

THE VIEWING SUBJECT

Brakhage tells us, "I am not when I see."⁷⁷ Thus, the following question emerges: Through what agency does a viewer become "capable of understanding his vision as a metaphoric creation?" How does, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, vision "divide itself" so that there is the seeing "that really takes place . . . squeezed into a body—its own body, of which we can have no idea except in the *exercise* of it," and there is the seeing "upon which I reflect, which I cannot think except as *thought*"?⁷⁸ How is it that seeing is and does become visible to sight as a representation of itself and ultimately leads to sight's recognition of its origins in a seer, a body-subject? For, as we have seen, existential vision need not so divide itself, reflect upon itself. The cat, the newborn infant, all of us in the "natural attitude" of our everyday lives do not watch our vision even as we possess and posit its contents as the experience of consciousness.

Indeed, the *visual activity* of seeing is first experienced in consciousness as it is directed toward the *visible world*. That is, the intentional trajectory of consciousness is directed through vision toward that which can be *seen* in the act of seeing, and not toward the *unseen* originator of the act—the *seer* who is not the content sufficient to the visible but is its necessary and *invisible condition*. The cat's or the very young infant's vision has not divided itself. Theirs is the vision that is experienced from within as the body's exercise. It is a vision that is unreflected upon and unrepresented to itself. Clearly, then, the act of being in the world with eyes is the foundation for, but not the same as, the act of being in the world with one's *own* eyes.

However, just as the structure of human consciousness allows consciousness to become aware of itself by reflexively transposing and representing its intentional activity as an intentional object for consciousness, so human vision can reflexively turn in on itself. It can reverse its dominant and "natural" directedness toward the visible world back toward its own directed and invisible activity of making the world visible. This reflexive intentional movement is the act of *reflection*. And, at its most radical, the act of reflection discovers its origins in the *subjective body that sees* and rescues the latter from ano-

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 48.

⁷⁸ Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," p. 176. (Emphasis mine)

nymity and invisibility by re-cognizing and re-presenting it to consciousness—that is, thinking it as the *body-subject who sees*.

Previous sections have elaborated upon the intentional structure and existential activity of vision—its irreducible correlation of the seeing with the seen, and its directed activity that marks existential choice as a diacritical hermeneutic and semiotic operation of the body even before it thinks itself as a subject. As well, two forms of vision have been described, both parallel in existence and through the body to the two forms of intentionality distinguished by Husserl as operative and deliberative, the former serving as the foundation and ground of the latter. Thus, Brakhage's statement "I am not when I see" and Merleau-Ponty's identification of a vision that is "exercised" by the body both describe that form of seeing that manifests itself in perceptual existence as *operative intentionality* at *visual work* in the world. This is a vision that is *anonymous* and *pre-personal*. It is the vision of the cat and the newborn and, indeed, informs all our adult human vision as the foundation upon and the ground against which a more deliberative vision can emerge as an act of judgment and thought aware of itself as such.

It is this latter kind of vision to which Brakhage refers when he describes sight as a "metaphoric creation" and to which Merleau-Ponty refers when he speaks of "vision as thought." Seeing, in this reflective and reflexive turn, expresses itself in perceptual existence as the *deliberative intentionality* that emerges from a body lived as a visible subject. This vision, therefore, is *predicative and personal*. It is a vision that represents and names itself as an expressive "utterance" of the perceptive body and that connects that body's eyes (first lived invisibly in the exercise of seeing) to an intending "I" who is visible to him or herself, who possesses visual experience consciously.

Therefore, as a modality of embodied perception, vision not only provides us fundamental access to the seen and visible world, but it also provides us fundamental access to ourselves—both as seen and visible subjects and as seeing and visual subjects. It is not surprising, then, that as a modality of perception vision has become radically entailed by those disciplines whose primary inquiry concerns human being and its objectivation and/or objectification as self-consciousness. (Objectivation, unlike objectification, is a primary form of self-representation not characterized as alienation.⁷⁹)

⁷⁹ For clear and pertinent distinction between the terms *objectivation*, *objectification*,

Both psychology and philosophy allow vision a central role in the constitution of the Self and the Other. More specifically, psychoanalysis has explored the act of seeing in its relation to the constitution of the Self "from the outside in"—thus positing, through the influential work of Jacques Lacan, the visibly *seen* as that Other who originates the visual seer. In the currency of contemporary critical terminology (much borrowed upon by film theory), the subject is posited rather than positing, is positioned rather than positioning. The Self, therefore, is less a subject of vision than the *direct object* of the visible, the seen Other: "That woman visible there sees *me* as visible." Alternatively and complementarily, existential phenomenology has explored the act of seeing in its relation to the constitution of Self-consciousness "from the inside out." That is, as Merleau-Ponty elaborates in his work, the act of *seeing* originates the visual seer and the visible Other as co-emergent subjects of vision, as both see-able and seen, visual and visible. Thus, the subject is positing as well as posited, positioning as well as positioned. The Self, therefore, is the subject of vision as well as the visible Other's *direct object* of vision. Indeed, the Other who is visibly *seen seeing* is experienced by the visual *seeing subject* as both its *direct object* and as an *indirect subject*: "I see that visible woman there visually seeing me as visible."

Psychoanalysis and existential, semiotic phenomenology seem oppositional, particularly in the way each describes the constitution of the Self in consciousness through the act of seeing. Yet the dialectical tension between them and the opposing directions they take converge in the actual dialectical experience of the seeing subject. As well, both meet in their concern with language and its radical origins and relations to conscious and self-conscious experience and expression. Seeing, for both disciplines, leads to speaking, although each discipline relates seeing and speaking differently, making of Lacanian psychoanalysis (grounded in language) a *phenomenological semiotics* and of Merleau-Ponty's existential philosophy (grounded in embodiment) a *semiotic phenomenology*.

Thus, Lacan and Merleau-Ponty have dealt with the existential fact of vision and its relation to the self-recognition of the viewing subject in different ways. And yet their descriptions overlap in many areas, obscuring some of the radical differences between them. Because the

alienation, and *reification*, see Peter Berger and Stanley Pullberg, "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness," *History and Theory* 4 (1965), pp. 196-211.

discussion here of how the subject comes to self-articulation through an act of seeing must, of necessity, be relatively brief, it seems useful to preface the particular synopses of Lacan's and Merleau-Ponty's work in this area with a general and summary comparison and contrast of psychoanalysis and existential phenomenology. The purpose is to emphasize both their similarities of interest and their opposed and/or complementary directional thrust, which is to say, their dialectical relationship.

Psychoanalysis and Semiotic Phenomenology

Psychoanalysis, particularly in its Lacanian articulation, can be described as a phenomenological semiotics because it proceeds on the premise that the *structures of language determine the structures of being*. An existential and semiotic phenomenology, conversely, proceeds on the premise that the *structures of being determine the structures of language*. Both approaches, therefore, correlate language and being. However, where psychoanalysis judges individual performance (and its deviations) against the ground of a prefigured competence (and norm), semiotic phenomenology describes a competence that emerges in and with individual performance. This is to say, both psychoanalysis and semiotic phenomenology agree that conscious human existence entails a universal structure (the competence that defines one as human and conscious) and an always contingent performance (a style of being human and conscious in a specific context). Psychoanalysis, however, begins with the structure and judges individual performance against its "grammar," while semiotic phenomenology begins with an individual performance that describes and inscribes a structure whose "grammar" is always emerging.

Put another way, within the realm of psychoanalytic reflection, the individual's *context* of choice is seen as *determining* his or her *choice* in context. Within the realm of phenomenological reflection, the individual's *choice* in context is seen as *constituting* her or his *context* of choice.⁸⁰ Thus, while both psychoanalysis and existential phenomenology posit a *dialectical relation between choice and context*, the primacy

⁸⁰ Lanigan, "Communication Models in Philosophy," p. 35. See also Richard L. Lanigan, "A Semiotic Metatheory of Human Communication," *Semiotica* 27, no. 4 (1979), pp. 293-305.

afforded the terms that constitute the synthesis of the Self points to their radical difference.

Both psychoanalysis and semiotic phenomenology also seem to share a hermeneutic function. They both seek to disclose interpretive structures and activities in human behavior that give conscious experience its implicit and explicit meaning. Psychoanalysis, however, is therapeutic in thrust while semiotic phenomenology is descriptive. The former focuses on exposing the distortions of interpretive structures and activity and seeks to demystify those structures and activity as they reify and sediment encounters with the world and others. That is, psychoanalysis moves from an already-constituted interpretation of significant experience to a reduction of that experience as the effect of a distorting structure to an explicit description of that original engagement with the world in the actual experience that gave rise to the distortion. Semiotic phenomenology, on the other hand, focuses on describing the expressions of interpretive structures and activity. It seeks to demythify those structures and activity we take for granted or assume are in some way magical—the first resulting from our “natural attitude” and the second resulting from a romantic and/or theological exaltation of expression without understanding. Unlike psychoanalysis, however, semiotic phenomenology moves from the description of an actual experience of engagement with the world and others to a reduction of that experience to its systemic structuring by and within an interpretive activity to an interpretation of the significance of that experience as it is lived.

One could say that psychoanalysis, as the “talking cure” and in its remedial and therapeutic focus, is a hermeneutic of the “abnormal” and the “unconscious” that presupposes the “normal” and “consciousness” without fully explicating them. Conversely, semiotic phenomenology as descriptive of expression and communication rather than of a predetermined “distortion” is a hermeneutic of the “normal” and of consciousness against which distortion can be seen as meaningful. Thus, psychoanalysis rests upon a foundation of communication and expression whose structure it does not disclose. It does not include a phenomenology of systemic communication and expression but emerges from it. Semiotic phenomenology, however, does include psychoanalysis as a “phenomenology of illness.” As Alden Fisher suggests, “Phenomenology permits psychoanalysis to recognize ‘psychic reality’ without equivocation, the ‘intra-subjective’ essence of morbid formations, the fantastic operation that *reconstructs*

a world on the margin of, and counter to, the true world, a lived history beneath the effective history—a world called illness.”⁸¹

Perhaps the most radical differences between psychoanalysis and semiotic phenomenology occur in their assessment of the relation of language to human experience. They are both in agreement that language provides a means by which the individual consciousness is able to relate itself to itself and to others, and that in so doing language de-centers the individual. That is, language allows individuals to transcend the immanent finitude and situation of their discrete and permanent bodily address in the world. However, for the psychoanalyst, *signification is incommensurable with existence*. In semiotic terms, the signifier (SR) and the signified (SD), as well as the sign and the referent, are separate and different entities comprising a dual system in being. For the phenomenologist, on the other hand, *signification is synonymous with existence*. The SR and SD, the sign and the referent, are linked and differentiated rather than regarded as different entities. As modalities of perceptive existence expressed by the same lived-body, they comprise a single system of being.

For psychoanalysis, language functions as a substitute for being, as merely a representation of presence. The sign thus designates the absence of the referent and its existential presence. Speech becomes a substitute for a loss, a vacancy, in experience. Again, phenomenology approaches language more sanguinely. Language functions as an extension of being, as the presentation of more than is present. The sign thus designates the presence of the referent by means of representation. Speech becomes an extension of the experience of being-in-the-world, a transcendence that is very much present in existence. The substitutive function of language for psychoanalysis leads to Lacan's description of the formation not only of ego-consciousness but of the unconscious. Thus, *language is held to be the essential condition of the unconscious*. Language is the wedge that splits the self, that allows for two different realms of signification and for intrasubjectivity (the person's system of representing primal experience to him- or herself). The extensional function of language for semiotic phenomenology leads to Merleau-Ponty's description of the movement from the preconsciousness of the subjective-body to the consciousness of the body-subject—that is, from the unreflective and unreflexive ex-

⁸¹ Alden L. Fisher, introduction to *The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969), p. 81.

psychoanalysis sees language as a stop-gap
we use to fill our disconnection between sign +
meaning (a sign as a phallic symbol)

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perience of consciousness to the reflective and reflexive consciousness of experience. Thus, *the lived-body is held to be the essential condition of consciousness and language*. Language is the link that connects the self not only with its own primordial experience but also with other selves, allowing for a communality of signification or intersubjectivity.

Lacanian psychoanalysis assumes a subject inserted into language and constituted by it. Language includes the subject and positions it. The Other (as holding the always-already present power and authority of language) authorizes and positions the subject and constitutes it as object. Thus, language is the given for psychoanalysis. It is the lived-Logos that produces both body-subject and world as its reified predications. Alternatively, semiotic phenomenology describes a subject inserted into language and constituting speech. The subject, therefore, while included in language, also includes it—positions it through speech in and as personal being. The subject (in always-already holding the power of authorship, in existentially speaking a parole that constitutes and reconstitutes *langue*) includes the Other and authorizes its authority as also a subject. It is lived-experience as perceptive and expressive that is a given for phenomenology. In its intentional engagement with a world that exceeds it, the lived-body extends its being beyond its own premises, predicating and reifying it as Logos.

These differences in the relation of language to being distinguish the directions from which psychoanalysis and semiotic phenomenology approach the issue of self-consciousness (the representation of self to self). They should be kept in mind in the following sections that concentrate on the function of vision in the formation of self-consciousness, the ego, the subject, the Self. From the phenomenological perspective this present study takes, vision and the act of viewing as a modality of perception have already been described as also expressive, as a "wild signification" exercised anonymously and prepersonally. Such a description does not discount or reject psychoanalytic accounts of the function of vision. However, it does find them incomplete and insufficiently explicative of their own grounds. In the "natural attitude," we may, indeed, live our vision and produce ourselves from the "outside in," and so lose sight of ourselves in the visible images we produce and reify. But we also, and most directly, live those produced images, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, from the "inside out." It is this dialectic of lived-experience that se-

miotie phenomenology describes, a dialectic that, with its tension and reversible movements, produces the *viewing and visible subject*, the viewer who can view a film and understand it as both a *viewing-view* and its production, the *viewed-view*.⁸²

Jacques Lacan: Being Seen and Seeing

The act of viewing, for Lacan, both figuratively and literally gives the infant access to itself as a seeing subject, as a subject whose perception consciously expresses its being. However, as previously summarized, Lacan describes this access from the "outside in." That is, within the anonymous and prepersonal activity of seeing that the sighted infant performs from birth, the discretely lived body-subject that the infant emerges as self-consciousness in its confrontation with the *seen*, with what is *visible* in vision. Thus, self-consciousness and its representation begin with that intentional correlate of vision that is not the intentional act of seeing but rather the intentional object of seeing. There, in the visible object, begins the reflective and reflexive trajectory of vision to Here, to its origin in the visual address of the eye, to the body-subject that is invisible to itself as it sees. Given the direction of this trajectory of vision and its starting point, it is clear why the *mirror* enjoys such a privileged status as both literal and metaphorical object in Lacan's account of the structuration of the Self, the ego-subject. (It is also apparent why film theorists find this particular aspect of Lacan's schema so attractive.)

⁸² For further discussion of the differences between and similar concerns of psychoanalysis and existential phenomenology, see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis: Preface to Hesnard's *L'Oeuvre de Freud*," trans. Alden L. Fisher, *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 18, nos. 1-3 (1982-1983), pp. 67-72; Jacques Lacan, "Merleau-Ponty: In Memoriam," trans. Wilfried Ver Eecke and Dirk De Schutter, *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 18, nos. 1-3 (1982-1983), pp. 73-81; J. B. Pontalis, "The Problem of the Unconscious in Merleau-Ponty's Thought," trans. Wilfried Ver Eecke and Michael Greer, *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 18, nos. 1-3 (1982-1983), pp. 83-96; Dorothea Olkowski, "Merleau-Ponty's Freudianism: From the Body of Consciousness to the Body of Flesh," *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 18, nos. 1-3 (1982-1983), pp. 97-116; Michael Hyde, "Jacques Lacan's Psychoanalytic Theory of Speech and Language," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980), pp. 96-118. For lengthier consideration of the subject, see also Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, *Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), pp. 129-152; and Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970).

It is through the objective agency of the *visible* mirror image (and not the subjective agency of its own situated and embodied visual activity) that the infant comes to see itself seeing and eventually recognizes the actual locus of vision as the *effect* of an externally induced rather than reflexively produced *reflection*. This recognition inaugurates the child's entry into the symbolic world, where it assumes the power and constraints of language in both the conscious and unconscious realms of its being and experience. Although our primary concern here is with the act of seeing and its implications of a body-subject who sees itself and its own activity of seeing, Lacan's mirror stage should not be isolated from his total schema that includes descriptions of other moments or "orders" of the ego's development. (Indeed, this isolation has been a major problem with certain cinematic applications of Lacan to both the film experience and the film viewer.)

Lacan describes three psychoanalytic orders whose relations within and among each other comprise a schema or *system* in which the ego develops. These orders are called the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The Imaginary order, associated with the mirror stage, is "characterized by the prevalence of the relation to the image of the counterpart," the counterpart being "another who is me."⁸³ Within the Imaginary, the image is con-fused with the real. It is *not* perceived as an image (that is, as an expression, a mediation, an SR of some kind). The child sees itself There in the mirror, not Here from where it casts the reflection that is There. Thus, in the Imaginary order, there is no *sign function* as such. (In this regard, it is interesting to note that Eco's semiotic theory identifies specular reflections as *pseudo-signs*. They are not true signs because they are *virtual* images and so do not stand as or for something else. That is, they exist in equality with other things, rather than in similitude.⁸⁴) The Imaginary order, then, is a set of relations based on the play of non-signs, on perception functioning as illusion rather than expression. Pre-symbolic and pro-symbolic, the Imaginary order is not yet symbolic, and it initiates the first "rough-cast" of the ego in an "irremediably deceptive" experience.⁸⁵

The Symbolic order is bound up with the Oedipal phase of ego

⁸³ J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), p. 210.

⁸⁴ Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, pp. 201-202.

⁸⁵ Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 210.

development and the acquisition of language and all such acquisition implies: That is, the discovery of both personal autonomy and dependence upon others, and the power of the word one speaks and the prohibitions of the word as spoken. Most immediately, the entrance into the Symbolic entails the "de-coalescence" of the SR and the SD, and the release of the infant from a false identification with its specular self as it re-cognizes the latter as merely a sign of itself. Such a release into the freedom and constraints of language and the language community, into a recognition of representation, results in the infant's self-objectification. The infant ego divides itself. It becomes not only distinguishable from others but also becomes both a "me" and an "I" (a self that is as it speaks and that also speaks of itself through a medium of objectification, language).

In the acquisition of language, the self also simultaneously divides its conscious significations from its more fearsome and primally predicated impulses and experience. Thus, primary signifiers are repressed to constitute the self's *unconscious*. Entrance into the Symbolic order, then, is repressive as well as liberating, although it is the latter aspect that is appreciated in self-consciousness (even as the infant encounters the linguistic prohibition "No"). As Lacan puts it, aptly using a metaphor appropriate to cinema, "Language permits him [the infant] to consider himself as the engineer, or the *metteur en scène* of the entire Imaginary capture of which he could not be otherwise than the living marionette."⁸⁶ Although not quite qualifying yet as a full-fledged *auteur*, at least the infant has assumed directorial responsibility for his images.⁸⁷

Brief mention must also be made of the order of the Real, although

⁸⁶ Jacques Lacan, "La Direction de la cure," cited in *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*, trans. with notes and commentary by Anthony Wilden (New York: Delta Books, 1968), p. 176.

⁸⁷ I have used the masculine pronoun here quite consciously given the debate feminist film theory has with psychoanalytic theories of subject formation and, specifically, the processes of identification (even as Lacanian psychoanalytic theory has provided the foundation for feminist film theory). Whether a female can be a subject in language (and assume "directorial responsibility" for her images) is at issue within this discursive field, one of the reasons this present study has refused the limited descriptions of subject formation and identification offered by psychoanalytic theory. Although an enormous amount of material has now been written on this issue (without much resolution), the uninitiated reader can find a clear and cogent summary in the first chapter of Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 1-22.

it does not occupy a major place in Lacan's analyses. This set of relations is not to be seen as describing some "objective" reality external to human experience and perception. The Real is not "for-itself." Rather, the Real is that inaugural experience and perception of the world that occurs prior to the constitution of the subject as such. It is the foundation upon which relations of all subsequent orders rest, upon which engagement with the world is based. (As we shall see, generally neglected by Lacan, it is this order that is commensurate with the primary area of Merleau-Ponty's concern.) For Lacan, the order of the Real founds the *need* that is later transformed into *demand* and *desire*, into the will to power that eventually becomes constituted as the ego and evidences itself in language. And, as the foundation upon which all the other orders are based, the relations of the Real transcend both the image and the sign, are their excess, and cannot be contained by them. Thus, according to Freud, and Lacan after him, the relations of the Real are "the domain outside symbolization."⁸⁸ They are, however, not outside the domain of the subject, for "the Real is not synonymous with external reality but rather with what is real for the subject."⁸⁹

What is crucial to keep in mind about the relationship among the three Lacanian psychoanalytic orders is their simultaneous existence and their imbrication in the mature ego. Thus, the Imaginary order, with its mirror phase, is not a set of relations somehow passed "beyond" or "gotten over." Neither is the most fundamental and unarticulated order of the Real, nor the "primary" order of the Symbolic—with its Oedipal phase. (Lacan considers the Symbolic order "primary" because it is the order that "represents and structures" the other orders so they can be reflectively known to consciousness).⁹⁰ This co-existence and intersection of the Imaginary, Real, and Symbolic as functions of the mature subject should contextualize the emphasis here on the visual relations of the mirror stage in the Imaginary order. It is the mirror stage and the Imaginary order that have enjoyed the close attention of film theorists.

Despite the term *stage* or *phase*, and despite its correlation with a particular chronological development of the human infant, for Lacan the mirror stage is as much a structural concept as it is a literal expe-

⁸⁸ Wilden in Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, p. 281; see also p. 295.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

rience. Thus, Wilden comments: "The Imaginary components of the mirror play of the child (as a perceptual relationship) absolutely require the *stade du miroir* to be read in three ways at once: backwards—as a symptom of or a substitute for a much more primordial identification; forwards—as a phase in development; and timelessly—as a relationship best formulated in algorithmic terms."⁹¹ The concept of the mirror stage describes the *presymbolic* phase of ego development in which primary identification occurs. It is a stage that precedes and forever contextualizes the later Oedipal phase that Freud saw as the nexus of ego constitution. However, the infant's primary moment of identification need not come about literally as the result of contemplating a mirror. It occurs through the child's perceptual identification with a powerful and significant Other—at this early point in its life with its mother (or someone who serves the maternal nurturing function). This Other presents a unified and powerful body upon which the helpless infant gazes and upon which the infant depends. The Other is that visible presence whom the infant has come to realize has the autonomous power to remove herself from or make herself available to both vision and the infant's needs.

Prior to the onset of the mirror stage (said to occur between six and eighteen months), the infant has no concept of self as such. Therefore it does not perceive its being as powerless and fragmented (that is, as partially invisible to itself and therefore visible only in parts—an arm here, toes there). Indeed, the infant makes no distinction between self and other. Inaugurally, all is a mass of undifferentiated experience in which inside and outside, self and other, are confused and merge. As Lacan puts it playfully, the infant is born into the world an "*hommelette*"—"a little man and also like a broken egg spreading without hindrance in all directions."⁹² It is in concert with the visual perception of an Other and its own image in the mirror that the infant comes to see and recognize its own coherence and unity. Wilden summarizes the crucial importance of the child's encounter with the mirror or its equivalent:

The significance of children's attempts to appropriate or control their own image in a mirror is that their actions are symptomatic of . . . deeper relationships. Through his perception of the image of another human being, the child discovers a form (*Gestalt*), a corporeal unity,

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 174.

⁹² Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism*, p. 101.

which is lacking to him at this particular stage of his development. . . . Lacan interprets the child's fascination with the other's image as an anticipation of his maturing to a future point of corporeal unity by identifying with this image. Although there are certain difficulties in Lacan's expression of his views on this extremely significant phase of childhood, the central concept is clear: this primordial experience is symptomatic of what makes the *moi* an Imaginary construct. The ego is an *Idealich*, another self, and the *stade du miroir* is the source of all later identification.⁹³

The paradigm of the Imaginary order, the mirror stage, involves the child's conscious perception of self as self, but because this self is alienated as a specular image, the child does not yet perceive this perception as its own self-expression. (This description stresses objectification rather than objectivation.) Thus, "Lacan's view of the *moi* as an alienated self . . . corresponds to the internalization of the other through identification: we are conscious of this self, but unconscious of its origins."⁹⁴ That is, the actually mediated perception of Self There as visible object seen in the mirror (the self at which the infant looks) is granted a power of origin belonging to the perception of Self Here as invisible subject who sees (the self from which the image of self is perceived and from which the expression and reflection of existence and movement originate).

Constituting the ego in its initial casting as a coherence that is visible as a unified corporeal body, the mirror image functions usefully but deceptively. The Self There as an image in the mirror is the "*moi*" or "me" that is predicated by my vision as its direct object. Thus, the Self There is alienated, seen as Other than the Self Here, the subject of my vision (who is not visible but is lived through the eye, the primordial "I"). Further, as it is visible, this direct object (the Self There) becomes identified with the visible Other (the Mother) who also appears in the mirror. Through this process of identification and recognition, the self comes to visibility in consciousness in what Lacan calls *méconnaissance*, a deceptive knowledge. It is only in the acquisition of language and the entrance into the Symbolic order through "the defiles of the signifier" and the relations of the Oedipal phase that the child can redress its original mis-taken notion of itself as Other. It is only through acquiring language that the child can pro-

⁹³ Wilden in Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, p. 160.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

claim and claim itself as the autonomous and invisible subject who constitutes itself in action, speech, and an ongoing recognition—or *reconnaissance*—of its true locus, its own situation.⁹⁵

In their discussion of Lacan's work, Rosalind Coward and John Ellis emphasize that the mirror phase has a double aspect: "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 real, 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*."⁹⁶ The Other and "otherness" are crucial to the productive and yet mis-taken process of self-differentiation. It is the Other—as a third term—who positions the infant in relation to its image. The Other provides the means by which the infant can jubilantly acknowledge its corporeal unity and relate that unified image to its fragmented visible being in a process of narcissistic identification.

What gives the Other this power over the constitution of the infant's self is its presence in the infant's vision as *doubly seen*. A unified body and a source of power, the Other is doubly seen as both a visible object There-in-front-of-the-mirror and a visible object There-in-the-mirror. Thus, the objective Other constitutes a visible system of *resemblance* and *homeomorphism* based on a lived-body that is visible in *both* its terms—quite unlike the infant's body, visible only as a single term, as its image in the mirror. Through this system, and in concert with the sight of its own unified body image seen as an object There in the mirror, the infant is able to differentiate its self-image as *different* from the image of the Other, but to see its self-image as a *visible body-object like the Other*.

The Other thus provides the grounds for the infant's recognition of difference at the same time that it *bears witness to* and *authorizes* that difference as making a difference. That is, the Other is crucial as a logical third term of relation that not only introduces difference as a sufficient condition of identity but also provides similitude as the necessary condition for the recognition of existence. The *double visi-*

⁹⁵ For additional discussion of the concepts of *méconnaissance* and *reconnaissance*, see Wilden in Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, pp. 96–97, 166.

⁹⁶ Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism*, p. 110. (Emphasis mine)

bility of the *same* unified body-subject that is the Other allows the infant to relate the visible mirror image of itself to the "missing term" that is its coherent and visible self not seen before except in fragments—to that other self *in front* of the mirror who sees invisibly yet is *expressed* by its own *reflection*. Thus, through the agency of the Other, the infant enters into a narcissistic engagement with an image that is recognized as its own and different from the image of the Other, but that also is identified with the visibility of the Other and objectified as (is) the image of the Other.

Initially, this narcissism springs from the infant's "jubilant assumption of the specular image . . . in which the 'I' is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other."⁹⁷ However, this jubilant narcissism is dependent upon a "retroactive fantasy" experienced by the infant as it assumes its specular image and precipitates the primordial "I." As mentioned previously, prior to this stage of psychic development, the infant has no sense of self. Therefore, it has no sense of its own visibility as fragmented. It has no sense that it lacks both a corporeal center and conceptual adhesive that would bond all of its separate visible bodily parts together and make of them a coherent unified entity. However, once the mirror-phase has constituted the first casting of the ego as a *corporeal unity*, once the infant sees and knows itself as a self (however "false" the basis for this primary identification), the infant fantasizes *retroactively* about its "body-in-pieces." (Lacan calls this the fantasy of *le corps morcelé*, and it well might be compared here to the film spectator and theorist's "retroactive fantasy" of the "film-in-pieces.")⁹⁸

This fantasy can emerge only within the infant who knows what corporeal unity looks like (much as its complementary fantasy for the film spectator and theorist can occur only from knowledge of the film as a "whole"). Thus, the fantasy is not primordial but retroactive. It is a reflection on the time when the infant visually lived its visible "body-in-pieces," but—having no reflective knowledge of vision or corporeal unity—did not know its body as other than this visible experience. That is, neither unity nor fragmentation had significant presence or meaning for the infant. (Here, in relation to the fantasy

⁹⁷ Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror-Phase as Formative of the Function of the I," trans. Jean Roussel, *New Left Review* 51 (September-October 1968), p. 72.

⁹⁸ For discussion of *le corps morcelé*, see Wilden in Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, p. 174, and Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, pp. 251–252.

of the "film-in-pieces," it is worth recalling Béla Balázs's anecdote about the Siberian girl who, not yet understanding the "corporeal unity" of a film, merely saw its edited close-up images of human heads, torsos, etc., as literal "bodies-in-pieces."⁹⁹ It is the visible self as the unified body reflected in the mirror that happily contradicts the retroactive fantasy of the "body-in-pieces" in the normal child, who seeks again and again the mirror image's verification that the fantasy is not true. Thus, the self-image as *visible object* becomes a *visible Other* who bears witness to, verifies, and authorizes the infant from a necessary but alienated and external situation. There in the mirror. So begins the lifelong fascination with one's mirror image: the basic narcissistic relationship between the child and its visible image that will later mature into an interest in and relationship with others.

Wilden usefully summarizes the alienated emergence of the infant's *ego* at this primary stage as *alter ego*. Discussing Lacan's "Schema L" (the schematic of ego formation), Wilden says:

Lacan shows the dual relationship between *moi* and other as a dual relationship of objectification (and, inevitably, of aggressivity) along the lines of Sartre's analysis of our sadomasochistic relationship to the other who is an object for us, or for whom we make ourselves an object. Aggressivity is intimately linked to identification. . . . the other we fear is often the other we love. The *moi* is thus another, an *alter ego*. In Lacan's interpretation, perception is certainly primary in human experience, but it is the notion of self, rather than that of subjectivity, which perception generates.¹⁰⁰

That is, perception in the presence of the mirror and an Other constitutes the infant's *ego* from outside. This is the *objective self*, the *visible self*, the self that is the direct object of vision as "me." According to Lacan, then, perception generates the seen self rather than the seeing self—the self in its visible objectivity rather than its visual subjectivity.

Thus, in this encounter with the mirror and the Other, the infant is *subjected* to the visible Other who is seen to have the power to bear witness to and authorize the infant's existence. As Wilden continues: "The child's release from this alienating image, if indeed he is re-

⁹⁹ Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art*, trans. Edith Bone. (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), pp. 34–35.

¹⁰⁰ Wilden in Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, pp. 160–161.

leased from it, will occur through his discovery of subjectivity by his appropriation of language from the Other, which is his means of entry into the Symbolic order in the capacity of subject. . . . He begins that crucial moment of entry through the phonemic organization of reality evident in the *Fort! Da!*, which Lacan has never ceased to stress."¹⁰¹ *Fort! Da!* is the infant's vocalization of absence and presence in a crib game noted by Freud. These phonemic oppositions in relation to the game were seen as an articulation of a system of differences necessary to the later entrance into language. As well, they stand as a major symbolization of the absence and presence of the M/Other, an absence or presence that the infant could control in the game as it could not in its real experience.

The movement, then, from *self* to *subjectivity* is accomplished through the power of control and function available to the infant as and through language. The infant cannot generalize and "use" its mirror image; it can, however, generalize and use its sight—as it can generalize and use language.¹⁰² The parallels between this subjective possession of vision (located in the act of seeing rather than as the seen) and the possession of language as subjectivity are apparent as Wilden goes on: "Later the child will appropriate personal pronouns for himself and others, along with the whole category of what linguists call 'shifters.' It is well known that personal pronouns present important difficulties for the child, who usually tends to prefer the apparent *solidity* of a proper name (a case of valid *ostensive* definition) to an 'alienable' word like *I*, which seems to be the property of others and not something designating the child himself."¹⁰³ The "me" in Lacan's schema precedes the "I," as the *seen object* in the mirror-phase takes precedence over the *seeing subject*. The knowledge of the eye finds its self-articulation in the infant's shift of identification in its use of the "I." Vision, in its intentional function, becomes not merely operative but also deliberative.

For Lacan, these transformations occur in the Oedipal phase of the Symbolic order. Unlike my exemplary cat, in its accession to language, the child does acquire consciousness of its own subjectivity. Thus, it can learn to see a film as a vision that is intentional in both

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 161.

¹⁰² For a brief elaboration of this distinction between the possession of one's own image and the ability to generalize and use it, see Richard Wollheim, "The Cabinet of Dr. Lacan," *New York Review of Books*, 25 January 1979, p. 37.

¹⁰³ Wilden in Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, p. 161. (Emphasis mine)

operative and deliberative modes, as a phenomenon that presents both a *seeing act* and its *seen objects* correlated in the irreducible lived-experience of an invisible but implicit and embodied *seeing subject*. While forever entwined with it, the pre-Oedipal mirror phase accedes to the Oedipal phase at that developmental and structural moment when, according to Lacan, the mirror "I" (the infant's image) is deflected in identification to the social "I" (the Other who is seen in the mirror seeing). As Lacan says: "This moment in which the mirror-phase comes to an end inaugurates, by the identification with the *imago* of the fellow and the drama of primordial jealousy (so well high-lighted . . . in the phenomenon of infantile *transitivism*, the dialectic which will henceforth link the "I" to socially elaborated situations."¹⁰⁴ The infant who cries when it *sees* an Other fall down points to this "infantile transitivism" and identification—as does the infant's desire to possess the Other's visible source of pleasure. *The objectified "I" belongs to the same class of visible objects as do those Others who are seen. Thus, the moment of identification with and objectification of the mirror image is a social moment, as well as a moment in which intrasubjective dialogue emerges as a dialectic between the image in the mirror that is "me" and the image in the mirror that sees "me," between the image of the infant that is at once "me" and validating, authorizing, Other.*

Entering into this dyadic social relation and passing through it into the triadic relations of the family and its legislation of culture, entering into the sociality of language, the infant simultaneously alienates itself from its instinctual drives. It identifies these drives from without as the Other who sees them, who names them, and represses them to form the unconscious. As Lacan suggests, this moment that ends the mirror-phase is momentous: "It is this moment that decisively shakes the whole of human knowledge in the mediatization by the desire of the other, constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence by virtue of the competition of the other, and makes the *I* into that system for which every instinctual thrust constitutes a danger, even though it should correspond to a natural maturation—the very normalization of this maturation being henceforth dependent, in man, on a cultural go-between. . . ."¹⁰⁵

The infant, according to this schema, can now *see seeing* as well as

¹⁰⁴ Lacan, "The Mirror-Phase as Formative of the Function of the I," p. 75.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 75–76.

the seen. That is, it can see the act of seeing not merely as externalized and objectivated, but also as alienated—objectified and objectifying. Seeing transfixes the subject from outside in; it is the Other who is seen seeing me. Lacan is hostile, therefore, to what he regards as existential philosophy's claims relative to the "self-sufficiency of consciousness." He writes: "These [existentialist] propositions are denied by all our experience, inasmuch as it teaches us not to regard the ego as centred on the perception-consciousness system, or as organized by the "reality principle"—a principle which is the expression of a scientific prejudice most hostile to the dialectic of knowledge. Our experience shows that we should start instead from the function of mis-recognition which characterizes the ego in all its structures. . . ."¹⁰⁶ Consciousness, Lacan argues, is not self-sufficient. For the acquisition of self-knowledge, it is dependent upon the Other (who serves a variety of Lacanian functions). Being seen—that is, the being of the Other as visible, and the being of the Other as validating the ego's existence by seeing it—is thus privileged in Lacan's "Schema L" over the perceptive act of seeing. As Wilden aptly points out, "An analyst would obviously be less than sympathetic to philosophies taking their departure or their certitude, directly from the cogito, or centered on it."¹⁰⁷

Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Seeing and Being Seen

A psychologist as well as philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty certainly recognized the importance of the infant's perceptual encounter with its own image and the Other to the formation of the ego-subject as an "I," a self-consciousness *visible* to consciousness. He, too, discusses the child's engagement with its specular image and specifically mentions Lacan in his published lecture "The Child's Relation with Others."¹⁰⁸ However, in that essay, Merleau-Ponty suggests that

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁰⁷ Wilden in Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, p. 93.

¹⁰⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Child's Relation with Others," trans. William Cobb, in *The Primacy of Perception*, pp. 135–136. On the major issues covered by this section, see also Hugh J. Silverman, "Merleau-Ponty's New Beginning: Preface to *The Experience of Others*," *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 18, nos. 1–3 (1982–1983), pp. 25–31; and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Experience of Others (1951–1952)," trans. Fred Evans and Hugh J. Silverman, *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 18, nos. 1–3, (1982–1983), pp. 33–63.

Lacan's description of the first casting of the child's ego in the mirror phase is only a *partial* description of that encounter, and that it neglects its foundation in the more fundamental perceptive experience that informs it.

Merleau-Ponty's work indicates that he agrees with Lacan that you can't make an "hommelette" without breaking eggs and that the very young infant is indeed "like a broken egg spreading without hindrance in all directions," possessing no immediate limits or boundaries to its being and becoming that could be considered the self-containment that marks the *ego*.¹⁰⁹ However, Merleau-Ponty's work suggests an emendation of Lacan's description. Phenomenological reflection reveals that, unless unnaturally or pathologically "scrambled," the "hommelette" does have a *center*, a nucleus, a living and lived-in situation from which it spreads out its existence in all directions—not as *ego*, but as an embodied subjectivity. (Indeed, we could refine Lacan's metaphor and suggest that an "hommelette" exists from the beginning as both albumen and yolk contained within a shell—the former comparable to the "id" in its spreading claim upon the world, the latter comparable to the "ego" in its nuclear form, and the shell comparable not only to the marker between different fields of existence but also to the "superego" in its clear marking of existence's limits.) Thus, although the "hommelette" is not *self-contained*, it is *subjectively centered*. Merleau-Ponty does not reject Lacan's description of the relations of the mirror stage but rather radically *incorporates* it—reaffirming the primacy of perception that is lived prereflectively as the subjective body.

Wilden's analysis of Lacan's approach to the mirror stage bears repeating in this context: "In Lacan's interpretation, perception is certainly primary in human experience, but it is the *notion of self*, rather than that of *subjectivity*, which perception generates."¹¹⁰ For Merleau-Ponty, however, *self* is a "notion" or thought founded on an *incarnate subjectivity* that is precisely *not* a Kantian "notion" or reflection generated by perception. Rather, it is lived through the flesh prior to the "notion" of Self and is the ground of that "notion." If incarnate subjectivity is in any way reflective and reflexive, it is so as an *inherent* reflection and reflexivity of the body upon itself in its *adherence* to the world. Merleau-Ponty elaborates this lived reflection of the body that

¹⁰⁹ Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism*, p. 101.

¹¹⁰ Wilden in Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, pp. 160–161. (Emphasis mine)

is not perception as thought of Self but is rather perception *as* the expression of subjectivity:

My body must itself be meshed into the visible world; its power depends precisely on the fact that it has a place *from which* it sees. Thus it is a thing, but a thing I dwell in. . . . There is a relation of my body to itself which makes it the *vinculum* of the self and things. When my right hand touches my left, I am aware of it as a "physical thing." But at the same moment, if I wish, an extraordinary event takes place: here is my left hand as well starting to perceive my right. . . . The physical thing becomes animate. Or, more precisely, it remains what it was (the event does not enrich it), but an exploratory power comes to rest upon or dwell in it. Thus I touch myself touching; my body accomplishes "a sort of reflection." In it, through it, there is not just the unidirectional relationship of the one who perceives to what he perceives. The relationship is reversed, the touched hand becomes the touching hand, and I am obliged to say that the sense of touch here is diffused into the body—that the body is a "perceiving thing," a "subject-object."¹¹¹

Counter to and contextualizing Lacan, Merleau-Ponty describes perception in existence as an original subjectivity. The "thought" of Self is a secondary and reflexive reflection on that original subjectivity. To state it more strongly (and in terms parallel to Wilden's analysis of Lacan's position), for Merleau-Ponty perception is indeed primary in human experience. It is the body's expression of subjectivity as *sense lived through* rather than the "notion" of Self that perception generates.

The empirical incorporation of Lacan's psychoanalytic description by Merleau-Ponty's existential, semiotic phenomenology is a radical transformation of the former. What Richard Lanigan says of the relations of perception to speaking can be seen also as a precise description of the relations between Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the lived-body and Lacan's psychoanalysis of ego-formation: "Merleau-Ponty posits the existence of man as the sense of perception—a semiology of meaning from within—as the ground on which is manifest the figure of speaking—a semiology of meaning from without—which is 'the external existence of the sense' or its essence."¹¹² Lacan's psychoanalytic interpretation of the relations of the

¹¹¹ Merleau-Ponty, "The Philosopher and His Shadow," p. 166.

¹¹² Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 96. For full elaboration, see Maurice Merleau-

mirror stage emerges, therefore, not as the ground for the formation of the ego and the advent of language, but as their figuration. Described by existential and semiotic phenomenology, the *specular image* is always related to and founded upon the existence of a *subjective body*, a *primordial subjectivity*. The literal and figurative reflections of the mirror phase that give rise to the Self in the Imaginary order are always in-formed by the body's perceptive and expressive *accomplishment* in the order of the Real. Perhaps "outside of symbolization," the domain of the Real nonetheless *signifies* the body's intentionality and produces its meaning in the world and in its lived-reflection. Therefore, the relationship of the infant to its specular image is not "just the unidirectional relationship of the one who perceives to what he perceives." The relationship is also reversible. To paraphrase Merleau-Ponty, the seen body becomes the seeing body, and we are obliged to say that the sense of sight is diffused as much into the body as it is into the image of the body, that in front of the mirror the body is both perceiving and a thing, a "subject-object."

Self and Other emerge as discrete but related figures against the common ground of the primordial subjectivity of a body that also has status as an object in touch with the world and materially part of it. As Merleau-Ponty writes:

Thus since the seer is caught up in what he sees, it is still himself he sees: *there is a fundamental narcissism of all vision*. And thus, for the same reason, the vision he exercises, he also undergoes from the things, such that, as many painters have said, *I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is equally passivity*—which is the second and more profound sense of the narcissism: not to see in the outside, as the others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that *the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know who sees and which is seen*. It is this Visibility, this generality of the Sensible in itself, this anonymity innate to Myself that we have previously called *flesh*, and one knows there is no name in traditional philosophy to designate it.¹¹³

There is, for Merleau-Ponty, a reciprocity, a reversibility, a dialectic at work in vision between the seer and the seen, the infant and the

Ponty, *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*, trans. Hugh J. Silverman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1973).

¹¹³ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 139. (Emphasis mine)

image, the Self and the Other Self. However, unlike Lacan's vision, this vision is not regarded as "deceptive" in its emergence as visibility.

As we have seen, it is the deception of the visible that structures Lacan's analysis. For Lacan, the infant's ego emerges in and according to the deceptive, alienating, objectifying character of the relations the infant as seer has to its specular image. It is through a perceptual "mistake," an act of *méconnaissance*, that the little "hommelette" originates the sense of its corporeal limits, meets the resistance of the image that is the Other, and constitutes in this resistance the boundary conditions of its own existence. Without rejecting this description or the differentiation it marks between the Self and the Other, Merleau-Ponty does transform its negativity and literally fleshes out its dialectical and diacritical possibilities. He does this by contextualizing the specular alienation of the mirror encounter within a primordial and immanent knowledge the infant always already possesses—a knowledge of the subjective body lived perceptively from within as "mine." It is this a-deceptive, lived knowledge (a knowledge that might be called *connaissance* in its immanence and immediacy) that informs the mirror relations described by Lacan. This primordial information of the mirror encounter by the subjective body grounds the *objectification* of the subject in the *objectivation* of subjectivity. (Objectivation is ontological in character: the way in which subjectivity produces itself in the world. Objectification is epistemological in character: the way in which the produced subjectivity and the world are apprehended as Self and Other.¹¹⁴) That is, the mirror encounter is less an originating act of *méconnaissance* (mis-taken knowledge) than of *reconnaissance* (knowledge re-taken in a different modality). This *reconnaissance* or reflective knowledge is the infant's awareness that the subjective body can be perceived from without as well as lived perceptively from within.

Thus, where Lacan originates the Self in the "being seen" in the mirror (that is, with the visible), Merleau-Ponty originates subjectivity in the "seeing being" in the mirror (that is, with the visual), in the infant's lived knowledge of the invisible and prepersonal intentional activity of the subjective body, centered and situated in the world. It is this primordial knowledge of the body that contextualizes the vis-

¹¹⁴ Given the unfamiliarity of this distinction, again the reader is directed to Berger and Pullberg, "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness," pp. 196–211.

ible Other seen in the mirror and informs the visible Other with subjective as well as objective status. As Merleau-Ponty elaborates:

The reason why I am able to understand the other person's body and existence "beginning with" the body proper, the reason why the compresence of my "consciousness" and my "body" is prolonged into the compresence of my self and the other person, is that the "I am able to" and "the other person exists" belong here and now to the same world, that the body proper is a premonition of the other person, the *Einfühlung* [spatial and temporal projection], an echo of my incarnation, and that a flash of meaning makes them *substitutable* in the absolute presence of origins.¹¹⁵

The mirror image is understood by the infant, not misunderstood. That is, prereflectively, the body lives a knowledge of its *seeing being as being seen*, a knowledge reflected in the mirror as the *reversibility*, the extensional and substitutable nature, of the specular image. The act of seeing ("I am able to") that is invisible as it is lived from within, and the seen activity ("the other person exists") that is visible as it is lived from without, are both irreducible correlates of vision that—with the body—constitute a *system of connection and commutation* between subjectivity and self-consciousness, and between self and consciousness of the Other as self. Embodied, the Other in the mirror is both seeing and visible, both subject and object in the world, both subjectivity and self for itself, and Other who can see and who can be seen by me. As visible object, the subjective body in its expression of perception initiates, at the most primordial level, a dialectic of human existence that is both intrapersonal and intersubjective, at once privileged and individual in its *self-possession*, and common and social in its *dispossession of itself as other self*.

Focusing on the mirror image, Lacan tends to overlook the bodily presence before it. At best, he emphasizes that body's incapacities and impotence—further reason that the infant is held in such thrall to its specular image and the Other. For Merleau-Ponty, however, no matter how uncoordinated and dependent, that infant body is also a capable and potent body. It is *present to and at and in the world and acting before the mirror and others*, as well as *perceiving the presence and action of others*. The infant's thralldom or subject-ion to the Other is but part of a *system* in which the Self and Other are not nec-

¹¹⁵ Merleau-Ponty, "The Philosopher and His Shadow," p. 175. (Emphasis mine)

essary rivals in subjectivity. Rather, they are co-operative figures constituted against the ground of the primordial experience of the body-being-in-the-world—always given to the “*hommelette*” as *mine*. Centered, but without limits to contain and isolate it from the world it encounters and whose materiality it shares, the infant incorporates others and “takes up” their bodily conduct or style of being in the world as part of a primordial *me*. Merleau-Ponty elaborates:

We must neither treat the origin of consciousness as though it were conscious, in an explicit way, of itself nor treat it as though it were completely closed in on itself. The first *me* is . . . virtual or latent, i.e., unaware of itself in its absolute difference. Consciousness of oneself as a unique individual, whose place can be taken by no one else, comes later and is not primitive. Since the primordial *me* is virtual or latent, egocentrism is not at all the attitude of a *me* that expressly grasps itself (as the term “egocentrism” might lead us to believe). Rather, it is the attitude of a *me* which is unaware of itself and lives as easily in others as it does in itself—but which, being unaware of others in their own separateness as well, in truth is no more conscious of them than of itself.¹¹⁶

The issue that needs explication, then, is not simply how, in Lacan's schematic, the child is able to *reclaim* its subjectivity from its initial subjection to the Other it sees in the mirror. The issue is not, in other words, how the Self (mis-taken as Other) can re-take itself as a subject. Rather, the issue that precedes and contextualizes this problematic is how the infant—born into the world as a subjective body lived always through the modality of a primordial *me*—can recognize the objective body of the Other it incorporates in its perception as also a subjective body. For existential phenomenology, the question is, How can the Other be differentiated as a *subject-for-itself* within my subjectivity that perceives and incorporates the Other as a *subject-for-me*, as my intentional object. Merleau-Ponty poses this original and asymmetrical perception of the Other thus: “In so far as the other person resides in the world, is visible there, and forms a part of my field, he is never an Ego in the sense in which I am one for myself. In order to think of him as a genuine *I*, I ought to think of myself as a mere object for him, which I am prevented from doing

¹¹⁶ Merleau-Ponty, “The Child's Relation with Others,” p. 119.

by the knowledge which I have of myself."¹¹⁷ This asymmetry is balanced, however, by the presence of my body in a world shared by other bodies, by the fact of our mutual and material incarnation. There is a "correlation between consciousness of one's own body and perception of the other" as a subject.¹¹⁸

Obviously, incarnation has special meaning for Merleau-Ponty. It is seen as radically transforming classical psychology's notion of the "psyche" as privately experienced and only inferred from without. The psyche is not inside the incarnate person, just as the meaning is not in a word. Rather, the psyche is incarnate action; it is a "conduct" of the body that describes (and makes visible in the world) a style of being, an intentional and postural schema. This is not behaviorism. Rather, the body's animated display is acknowledged as making sense of the world through its sensible presence in the world. This sense is sensible both subjectively and objectively, from "within" and "without." As Lanigan puts it: "The point that Merleau-Ponty is making is quite succinct: 'The mental . . . is reducible to the structure of behavior.' The assumption in this theory is that the behavior that is visible from the outside by another person is at the same time visible from the inside by the actor, hence 'another person is in principle accessible to me as I am to myself; and we are both objects laid out before an impersonal consciousness.'"¹¹⁹ This "impersonal consciousness" is in no way a transcendental consciousness in the Husserlian sense. Rather, it is a recognition of the transcendence of perspectives, the potential alterity of one's bodily situation in the world which exceeds one's immediate and immanent view and grasp. This recognition brings to awareness both the invisible aspects of a vision usually reduced to the visible and vision's transcendently intersubjective—that is, social—nature.

Incarnate and situated in the world as a sensing and sensible body, the infant lives its primordial *me*—its "psyche"—as a behavior in a world of other bodies and other behaviors. These the infant's body perceives and appropriates as motor possibilities of its own. What occurs when the very young infant smiles in response to a smile (any smile, for we are not talking of personal recognition here) is not an

¹¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 352.

¹¹⁸ Merleau-Ponty, "The Child's Relation with Others," p. 120.

¹¹⁹ Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 101. (Emphasis mine) Internal reference is to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, trans. Alden L. Fisher (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 221–222.

imitation of gesture based on thought, but rather a bodily sympathy with other bodies. As Merleau-Ponty suggests, even prior to the mirror encounter the child incorporates the Other into its own body "unaware of himself and the other as different beings."¹²⁰ This psycho-genesis is precommunicative, but procommunicative—for "the other's intentions somehow play across my body while my intentions play across his."¹²¹ Outside the domain of symbolization, we, nonetheless, are never outside the act of signifying intentionality with that situated but "floating" signifier that is our incarnate being. Thus, Merleau-Ponty says, "Between my consciousness and my body as I experience it, between this phenomenal body of mine and that of another as I see it from the outside, there exists an *internal relation* which causes the other to appear as the *completion of the system*."¹²²

It is precisely such a system that Merleau-Ponty elaborates in "The Child's Relation with Others." This system accounts not for the Self as subjectivity (this, as we have seen, is immanent to prereflective and embodied consciousness), but rather for the Other as subject (as an other "myself," however incorporated within the compass and circumscription of my perception). In its attempt to schematize the positive nature of self-identity in terms of the Other, this "system of four terms" contrasts with Lacan's "schema L," which describes the negative nature of self-identity and a dysfunctional experience of the Other founded in *méconnaissance*. Thus, Merleau-Ponty's system accounts for *subjectivity as intersubjectivity*, whereas Lacan's schema accounts for *subjectivity as objectified*.

Merleau-Ponty describes his "system of four terms":

The problem of the experience of others poses itself, as it were, in a system of four terms: (1) myself, my "psyche"; (2) the image I have of my body by means of the sense of touch or of cenesthesia, which, to be brief, we shall call the "introceptive image" of my own body; (3) the body of the other as seen by me, which we shall call the "visual body"; and (4) a fourth (hypothetical) term which I must reconstitute and guess at—the "psyche" of the other, the other's feeling of his own existence—to the extent that I can imagine or suppose it across the appearances of the other through his visual body.¹²³

¹²⁰ Merleau-Ponty, "The Child's Relation with Others," p. 119.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 352. (Emphasis mine)

¹²³ Merleau-Ponty, "The Child's Relation with Others," p. 115.

Merleau-Ponty's recasting of the classical notion of "psyche" posits in his first term a subjectivity that is not inaccessible from "without" even as it is not publicly lived. Rather, this "psyche" is a subjectivity revealed and expressed through and across the body as the inscription of primal intentional behavior—as a mode of having being. This "my psyche" is primordial self-awareness, experienced by the infant as an undifferentiated and yet centered "me exists" and "me wants." While observations of infant behavior affirm the infant's lack of awareness of its limits and discretion as an entity, they also affirm this primordial sense of "myself." (Infants have long been known to begin crying when they hear *other* infants cry—demonstrating transitivity and incorporation of the Other. But it has also been demonstrated that infants only twenty hours old stop crying when a tape recording of their *own* crying is played to them—evidence of a primordial self-recognition at work.) Thus, as Lanigan points out, Merleau-Ponty's first term ("myself, my 'psyche' ") refers to the self as it is known "prior to the experience of self-as-other or prior to knowing the other"; "myself, my 'psyche' " is "the *cogito* as radical *cogito*."¹²⁴

Merleau-Ponty's second term is the "introceptive image." This term nominates the infant's image of its own body as it is *sensibly lived through*, that is, as it is sensed from *within* by the psyche as also possessing an *exterior* modality of being-in-the-world. It is with regard to this term that Lacan and Merleau-Ponty can be seen to differ radically in their approach to the specular image and the infant's relation to it. As Lanigan describes it, that relation is not the one of duality and rivalry posed by Lacan: "The power of the realization that there is another myself exterior to me and a public figure on display for others is seen most accurately in the experience of seeing oneself in a mirror. In the mirror experience there is the *literal perception of psyche looking at body*, yet the understanding that the image and the psyche are one."¹²⁵

The relation between "myself, my psyche" and my "introceptive image" is one that is lived through *prereflectively*. Nonetheless, it is the relation that presents and initiates sign production in its first casting. "Myself, my psyche" and my "introceptive image" exist in a *reversible* relation of signifier to signified. That is, lived subjectively from within, "myself, my psyche" is the SR of my "introceptive im-

¹²⁴ Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 210.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109. (Emphasis mine)

age" (the SD), but lived objectively from without, as in Lacan's schema, my "introceptive image" is the SR of "myself, my psyche" (the SD).

The relation Merleau-Ponty describes between "myself, my psyche" and my "introceptive image" is not, as Lacanian psychoanalysis would have it, a "coalescence of the signifier with the signified" in the Imaginary order.¹²⁶ Rather, these relations are seen as a dialectic that emerges in the mirror phase as the "synthesis of coexistence," as two modalities of being *one-self*.¹²⁷ It is through this lived and pre-reflective synthesis that the infant is able to come to a state of reflection, to understand the lived logic whereby "unless I have an exterior others have no interior."¹²⁸ It is the relation between the first two of Merleau-Ponty's four terms which provides the infant two modalities of being and two "views" of its subjective body. Thus, this relation of "myself, my psyche" and "introceptive image" provides the infant with an *intrasubjective system* whereby the other can be systemically understood not only as an *object-in-itself-for-my-perception* but also as a *subject-for-itself-and-as-me*.

The "visual body," the third term in Merleau-Ponty's system, designates the body of the other as it is visible and seen by me. With respect to that initial relation that holds between "myself, my psyche" and my "introceptive image," the "visual body" of the other is the *visible* presence that allows me access to the other as a being such as myself and who, by virtue of my own experience of myself, is hypothetically in possession of its own being introceptively. As Lanigan puts it: "My sense of body and that of another's body come to constitute a *common* form or structure that is knowable by contrast and comparison. In this analysis of likeness and dissimilarity of corporeal perception there are two ways in which to view the other."¹²⁹ The body thus provides a *commutative function* between my *introceptivity* and the other's *exteriority*—that is, between seeing and being seen, between perception and its expression. The other's body can be understood as *simultaneously both perceptive and expressive* because I have a body that I live as capable of these two modalities, a body that reversibly functions as both SR and SD. "In short," Lanigan says, "the visual body is the medium through which the individ-

¹²⁶ Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 210.

¹²⁷ Merleau-Ponty, "The Child's Relation with Others," p. 140.

¹²⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 373.

¹²⁹ Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 110. (Emphasis mine)

ual body-subject comes to an awareness of others whose bodily existence bears analogy to his own."¹³⁰

Through this "visual body" and its mode of being that parallels my "introceptive image" as the body's "other side" (its visible expression), a fourth term emerges. This is the other's "psyche," the "other's feeling of his own existence" in the world and with others (one of whom is I, perceived by the other as a "visual body"). Unlike my own "psyche," however, the other's "psyche" is hypothetical in that I do not live it. It is thus intuited logically within a co-operative system as an "invisible" term not immanent as my perception. That is, the other's "psyche" is the SD of its "visual body" for me—and the other's "visual body" is the SR of another "psyche's" existence as a "myself." Because of my own lived knowledge of myself as constituted in the relation "myself, my psyche" and "introceptive image," I am able to also comprehend the other's "visual body" in its function as an SD for the relation between the other's "introceptive image" and "myself, my psyche," a relation that transcends my immanent experience but is systemically like my immanent experience. This "system of four terms" inaugurates the person as both individual and social, as both privately and publicly available, as both a self and an other whose lived-body constitutes a language with which I am—and you are.

Evoking the relations of the sign as ontological and the person as textual, Merleau-Ponty wrote in his notes for *The Visible and the Invisible*:

The other, not as a "consciousness," but as an inhabitant of a body, and consequently of the world. Where is the other in this body that I see? He is (like the meaning of the sentence) immanent in this body (one cannot detach him from it and pose him apart) and yet, more than the sum of the signs or the significations conveyed by them. He is that of which they are always the partial and nonexhaustive image—and who nonetheless is attested wholly in each of them. Always in the process of an unfinished incarnation—Beyond the objective body as the sense of the painting is beyond the canvas.¹³¹

In Merleau-Ponty's logical system of four terms, I can recognize reflectively the presence of another subjectivity that transcends my perception even as it is present to my perception and is grasped by it.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 111.

¹³¹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 209–210.

The other and I mirror each other. We acknowledge a reciprocity of being—as “seeing being” and “being seen,” as transcendent and immanent, as invisible and visible.

Certainly, as Lacan's schematic suggests, there can be a competitive rivalry between Self and Other, a relation in which one is subjected to the other and becomes an object rather than a subject. However, such rivalry rests upon an implicit and lived knowledge of the reversibility of its terms. The dualism it announces is false. There could be no rivalry were we not vulnerable to each other as each other. Lanigan points out, “What one must be aware of is the separation of myself and the other, not as subject and object, but as corporality and corporality with the possibility of psychic reflection that is a claim to immediacy (i.e., the lived-body experience).”¹³² It is this corporality that the infant lives from birth and that is reflected in the mirror and appears beside it. It is this corporality that serves as the commutation between the self and others, between perception and expression, between immanence and transcendence, between flesh and language. Whether seen as a specular image or as a substantial body, “the other and I are the possibility of one another and can know each other as the like body of myself. And, the presence of the other moves from a possibility, from the potential X, to the constituted other through the action that is gesture, facial movement, bodily position, and speech to an experienced actuality.”¹³³

It is as the acting body that the other becomes constituted for me as another subjectivity. Through its intentional activity, Merleau-Ponty tells us, “the other body has ceased to be a mere fragment of the world, and becomes the theater of a certain process of elaboration, and, as it were, a certain ‘view’ of the world.” And, he continues:

I say that it is another person, a second self, and this I know in the first place because this living body has the same structure as mine. I experience my own body as the power of adopting certain forms of behaviour and a certain world, and I am given to myself merely as a certain hold upon the world: now, it is precisely my body which perceives the body of another person, and discovers in that other's body a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions, a familiar way of dealing with the world. Henceforth, as the parts of my body together comprise a system, so my body and the other person's are one whole, two sides of

¹³² Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 115.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

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*one and the same phenomenon, and the anonymous existence of which my body is the ever-renewed trace henceforth inhabits both bodies simultaneously.*¹³⁴

By virtue of our common *form* and our common *wor(l)d*, we live both intrapersonally and intersubjectively from the moment of our birth. However, we share neither our *bodily situation* in the world nor our immanent experience of its intentional spatialization lived in the world as a *uniquely inscribed temporalization*. Self and Other emerge from these differences as the diacritical markers of particular modes of existence, but they do so against the common ground of our anonymous similarity as beings-in-the-world. Seeing and being seen, the viewing subject is visible to other subjects because she is incarnate and shares a world, because she has a point of view that can transcend, displace, and negate itself in intentional action. Seeing and being seen is an open system that signifies flesh and materiality as meaningful and allows for the possibility of communication in all its modalities. This is semiotics as it begins with the subjectively lived objective body, always already thrown into the world as both privately and publicly experienced. Thus, counter to Lacan, Merleau-Ponty says, "Even if each of us has his own archetype of the other, the very fact that he is open to participation, that he is a sort of cipher or symbol of the other, obliges us to pose the problem of the other, not as a problem of access to another nihilation, but as a problem of initiation into a symbolics and a typicality of the others of which the *being for itself* and the *being for the other* are reflective variants and not the essential forms."¹³⁵

It is this symbolics, this system of four terms, that the infant learns in the mirror or its analogues. And it is this symbolics that initiates us into the bodily reflection that gives us the visibility of our own vision. We become viewing subjects in possession of our own eyes, our own sight. We know "what *we* and what *seeing* are."

FILM AND/AS VIEWING SUBJECT

There is no one who would argue the claim that the act of viewing is essential to the film experience and to cinematic communication.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 353-354. (Emphasis mine)

¹³⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 82n.

¹³⁶ The fact that a film can be experienced by blind people does not counter this

pable of signifying in the world and to others its own and the world's significance. Thus, this "sense of perception" is experienced within my own sense of perception as the expression of perception, "a semiology of meaning from without—which is 'the external existence of the sense' or its essence."¹⁴⁷

The film presents an analogue of my own existence as embodied and significant. It is perceptive, expressive, and always in the process of becoming that being which is the conscious and reflected experience of its own expressed history. Like ourselves, the film's vision is an irreducible viewing-view and viewed-view, a lived vision that grasps a world and a reflective vision that reflexively grasps itself and its own signification. It is also a vision that is situated, finite, and necessarily diacritical in its direction and movement. Like our own vision, the film's vision is an embodied vision—even though, unlike our encounter with the visual experience of others, we do not usually see its "visual body." It is to the nature and function of the film's "body" that we turn in the next chapter. However, in closing this chapter, we must consider certain aspects of the human body that have particularly occupied contemporary film theory.

WHOSE BODY?

A BRIEF MEDITATION ON SEXUAL DIFFERENCE AND OTHER BODILY DISCRIMINATIONS

Except for comments in the Preface, a few parenthetical remarks, and a note or two, thus far I have avoided particularizing the body in terms of gender (or, for that matter, of race). This neglect has been purposeful. First, insofar as the present project is a response to the constraints of a binary thinking that would limit description of the terrain and terms of embodied vision as it relates to cinematic experience, I have resisted introducing the accepted terminology of "sexual difference" or starting my description relying on the ground staked out by dominant theoretical discourse. Second, insofar as any discussion of the body's specificity "outside" of the terms provided by dominant discourse calls for a new mode of articulation, it seemed important to introduce and work through the process and language of phenomenological description by first focusing on the body's ac-

¹⁴⁷ Lanigan, *Speaking and Semiology*, p. 96.

tivity of visual perception and visible expression. Third, insofar as existential and semiotic phenomenology suggests that "coding" and containing the body's excessive, mobile, and "wild" signification is a cultural and historical activity that stakes out upon the body's broader meaning-producing field a limited and mutable circumscription of significance, it has seemed important to introduce the lived-body in terms of its essential ontological functions—that is, those functions that do not precede, but do provide the ground for, the marking of and discrimination against the lived-body and its excessive, ambiguous, and over-running semiosis. The ground of discrete, strategic, and contested areas of value, differentiation, and discrimination, the lived-body is never merely or wholly male or female, white or black. (To initially take it up in such terms is an essentializing act that confuses epistemological qualifications with ontological conditions.) Rather, the lived-body is excessive and ambiguous in its materiality, its polymorphism, and its production of existential meaning. It manifests "the fleshy consciousness which inhabits a multi-dimensional field where the senses intermingle, a field open to a multiplicity of possible foci and interpretations. In Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the ambiguity and overflowing of perceptual experience we find the portent of the *différance* on which later French writers dwell."¹⁴⁸

This section can suggest only briefly a direction and method for the further investigation of human embodiment as it is, first, always an essential set of ontological functions that enable "being-in-the-world" at all, and, second, always a qualified and specific set of epistemological functions that determine "being-in-a-particular-world" in a particular modality. The primary focus of this current work is on the ontological conditions of embodiment—specifically, insofar as they inform the existential activity of vision and suggest a system of commutation that provides the grounds for cinematic intelligibility. However, in no way does this focus preclude, deny, or contradict the simultaneous epistemological conditions by which embodiment is culturally and historically known in its materiality and nominated as a limited set of discriminations. The essential body is always also a qualified body.

¹⁴⁸ Jeffner Allen and Iris Marion Young, introduction to *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy*, ed. Jeffner Allen and Iris Marion Young (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1989), p. 5.

Cultural and historical practices always both generalize and discriminate in relation to the lived-body—on the one hand, recognizing its capacity as a vehicle of signification and its wide variety of signifying functions, and, on the other, reconstituting and containing its semiotic freedom by selecting from its excessive and particular features a limited number of binarily related, marked and unmarked elements.¹⁴⁹ Those features of bodily existence marked as most significant by and within our global culture and historical time are, of course, the body's "sex" and the body's "race." However, there are also other features of the body that have been marked as culturally and historically significant, that have been "given" meanings "taken up" by those living their bodies in the binary—and unequivocal—terms of the "marked" and "unmarked." Thus, focusing on the marked term (the "figure" selected against the invisible and "natural" ground that is the unmarked term and the cultural dominant), we can add to the "female" body and the "colored" body further significant discriminations: the "diseased" body, the "impaired" body, the "fat" body, the "old" body, and even the "deprived" body. (Along with "gender" and "race," "class" also makes its mark upon the body and the body its mark—and thus is open to phenomenological description.) These are the lived-bodies significantly marked and "disfigured" in our current culture. The term *disfigured* here is not used poetically but literally. That is, I am using the term with emphasis on its Latin roots: "*dis*-(in sense of 'spoiling') + *figurare*, to fashion, form."¹⁵⁰ Although to re-mark a bodily aspect or quality is to take it as a figure, it is also to spoil, mar, harm the lived-body *as a whole*. Marked elements thus *de-face* the lived-body in a synecdoche that refuses the body-subject: its existence as intentional and its activity of becoming.

I have introduced this variety of marked or "disfigured" bodies here so that the section's primary and limited focus on issues surrounding the discrimination of (and against) the "female" body can contextualize and be contextualized within a broader range of culturally significant bodily discriminations. By introducing such discrimi-

¹⁴⁹ For elaboration of the logic informing "marked" and "unmarked" terms in communication and language theory, see Elmar Holenstein, *Roman Jakobson's Approach to Language: Phenomenological Structuralism*, trans. Catherine Schelbert and Tarcisius Schelbert (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976), p. 131.

¹⁵⁰ *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*, College ed. (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1966), p. 419.

nations now, I also hope that the models of phenomenological inquiry used by certain feminist philosophers to describe the lived-body experience of "women" in a culture that marks or "disfigures" lived-bodies as "female" might be suggestive for film theory and its descriptions of other discriminate lived-body experience in its engagement of cinema.

Insofar as it has focused on the human body at all, film theory has emphasized the body's "sexual difference" and the social construction of its gender, particularly as both relate to the processes of spectatorial identification and visual pleasure.¹⁵¹ More recently, attention has also focused on the body's ethnicity and "racial difference"—or (only a bit less abstractly, and more specifically) on the spectatorial experience of "people of color."¹⁵² In the first instance, theories of sexuality, sexual difference, and spectatorial engagement have

¹⁵¹ The literature here is vast. For a sampling of book-length studies and anthologies focused on these issues, the reader is directed not only to the previously cited de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't*; Doane, *The Desire to Desire*; and Studlar, *In the Realm of Pleasure*; but also to Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1987); Lucy Fischer, *Shot/Countershot: A Dialogue on Women and Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989); Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1981); E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York: Methuen, 1983); Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), and *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985); Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (New York: Methuen, 1984), and *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1988); Constance Penley, *The Future of an Illusion: Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis* (Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989); Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), and *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1988); Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams, eds., *Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism*, The American Film Institute Monograph Series, Vol. 3 (Frederick, MD: Univ. Publications of America, 1984); and Constance Penley, ed., *Feminism and Film Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

¹⁵² In comparison to the work available on sexual difference and cinematic identification, the theoretical literature here is scant and has tended to focus on "black" representation and spectatorship. For a sampling (as well as further bibliographic material), see Kobena Mercer, ed., *Black Film/British Cinema*, ICA Document 7 (London: British Film Institute Production Special, 1988); Mbye Cham and Claire Andrade-Watkins, eds., *BlackFrames: Critical Perspectives on Black Independent Cinema* (Boston: MIT Press, 1988); "Racism, Colonialism, and the Cinema," Special Issue, *Screen* 24, no. 2 (March-April 1983); "Other Cinemas, Other Criticisms," Special Issue, *Screen* 26, nos. 3-4 (May-August 1985); and "The Last 'Special Issue' on Race?" *Screen* 19, no. 4 (Autumn 1988).

emerged primarily within the context of psychoanalytic discourse (even when this libidinal theory of the subject is characterized by feminist film theorists as universalizing, patriarchally biased, and heterosexist). In the second instance, the issue of "race" and its information of spectatorship has emerged primarily within the context of colonial discourse analysis and its concern with structures of power, domination and subordination, centrality and marginality.

It is hardly surprising that, in the first instance, the problem of "sexual difference" has been focused on the marked term of "female" spectatorship (and, more recently, on sexual orientation focused on the marked terms of "gay/lesbian/bisexual" spectatorship). In the second instance, the problem of "race" has devolved around the marked term of "colored" spectatorship.¹⁵³ In both instances, a common sense of exclusion is articulated—exclusion both from the domain of cinematic expression and from the domain of theory. Both the expression of cinematic perception and the language of theory are regarded as suspect and limited but are all that is available to describe a range of human experience that neither cinema nor theory apparently can—or cares to—nominate and describe. Thus, for those whose experience has been elided or marginalized within the homogenizing rhetoric of culturally dominant discourses, a major task has been to locate a "place" from which women, people of diverse sexual orientations, and "people of color" can speak, and to find a "language" that can express not only the perception of their differences, but also their different perceptions.

Existential and semiotic phenomenology maintains that "place" and "language" can be found in the unique situation of each lived-body, even as it inhabits and moves in a social world of other lived-bodies that would deny its rightful residence and constrain its movements. What is often forgotten both in the homogenizing practices of dominant cinema and in abstract and "objective" theories of spectatorship is that the *particular* human lived-body (specifically lived as "my body") is *in excess* of the historical and analytic systems available to codify, contain, and even negate it. However, although perfectly consonant with the expressed aims of existential phenomenology and its insistence on meaning as always contingent and contextual as

¹⁵³ Of particular interest here is an attempt to deconstruct the unmarked and grounding term of racial difference; *white*. See Richard Dyer, "White," *Screen* 19, no. 4 (Autumn 1988), pp. 44–64.

it is individually, but also socially, lived by embodied subjects, this assertion in some ways radically challenges existential phenomenology's actual practice of "radical" description. Even Merleau-Ponty, whose contribution to phenomenology has been an insistence upon and elaborate description of human embodiment as the ground of all meaning and semiosis, has neglected any consideration of bodily existence as it is culturally and historically lived in certain forms of critical differentiation and discrimination. This is to say that the "lived-body" of existential and semiotic phenomenology has been explicitly articulated as "every body" and "any body" (even as it has implicitly assumed a male, heterosexual, and white body).¹⁵⁴ Sexual difference (and orientation) and "racial" difference have been ignored, although each human lived-body is, to at least some degree, a sexed and sexual body, and each has a skin, one of its qualities being color. This oversight and its implications have not gone unnoticed or uncriticized by feminist philosophers—even as many of them find in existential phenomenology a positive mode of reflection on particular forms of lived experience and a language that accommodates the latter's description.

On the one hand, certain feminist philosophers are drawn to existential phenomenology as "a philosophy of liberation that recognizes the potential for change exercised by individual and collective action."¹⁵⁵ Insofar as existential phenomenology emphasizes the lived-body in its situated freedom and its continual activity of self-displacement or "becoming" and understands even "the most apparently immutable human attributes . . . to be the product of human definition and thus subject to change," existential phenomenology offers feminists a positive context for reflection.¹⁵⁶ That is, as both a philosophy and reflective procedure, existential phenomenology interrogates the "given" and the "natural" determinants of existence and suggests that they might be and indeed could be otherwise. As Jeffner Allen puts it: "The excitement of existentialism, for a feminist philosopher such as myself, is its unwavering affirmation of change. Existential

¹⁵⁴ For examples and elaboration of this critique, see Jeffner Allen, "Through the Wild Region: An Essay in Phenomenological Feminism," *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 18, nos. 1-3 (1982-1983), pp. 241-256; and Judith Butler, "Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description: A Feminist Critique of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*," in *The Thinking Muse*, pp. 85-100.

¹⁵⁵ Allen and Young, introduction to *The Thinking Muse*, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

emphasis on the primacy of existence over essence shows that I have no "nature": I am not destined to enact the dictates of biology, social custom, or political institutions. I am what I become through my choices to resist fixity and to create a new freedom. . . . change is effected through an intense focus on the possibilities which lie, albeit ambiguously, in my worlds of experience."¹⁵⁷ In this sense, although emphasizing its central task as radical description, existential phenomenology challenges normative experience and opens the way to revolutionary action. "The fact that one is a slave today determines nothing about one's being tomorrow." "One is not born a woman. Femininity and masculinity are socially defined forms of identity that need not . . . exist at all."¹⁵⁸

On the other hand, existential phenomenology has been subject to critique from feminist philosophers. Indeed, whatever possibilities it offers for the radical description of existence and experience and however much it has challenged categorical and binary thinking, existential phenomenology is also rightfully seen as itself historically patriarchal. That is, in its project of describing and interpreting *human* being-in-the-world and the experience and significance lived and constituted by the *body-subject*, existential phenomenology has encountered the same kind of feminist critique that has been leveled at other "humanisms." Apart from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (its own feminist existentialism limited by patriarchal and binary ascriptions of activity and passivity linked to sexual difference), the insights that one is not born a woman and that femininity and masculinity are social forms that need not exist at all are not articulated in the philosophical canon.¹⁵⁹ Thus, despite her enthusiasm for existential phenomenology, Jeffner Allen also writes, "To the extent that existential description and the concepts which animate that description equate the masculine with the human, existentialism renders a reductive and misleading account of experience, specifically, of women's experience."¹⁶⁰

Existential phenomenology in general (as well as Merleau-Ponty's work in particular) assumes "the neutrality and universality of the

¹⁵⁷ Jeffner Allen, "An Introduction to Patriarchal Existentialism: A Proposal for a Way Out of Existential Patriarchy," in *The Thinking Muse*, p. 71.

¹⁵⁸ Allen and Young, introduction to *The Thinking Muse*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952).

¹⁶⁰ Allen, "An Introduction to Patriarchal Existentialism," *The Thinking Muse*, p. 72.

subject" and "devalues gender."¹⁶¹ (For similar reasons, it also devalues "race" and "ethnicity.") In a powerful deconstruction of Merleau-Ponty's "The Body in Its Sexual Being" (an unusually brief and disturbingly vague chapter in the *Phenomenology of Perception*), Judith Butler summarizes the philosopher's implicit patriarchal and heterosexual orientation, what she calls his "sexual Cartesianism":

Merleau-Ponty's conception of the "subject" is . . . problematic in virtue of its abstract and anonymous status, as if the subject described were a universal subject or structured existing subjects universally. Devoid of a gender, this subject is presumed to characterize all genders. On the one hand, this pre-sumption devalues gender as a relevant category in the description of lived bodily experience. On the other hand, inasmuch as the subject described resembles a culturally constructed male subject, it consecrates masculine identity as the model for the human subject, thereby devaluing, not gender, but women.

Merleau-Ponty's explicit avoidance of gender as a relevant concern in the description of lived experience, and his implicit universalization of the male subject, are aided by a methodology that fails to acknowledge the historicity of sexuality and of bodies. For a concrete description of lived experience, it seems crucial to ask *whose* sexuality and *whose* bodies are being described, for "sexuality" and "bodies" remain abstractions without first being situated in concrete social and cultural contexts.¹⁶²

Arguing that critical deconstruction of existential phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty's devaluation of gender and of women is a major task of feminist philosophy, Butler nonetheless calls for a "feminist appropriation of Merleau-Ponty." Appreciating the philosopher's emphasis on the body as expressing and dramatizing existential themes, Butler suggests that insofar as these themes are "gender-specific and fully historicized," phenomenological reflection allows access to and description of "a scene of cultural struggle, improvisation, and innovation, a domain in which the intimate and the political converge . . . a dramatic opportunity for expression, analysis, and change. The terms of this inquiry, however, will not be found in the

¹⁶¹ Allen and Young, introduction to *The Thinking Muse*, p. 16.

¹⁶² Butler, "Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description," *The Thinking Muse*, p. 98.

texts of Merleau-Ponty, but in the works of philosophical feminism. . . ."163

Thus, it is not to Merleau-Ponty, but to a feminist philosopher that I will turn for phenomenological descriptions of lived-body experience that is gender-specific and historicized. The work of Iris M. Young is exemplary in providing a model that, on the one hand, is based on certain ontological assumptions about embodiment shared with Merleau-Ponty and, on the other hand, qualifies the character of a specific body as it is marked, constrained, and lived as "female" in our present culture.¹⁶⁴ Young's phenomenological descriptions of women's experience are positive as well as critical; they focus on the particular and quite distinctive pleasures of being a female body as well as on the ways in which, in certain cultures such as our own, the female body-subject has, in the performance of certain intentional projects, often lived her body tentatively and in heightened consciousness of it as an object.

Of particular relevance here is Young's "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality." On the one hand, the essay criticizes phenomenological description that has not lived up to its radical aspirations and has failed to describe adequately "the modalities, meaning, and implications of the difference between 'masculine' and 'feminine' body comportment and movement."¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, Young uses phenomenological description to trace "some of the basic modalities of feminine body comportment, manner of moving, and relation in space" in "women situated in contemporary, advanced industrial, urban, and commercial society" and to thematize the "intelligibility and significance" of "certain observable and rather ordinary ways in which women in our society typically comport themselves and move differently from the ways that men do."¹⁶⁶ (Young is very careful to indi-

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁶⁴ See, particularly, Iris M. Young, "Pregnant Subjectivity and the Limits of Existential Phenomenology," in *Descriptions*, ed. Don Ihde and Hugh J. Silverman (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1985), pp. 25-34; "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality," in *The Thinking Muse*, pp. 51-70; and "Breasted Experience: The Look and the Feeling," in *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990), pp. 189-209.

¹⁶⁵ Young, "Throwing Like a Girl," in *The Thinking Muse*, p. 52.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

cate on what cultural and historical bases and within what limits she presumes to thematize comportment and movement as "feminine" and therefore "typical" of "women.") At first glance, Young's essay might seem irrelevant to our concerns here with sexual difference and spectatorship. Her major focus is on "activities which relate to the comportment or orientation of the body as a whole, which entail gross movement, or which require the enlistment of strength and the confrontation of the body's capacities and possibilities with the resistance and malleability of things," activities that aim "at the accomplishment of a definite purpose or task."¹⁶⁷ Nonetheless, insofar as vision is an existential activity that emerges within an entire bodily schema and "orientation of the body as a whole toward things and its environment,"¹⁶⁸ Young's phenomenology of purposive action may reveal the bodily in-formation of women's experience of spectatorship (whether as film-goer or filmmaker).

Young begins with a phenomenological description of ordinary activities, noting empirically observable and specific features of women's bodily comportment, motility, and use of space—particularly as they are differentiated from male behavior in the performance of similar tasks. These features include "a failure to make full use of the body's spatial and lateral potentialities"; a relative lack of bodily "openness" in "gait and stride" and a tendency to close the body in on itself whether sitting, walking, or carrying objects; not putting the whole body into engagement with "tasks that require force, strength, and muscular coordination"; the tendency to concentrate motion in "one body part"; tentative rather than "fluid and directed motion"; and limited reaching, extending, leaning, stretching, or following through "in the direction of her intention."¹⁶⁹ In relation to space, Young also describes how, even in sports activities, women tend to "remain in one place more often than men" and "react" within that constricted space to objects that approach them rather than appropriating space in an active movement toward objects.¹⁷⁰

These observable differences between men and women are in no way attributed to biological difference or some inherent feminine or masculine "nature." Rather, and as might be expected, Young lays out a number of historical and cultural factors that might "explain"

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 55–56.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 57.

the difference—and again indicates that her descriptions and generalizations are limited in their claims. As a phenomenologist, however, Young is less interested in sociological explanation than in the explication of the lived meaning of these bodily differences. Thus, she proceeds to a phenomenological reduction or “thematization” of the features mentioned above. She tells us: “The three modalities of feminine motility are that feminine movement exhibits an *ambiguous transcendence*, an *inhibited intentionality*, and a *discontinuous unity* with its surroundings. A source of these contradictory modalities is the bodily self-reference of feminine comportment, which derives from the woman’s experience of her body as a *thing* at the same time that she experiences it as a capacity.”¹⁷¹ As has been indicated previously, the lived-body has been described by phenomenology as both immanent and transcendent. An object in the world and immanent in its materiality and situation, the body is transcendent nonetheless; it is lived as a subject, as intentional, as “pure fluid action, the continuous calling forth of capacities, which are applied to the world.”¹⁷² Young, however, points out that relative to masculine bodily existence “feminine bodily existence . . . is *overlaid* with immanence, even as it moves out toward the world.”¹⁷³ Only part of a woman’s body moves toward the accomplishment of a given task, “while the rest remains rooted in immanence.”¹⁷⁴ Unsure of her physical capacity, often finding it unwieldy or expecting it to be inadequate, attempting tasks the woman “often lives her body as a burden, which must be dragged and prodded along, and at the same time protected.”¹⁷⁵ Hence, the lived-body’s transcendence is ambiguous when it is lived as a woman.

Similarly, in the culture and historical moment of which Young speaks, living one’s body as a woman in certain gross motor activities inhibits its expression of intentionality, constitutes a contradiction (or dialectic) between the lived-body’s inherent “I can” and the feminine body’s acculturated “I cannot.” (One can also see this contradiction or dialectic in men when they are engaged in “purposeless” or “aesthetic” motion such as social dancing.) Although any lived-body has to deal with the contradiction between its own intentional aims and

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

the world's "opacities and resistances," the woman's lived-body often experiences this contradiction as the very structure of her intentional aims. Young points out: "To the extent that feminine bodily existence is an inhibited intentionality . . . the same set of possibilities which appears correlative to its intentions also appears as a system of frustrations correlative to its hesitations. By repressing or withholding its own motile energy, feminine bodily existence frequently projects an 'I can' and an 'I cannot' with respect to the very same end."¹⁷⁶

Previous discussion has also emphasized the lived-body's synoptic and synthesizing functions, its existence as a unified field and an organizing agency through which engagement in the world sensibly coheres as significant experience. Thematizing the various features of feminine comportment and motility, Young, however, suggests that feminine bodily existence "stands in *discontinuous unity* with both itself and its surroundings."¹⁷⁷ Performing their bodies only in part(s) rather than as a whole relative to certain motor tasks, women's motion is discontinuous with itself, that is, "that part of the body which is transcending toward an aim is in relative disunity from those which remain immobile. The undirectedness and wasted motion which is often an aspect of feminine engagement in a task also manifests this lack of body unity."¹⁷⁸ All three of the modalities of feminine bodily existence thematized by Young are structured in contradiction. And all have their source in the fact that, for women, "the body frequently is both subject and object for itself at the same time and in reference to the same act," an experience heightened in a culture in which a woman's body is regarded as "a *thing* which exists as looked at and acted upon."¹⁷⁹

This observation, of course, says nothing new, particularly to feminist film theorists who have spent most of their efforts in laying out the "split subjectivity" that marks the female spectator who exists as both subject and object of what has been argued is essentially the cinema's male gaze. What is new, however, is that Young has reached this observation not through psychoanalysis but through phenomenological description and thematization of empirically observable phenomena—and she has described not essential structures

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 60–61.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

from which there is no escape but existential structures shaped by culture and history that could be otherwise. As well, of particular usefulness is her further elaboration from these data of a particular *feminine spatiality*. As has been discussed previously, space is not an abstract, objective category for phenomenology. Rather, it is lived and significantly constituted as the *relation* between the intentional body-subject prospecting and acting and the objective world that provides the context and horizons for projects and action. Thus, Young says: "If there are particular modalities of feminine bodily comportment and motility, then it must follow that there are also particular modalities of feminine spatiality. Feminine existence lives space as *enclosed* or *confining*, as having a *dual* structure and the feminine existent finds herself as *positioned* in space."¹⁸⁰

Young notes that women appear to have a more clear sense of the boundaries of their bodies than do men and that they do not fully use or inhabit the phenomenal space that is physically available to them. Specifically, "Feminine existence appears to posit an existential enclosure between herself and the space surrounding her, in such a way that the space which belongs to her and is available to her grasp and manipulation is constricted, and the space beyond is not available to her movement."¹⁸¹ Feminine existence also often experiences space as dually structured—the noematic complement to the inhibited intentionality informing certain feminine noetic activity as both an "I can" and "I cannot." Young describes this double and discontinuous spatiality as a

space which is "yonder" and not linked with my own body possibilities, and the enclosed space which is "here," which I inhabit with my bodily possibilities.

The space of the "yonder" is a space in which feminine existence projects possibilities in the sense of understanding that "someone" could move within it, but not I. Thus the space of the "yonder" exists for feminine existence, but only as that which she is looking into, rather than moving in.¹⁸²

How particularly poignant and new this description is in relation to, for example, the final image of a film like *Stella Dallas* (King Vidor,

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁸² Ibid.

1937). For women whose lived experience of space is so separated, how much more moving and significant cinematic images of exclusion and longing become when they are articulated as the looking from a constricted "here" into an other "yonder" space which they can intend but cannot inhabit.

Young also points out that feminine existence generally experiences itself not as constituting or *positing* space through its activity as a *body-subject*, but rather as *positioned* in space as a *body-object*. As a body-subject, one does not exist in space the determinate way a book or automobile does; rather, one constitutes and lives space as a *situation*. However, Young tells us: "[To] the extent that feminine motility is laden with immanence and inhibited, the body's space is lived as constituted. To the extent, that is, that feminine bodily existence is self-referred and thus lives itself as an *object*, the feminine body does exist in space."¹⁸³ And insofar as feminine existence feels itself as an object "rooted in *place*" rather than a subject positing space, its spatial perception of and relations with other objects in the world have their own modality. Young points to studies that show females as generally "field dependent"—that is, as having a "tendency to regard figures as embedded within and fixed by their surroundings."¹⁸⁴

Of particular significance to film theorists is Young's implication of *visual perception* in these particular modalities of feminine comportment, motility, and spatialization. Acknowledging the synthetic and synaesthetic function of the lived-body's sensorium, she refers to Merleau-Ponty's description of the reversibility of visual perception and motility (or bodily expression) to conclude that "an impairment in the functioning of one . . . leads to an impairment in the functioning of the other."¹⁸⁵ Thus, although sharing in certain ontological features and functions common to all lived-bodies, insofar as history and culture qualify it as a particular and delimited lived-body, the female lived-body will experience visual perception and visual space in a modality complementary to its bodily qualification. Therefore, as Young says: "If feminine body spatiality is such that the woman experiences herself as rooted and enclosed, then on the reversibility assumption it would follow that visual space for feminine existence also has its closures of immobility and fixity. The objects in visual

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

space do not stand in a fluid system of potentially alterable and interchangeable relations correlative to the body's various intentions and projected capacities. Rather, they too have their own places and are anchored in their immanence."¹⁸⁶

Young concludes her essay with a phenomenological interpretation. That is, having described empirical features of feminine comportment, motility, and spatiality as they are lived in the accomplishment of certain specific tasks, and having then thematized both the noetic and noematic correlates of feminine intentional acts and intentional objects, she goes on to correlate them as they are lived, as they signify and are significant in the life-world of those who live them. Finding the source of these themes or modalities of feminine existence not in anatomy or physiology or some female "essence," but in "the particular *situation* of women as conditioned by their sexist oppression in contemporary society," Young points out that, insofar as it is lived "in accordance with the definition that patriarchal culture assigns" and in cultural practices that are obvious to all of us, the female lived-body is constituted as physically handicapped: "inhibited, confined, positioned."¹⁸⁷ Nonetheless, the definition and circumscription of the lived-body as "female" cannot be seen as only "privative." It also informs feminine modalities or styles of bodily existence "positively." That is, the female lived-body is not simply "lacking" in certain of its engagements with the world; over time, it also acquires and assumes certain forms or styles of comportment and motility that increasingly mark it as "feminine." Empirical study reveals that "it is in the process of growing up as a girl that the modalities of feminine bodily comportment, motility, and spatiality make their appearance."¹⁸⁸ In closing, Young emphasizes the profound *source* of this process of feminine bodily modalization and locates it in patriarchal society's definition of woman as a body-object rather than a lived-body. She says, "An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living the ever present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another subject's intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention."¹⁸⁹ And, as we know, this objectification is not merely im-

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 64-65.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

posed from without and through the gaze of a normative—and currently male—Other. Within the context of the patriarchal social relations in which women exist, it is also self-imposed. The feminine body is introceptively lived out less as “myself, my psyche” than as “me, my thing.” Thus, as a “thing,” it can be appropriated and possessed by others or it can be self-possessed. It has a “place” in which it is kept, positioned by others or protected and preserved for itself.

Limited to studying the feminine lived-body of a particular segment of contemporary industrial culture in relation to its performance of certain definite gross motor tasks as compared to masculine performance of similar tasks, “Throwing Like a Girl” does not elaborate on what kind of “thing” the feminine body is for patriarchy. However, insofar as we understand from its discourses and activities the kind of subject that acts as the culture’s normative lived-body (latently marked as “unmarked” and masculine), we could speculate that the constraints and inhibitions placed on feminine bodily comportment, motility, and spatiality have to do with 1) Cartesian, patriarchal, industrial society’s separation of the lived-body’s reproductive capacity into discrete and chronological functions and responsibilities at the same time this society has separated the lived-body’s productive capacities in similar ways, and 2) its exclusion of the invisible from the existential activity of vision at the same time it has excluded the lived-body’s introceptive and subjective experience from its extroverted and objective appearance. In this cultural context, one of the two bodies necessary to reproduction has been marked because it is the body that *visibly* demonstrates its capacity to *extend, exceed, and re-produce* itself. (As Linda Williams points out in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible,”* it is no accident that certain forms of cinema attempt to redress the other “unmarked” reproductive body’s normally *invisible* excess of its own being by devolving around the visible representations of extended and engorged penises, ejaculation as the lived-body’s privileged act of exceeding itself, and the latter’s repetitious re-production in what, aptly, has been called both the “come shot” and the “money shot.”¹⁹⁰ What is of interest is that these films struggle to constitute the male body not as unmarked and normative, but as marked and singular.) Given these particular bifurcations, patriarchal society’s inhibition

¹⁹⁰ Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible”* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989).

and enclosure of feminine comportment, motility, and spatiality is a direct and threatened response to the unmarked (male) body's own perceived bodily "lack" of visible proof of the lived-body's capacity to exceed, outrun, and regenerate itself.

I have spent most of this section focusing on the ways in which "feminine" lived-bodies are historically and culturally marked and constituted as particular and limited modalities of the "lived-body" in its polymorphous possibilities for signifying its own and the world's significance. Given the brevity of this discussion in relation to the issues involved, I have been less exhaustive than suggestive. However, in closing this chapter, I want to draw attention to what a phenomenological investigation like Young's can provide film theory—not only as it attempts to explicate the structure and activity of spectatorship in relation to the "feminine" lived-body, but also to the "colored" body, the "diseased" body, the "impaired" body, the "fat" body, the "old" body, and even the "deprived" body.

These are all lived-bodies that, at the ontological level, share existence and the world under similar conditions and in similar ways to all other lived-bodies not so nominated. That is, as discussed previously, all lived-bodies are material, intentional, motile, and finitely and perspectively situated. Correlated with intentional consciousness, all lived-bodies constitute an "orientational point, 'O', from which spatio-temporal coordinates organize and structure the milieu." All lived-bodies are "organs of perception" or "that by means of which" there is access to a world that can be said to exist; as perceptive organs, all lived-bodies also synthesize several sensory fields and are the material "that on and in which . . . fields of sensation are spread out" and synoptically experienced in their modality as "mine." And, to varying degrees, all lived-bodies actualize both the operative and deliberative "strivings of consciousness."¹⁹¹ However, although grounded in a common ontology and intentional capacity, these "female," "colored," "diseased," "impaired," "fat," "old," and "deprived" bodies are also synecdochically marked, disfigured, defaced, and incapacitated—made particularly, rather than individually, significant and generalized as a category. And, as Young has demonstrated, the delimitation of the whole lived-body-subject into a part-icular and de-signated body-object leads to correspondent modalities of bodily comportment, motility, and spatialization and cor-

¹⁹¹ Zaner, *The Problem of Embodiment*, pp. 249–251.

respondent modalities of perception (including vision for those who are sighted). Insofar as these bodies are presently intentionally inhibited within the cultures that have so marked them, and insofar as they are marked negatively, it is likely that some of the features Young has laid out in relation to feminine comportment, motility, and spatialization might be shared among them. Yet bearing different marks than "female" (or in addition to being marked "female"), other of these lived-bodies will have their own existential character and praxis—both privative and positive, and differentiated in relation to specific kinds of intentional activities.

In this regard, phenomenological inquiry suggests beginning with concrete and empirical description of these historically and socially "significant" bodies as they are "disfigured" and perceived as pleasing or threatening to me in the "natural" attitude of my institutionalized culture. Marked as "female," "colored," "diseased," "impaired," "fat," "old," and "deprived," these bodies can only be described, thematized, and interpreted by me as they are immanent in the pleasure or threat they hold for me, and as I live them subjectively and/or objectively. Here, for example, I might have been able to describe the subjective modalities of my bodily comportment, motility, and spatiality as I've lived them not only as female, but also (because I've had cancer) as significantly "diseased." As a female in our particular cultural milieu, for most of my life (until I refused to "take up" such designation as my own), I have almost always lived my introceptive bodily image negatively as "fat" (whatever my physical size or whether I was regarded so by those engaging my visual body), and I could rigorously describe the indelible sense of material immanence that dragged on my upright posture, made my movements clumsy and "gross," and made me feel as if I had to squeeze into worldly space as if it were a too-tight dress. I am beginning also to become aware of the immanence of significantly living my body as "old"—experiencing, for example, a certain kind of devitalization and a consequent shrinking of my intentional being (soon my body) when certain younger persons look at me with a glance that, by virtue of its disinterest and dismissal, "withers" my embodied presence. However, my access to being marked as "colored," "impaired," or "deprived" is, for the moment, limited to my objective engagement with other lived-bodies so marked. This objective access is also lived by me and no less valuable or significant, but here I approach and describe the other marked body not introceptively, but (to use

↳ How phenomenology can be personal, but universal

Merleau-Ponty's term) visually. The introceptive description and thematization of being a "colored," "impaired," or "deprived" body must be performed by those so marked. The phenomenological interpretation of these disfigurements will be *verified*, however, only in the *correlation* of their subjective and objective forms.

In its focus on the lived-body's postural schema, its subjective activity, and its objective forms of "taking up" and engaging space, phenomenological inquiry locates the "subject," "consciousness," and "meaning" in actual and embodied existential praxis. However, because of its attention both to the lived-body as a commutative system of perceptive and expressive functions and to a horizon of existential possibilities broader than any specific praxis, phenomenological inquiry also indicates how the forms of specific existence are not an essential "given" and, however "natural" they may seem, could be otherwise. This has several implications for film theory. First, less programmatically than does psychoanalysis, phenomenology allows a critical reading of actual cinematic practice that could engage consideration of both specific films and their specific spectators in terms not of determinate psychic structures of identification but of postural, motor, and spatial practices as they are lived both introceptively and objectively. Such phenomenological description might, for example, take another kind of look at those films that (perhaps quite aptly) have been called "women's pictures" (but now are "objectified" as "family melodramas"). As has been suggested, what might be described are the correlated postural schemas, motility, and spatiality of both the spectators watching the film and the film itself as spectator—e.g., the film's composition or stance as it engages the world of objects and others, the scope and style of its motility in actualizing its intentional projects of perception and expression, and its appropriations or inhibitions in relation to "taking up" and living space as significant experience. Insofar as the film's bodily schema and motor projects are correlated and interpreted as compatible (or incompatible) with the spectator's, another more concrete and less deterministic way of describing cinematic "identification" becomes possible. Second, phenomenological description of these actual bodily practices (both by the spectator and the film) should provide the concrete grounds for practicing them consciously (that is, purposively)—or changing them. Here I am suggesting something much more subjectively grounded and less programmatic than what has emerged as the objective and too general category of "alternative" film practice.

That is, insofar as phenomenological scrutiny reveals both the introceptive and visible modalities of embodied intentionality as they are perceived introceptively, these modalities can be expressed objectively, articulating a visual style (as well as a visible content) of being that has not been allowed to fully become, that has to contest and overcome its delimitation.

The next chapter will focus on an elaboration of what I have been calling the film's "body." The nonmetaphorical way in which I am using the term has already been remarked upon. Phenomenological description has revealed the lived-body as a commutative system that reverses perception and expression. It also has pointed to the lived-body as serving certain ontological (as well as epistemological) functions. Insofar as a film is revealed as a similar commutative system and performs similar ontological functions in constituting the experience of consciousness and the consciousness of experience, it can be said to be "embodied." However, whatever the specificity of its material nature, the film's "body" is not disfigured in the same way as is the human lived-body. That is, historically and culturally, we do not speak of the *concrete materiality* of the cinematic apparatus in the same terms we use when discussing human bodies (although often we do speak of the film's style and perspective in such terms).

The film's "body" is not sexed, although it is sensible and sensual. It is not "colored," although today its vision usually takes up the world as such. It is not "impaired," "fat," "old," or "deprived" — although, as a whole, certain films have been described as "physically handicapped" by, for example, their silence or lack of color, as "excessive" or "padded" in their expressive behavior, as "old" in their outmoded interest or ways of engaging the world, and as "deprived" in their "low-budget" lack of resources to actualize the intentionality informing their perceptive and expressive projects. Obviously, films are only films insofar as they are made through human artifice and intention and engaged by human spectators. Obviously, their significance as the kind of phenomena they are is dependent upon and qualified by the kind of phenomena we are. Nonetheless, insofar as the film's material conditions for providing access to the world, accomplishing the commutation of perception and expression, and constituting or signifying a significant coherence are different from our own, they provide us actual and possible modes of becoming other than we are. Thus, even as human bodies engage the film's body in an always correlated activity (whether of filmmaking

or spectating), the film's material body also always engages us in its possibilities as a nonhuman lived-body. In this sense, and in the context of this section, the embodied film exists not as a prosthetic device but rather, to use Donna Haraway's characterization, as a "cyborg"—an other body that signifies possibilities and liberation from the disfigured bodies some of us presently live.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," *Socialist Review* 80 (1985), pp. 65-107.