, "but it is nevertheless crucial that we grasp the latter as the psychic consequence of a conventional interpellation into the former."[115] She

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[114]Silverman, Subject of Semiotics, 119-20.

[115]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 41. Although nowhere in her book does she qualify it, Silverman's use of the pronoun "we" deserves some comment. I don't think Silverman's "we" is of the category recently criticized by Marianna Torgovnick as "a kind of 'we' in cultural criticism that seems utterly convincing—rounded, magisterial, confident—and enough to make you want to die if you can't be a part of it. . . . the sign and symbol of culture gets drawn: who's in, who's out, why, and to what effect." However, given that Silverman is dealing with a libidinal politics of subjectivity, a discussion which involves marginality and identity, I do feel that more care must be taken in using this volatile term. See Torgovnick, "Politics of the 'We,'" South Atlantic Quarterly, 91: 1, (Winter 1992): 43.

is thus inserting ideological function into a modified Lacanian framework, leaving language as the Law, and severing the penis from the phallus while at the same time relieving the phallus of its "transcendent" luminosity.

She writes:

> It . . . seems to me crucial that we understand the ideological bases of the conventional male subject's self-recognition-misrecognition, for far from belonging to a kind of "sacred time," beyond the vicissitudes of ideology and history, the phallus/penis equation is promoted by the dominant fiction, and sustained by collective belief.[116]

The positive oedipus complex is the normative psychic response to the dominant fiction. The Law of Kinship Structure, with its incest taboo, sets up the eroticization of family relations, and is thus "indispensable if the subject is to be subordinated to the Name-of-the-Father, since that subordination entails both sexual difference and heterosexuality."[117] Indeed, the constitution of sexual difference and heterosexuality is crucial for the maintenance of fraternal-patriarchal order. Silverman is linking the mechanism by which the male subject refuses to acknowledge the defining limits of subjectivity, displacing his ontological "castration" onto the female subject, wherein she stands in (as fetish) for his "lack," summoning forth the phallus to fill the phantasmatic void, with the Imaginary mediation of ideology in the form of the dominant fiction working through the structure of the positive oedipus complex to interpellate *hetero-sexed* subjects as *subjected* to fraternal-patriarchal order.

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[116]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 44.

[117]Ibid., 40.

Silverman writes:

> The subject lives its relation to the symbolic at the level of the imaginary, through identification and fantasy, but . . . it is only through those particular identifications and fantasies which are commensurate with ideological belief that this relation is "exemplary," i.e. that the subject is accommodated to the Name-of-the-Father.[118]

For any subject it is very particular identifications and phantasies which facilitate fraternal-patriarchal cultural accommodation. And a particular imaginary is thus promoted as being of symbolic status. Feminist philosopher, Luce Irigaray, has come to a similar conclusion. Addressing "Gentlemen, psychoanalysts . . . ," she writes: "your fantasies lay down the law. The symbolic, which you impose as a universal innocent of any empirical or historical contingency, is your imaginary transformed into an order, into the social."[119]

However, as Silverman insists:

> No social or psychic imperative dictates that the symbolic Law be synonymous with the Name-of-the-Father; that the phallus stand in for the subject's "very life"; or that castration be represented only by certain members of the socius. The only immutable law of desire is the one which denies to each of us the possibility of wholeness and self-presence—the Law, that is, of language.[120]

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[118]Ibid., 41.

[119]Luce Irigaray, "The Poverty of Psychoanalysis," trans. David Macey with Margaret Whitford, in The Irigaray Reader, ed. Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 94.

[120]Silverman, "The Lacanian Phallus," Differences vol. 4 , (Spring, 1992) *The Phallus Issue*: 114.

There is only one Law, the Law of language, of representation. Fraternal-patriarchal culture, operating under the Name-of-the-Father, is itself an example of that Law in action, for the Name-of-the-Father poses as the Law, presumes to *represent* the Law.

The Making of Belief: Towards Strategic Acts

> When we are confronted with
> any manifestation which someone
> has permitted us to see, we may ask:
> what is it meant to conceal?
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche[121]

Silverman stresses that the dominant fiction does not exist in the abstract—as "a reservoir of sounds, images, and narratives, it has no concrete existence apart from discursive practice and its psychic residue."[122] The dominant fiction lives in ideology. It follows that if representation and signification constitute the site at which the dominant fiction comes into existence, they would seem to provide the necessary vehicle for ideological contestation—"the medium through which to reconstruct both our 'reality' and 'ourselves.'"[123] Silverman insists, however, that a number of things "conspire against a permanent withdrawal of collective belief from our current

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[121]Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Dawn of Day," section 523, in The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, vol. 9, ed. Oscar Levy (New York: Gordon, 1974).

[122]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 48.

[123]Ibid.

dominant fiction," factors such as the conservatism of the psyche, its allegiance to the past, and the unconscious operation of ideological belief.[124]

For Freud, as for Althusser, belief does not proceed from consciousness, but from that other scene which is closed off from it by representation: the unconscious.[125] Freud defines belief as a "judgment" or attribution of "reality."[126] Silverman writes: "Freud . . . makes clear that psychical reality does not necessarily correspond to objective 'fact,' and so helps explain how the subject of ideology can attribute reality to mere representation."[127] Since it is phantasy rather than history which determines what is reality for the unconscious, only by successfully defining what passes for "reality" at the level of the psyche can ideology be said to command the subject's belief.

Althusser's theory owes much to Lacan's account of the subject's ceaseless recognition-misrecognition of itself within a series of exterior and irreducibly phantasmagorical images with which it can never be equivalent. Phantasy emerges to "fill" desire arising in response to perceived lack,

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[124]Ibid.

[125]See Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), SE V, 509-621. It is precisely through incorporating the notion of the unconscious, and to a large degree, Lacan's critique of the self-identical subject as the source of knowledge that Althusser manages to reject the two Marxist positions that ideology is a false representation of the *real*, and that ideology is a distorted *reflection in consciousness* of real social relations. Althusser challenges the notion that ideology is a "false consciousness" of reality, that "false consciousness" is a true consciousness in blinkers. Instead, the implication is that there is no *true* consciousness—an idea that is close to the Lacanian foreclosure of the Real. See Hirst, "Althusser and the theory of ideology," 385-7.

[126]Freud, "The Project for a Scientific Psychology" (1895), SE I, 333.

[127]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 18. The subject, in Freud's words, "cannot distinguish between truth and fiction that has been cathected with affect." Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 264.

ultimately the lack of being at the origin of language, or representation. The *objet a* is desired as "that which is capable of restoring lost wholeness to the subject."[128] Silverman notes that for Lacan, this desire is fundamentally "a desire for nothing,"[129] that it is *phantasy* that defines it as a desire for *something*.[130] Phantasy thus "conjures forth a fictive object for a fundamentally a-objectal desire,"[131] thereby conferring "psychical reality"[132] upon those objects "which stand in metaphorically for what is sacrificed to meaning—the subject's very 'life.'"[133] This desire for what in Lacan's terms is the foreclosed Real, is sufficiently forceful that at the level of the unconscious it propels phantasy to be taken for reality.

But what happens to belief in phantasy at a conscious level? Silverman notes that while belief is often assumed (believed?) to turn upon conscious assent, or as *The Oxford English Dictionary* puts it, (thereby providing that which it purports is required) upon "the acceptance of a proposition, statement, or fact, as true, on the ground of authority or evidence," Althusser suggests that belief can be enacted simply through "kneeling down,"

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[128]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 20.

[129]Lacan, Seminar Book II, 211. He also has this to say: "Desire is a relation of being to lack. This lack is the lack of being properly speaking. It isn't the lack of this or that, but lack of being whereby the subject exists." Seminar Book II, 223.

[130]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 20.

[131]Ibid., 4.

[132]According to Laplanche and Pontalis, what Freud means by "psychical reality" is "everything in the psyche that takes on the force of reality for the subject." Language of Psychoanalysis, 363.

[133]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 20.

the gesture of the sign of the cross," or the "*mea culpa*."[134] He invokes Blaise Pascal's wager, and for Pascal belief comes, as it were, with practice: he writes, "Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe."[135] Indeed this has led Slavoj Zizek to suggest that such rituals may therefore be performed cynically, without conscious acquiescence.[136]

"Ideological belief occurs at the moment," writes Silverman, "when an image which the subject consciously knows to be culturally fabricated nevertheless succeeds in being recognized or acknowledged as 'a pure, naked perception of reality.'"[137]

Zizek uses the terms "phantasy" and "ideology" pretty much interchangeably. He notes that "it is not just a question of seeing things . . . as they 'really are,' of throwing away the distorting spectacles of ideology; the main point is to see how the reality itself cannot reproduce itself without this so-called ideological mystification."[138] The use of psychoanalysis is thus not simply a matter of demasking, of removing the veil presumed to hide a naked reality, of "the liberating gesture of saying finally that 'the emperor has no clothes.' The point is, as Lacan puts it, that the emperor is naked only beneath his clothes."[139] Zizek also cites the work of German theorist Peter Sloterdijk,

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[134]Ibid., 17.

[135]Blaise Pascal, Pensées (Harmondsworth: 1966), quoted in Althusser, "Ideology and ISAs," 83.

[136]Zizek points to the function of Tibetan prayer wheels. See Sublime Object, 34.

[137]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 17. The quotation from Althusser is from "Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation," 26.

[138]Zizek, Sublime Object, 28.

[139]Ibid., 29.

whose thesis is that ideology's dominant mode of functioning is cynical, that the cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but nevertheless insists upon the mask.[140] Confronted with such cynical reason, traditional critique of ideology no longer works. For Zizek, "cynical reason, with all its ironic detachment, leaves untouched the fundamental level of ideological fantasy, the level on which ideology structures the social reality itself."[141] If the prevailing ideology is one of cynicism, where people no longer (if indeed they ever did) take ideological propositions seriously, cynical distance is just one of many ways "to blind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy: even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, *we are still doing them.*"[142]

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[140]Ibid. See Peter Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason, trans. Michael Eldred, Foreward by Andreas Huyssen (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Sloterdijk defines cynicism as *"enlightened false consciousness."*

[141]Zizek, Sublime Object, 30. Taking the use of money for an example, he argues that when using it individuals know that money is simply an expression of social relations. He writes:
"The everyday spontaneous ideology reduces money to a simple sign giving the individual possessing it a right to a certain part of the social product. So, on an everyday level, the individuals know very well that there are relations between people behind the relations between things. The problem is that in their social activity itself, in what they are doing, they are acting as if money, in its material reality, is the immediate embodiment of wealth as such. They are fetishists in practice, not in theory. What they 'do not know,' what they misrecognize, is the fact that in their social reality itself, in their social activity—in the act of commodity exchange—they are guided by the fetishistic illusion." The illusion is not on the side of knowledge, it is already on the side of "reality itself"—on the side of what the people are *doing*. Thus Zizek points to the error, the distortion "already at work in the social reality itself, at the level of what the individuals are *doing*, and not only what they *think* or *know* they are doing." Sublime Object, 31.

[142]Ibid., 33.

This is because the subject can, in Silverman's words, "continue to 'recognize' itself and its desire within certain kinds of sounds, images, and narrative paradigms long after consciously repudiating them."[143] Phantasy "articulates the particular libidinal scenario or tableau through which each of us lives those aspects of the double Oedipus complex which are decisive for us—because it articulates . . . our symbolic positionality, and the *mise-en-scène* of our desire."[144] It is this psychic investment which binds the subject to belief in the "core elements of our dominant fiction"—heterosexual family and the phallus. Silverman insists that although there can be other kinds of subjectivity than those promoted by the dominant fiction, "there is no subject whose identity and desires have not been shaped *to some degree* by it."[145]

Silverman underlines Lacan's use of two terms, *moi* and *je*, to distinguish between the two aspects of the subject split in the mirror stage, two aspects corresponding to identity and subjectivity, respectively. "Lacan refers to the ego as the *moi*," she writes,

> since for him it is that which is responsible for the production of identity or a "me." He also means thereby to distinguish it as object from the *je* or "I," which is for him the subject proper, i.e. the desiring subject. The *moi* is the psychic "precipitate" of external images, ranging from the subject's mirror image and the parental imagoes to the whole plethora of textually based representations which each of us imbibes daily. What the subject takes to be its "self" is thus both other and fictive.[146]

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[143]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 48.

[144]Ibid., 18.

[145]Ibid., 48.

[146]Ibid., 3.

The *structuring action* by which the *moi* comes to be the "psychic 'precipitate'" of these images is phantasmatic. What the subject takes to be its "self" is a collection of fragments, images loosely organized around family and phallus. These are what Silverman calls "the 'politics' of desire and identification."[147]

Thus I want to argue that any strategy which aims to challenge, and ultimately change either the dominant fiction or the relation of the subject to the dominant fiction, must work with and "refunction" those forces already (always) operational. The term "refunction" comes from Brecht's phrase "functional transformation" (*Umfunktionierung*), which he coined to argue that artists and intellectuals should not merely supply the production process and feed its voracious appetite for the new, but should attempt to transform it.[148] Following Brecht, I am not arguing for the construction of an elite cultural vanguard from whence to critique those of the *masses* whose misfortune it is to swallow the dominant fiction, for I doubt that many do, consciously. Rather, what I am suggesting involves intervention through the phantasmatic, at the level of a subjectivity formation that is always in process. For, to attend to Jacqueline Rose's questioning of why the "necessary symbolization and privileged status of the phallus appears as interdependent in the structuring and securing, but never secure, of human subjectivity," it is clear that belief in the dominant fiction is deeply imbricated in belief in the self, and *vice versa*. For the subject, the self is what is at stake, and it is fear of loss of self which binds phantasy to practice. The notion of a self-identical subjectivity

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[147]Ibid., 1.

[148]See Walter Benjamin, Understanding Brecht, trans. Anna Bostock, Introduction Stanley Mitchell (London: NLB, 1973), 93-4.

is nothing more or less than a fiction, a linguistic convention—a subject fit to predicate, a place from which to speak—imbued with social, cultural, and political significance. It is a fiction that can be held in place only through repeated acts of belief, *a la* Pascal.

If the only Law is that of Language then meaning is not fixed. Judith Butler, developing Foucault's analysis, writes:

> The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; "agency," then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition.[149]

In suggesting intervention at the level of process what I am getting at is changing those very repetitious acts of signification, acts that occur along well-worn pathways across axes of sex and sexuality, acts of identification and desire that invent, maintain and promote the dominant fiction. Thus it is not the acts themselves, those "mistakes that enable us to make sense of our lives,"[150] as much as their particular regulated configurations with which I propose to tangle.

It is primarily across and through the matrices of sex, sexuality, race, and class that a hierarchy of subjectivities is ordered by fraternal-patriarchal culture. In this thesis I am focusing on sex and sexuality, for this cultural order depends upon the conflation of the penis and the phallus. "Within every

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[149]Butler, Gender Trouble, 145.

[150]Spivak, "Asked to Talk About Myself . . . ," 9.

society," writes Silverman, "hegemony is keyed to certain privileged terms, around which there is a kind of doubling up of belief."[151] In Western fraternal-patriarchal society, the phallus is indeed such a privileged term, (if not *the* privileged term). Since the penis-phallus equation represents a crucially vulnerable component of the dominant fiction, and given that without the distinction of hetero-sexual difference the phallus loses its intelligibility, hetero-sexual difference itself being incomprehensible without both the externalizing displacement of male castration onto the female subject and the promotion of heterosexuality as normative, it seems to me the perfect place to focus attack is precisely at the intersection of sex and sexuality. If there is one single locus where the degree of anxiety matches that of desire, it is this. Any image which blurs the binary rigidity of this *sexual difference* will function to undermine serious authorial positioning with regard to the phallus and the power for which it stands in fraternal-patriarchal culture.

Silverman's strategy for what she calls "contesting" the dominant fiction is to argue for the subversive possibilities of "non-phallic masculinities"—those not predicated upon the disavowal and projection of male lack onto a fetitishized female subject, "deviant" masculinities which say "no" to power, and in so doing collapse "that system of fortification whereby sexual difference is secured."[152] My own proposed strategy follows thus far, however whereas Silverman pursues "the image of a lacking or impaired male subjectivity,"[153] across discursive fields of literature and cinema (and has done

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[151]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 16.

[152]Ibid., 2, 3.

[153]Silverman, Acoustic Mirror, 234.

so, I might add, throughout the last decade of her work), my own seeks out another moment in the sex and sexuality dialectic: images (in this thesis, cinematic) of women who *seriously* take up a traditionally masculine position—gestural, scopic, desiring—*butch*. Such images deny support for the foundational illusions of male subjectivity through not providing a hospitable environment for the projection of male lack, confounding production of hetero-sexual difference by effecting a break in the alignment of "male" with "masculinity," and "female" with "femininity."

To challenge the dominant fiction, its prime *point de capiton*, the phallus, and all the attendant relegated and regulated normative sexualities, is to challenge those very fictions whose repetition invents fact. It is of little surprise that those with most privilege are those with most to lose. Relating my proposal to Hegel's parable of the master and the slave, just as one in a position of privilege, or *master*, must resist movement within the dialectic in order to maintain *his* position, so the marginalized, or *slave* must resist the "congealing" (to use Butler's term) which is, I will argue, as much an effect of cultural law—prohibition and its enforcement in its social form, as it is an aspect of what could be called the *master* within the *slave*, or in psychoanalytic terms, the negotiation, or struggle in the unconscious between the prohibitive system and desire.[154] The second of these (psychic struggle) is no less political than the first (social struggle). For in both cases the desire of the *marginalized* is for recognition without domination.

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[154]The aspect of the ego which Freud, in his later topography, came to call the super-ego. See Laplanche and Pontalis, Language of Psychoanalysis, 130-143.

Thus I propose direct intervention into the very images which both feed upon and form the phantasmatic. As Silverman writes, "the *mise-en-scène* of desire can only be staged . . . by drawing upon the images through which the self is constituted,"[155] but since these workings are governed by the dynamics of the *future anterior* they can be challenged and read back. It is never too late to blur the distinction "hetero-sexual difference," and in so doing disprivilege the phallus. If it is through the workings of the phantasmatic that the identity and desires comprising any subjectivity are shaped by the dominant fiction, then it is back through the images and relations which populate and structure the phantasmatic that change might be effected in the politics of sex, sexuality, and subjectivity.

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[155]Silverman, Male Subjectivity, 5.

CHAPTER THREE

TRAVESTY, CAMOUFLAGE, INTIMIDATION

BUTCH MIMESIS: TOWARDS *PHALLIC* NEMESIS

A little girl, well informed about all
sexual processes, and already aware
of the gratification she could derive
from the clitoris or the vaginal
entrance, who, moreover, knew
that she was capable of motherhood
which would be denied to the boy,
nevertheless insisted with
astonishing stubbornness
"But I want a little tassel right now."

Jeanne Lampl de Groot[1]

How many beers can you drink
without becoming something of an
essentialist? On the single occasion
when I went out in full drag, it took
me some 30 minutes to screw up my
courage for the Men's Room. I
swaggered in nonchalantly and glided
safely into a stall. But when I pulled
down my pants, my crotch-stuffing,
wadded-up red sock leapt out, rolled
under the door, and landed by a
urinal.
So much for the phallus as signifier.

Alisa Solomon[2]

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[1]Jeanne Lampl de Groot, "Problems of Femininity," Psychoanalytic Quarterly 2, (1933): 497.

[2]Alisa Solomon, "Queen for a Day: Margorie Garber's Drag Race," Voice Literary Supplement (June 1992): 23.

First and foremost, as it is understood in this chapter, "image" has to do with the mirror stage's identificatory *gestalt* of self. Of course, in common understanding, not all images are *gestalts* of self, but in an important psychoanalytic sense they are, for they represent the self as seen from the position of the desire of the Other (ego-ideal). The structuring action of the phantasmatic binds image to meaning, organizing subjective relations to the particularities of any given image, or sequence of images. This pertains to how images are *held*, mnemonically, and how, like words in language signifying in relation to other words, images bear meaning in relation to other images (both aural and visual, although I shall limit my discussion to visual).

Following Roland Barthes, I shall examine images both in their "frozen" form as stills, and as they form in relation to the context of the narrative of a film text.[3] Although, as film theorist Christian Metz has pointed out, a photographic image differs from a cinematic image in that the former may be held, touched, whereas the latter lacks such sensuous accessibility,[4] images which might *matter* to each and any viewer, whether apprehended in the pages of a magazine, the bottom drawer of a deceased parent's desk, on the screen of a VCR, or in a movie theater, do so according to a future anterior

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[3]See Roland Barthes, "The Third Meaning. Research notes on some Eisenstein stills," Image-Music-Text, essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath (New York: The Noonday Press, 1977); and Camera Lucida, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

[4]Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish" October 34 (Fall, 1985): 88-90. This paper was originally written as a talk in 1984 in response to Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), Metz writes, "Most of all a film cannot be touched, cannot be carried and handled: although the actual reels can, the projected film cannot . . . Film is more capable of playing on fetishism, photography more capable of itself becoming a fetish."

logic, in a manner such that their significance forms and is formed by a phantasmatic which provides a setting, that *stages* the viewer's desire.

> A reduplication postulated, now in a still chaotic substance to which he claims to give form, now in the efficacity of a negativity, a representative of all that hollowness from whence determination is still to come, now in the repetition of an assertion which, instantaneous as it would like to be, still needs to pass again in/through the other.
>
> Luce Irigaray[5]

> (G)eometer-moth caterpillars simulate shoots of shrubbery so well that gardeners cut them with their pruning shears. The case of the Phyllia is even sadder: they browse among themselves, taking each other for real leaves.
>
> Roger Caillois[6]

> *(F)orm is only a snapshot view of a transition.*
>
> Henri Bergson[7]

Roger Caillois opens his 1935 essay, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," with a caution: "Beware: playing the phantom, one becomes it."[8] This characterizes very nicely a grave danger involved in the relationship

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[5]Luce Irigaray, "Volume without Contours," trans. David Macey, in The Irigaray Reader, 61-2.

[6]Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," 17.

[7]Henri Bergson, "Form and Becoming," in Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1911), 328.

[8]The caution reads: *"Prends garde: à jouer au fantôme, on le devient."* I am grateful to Jacqueline Levitin for this translation, which agrees with Denis Hollier's version of the epigraph, "that by pretending to be a ghost you turn into one." See Hollier, "Mimesis and Castration" (1937), October 31 (Winter 1985): 13.

of the subject to its identity—over-identification. If belief in the serious fiction of the unified self-identical subject congeals into fact, and is to remain to itself a figure of constancy, this chimeraic subject requires a tremendous amount of shoring up. I have argued that such is the case with the heterosexual male subject in fraternal-patriarchal culture. In working my way to a place from which I can turn to particular images of *butch*, and discuss how they might work against such "shoring up," I must return to the relation between negation and metaphor, for this bears on the *deconstructive* possibilities of mimesis.[9] Indeed, if it is through intervention in the phantasmatic that the dominant fiction might be tampered with, it is something akin to deconstruction which seems to best theorize the breaking and entering of the phantasmatic.

Directly following his warning about playing at chimeras, Caillois writes:

> From whatever side one approaches things, the ultimate problem turns out in the final analysis to be that of distinction: distinctions between the real and the imaginary, between waking and sleeping, between ignorance and knowledge, etc.—all of them, in short, distinctions in which valid consideration must demonstrate a keen awareness and the demand for resolution. Among distinctions, there is assuredly none more clear-cut than that between the organism and its surroundings; at least there is none in which the tangible experience of separation is more immediate.[10]

I want to point to links between notions of distinction and form, and the coming into being of the subject, especially the bourgeois heterosexual male

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[9]Explanation of deconstructive method follows below.

[10]Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," 17. I think Caillois is using "real" and "imaginary" in an unmediated way.

subject. Making these links does not require a great stretch of any faculty, for that which connects them is *negation*. It is the thread which runs through the first two chapters of this thesis, and it is the thread which runs through Western fraternal-patriarchal culture. It is negation, the possibility of something's not being (e.g. Fort! Da!), that is itself the link between the coming forth of language and representation, and the basis of a hierarchical order based on a binary logic. Henri Bergson points out that there are no negatives in "nature,"[11] and Freud locates negation firmly in the conscious realm of symbolic articulation. Freud writes:

> With the help of the symbol of negation, thinking frees itself from the restrictions of repression and enriches itself with material that is indispensible for its proper functioning. . . . (T)he performance of the function of judgement is not made possible until the creation of the symbol of negation has endowed thinking with a first measure of freedom from the consequences of repression and, with it, from the compulsion of the pleasure principle.
>
> This view of negation fits in very well with the fact that in analysis we never discover a "no" in the unconscious and that recognition of the unconscious on the part of the ego is expressed in a negative formula.[12]

Negation is a Symbolic function ("nothing is missing in the Real"); it founds the world of language and representation. It also separates form from matrix, figure from ground.

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[11]Bergson, "The Idea of 'Nothing,'" in Creative Evolution, 296-324; cited in Babcock, "Introduction," The Reversible World, 18.

[12]Freud, "Negation," 236-9.

Jacques Derrida asks "what is the relation between the self-eliminating generation of metaphor and concepts of negative form?"[13] He is pointing to the link between the slipping, or "self-eliminating" aspect of metaphor, where something—a word, a symbol, a figure, an image—comes to stand for something else, and the obscured, or postponed transparency of the dependence of a term upon the articulation and suppression of its negation.[14] Of "concepts of negative form," such as *"ab-solute, in-finite, in-tangible, not-being,"* Derrida writes that they "cancel definiteness and determinacy, and it is their function to break the link with the sense of a particular being, that is, with the totality of what is. In this way, their obvious metaphorical quality is put in abeyance."[15] This is, in effect, the double movement of Derridean deconstruction: reversal and displacement together. Elizabeth Grosz writes that in Derrida's reading strategy,

> the dichotomy must be reversed (showing that the terms are not logically necessary or unalterable in their hierarchical relation); and the repressed term must be displaced, not *out of the structure altogether* but by positioning it within the core of the dominant term, as its *logical condition*. This makes explicit the unacknowledged debt the dominant term owes to the secondary term; moreover, it makes clear the fact that the dichotomous structure could be replaced by other conceptual paradigms—for although they have been *historically* necessary they are not *logically* necessary.[16]

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[13]Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," New Literary History 6 (1974): 9; quoted in Babcock, "Introduction," The Reversible World, 14.

[14]Recall Freud's definition of negation, and the footnote regarding Hegel's notion of *"aufheben,"* both in chapter Two above.

[15]Derrida, "White Mythology," 9.

[16]Grosz, Sexual Subversions, 30.

It is my contention that as female in a "male body drag,"[17] *butch* enacts this double movement of deconstruction.

Furthermore, turning back to Caillois's essay on mimesis, I want to argue that for the heterosexual male subject, *images* of *butch* might contribute to what Caillois terms *psychasthenia*,[18] a loss of ego strength resulting from what Elizabeth Grosz describes as "a disturbance in the relations between 'personality and space.'"[19] This "disturbance," a loss of the most "clear-cut" distinction, "that between the organism and its surroundings," is brought about through a process of visual fusion with the other through morphological mimicry.

Although it is clear that disturbance of distinctions facilitated by morphological mimicry is a concept gleaned by Lacan for his formulation of the mirror stage, Teresa Brennan comments that "(t)he one aspect of Ca[i]llois's work that Lacan does not pursue is the former's argument that morphological mimicry entails a loss of psychic energy."[20] However, at least one related idea does surface in Lacan's "Aggressivity in psychoanalysis" (1948).[21] As I noted in chapter One, aggressivity arises within the ambivalence of the alienating

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[17]This phrase comes from Esther Newton, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman," Signs 9, No. 4 (Summer 1984), 573.

[18]The term comes from Pierre Janet. See Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," 28-30; and Hollier, "Mimesis and Castration," 11.

[19]Grosz, Jacques Lacan, 196.

[20]Brennan, History After Lacan, footnote no. 26, 46. Brennan mispells Caillois as "Callois."

[21]This is the early essay which I have discussed briefly in chapter One, describing it as the companion piece to "The mirror stage."

narcissistic structure of the ego, the coming-into-being (*devenir*) of the subject, the sense of me and not-me, and a maximum aggressiveness is produced through confrontation with a replica of one's image—a double.

Mention of a double in a psychoanalytic context immediately invokes Freud's essay on "The Uncanny" (1919), a work in which the author goes to some length to explore the meaning of the term "uncanny," or *"unheimlich"* in German, a negation of *"heimlich,"* which commonly means "belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, friendly, etc."[22] Following a long list of definitions, Freud notes that "what interests [him] most" is

> to find that among its different shades of meaning the word *"heimlich"* exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, *"unheimlich."* What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*. . . . the word *"heimlich"* is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight.[23]

Following another selection of definitions, Freud summarizes: "Thus *heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich.*"[24] For Freud, feelings of "uncanniness" accompany conceptions and experience of a double of the self. Indeed, anticipating (uncannily) Lacan's mirror stage, Freud writes: "When all is said and done, the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the 'double' being a creation dating back to a very early mental

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[22]Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919), SE XVII, 222.

[23]Ibid., 224-5.

[24]Ibid., 226.

stage, long since surmounted—a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect."[25]

What I want to suggest here is that for the male subject, the mimetic "double" posed by an image of *butch* might very well provoke aggressivity, recalling that the "aggressivity that interests Lacan is not a defense of an ideal unity of the self, but a rebellion against it."[26] How sweet it would be if the heterosexual male subject were to "self-de(con)struct" upon repeated visual contact, or "fusion" with images of *butch.* This is not, however, mere wishful thinking. For the male subject images of *butch* are not simply doubles in the same sense as would be images of other males. Rather, the mimetic masculine morphologies of the former carry within them the twist of negation, rendering identification ambivalent, potentially leading to some degree of psychasthenia.

Recalling Brennan's comment that Lacan fails to pursue loss of ego strength as a result of morphological mimicry, I want to point to his discussion of "aphanisis" as a possible continuation of this idea. For the subject, the idea(l) of self is linked with image, a phantasmatic ideal image of self—identity—born of desire for recognition (from the position) of the Other. The image is thus summoned to reassure the subject of its being, to *mean* being. Lacan borrows a term, "aphanisis," from Ernest Jones, who, according to Lacan, "mistook it for something rather absurd, the fear of seeing desire disappear."[27] Lacan writes:

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[25]Ibid., 236.

[26]Boothby, Death and Desire, 39. I have already quoted this passage in chapter One.

[27]Lacan, "The Subject and the Other: Alienation" (1964), Four Fundamental Concepts, 207. In a footnote to his translation of "The signification of the phallus," in Ecrits: A Selection, Alan Sheridan writes: "*Aphanisis*, the disappearance of sexual desire. This Greek term was introduced into psychoanalysis by Jones in 'Early Development of Female Sexuality' (1927), in Papers on Psycho-analysis, 5th edn.,

"Now *aphanisis* is to be situated in a more radical way at the level at which the subject manifests himself in this movement I describe as lethal. In a quite different way, I have called this movement the *fading* of the subject."[28] Splitting, or "division" of the subject, is "when the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he [*sic*] is manifested elsewhere as 'fading,' as disappearance."[29] Lacan's version of aphanisis is thus nothing less than the ambivalence of that point where something (the subject) is in the presence of the possibility or threat of the absence of itself, its negation. Indeed, it is the possibility of not-being that grants meaning to being. (In this respect, it seems odd that Lacan would so admonish Jones, for of course desire would disappear with the *fading* of the subject.) Aphanisis thus pertains to the male subject's negation of ontological "castration," repression of which leads to displacement of fear and anxiety onto "castration" as it relates to hetero-sexual difference.

Steering this discussion towards a linking of "bourgeois" with the coming-into-being of subjectivity, particularly heterosexual male subjectivity, with form, and with "image" and its relation to ego, I want to turn to (the subject of) fashion. In her essay "Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse," Kaja Silverman cites recent work by "fashion critics" who argue that ornate dress was "primarily a class rather than a gender prerogative" from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, a prerogative protected by civil law.[30]

London, 1950. For Jones, the fear of aphanisis exists, in both boys and girls, at a deeper level than the castration complex," 291.

[28]Lacan, "The Subject and the Other: Alienation," 207-8.

[29]Lacan, "The Subject of the Other: Aphanisis" (1964), Four Fundamental Concepts, 218.

[30]Kaja Silverman, "Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse," in Critical Approaches to Mass Culture, ed. Tania Modleski (Indiana University Press, 1986), 139.

> In other words, sartorial extravagance was a mark of aristocratic power and privilege, and as such a mechanism for tyrannizing over rather than surrendering to the gaze of the (class) other. Moreover, the elegance and richness of male dress equalled and often surpassed that of female dress during this period, so that in so far as clothing was marked by gender, it defined visibility as a male rather than a female attribute.
>
> It was not until the eighteenth century that the male subject retreated from the limelight, handing on his mantle to the female subject. During the second half of that centrury, the voluminous clothing and elaborate wigs of the nobleman slowly dwindled into what would eventually become the respectable suit and *coiffure à la naturelle* of the gentleman, while female dress and headpieces reached epic proportions.[31]

Silverman notes that Quentin Bell "attributes the new modesty in male dress to the rise of the middle class, and the premium it placed upon industry."[32] Bourgeois woman's sumptuous dress came to signify both her economic dependence upon her father or husband, and "his" wealth *per se*. Silverman adds that writing in the 1930s, J. C. Flugel argued that as a result of revolution and the shift in class relations during the eighteenth century, "masculine clothing ceased to proclaim hierarchical distinction and became a harmonizing and homogenizing uniform, serving to integrate not only male members of the same class, but male members of different classes."[33] This is the social contract as sexual contract as an agreement about who gets to wear what. While subtle or obvious distinctions in cut and label mark class, occupation

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Besides the "classic study" by J. C. Flugel, The Psychology of Clothes (London: Hogarth, 1930), Silverman also cites the recent work of two fashion critics: René Konig, The Restless Image, trans. F. Bradley (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973); and Quentin Bell, On Human Finery (London: Hogarth, 1976).

[31]Silverman, "Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse," 139.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., 141.

(and taste), men as a fashion fraternity unite in the renunciation of flamboyance, moulding into a frill-free "form."

Mimesis leads to identification, a visual fusion with a "*fantôme*," a chimera, a ghost, or as Lacan writes in a passage about a "small crustacean" and its mimesis of a "stain" or "picture," with an image.

> It is to this stain shape that the crustacean adapts itself. It becomes a stain, it becomes a picture, it is inscribed in the picture. This, strictly speaking, is the origin of mimicry. And, on this basis, the fundamental dimensions of the inscription of the subject in the picture appear infinitely more justified than a more hesitant guess might suggest at first sight. . . .
>
> . . . To imitate is no doubt to reproduce an image.[34]

The hom(m)ogenized image of the bourgeois fraternal-patriarchal male subject thus reproduces that "frill-free" form.

It is the *twist of negation* within the mimetic masculine image of *butch* that invites psychasthenia, turning around the disappearance or aphanisis of the subject "inscribed in the picture" to effect a crisis of identification, a loss of ego strength, in the male subject. Lacan writes of Caillois that "with that unquestionable penetration that is sometimes found in the non-specialist," he "brings out the three headings that are in effect the major dimensions in which the mimetic activity is deployed—travesty, camouflage, intimidation."[35] Of "camouflage," Lacan writes: "The effect of mimicry is camouflage, in the strictly technical sense. It is not a question of harmonizing with the background but, against a mottled background, of

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[34]Lacan, "The Line and Light," (1964), Four Fundamental Concepts, 99.

[35]Ibid.

becoming mottled."[36] The "phenomenon known as intimidation . . . involves [the] over-valuation that the subject always tries to attain in his [*sic*] appearance"; and "travesty" pertains to the relation between sexuality and "disguise, masquerade."[37] Throughout the following two sections I shall argue that it is through these very three "dimensions" that the "mimetic activity" of *butch* is deployed.

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[36]Ibid. "Exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare," continues Lacan.

[37]Ibid., 100.

Un-beccoming Woman:

Ethics, Prosthetics, and Aesthetics:

Bev Francis's *Male Body Drag*

> How can I handle her as a woman, having taken her body to the limit? I really had to spend a lot of time working with her, much more than the other women, to make her look more feminine. I tried to favor lighting conditions by setting them in such a way that would flatter her, maybe soften the edges a little.
>
> Dyanna Taylor[38]

> No absolute borderline can be drawn between body and meaning in the sphere of culture.
>
> V.V. Ivanov[39]

> Desire has a terrifying precision.
>
> Judith Halberstam[40]

In 1977 George Butler made "Arnold Swarzenegger" a household name with the film *Pumping Iron*. Eight years later Butler released *Pumping Iron II—The Women*, a blend of documentary and fiction which purports to examine the issue of femininity through following the fortunes of a number of

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[38]Dyanna Taylor, cinematographer on *Pumping Iron II—The Women*, discussing the filming of Bev Francis. Interviewed by Les Paul Robley, "Pumping Iron II," American Cinematographer vol. 65, no. 7 (July 1984): 77.

[39]V. V. Ivanov, "The significance of Bakhtin's ideas on sign, utterance and dialogue for modern semiotics," in Papers on Poetics and Semiotics 4, Tel Aviv, The Israeli Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, Tel-Aviv University (1976): 3; cited in Stallybrass and White, Politics and Poetics, 21.

[40]Judith Halberstam, "F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity," in The Lesbian Postmodern, 212.

female bodybuilders in a competition staged especially for the production of the film.[41] *Pumping Iron II* reveals a lot more about the fragility of masculinity, however, as the text twists itself around the massive proportions, the *male body drag* of Australian weightlifter turned bodybuilder, Bev Francis (Figure 1).[42]

Butler spent six months convincing Caesar's Palace (Las Vegas, Nevada) to allow him to set the contest there.[43] One of the contestants, twice Miss Olympia, Rachel McLish, represents the "state of the art," perfectly complying with Freud's outline of the characteristics of femininity: seductive coquettish behavior, narcissism, vanity, jealousy and a weak sense of justice.[44] She says in the film: "I want all the women out there to want to look like me." Besides Francis and McLish, the third prime contender is Carla Dunlap, the only black competitor. Her musculature is well developed and her

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[41]Annette Kuhn argues that it "might be called 'semi-documentary,' in that while all the characters play 'themselves,' they are placed in situations set up expressly for the camera. . . . Suffice it to say—without entering into debates about 'truth' and 'fiction' in cinema—that a certain fictionality underlies the film's *cinéma vérité* appearance." Kuhn, "The Body and Cinema: Some Problems for Feminism," in Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism, ed. Susan Sheridan (London, New York: Verso, 1988), 12.

[42]At the time of filming Francis had broken forty world records in power-lifting—she could squat 470 pounds—her biceps measured sixteen and a half inches, and she dropped her body weight from 180 pounds to just under 140 pounds for the contest, which left her with 4 percent body fat (the average woman carries 25 percent). George Butler wanted to find the "biggest, most muscular woman in the world," and when he saw Francis he "knew if Bev competed, femininity would be the issue." See Marcia Pally, "Women of 'Iron,'" Film Comment vol. 21, no. 4 (1985): 60.

[43]Most of the film's $1.5 million budget went on building a $10,000 proscenium, airfares, hotel rooms and masseuses for the competitors. At the time it was the largest public staged event ever granted female bodybuilding. See Pally, "Women of 'Iron,'" 60; Robley, "Pumping Iron II," 78.

[44]See Freud, "Femininity," SE XXII, 132.

presentation is "shapely and pretty"[45] without McLish's approval-seeking pout. Dunlap is an "articulate outsider"—accompanied to the event not by a boyfriend, but by her mother and sister.[46] In the film it is Dunlap alone of the competitors who goes on record as querying the judges' limits on female bodybuilding, limits which insist that the woman should still appear "feminine." The chief judge, a pedantic elderly dormouse called Oscar State, leads the way in insisting that a woman must look "like a woman." This tautology "rules ok," even when challenged by a younger male judge, who says: "That's like being told there is a certain point beyond which women can't go in this sport. It's as though the US Ski Federation told woman skiers that they can only ski so fast." The chairman of the International Federation of Bodybuilders, Ben Weider, remarks with assurance: "What we're looking for is something that's right down the middle. A woman who has a certain amount of aesthetic femininity, but yet has that muscle tone to show that she is an athlete." The senior judges are totally discredited by the time they come to add up the scores. Not only are they unable to operate a pocket calculator, but they are clearly in much consternation because Francis has been given the highest scores in the first round, the one in which musculature is the primary criterion. They feel that some of the other judges have not understood the importance of the emphasis on and nature of "femininity." When they

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[45]Pally, "Women of 'Iron,'" 62.

[46]Dunlap says, in an interview with Pally: "The man I was involved with during the shooting of the film was married, and I told Butler he'd be in the film as long as he would pay for the divorce proceedings. But I haven't had many serious relationships—I put a lot of time into sports, and most men don't want to be third priority to a swimming pool and a gym. Since I've spent a lot of time alone, I can do most things for myself, and men often don't know what to do with a woman if she doesn't *need* him." Pally, "Women of 'Iron,'" 62.

announce that of the eight finalists, Francis is placed eighth, the audience at Caesar's Palace erupts into boos and cat-calls, although for some judges, it has clearly been a mistake that she has been allowed among the finalists at all. Placed seventh is a petite woman whose musculature is barely visible, but whose "femininity" is certainly in place. McLish is placed third, and Carla Dunlap announced as the winner.

The judges, diegetic representatives of the law, are in a position where they must be seen to be upholding order, maintaining (hetero)sexual difference. Annette Kuhn writes that in their decision they are proclaiming that Francis' body has passed the "point at which a woman's body becomes something else."[47] But what? In their attempt to "define femininity once and for all," the judges are thrown into crisis because Francis has not only appropriated muscularity, and as Richard Dyer points out, (writing on the male pin-up) "muscularity is a key term in appraising men's bodies . . . is the *sign* of power—natural, achieved, phallic,"[48] but she refuses to soften the effect, to make it more acceptable by adopting the gestures, the signifiers of femininity. Francis presents a near-nude female body with none of the allure, with very little to signify sexual difference, no signs which traditionally reassure a male spectator of his potency, allowing for disavowal and projection of his own ontological castration onto the image of "woman."

The importance of such signification is certainly understood by McLish, who goes to the extent of wearing a padded bra. Breast tissue is fatty tissue—and as Marcia Pally writes: "When women lose body fat . . . breasts

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[47]Kuhn, "The Body and Cinema," 16.

[48]Richard Dyer, "Don't Look Now," Screen 23: 3-4, (Sep/Oct 1982): 68.

diminish and hips flatten."[49] But McLish's prosthetics work against her, and she loses points as little Mr. State scrutinizes the contents of her bra. Francis' breasts have long since been absorbed into her pectoral muscles: her bikini bra, like her bikini briefs, functioning to signify what is *not* there.

Ethics and aesthetics tangle elsewhere too, this time in the very construction of the images, as Butler's cinematographer Dyanna Taylor struggles "to make Francis palatable to viewers."[50] Taylor sees Francis as a special case, to a large extent spared the treatment given the other contestants. As Christine Holmlund remarks, in spite of Taylor's previous work, which includes a film about female striptease artists, and one about the first women's team to climb Mount Annapurna, in *Pumping Iron II*, "(t)hough muscular, breasts and buttocks still appear as tits and ass."[51] This cinematographer is concerned with "'(h)ow a woman looks when she's flexed and powerful and strong, and what a contradiction that is when it's the soft parts of her body that make up this hard part.'"[52] All Bev's "soft parts" have gone hard. Taylor works with lights and camera angles but nothing can make Francis "'look more

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[49]Pally, "Women of 'Iron,'" 62.

[50]Robley, paraphrasing cinematographer Dyanna Taylor, "Pumping Iron II," 77.

[51]Christine Anne Holmlund, "Visible Difference and Flex Appeal: The Body, Sex, Sexuality, and Race in the *Pumping Iron* Films," Cinema Journal 28, no. 4 (Summer 1989), 44. Pally describes the opening shot in the film: "Close to the woman's skin, the camera slides along her nude body. It runs down a leg, around the soft, flat stomach, and over the hip bones like a steeplechaser barely acknowledging a shrub. It sweeps across her back to the nape of her neck, and then to an arm more venous than most. It circles a shapely thigh brushing her body with a motion that is part caress but more a search. It scans her surface and takes note; like the cop in any *policier*, it knows what to remember and what to reveal. The case under investigation is the nature of femininity; the female body lies here, in evidence." Pally, "Women of 'Iron,'" 60.

[52]Taylor, interviewed in Robley, "Pumping Iron II," 77.

feminine.'" So she compensates for Bev's lack of lack through her filming of the other women.

Holmlund writes of two sequences in the film, which involve groups of women bodybuilders, where "the beauty of the female body is evoked via lyrical images, even as individual women debate the essence of femininity."[53] The first of these sequences is set in Gold's Gym in California.

> It opens with a series of shots of women lifting weights. The camera then moves with the women through the door marked "Ladies Only" into the shower room. There, through lather and steam, naked female bodies are glimpsed. The scene is a fetishist's delight: the camera pans and cuts from torsos to biceps to necks to breasts to heads.[54]

Needless to say Bev is not to be found behind a door marked "Ladies Only," and yet neither is Carla Dunlap. Visibly marked by difference—Bev's masculine degree of muscularity and decidedly unfeminine attitude, Carla's black skin—the film works to separate Dunlap and Francis from the *normative* female body. In a second sequence, again involving women with water, this time in a pool outside Caesar's Palace, white heterosexual female femininity is reasserted. Holmlund writes:

> The camera movements, editing, even the lighting, echo those of the Gold's Gym sequence, only here doubly frozen bodies—the female statues—add to the camera/spectator's titillation and admiration of muscular but distinctly feminine women's bodies, portrayed as so many water nymphs. In each sequence, the images counteract the threat posed by muscular, active women by placing them in traditionally sexy, feminine

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[53]Holmlund, "Visible Difference and Flex Appeal," 43.

[54]Ibid.

> environments (showers and pools) and by showing them in stereotypical ways (frozen, fragmented, or both).[55]

Such female bodies are contained, trimmed of excess fat but equally devoid of "excess" muscle.

Dunlap remarks in the film that Francis should win the contest, but thinks the bodybuilding world is not yet ready for the likes of Bev. Says Dunlap: "If we'd had Bev in 1979, women's bodybuilding would have died. In a few short years, she won't even stand out in a lineup." Ten years after the film's release Carla Dunlap is proven both right and wrong. Researching among bodybuilding magazines I have found quite a few women with dense, heavy musculature, but most have their own version of McLish's approval-seeking pout, and the remaining few attempt to diffuse the threat their appearance presents with a winning smile.[56]

One who would most definitely be found behind a door marked "Ladies Only," is bodybuilder (Lady) Lisa Lyon, winner of the first World Women's Bodybuilding Championship in 1979, only three years before McLish won the same title in 1982. I want to turn for a moment to an article by Lynda Nead, in which, referring to Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of Lyon, Nead argues that Lyon's body just updates the stereotypical image of the female body beautiful.[57] She writes that the images of Lyon

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[55]Ibid., 43-4.

[56]See, for example, issues of *Female Body Building and Sports Fitness*; and *Women's Physique World*.

[57]Lynda Nead, The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 8. See Robert Mapplethorpe, Lady: Lisa Lyon, Foreward by Samuel Wagstaff, text by Bruce Chatwin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

> are presented in terms of 'logic,' 'precision' and 'order,'. . . . The hard edges and stark chiaroscuro of the images transform the body into sculpture—an effect that is intensified by the use of graphite on the body which subordinates modulations and details of the body surface to matt articulations of form and volume.[58]

Nead argues for Mapplethorpe and Lyon's aesthetic compatability. She cites Samuel Wagstaff, writing of Mapplethorpe in his foreward to the book of images: "I don't suppose he would ever have taken a second exposure of Lisa if her classicism and ideals of order had not been a match for his."[59] For Nead, Lyon transgresses sexual categories, only to re-fix "the boundaries of femininity."[60] Lyon is "contained in the frame of Mapplethorpe's photographs—the disposition of light and shade, the surface and edges of the images. In other words, the act of representation is itself an act of regulation."[61]

The idea of representation as containment recalls Roland Barthes's distinction between representation and what he calls "figuration," in *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975).[62] He writes:

> Certainly, it happens very often that representation takes as its object a picture; it circulates among the characters; if it has a recipient, that recipient remains interior to the fiction. (. . . That is what representation is: when

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[58]Nead, The Female Nude, 8-9.

[59]Samuel Wagstaff, Foreward to Lady: Lisa Lyon, 8.

[60]Nead, The Female Nude, 9.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text, trans. Richard Miller, with a note on the text by Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1975).

> nothing emerges, when nothing leaps out of the frame: of the picture, the book, the screen).[63]

As Jane Gallop notes, in this short essay Barthes is arguing against representation, which he sees as "a means of containing and coopting desire, pleasure, sexuality."[64] Lyon colludes in her representation as containment within Mapplethorpe's photograph. In Lacan-Cailloisian terms, Lyon's image is "inscribed in the picture," with no hope of escape. There is no "twist of negation" here, nothing to "leap out" of the picture.

Returning to *Pumping Iron II*, Annette Kuhn argues that in giving first prize to Dunlap the issue of the appropriate body for a female bodybuilder is not actually resolved,

> rather it is displaced on to a set of discourses centring on—but also skirting—race, femininity and the body, a complex of discourses which the film cannot acknowledge, let alone handle. In *Pumping Iron II's* terms Carla's body can be "read" only as a compromise: other major issues are left dangling.[65]

Two major issues never broached within the text, but which haunt the film, are lesbianism and steroid use. The latter is left alone not only for legal reasons, but also because to question Bev's bodily integrity would be to question that of male bodybuilders. No one, not even Arnold Swarzenegger, gets

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[63]Ibid., 56-7.

[64]Gallop, Thinking Through the Body (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 151.

[65]Kuhn, "The Body and Cinema," 18.

muscles like that without using steroids.[66] Lesbianism hangs around women bodybuilders, especially Bev Francis. In his film, George Butler goes to no small lengths to reassure the world that such an equation is not involved. Pally notes: "Butler saw to it that each contestant was flanked by male trainers and boyfriends during the shooting. Lori Bowen's young man (Bowen came in fourth in the Vegas contest) proposed to her for the cameras and the collective relief of heterosexual America."[67] Francis poses a special challenge, and Butler responds by having weightlifter Steve Weinberger, accompany her throughout the film. Indeed, Weinberger is present even during Pally's interview with her.[68] Pally writes: "she doesn't go anywhere without him, the press agent explained to me. And [the] public relations office felt compelled to adapt in early press material [the] famous line: 'Bev Francis is now and has always been a heterosexual female.'"[69]

As Heather Dawkins has pointed out, those evaded issues of chemical hormones and inverted sexuality raise doubts about more than the "integrity"

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[66]Marcia Pally reports from her interview with Dunlap that the drug bill for male bodybuilders could be as high as $2,000 every few months. Dunlap explains: "That's why the prize money is so much higher for men than for women—everyone knows they have to support the drugs." Dunlap says that Bev's body "has the look of drugs. But it could be her athletic background. I wish they'd do some good studies on this because no one comes clean and there's no proof. The guys use drugs and assume the women use drugs, and so women coming into the sport believe they have to use them to succeed," Pally, "Women of 'Iron,'" 63.

[67]Ibid., 62. Following a screening of this film in a graduate seminar in the School for the Contemporary Arts, SFU 1992, Heather Dawkins remarked that Bowen's boyfriend's proposal before the cameras, in effect steals the glory of her winning fourth place.

[68]Although it is not emphasised in the film, it is made clear to Pally during the interview that Weinberger is Bev's "fiancée."

[69]Pally, "Women of 'Iron,'" 62.

of sexual bodies and images; they also undermine the integrity of the "naturalist" discourse of the contest, and further undermine the "naturalist" discourse evoked by, and understood as "documentary" film, even a "semi-documentary" such as this.[70] Thus the credibility of the film itself is also as stake. Just as these discursive authorities begin to dissolve, the judges are discredited, and Bev Francis has appropriated not only masculine right to muscularity, but to the "naturalized" wearing of those muscles, masculine authority is in jeopardy, and *Pumping Iron II* plays its trump.

Intercut with the sequence which discredits the judges, that which depicts their ultimate "fixing" of the competition scores, is the performance of the "guest poser," Bev's trainer, Steve Mihalik.[71] In full confidence of his supreme assumption of the right to muscularity, Mihalik performs an epistemological stripping away of layers to deliberately expose the ultimate veil required for the establishment of meaning. For Lacan the metamorphosis of the flaccid penis into its turgid state is a metaphor for distinction, the "congealing" of form, and of meaning, and the coming into being of the subject. As such, all are linked to the phallus. Recall Lacan's dictum, "the phallus can only play its role as veiled." Indeed, the phallus refers to the *function of veiling*.[72] Mihalik enters to music from *Star Wars*, completely

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[70]Heather Dawkins made this comment in response to an early version of this portion of my thesis.

[71]The inclusion of a performance by one or more "Guest Posers" is a tradition at bodybuilding competitions.

[72]As Rose remarks in her commentary on Lacan's "The Meaning of the Phallus": "he constantly refused any crude identification of the phallus with the order of the visible or real and he referred it instead to [the] function of 'veiling.'" "Introduction II," Feminine Sexuality, 42.

"veiled" in a costume referencing Darth Vadar. The cloak is of a shimmering, slinky black material which follows his body's contours where it touches the skin. He removes it to reveal a body oiled-up, clad in briefs. After posing to the music in various attitudes, the better to display the different muscle-groups, Mihalik removes the briefs, in a consciously mocking allusion to the strip-tease, revealing another pair of briefs underneath. The phallus remains in place. Intercut with the sequence where the judges are "disrobed" of their authority, this ingenious performance serves, as Barbara Correll remarks, to "reassert . . . the 'gold standard' of the phallus."[73]

It is not only men, however, who hold a stake in the maintenance of the status of the phallus. The only female judge on the panel winces in quiet desperate horror as Francis flexes before her, and when interviewed in the film she says that it would be a disaster *for women* if Bev should win. Bev's is not the only masquerade. Indeed, while for Lacan, ultimately all sexuality (and subjectivity) is masquerade, psychoanalyst Joan Rivière writes specifically of femininity as masquerade, in a paper published in 1929.[74] Rivière analyses the degree to which women must offset professional skill and power with feminine artifice. Such compensatory measures are a function of the conditions governing a woman's participation in a fraternal-patriarchal symbolic realm. This is where sex and sexuality intersect, as a woman engaged

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[73]Barbara Correll, "Notes on the Primary Text: Woman's Body and Representation in *Pumping Iron II—The Women* and *Breast Giver*," Genre XXII (Fall 1989): 302.

[74]See Rivière, "Womanliness as a Masquerade." Lacan's use of the term "masquerade" comes directly from Rivière's, for whom it indicated a failed femininity. Rivière's work was part of the psychoanalytic debate on femininity in the 1920s and 1930s, a debate which included contributions by Helen Deutsch and Ernest Jones.

in commerce with such a symbolic order is caught in a "choice" between being seen as one of the boys, or as one who is willing to mortgage her virility to gain social, political, sexual, and or economic purchase. Emphasizing the function of the ego-ideal (seeing oneself from the position of the desire of the Other, ultimately here, a fraternal-patriarchal Other), I want to underline that within a heterosexist economy assignment to the category "women" demands at least a gesture in the direction of "womanliness," or femininity.[75] That is what lies behind the female judge's horror of Francis's bulk and attitude, McLish's pout and prosthetics, and cinematographer Dyanna Taylor's efforts to soften Bev's edges with her lens.

The sexual asymmetricality ordained by a heterosexist fraternal-patriarchal order finds its perfect emblem in the phallus, in spite of the fact that for Lacan, male masquerade of "being" the phallus, and female masquerade of "having" it, are always already comedic approximations. He writes:

> Let us say that these relations will revolve around a being and a having which, because they refer to a signifier, the phallus, have the contradictory effect of on the one hand lending reality to the subject in the signifier, and on the other making unreal the relations to be signified.
>
> This follows from the intervention of an "appearing" which gets substituted for the "having" so as to protect it on the one side and to mask its lack on the other . . . [76]

Lacan is pointing to the split between meaning and being, and linking this with the masquerade, the "appearing" of "having" the phallus.

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[75]This is why Monique Wittig insists that lesbians are not women. See Wittig, "The Straight Mind," Feminist Issues (Summer 1980): 110.

[76]Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," 83-4.

Close to the end of "The Meaning of the Phallus," he notes that "femininity takes refuge in this mask," which "has the strange consequence that, in the human being, virile display itself appears as feminine."[77] In other words, if men display masculinity, "show [their] prick,"[78] they give up the protective cloak of the phallus, a gesture which feminizes them. Indeed, in a scene in her hotel room, Bev imitates the "posing" of male bodybuilders, a performance which has her appear quite "campy." She also incorporates these male posturings, along with some "moves" of traditional "feminine" posing, such as hip-wiggling, in her own posing routine, performed before audience, judges, and cameras. In the context of Bev's appearance and manner, the feminine moves look rather jaunty, and together with the campy masculine posturings, her performance when posing takes on a parodic aspect.[79]

Bev masquerades as not only "being" the phallus, but as "having" the phallus too.[80] Where there is no reassuring visible "lack," the question of sexual difference becomes speculation on the contents of bikini briefs or the testosterone level of blood. In a film where the "unhomely" image of Bev Francis's *male body drag* exceeds the text's attempts to contain her, Mihalik's performance, his "feminine" display of masculine virility re-establishes the

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[77]Ibid., 85.

[78]Gallop, writing of Lacan compared with Ernest Jones, The Daughter's Seduction, 38.

[79]This point came out of a conversation with Laurie Milner.

[80]One might say that McLish, on the other hand, masquerades as being the phallus and *not having it*. Hers is a masquerade of divestment.

currency of the phallus, as the threat of its unveiling becomes its *raison d'être, is* its erection.[81]

Yet Bev's stance, her taking up of a masculine position and her assumption of "his" muscularity to a point where in the film she is dubbed the strongest woman in the world, another "version of Arnold Swarzenegger,"[82] has her occupy what might be called, after Barbara Babcock, a condition of extended liminality.[83] *Liminal* because she represents masculinity in a female alterity, or the *inclusion* of female within muscularity that is not petite, decorative, contained—but pushed as far as possible—"natural, achieved, phallic." *Extended* because recuperation is not possible within the terms of the image itself. In other words, the terms across and through which this image articulates itself, primarily a whole bunch of discursive polarities around sex, sexuality, the body, and representation, cannot contain it.

Bev's *male body drag* represents a *fusion* of what are, in Mikhail Bakhtin's terms, "grotesque" and "classical" bodies.[84] Here then, as with the

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[81]I think this is precisely what Lacan is getting at when he says "Meaning indicates the direction in which it fails." See "A Love Letter ," in Feminine Sexuality, 150.

[82]Robley, "Pumping Iron II," 77.

[83]See Babcock, "'Liberty's a Whore': Inversions, Marginalia, and Picaresque Narrative," in The Reversible World, 101.

[84]Stallybrass and White comment: "The convergence of Bakhtin's thinking and that of current symbolic anthropology is highly significant. Where Ivanov points to the kinship Bakhtin shares with Lévi-Strauss and Edmund Leach . . . Masao Yamaguchi suggests that Bakhtin's work significantly parallels that of Victor Turner, Barbara Babcock and Mary Douglas in their shared interest in cultural negations and symbolic inversions. . . We may note, for instance, the similarity of Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque high/low inversion to the concepts developed in *The Reversible World*, a collection of essays on anthropology and literature edited by Barbara Babcock. Although apparently unaware of Bakhtin's study she assembles a range of writing on 'symbolic inversion and cultural negation' which puts carnival into a much wider perspective." Politics and Poetics, 17; Stallybrass and White cite: Edmund Leach, "Time and False

confusion of figure and ground, the "camouflage" involved in mimesis, it is the *fusion*, the merging, the *extended liminal state* that has maximum effect in upsetting order, and ordering. Describing Bakhtin's terms, Mary Russo writes:

> The grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change. The grotesque body is opposed to the classical body, which is monumental, static, closed, and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism; the grotesque body is connected to the rest of the world.[85]

For Bakhtin the classical body was far more than an aesthetic standard or model. "Classical" and "grotesque" bodies function discursively to encode opposing systems. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White write of the discursive function of the classical body:

> It structured, from the inside as it were, the characteristically "high" discourses of philosophy, statecraft, theology and law, as well as literature, as they emerged from the Renaissance. In the classical discursive body were encoded those regulated systems which were closed, homogeneous, monumental, centred and symmetrical. It began to make "parsimony" of explanation and "economy" of utterance the measure of rationality, thus institutionalizing Lenten rule as a normative epistemological standard. Gradually these protocols of the classical body came to mark out the identity of progressive rationalism itself.[86]

The grotesque body has *its* discursive norms too:

Noses," in Leach, E. ed. Rethinking Anthropology, Monograph/Social Anthropology 22, (London: Athlone Press, 1961); and Masao Yamaguchi, "Bakhtin and symbolic anthropology," MMB (Coll.), 323-39 (Kingston, Ontario: Queens University, 1983).

[85]Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," Feminist Studies/Critical Studies, ed., Teresa de Lauretis (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: The Macmillan Press, 1988), 219.

[86]Stallybrass and White, Politics and Poetics, 22.

> impurity (both in the sense of dirt and mixed categories), heterogeneity, masking, protuberant distension, disproportion, exorbitancy, clamour, decentred or eccentric arrangements, a focus upon gaps, orifices and symbolic filth (what Mary Douglas calls "matter out of place"), physical needs and pleasures of the "lower bodily stratum," materiality and parody.[87]

The grotesque thus designates the marginalized, that which is "outside" from the perspective of the classical which is "situated as high, inside and central by virtue of its very exclusions."[88] The grotesque also can be linked to the condition of extended liminality in that it refers discursively to "impurity," or the mixing of categories.

In its elevated, closed, static monumentality, Bakhtin's notion of the "classical body" corresponds to what I have been discussing as *congealed* form—the (male) bourgeois subject—its coming into being symbolized by the phallus. In this metaphor, the mantle of the "grotesque" seems to fall upon the *pre-*, or rather, *a*-phallic penis, in all its misshapen, orificed ordinariness. It is, however, the discursive grotesque which governs the process of becoming.

Unlike Mapplethorpe's images of "Lady" Lisa Lyon, whose "transgression" of historically deemed appropriate feminine muscularity works to shift those boundaries demarking femininity (boundaries which may just as

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[87]Ibid., 23.

[88]Ibid. Stallybrass and White note that this connects with Foucault's arguments about "'institutionalizing'—asylums, hospitals, schools, barracks, prisons, insurance and finance houses—which . . . embody and assure the maintenance of classical bourgeois reason. Furthermore Foucault's concentration upon the contained outsiders-who-make-the-insiders-insiders (the mad, the criminal, the sick, the unruly, the sexually transgressive) reveals just how far these outsiders are constructed by the dominant culture in terms of the grotesque body." Ibid., 22-3. With reference to Judith Butler's Foucauldian argument, I have discussed how homosexuality "enables" heterosexuality in chapter Two.

easily, as a function of fashion, shift back again), images of Bev's male body drag are irrecuperable within the terms of (hetero) sexual difference. Those very muscles which when worn by Swarzenegger or Mihalik extend the range and volume of the classical body to a point where boundaries are pushed (where perhaps there is even a suggestion of excessiveness, of pushing new frontiers), those same muscles are made to appear on Bev Francis as bulbous and protuberant. Images of Bev are at once "monumental, static, closed, and sleek," *and* disproportional, exorbitant, "impure." Matter is most definitely "out of place." Thus what is at issue here is not just the marginality of the image of a female body of such (dis)proportions, but its extended liminal state. Bev's image hovers between the grotesque and the classical: it is grotesquely classical, classically grotesque. It is in the (grotesque) process of becoming—what? It is the muck out of which form arises, "the pure possibility of liminality."[89]

Searching to put a name to the effect that such an image might have on its viewer I have turned again to the work of Roland Barthes, for such is what the ponderous M. Barthes might call the *punctum* of the image. Writing on photographic images in *Camera Lucida* (1981), he distinguishes *studium* (public, obvious meaning) from *punctum* (private, unpredictable meaning).[90] For him the *studium* of an image is that which is enclosed, contained,

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[89]Babcock, "Introduction," to The Reversible World, 32. Indeed, this explains the paradox involved in cinematographer Dyanna Taylor 's project to make Bev's image more palatable to viewers. Even if Taylor could manage to "soften" the outlines of Bev's body, in blurring boundaries between figure and ground, the result would remain in the liminoid zone.

[90]See Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida, 26. I must agree with Jane Gallop that Barthes distinctions "studium" and "punctum" are developments of his distinction between "representation" and "figuration," from The Pleasure of the Text, but they can also be traced to his essay "The Third Meaning" (1970), where their ancestors are "obvious" and "obtuse" meanings, respectively. See Barthes, Image-Music-Text, 52-68.

expected—"I invest the field of the *studium* with my sovereign consciousness."[91] This is the comfort zone. Martin Jay writes that its "connotatively charged subject matter [is] determined by the cultural context in which it is received."[92] Such an image does not challenge the dominant fiction, at the level of either the male subject or culture. But there is a "second element" that breaks the *studium*, it "rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me."[93] Barthes continues: "A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument: . . . This second element which will disturb the *studium* I shall therefore call *punctum;* A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me . . ."[94]

Whereas to recognize the *studium* is to "encounter the photographer's intentions," *punctum* is in excess of them, in spite of them.[95] *Punctum* is "an addition": "it is what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there.*"[96] Barthes is doubtful that images in "movies" can be added to: "I don't have time: in front of the screen, I am not free to shut my eyes; otherwise, opening them again, I would not discover the same image; I am constrained to a continuous voracity."[97] Yet he insists: "Very often the *Punctum* is a 'detail,'

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[91]Ibid.

[92]Jay, Downcast Eyes, 452.

[93]Barthes, Camera Lucida, 26.

[94]Ibid., 26-7.

[95]Ibid., 27.

[96]Ibid., 55.

[97]Ibid.

i.e., a partial object."[98] Now all this suggests to me that in cinema the *punctum*, the "detail" or "partial object," the piercing shard could make its mark, as does "a pointed instrument," quickly, immediately, and then be held, mnemonically. In this sense, the *punctum* pertains to its invocation of the psychic link between an image (or aspect or fragment thereof) and the phantasmatic.

Such a reading is supported by Barthes, (although not in full agreement with him, he is himself "doubtful"), in that the *punctum* has to do with memory, with irretrievable loss, and for him (as for Freud in his essay on the uncanny), this loss is connected with a phantasy of maternal plenitude. Martin Jay notes that Barthes, "searching for a photograph whose 'punctum' would reactivate his connection with the lost object, . . . found one taken in 1898 of his then five-year-old mother and her seven-year-old brother in a conservatory."[99] Jay remarks that Barthes refused to reproduce this image in *Camera Lucida*, "for the disinterested 'studium' of his readers," and he points to Jacques Derrida's observation that it serves "as the 'punctum' of the entire book."[100] *Punctum* thus works to summon forth both the lost object, in Lacan's terms "the *object (a)*," and simultaneously, its *lostness* for the subject. In this capacity to evoke both absence and presence, *punctum* describes the *phallic* function of an image.

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[98]Ibid., 43.

[99]Jay, Downcast Eyes, 453.

[100]Ibid., 453-4; see also Jacques Derrida, "The Deaths of Roland Barthes," in Philosophy and Non-Philosophy Since Merleau-Ponty, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (New York: Routledge, 1988), 286.

The *punctum* of a liminal image such as *butch* thus functions to "wound" the viewer, to both disturb psychic location in relation to categorical sexuality, and to work towards dissolving the boundaries of the sexual categories themselves. In the context of the dominant fiction, it is not surprising that films representing such images tend to work towards containing this effect. Indeed, following Barthes, the very representation of such an image is an attempt to contain it. It is represented *in order* to be contained. This, for example, is a function of narrative as it supports dominant fiction, it *is* the "ordering." Narrative struggles to render a liminal image merely "transgressive." I want to suggest that *butch punctum* functions in spite of this struggle—indeed, to some extent, because of it.

Butchwork: From Imitation to Intimidation

> We still have to take up the naturalness with which such women appeal to their quality of being men.
>
> Jacques Lacan[101]

> To designate Lacan at his most stimulating and (forceful) is to call him something more than just phallocentric. He is also phallo-eccentric. Or, in more pointed language, he is a prick.
>
> Jane Gallop[102]

> I have a little bit of penis envy. They're ridiculous, but they're cool.
>
> k.d. lang[103]

Besides the anthropomorphic "prick" by which Jane Gallop refers to Jacques Lacan, Gallop registers amusement at Barthes' choice of a French equivalent for the Latin *punctum—piqûre*, translated as "prick."[104] "Not, of course," she writes, "our vulgar word for the male genital, but the word for something that pierces, something that wounds."[105] Still more versions are to

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[101]Lacan, 'Feminine Homosexuality and ideal love,' Part IX of "Guiding Remarks fo a Congress on Feminine Sexuality" (1958), Feminine Sexuality, 97. In the commentary opening her translation of the essay, Jacqueline Rose writes that "Guiding Remarks," was written in the same year, and is a complement to "The Meaning of the Phallus." My thanks to Jacqueline Levitin for suggesting the term "*Butchwork*."

[102]Gallop, The Daughter's Seduction, 36.

[103]k. d. lang, quoted in Leslie Bennetts, "k.d. lang Cuts It Close," Vanity Fair vol. 56, no. 8 (August 1993): 99.

[104]Gallop, Thinking Through the Body, 152.

[105]Ibid.

be found in Barbara Babcock's essay on the adventures in narrative of the marginal "rogue," *pícaro* ; and in the pointed weaponry often arming peripherally significant *butch* characters in narrative cinema. An enactment of my own *penisneid*,[106] my intention in assembling this "prickly" assortment is to examine how images of *butch* both "prick" and are "pricks."

Admonishing Ernest Jones for stopping short at the "too convenient prop of identification," Lacan writes of what he (perversely) calls the "feminine homosexual":

> Freud's chief case, inexhaustible as always, makes it clear that this challenge is set off by a demand for love that is thwarted in the real and that it stops at nothing short of taking on the airs of a courtly love.
>
> In that such a love prides itself more than any other on being the love which gives what it does not have, so it is precisely in this that the homosexual woman excels in relation to what is lacking to her.[107]

For Lacan, lesbian desire is quintessential desire, *forever* longing. However, turning specifically to "the naturalness with which such women appeal to their quality of being men," this being "opposed to the delirious style of the transexual male," he suggests that such "feminine sexuality" is "to be *realised in the envy* of desire, which castration releases in the male by giving him its signifier in the phallus."[108] In this typically obtuse statement, I think Lacan is

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[106]*Penisneid* is the German term used by Freud, which has been translated as "penis envy."

[107]Lacan, "Guiding Remarks for a Congress on Feminine Sexuality," Feminine Sexuality, 96. "Freud's chief case" is that of the unnamed young woman of "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," wherein the young woman "courts" the older woman who is the object of her affections. For an interesting reading of this text see Mandy Merck, "The Train of Thought in Freud's 'Case of Homosexuality in a Woman,'" in Perversions: Deviant Readings (London: Virago, 1993).

[108]Lacan, "Guiding Remarks for a Congress on Feminine Sexuality," 97.

updating Freud's notion of penis envy, for in the next paragraph he asks: "Could it be this privileging of the signifier that Freud is getting at when he suggests that there is perhaps only one libido and that it is marked with the male sign?"[109] The "naturalness with which such women appeal to their quality of being men" results from this libidinal monopoly that is "marked with the male sign." There is nothing to be gained from a *butch* denial of penis envy. Neither can I see how a sexuality *"realised in the envy* of desire" is not an "identification."

Butch's not so "feminine sexuality," realised in envy of desire, finds form in a mimesis of shape. *Pumping Iron II's* Bev assumes the morphology of an inverted triangle, a morphology coded as masculine. Yet her broad shoulders and narrow hips are no innocent imitation of masculine display. Rather, those broad shoulders carry easily what the inverted triangle shape of a *butch* presentation suggests, the willingness and ability to take erotic responsibility. While in the case of Bev in *Pumping Iron II,* such a competence (unfortunately) remains within the realms of suggestive possibility, in turning attention to *butch* images which more specifically usurp a "masculine" (hetero) sexuality—a desiring position in relation to women—there is more chance of encountering images of what Joan Nestle has described, in the context of urban American "butch-femme" relationships in the 1950s, as "women who were willing to identify their passion for other women by wearing clothes that symbolized the taking of responsibility. Part of this responsibility was sexual

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[109]Ibid.

expertise . . . . (T)his courage to feel comfortable with arousing another woman became a political act."[110]

In considering *butch* images, the first thing to note, however, is a dearth of narrative films of feature length with central characters that I consider *butch*.[111] Also of note is what seems to be something of a formula at work in films representing lesbians, where they tend to be represented as sexually desiring if *feminine*,[112] and as *butch* if their sexual desire is diverted in some way, usually sublimated to violence. Think of Lotte Lenya's "Colonel Rosa Klebb" in *From Russia With Love*, (Terence Young, UK 1963), and Kate Murtagh's "nurse" in *Farewell My Lovely*, (Dick Richards, USA 1976), who share a passion for very sharp, pointed objects—knives or hypodermic syringes (all the better to *punctum*with).[113] Then there is *butch* that doesn't "want," represented as *devoid* of sexual desire. Witness Barbra Streisand's recent selling of "look! no hands!" lesbianism to middle-America, with the "made for television" film, *Serving in Silence: The Margarethe Cammermeyer Story* (Jeff Bleckner, USA 1995), where the intimacy between Glenn Close's *butch* and the Judy Davis character has been scrubbed clean of any suggestion of physical,

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[110]Nestle, "Butch-Fem Relationships: Sexual Courage in the 1950s," Heresies 12 (1981): 21.

[111]Let me reiterate that my discussion is not intended to be exhaustive, or even extensive, but suggestive of further work.

[112]See Christine Holmlund's excellent essay on what she calls "The 'Femme' Film": "When Is A Lesbian Not a Lesbian?: The Lesbian Continuum and the Mainstream Femme Film," Camera Obscura 25/26 (1991): 144-179.

[113]"Colonel Rosa Klebb" aims a shoe knife at that overinvested cartoon of male virility, "James Bond": she wants to steal Bond's gal; blood from a punch dribbling from her mouth, along her chin and onto her white shirt, Murtagh's "nurse" drives a huge syringe into Robert Mitchum's neck, as he is held down by one guy while a second presses a gun to his temple.

sexual passion.[114] If a sexually desiring *butch* does make it onto the screen, that desire either remains a tortuous unconsumated longing, the fate of k.d. lang's character in *Salmonberries* (Percy Adlon, USA 1990), or leads to death, as in *Another Way* (Karoly Makk, Hungary 1982). Vasquez (Jenette Goldstein), the tough trooper in *Aliens* (James Cameron, USA 1986), is very *butch*, she is "one of the boys." As she shows off her biceps doing chin-ups, one of her male buddies asks, "Hey Vasquez, have you ever been mistaken for a man?" "No," she replies, "have you?" Although clearly she is present in the film to enable the heroic Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) to be seen as "feminine," Vasquez takes up *butch* space in an uncompromising manner. She must die, albeit a hero's death.

Barbara Babcock's discussion of how narratives deal with "the *pícaro*"[115] describes very accurately those kinds of narrative strategies of containment exercised on *butch*. The picaro represents an inversion of "normative" social values, an outsider, a "social bandit."[116] Both *butch* and

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[114]*Serving in Silence: The Margarethe Cammermeyer Story*, produced by Barbra Striesand and Glenn Close, concerns the experience of Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer, who was recently thrown out of the military because she acknowledged that she was a lesbian, and then would not retract her statement. The "hands off" rendition compromises otherwise quite impressive performances from Close as the *butch* Colonel Cammermeyer, and Judy Davis as her eccentric-artist lover, thereby enacting the very policies of which the film is explicitly critical.

[115]Briefly, Babcock reports that the term *pícaro* was first documented in 1525 with the meaning of "kitchen boy" and the connotation of "evil leaning": "In the first dictionary of the Spanish Academy of 1726, *pícaro* is defined as an adjective meaning 'low, vicious, deceitful, dishonourable and shameless.'" Babcock argues that the *pícaro* is one of the first "low" characters in written narrative, who is a hero or antihero. Since the turn of the sixteenth century the term has generally been translated as "rogue" or "delinquent." It usually designates one who violates social and human norms, always having the connotation of "prankster." Babcock, "Liberty's a Whore," 96-7. Following Babcock in her essay, hereafter I shall use the anglicized term "picaro."

[116]Ibid., 114.

the picaro are not just *marginal* figures; they are *liminal*—"betwixt and between."[117] A major problem for any narrative dealing with a marginal figure, has to do with the formulation of an appropriate ending: redemption, retribution, or what? Babcock notes three possible endings: "(1) the picaro reenters society, sometimes through marriage, and is apparently reintegrated into the social structure; (2) the picaro is killed or punished; and (3) the picaro's adventures are 'to be continued.'"[118] It is the last, the episodic ending as non-ending, which Babcock notes is "appropriate to the formal and ideological 'openness'" of picaro.[119] The other two endings hold to a binary model: the first is incorporative, the second exclusive. (Recall Nancy Jay's categories A and Not-A.) They attempt to either recover or banish the picaro as "transgressive," when picaro, like *butch*, is instead in an extended liminal state. It is this aspect of liminality which causes images of *butch* to have functioning *punctums* in spite of such narrative strategies of containment.

It is precisely what makes *butch* irrecuperable as a merely "transgressive" image that is its *punctum*. The problem with "transgression,"

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[117]Ibid., 101.

[118]Ibid. Babcock's work goes a long way to explain the well-documented high cinematic narrative mortality rate for lesbian and gay characters. See Vito Russo, The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), esp. the "Necrology," 247-9.

[119]Babcock, "Liberty's a Whore," 113. In a footnote, Babcock lists three other possible endings for picaro: "(1) the wanderer reenters society but refuses to abandon his [*sic*] antisocial, antinormative behaviour, in which case he is incarcerated in jail or the insane asylum—the modern version of banishment; (2) the deviant returns and remakes the society which expelled him—the pattern of idealistic, revolutionary narrative; and (3) the exile in his wanderings finds a society structured according to his own values, or returns home to find that the society he left has been transformed—the pattern of utopian literature." She comments that in all three of these endings, "there is a triumph of one set of values which reduces the ambiguous nondisjunction of social and antisocial values upon which the picaresque is based." "Liberty's a Whore," 111.

is that like Bakhtin's notion of "carnival," it implies that there is a "norm" that is to be recuperated,[120] when such a "norm" is simply the dominant set of values of a binary pair. Homosexuality is thus seen to be transgressive, but can be so only from the perspective of heterosexuality as normative. As I argued in relation to the case of (Lady) Lisa Lyon, any stepping outside a boundary is made from a desire to be more inclusive, to extend the boundary; transgression is necessary only to show how the boundary-line can be moved (and it can be moved back, too).

There is something indigestible about *butch*. In what is arguably one of cinema's most interesting and potent representations of *butch*, Mercedes McCambridge's portrayal of a member of the "Grandi" gang (Figure 2) in *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, USA 1958), the film's narrative does not *contain* her.[121]

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[120]The major drawback of Bakhtin's "carnival" theory is the ultimate reversion to normal hierarchical order following the heady upheavals of role reversal. "Carnival" functions then, as a social, cultural safety valve. Stallybrass and White write: "Most politically thoughtful commentators wonder, like [Terry] Eagleton, whether the 'licensed release' of carnival is not simply a form of social control of the low by the high and therefore serves the interests of that very official culture which it apparently opposes." Politics and Poetics, 13. See also René Girard, Violence and the Sacred, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1977).

[121]Now McCambridge has some *butch* history in Hollywood cinema. She appeared in 1954 opposite Joan Crawford in what Vito Russo has called Nicholas Ray's "neurotic western," *Johnny Guitar* (USA), a performance wherein McCambridge's character consistently *outbutches* Crawford's Vienna, *her* (unspeakable) love for *her* sublimated into jealous rages (Hell hath no fury . . .) and onto the accommodating double, The Dancing Kid, and Johnny (Sterling Hayden). McCambridge was a member of Welles' group at the Mercury Theatre. She received an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress for her role as a cynical political aide, in *All the King's Men* (Robert Rossen, USA 1949). She did a lot of work on radio, and was presumed to endure quite a struggle with alcoholism. She gave at least one other uncredited performance, as the voice of the Devil in *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, USA 1973). My thanks to Patsy Kotsopoulos for these pieces of information. If I might make a speculative comment, one not irrelevant to my topic, this brief biographical data suggests to me the possibility of McCambridge's own prolonged struggle with homosexuality.

As such McCambridge's *butch* is one of a number of tropes of liminality deployed throughout the text.

Film theorist André Bazin writes of the narrative of *Touch of Evil*:

> The scenario opposes an old and unscrupulous policeman convinced of the guilt of a suspect and an upright young official who tries to bring him down. His back against the wall, Quinlan (the policeman [Welles]) defends himself by mounting an abominable blackmail plot against the latter's wife. Vargas (the official [Charlton Heston]) only manages to extricate himself by recording a conversation between Quinlan and his best friend. The action takes place in a small town on the border between Mexico and the USA.[122]

It is a narrative which nods in the direction of a structuralist formula, involving the setting up of confusion around binary oppositions such as right and wrong, good and bad, white and non-white, normal and abnormal sexualities, in order for these oppositions to be "resolved."[123] However, the text is clearly in excess of any simple resolution or closure, and as Stephen Heath writes, "(t)here can be no question of trying to fix the film in a single reading, a coherent 'interpretation.'"[124] Indeed, the text argues against its own narrative closure.

In its dialectical mixing of categories this film is governed by the discursive grotesque. There is the classical, republican body of the USA, and

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[122]André Bazin, Orson Welles (Paris: 1972), 115; cited in Stephen Heath, "Film and System: Terms of Analysis: Part I," Screen 16: 1-2 (1975): 12.

[123]For an excellent (although rather long) discussion of cinema and narrative, especially in relation to gender, see Teresa de Lauretis's chapter, "Desire in Narrative," in her Alice Doesn't. Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

[124]Heath, "Film and System: Terms of Analysis: Part II," Screen 16: 1-2 (1975): 95.

the disorganized, drug-riddled, incestuous and nepotistic body of Mexico; but then there is the classical, athletic body of the Mexican detective, Vargas (Heston sporting a "Mexican" signifier, a small moustache), and the bloated, candy-riddled, corrupt body of the American detective, Quinlan, who is given to following intuition at the expense of police process, purportedly since his own wife's killer (in his phantasy, a "half-breed") got away from the law. Boundaries are blurred throughout the film, which is even set on a border: oil rigs pump up what is below the surface; time and narrative take a zen slide as Quinlan steps from a 1950s Mexican street into the von Sternbergian spectacle of Tanya's (Marlene Dietrich) brothel as living museum, what Stephen Heath calls her "*maison close.*"[125]

Mixing of sexual categories is most evidenced in what Heath calls "the fantastic sexual *brouillage* of the Grandi family—homosexual, lesbian, hermaphrodite."[126] The older Uncle Joe Grandi (Akim Tamiroff) dresses fastidiously: he wears make-up and a wig. The younger Grandis form the nucleus of a gang. Besides McCambridge's sadistically voyeristic *butch*, this gang comprises two boys, two girls, and another especially menacing and sexually ambivalent character, the gang's leader, "Pancho" (Valentin De Vargas). Heath writes of the generic "Pancho" that although a main character, he has no real name throughout the film; "(unnameable, he is a *mixture*)."[127] I read "Pancho" as brother or cousin to McCambridge's *butch*, their "sexual *brouillage*" evidence of a broken sexual taboo. This gang abducts Vargas's wife,

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[125]Heath, "Film and System: I," 13.

[126]Ibid., 74.

[127]Ibid., 39.

Susan (Janet Leigh), and takes her to a motel room. The scene is shot as though something dangerous and evil (such as a rape) is about to happen. When told (in Spanish) by "Pancho" to leave the motel room with the two girls, McCambridge wants to stay behind with the boys. In a concise articulation of *butch* agency sublimated to voyeurism she says, "No, I wanna watch."

At the end of the film Uncle Joe Grandi has been strangled by Quinlan, Susan is saved from the clutches of the Grandi gang, and reunited with her husband, Vargas. Quinlan, the "bad" cop is dead, betrayed and killed by his best friend, Pete Menzies (Joseph Calleia). However, in spite of all this there is no sense of closure, of all being well with the world. Instead, there is the open-ended and uneasy tension of a *noir* ending,[128] not only because Vargas and Susan are an unlikely couple (although they are), but because there is a profound sense of the menacing indestructability and pervasiveness of ambivalence (the Grandi gang are still on the loose, the pianola is still playing in Tanya's *maison close*).

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[128]Richard Dyer writes: "There is quite a lot of disagreement about film noir, both over what kind of phenomenon it is (a genre? a mood? a style? a cycle?) and over what films are to be included in it." He notes that Paul Schrader's desire to term it a "mood" is understandable, and argues that a "mood" is "carried by identifiable aesthetic features" which occur at the levels of structure, iconography and visual style. In spite of the fact that it is only in a minority of noir films that gay characters appear, Dyer argues that gay or lesbian characters do "constitute a defining feature of film noir taken as a whole." It is not my intention to discuss this at great length, and *Touch of Evil* is not usually included among noir titles, (Dyer does not mention it), but I do want to suggest at least a noir influence, and point to a link between the noir "mood" and the various ambivalences and liminalities at work in the film. See Dyer, "Homosexuality and film noir," in his The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); and Paul Schrader, "Notes on Film Noir," Film Comment 8: 1 (1972): 8-13.

However, the text does emasculate McCambridge's *butch* to some degree, for McCambridge's name does not appear in the film's credits.[129] This omission has remained largely unnoticed for the simple reason that most members of the audience would fail to recognize the character as *butch*. In "the naturalness with which [she] appeal[s] to [her] quality of being [a man]," Mercedes McCambridge *passes*.[130]

I have discussed at some length the Caillois-Lacanian dimensions of travesty and camouflage, as they involve the disruption between figure and ground, and the masquerade that is sexuality. Intimidation, the last of Caillois's "dimensions" in which mimetic activity is deployed, refers to the deliberate development of an awesome aspect. *("Desire has a terrifying precision.")* Images of *butch* represent the striving to attain a worth that is over-estimated within a fraternal-patriarchal symbolic. One might say that imitation is the sincerest form of "over-valuation." Those very images which pertain to the coming into being of *butch* identity, are those most likely to "intimidate" the hetero-sexual male subject, for they threaten a devaluation of the "gold standard of the phallus."

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[129]I am aware that McCambridge may well have herself requested that her performance in *Touch of Evil* not be attributed to her name.

[130]Indeed, McCambridge passes in another way as well, for although McCambridge is a fairly well known actress, the name "Mercedes McCambridge" is sexually ambivalent, so that even if it were in the credits, audience members unfamiliar with it, and the one to whom it refers, could be forgiven for presuming its referent to be male. "Passing" is a practice common to marginalized groups, where its members choose to "pass" as members of the dominant culture. It is precisely what was done by many lesbians in North America in the 1950s who identified themselves as *butch*. For social histories of such lives see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Lillian Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America (USA: Penguin, 1992); and Nestle, ed., The Persistent Desire.

Remember Barthes' paradoxical dictum on *punctum*: "whether or not it is triggered, it is an addition: it is what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there.*"[131] Barthes is hedging his bets. I want to be more specific, and argue that the *punctum* is located in the moment when the *subject* encounters the image. Not just any image, however. The *punctum* is precisely the subject's seizing something in the image, a seizing into which the subject is drawn by the structuring action of the phantasmatic.[132] That the *punctum* "pierces," or "wounds," then, is something in which the subject is implicated. Indeed, the piercing or wounding *is* the implication of the subject.

Punctum thus has to do with the tension between the subject in formation (and are not all subjects in formation, all the time?), and the repetition that grants consistency to that process of subjective formation. (This is akin to the tension between hegemony and negotiation, and the possibility for change, that coexists with the probability of more of the same.) This linking of *punctum* with the phantasmatic provides a way to speak about how images can be read in ways at real odds with their *studium* (how they might be intended to be read). A phantasmatic (in)formed by images of *butch*, such as those of Bev Francis or Mercedes McCambridge, demands unconscious negotiation of sexual signifiers, and this negotiation must bear directly upon subjective formation.

Finally, if, as I am suggesting, the *punctum* of an image can affect the subjective morass, then the repeated production and promotion of such

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[131]Barthes, Camera Lucida, 55.

[132]It is worth noting here that when "catching" images of Bev and Mercedes from tapes on the VCR, both myself and others could not but notice the strong physical resemblances between images of myself and those of Bev and Mercedes which I was drawn to "grab."

liminal images as those of *butch* cannot but enhance the possibility for effecting change at a crucial, *symbolic* level of the subject: that of signification, where meaning comes to stand in for being. In other words, given that the imaginary is the dimension of images, might not the *punctum* of an image occur at precisely the moment of juncture where subject, imaginary, and symbolic intersect.

Figure 1. Bev Francis in *Pumping Iron II—The Women* (George Butler, USA 1985). Image reproduced from Annette Kuhn, "The Body and Cinema," in Susan Sheridan, ed. Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism, 13.

Figure 2. Mercedes McCambridge in *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, USA 1958). Image reproduced from Vito Russo, The Celluloid Closet, 104.

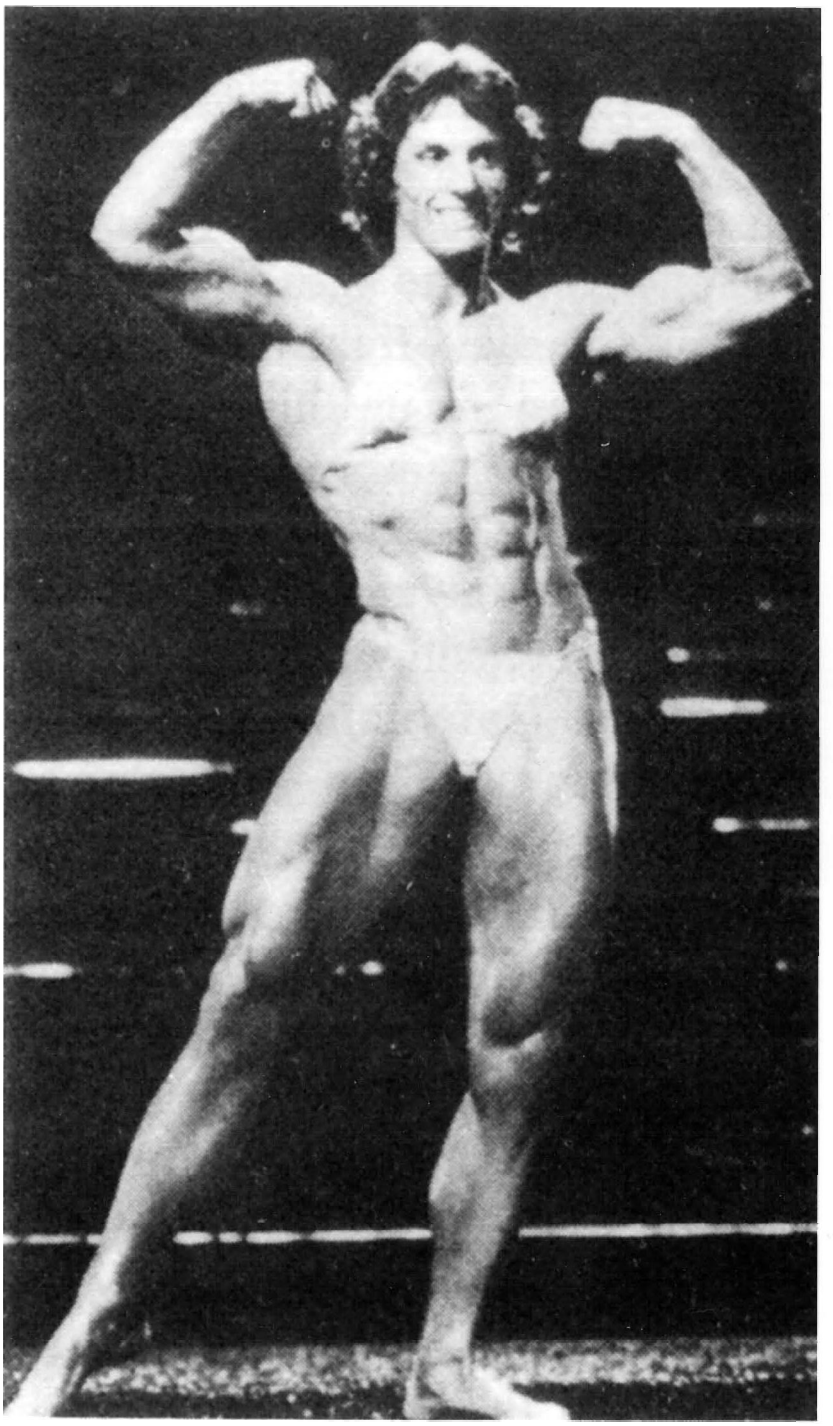

Figure 1

Figure 2

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