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**Chapter for: *Desire in Ashes: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, Philosophy***

**Fort Spa:**

**In at the Deep End with Derrida and Ferenczi**

*Now, it is here that the very possibility of a speculation that would be neither philosophical nor scientific in the classical sense (the devil for science and philosophy), nevertheless could open onto another science, as it does to another fiction […].*

– Jacques Derrida[[1]](#endnote-1)

*[…] when the psychic system fails,*

*the organism begins to think*. – Sándor Ferenczi[[2]](#endnote-2)

Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, Philosophy: this contact zone remains a journey into hot water, waters further heated by the addition of a fourth ingredient - Feminism. This chapter specifically engages the return of the body and the biological within contemporary material feminism in light of Derrida’s early insistence on the soma and psyche as that which is mutually informed.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Without a significant barrier decisively separating them, the commensality of soma and psyche is yet ‘marred’ or perhaps conditioned in Derrida by the work of repression that is also the scene of writing. The return of the repressed in the deconstructive transformation of psychoanalysis, however, cannot be guaranteed: the death drive already at home within the archive puts paid to that.[[4]](#endnote-4) Strongly identified with the body as the scene of representation, it has taken a long time for feminist theory to shake loose the influence of Jacques Lacan’s *Ecrits*. These ‘writings’ were formerly assumed to authorise a non-essentialist version of the body by virtue of its fading before the signifier, with the concomitant assumption that this – and only this – shift into signification gave room for a political future of emancipation.[[5]](#endnote-5) Loosening this legacy allows us to entertain the notion of the body as something beyond a disengaged support for the inscription of the psyche. For the sake of brevity this chapter will only nod towards the Deleuzian turn in feminism of the 1990’s and its important alternate emphasis on what a body can do, since this work tended to misapprehend Derrida as closer to Lacan and thus in continuation with the dialectical tradition.[[6]](#endnote-6) Departing from that tradition, ‘Fort Spa’ solicits another kind of speculation in view of another kind of body. [[7]](#endnote-7) Mixing deconstruction, psychoanalysis, philosophy and feminism, this chapter welcomes a return not simply to ‘the body’ as if there were only one, but to biology as a scene of dynamism. Rather than the infernal trap that would spring the most patriarchal of destinies upon women without hesitation, as found in the explicit appeal to the teleology of nature in Sigmund Freud’s essay on “Femininity,” biology becomes something for us to think with.[[8]](#endnote-8) ‘Fort Spa’ keeps the performative ‘SF’ of Donna Haraway in mind: trained as a biologist, her work frequently solicits the supplement of a ‘speculative fabulation’ or ‘speculative feminism’ that might dispel the tendency of origin stories from condensing into patri-*arkhe.*[[9]](#endnote-9) Adding in ‘So Far’ to the title of her paper headed by this acronym was not merely poetic frivolity but a pointer to the contingency and the incompleteness of SF. ‘Fort Spa’ gives specific attention to Elizabeth A. Wilson, one of a new generation of feminists who are also readers of Derrida, and zones in on her recuperation of a dynamic biology in the more marginal archives of psychoanalysis such as the works of Sándor Ferenczi.[[10]](#endnote-10) While Wilson emphasises Ferenczi’s radicality in proposing what he names ‘bioanalysis’ thus stepping beyond the psyche as a closed system, this chapter asks after the antiquated models of sexual difference that may yet hinder his speculation. With Derrida’s suggestive reading of the legacy of psychoanalysis in “To Speculate-on ‘Freud’” in mind, we can dive in.

**SF**

*[…] the uncertainty of our speculation has been greatly increased by the necessity for borrowing from the science of biology. Biology is truly a land of unlimited possibilities.* – Sigmund Freud[[11]](#endnote-11)

A common abbreviation of the genre ‘science fiction’, ‘SF’ also promiscuously speaks to other terms. Derrida’s doubling of “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” travels under the title of “To Speculate-on ‘Freud’”. SF might thus claim Speculation on ‘Freud’. Treading cautiously in the troubled steps of Freud, Derrida remarks on Freud’s resistance to philosophy, on his hesitation regarding possible debts that psychoanalysis might incur, and in particular on what might be smuggled in under the name of ‘speculation’ (such as the dialectical tradition). Philosophy is of ‘no concern’, apparently.[[12]](#endnote-12) If it was, and if it did have something to say about pleasure, Freud would ‘readily express [his] gratitude’. [[13]](#endnote-13) As things stand, Freud feels free to speculate upon a cleared ground, without influence and thus without debt. For Derrida, Freud’s auto-acquittal serves the purpose of allowing for the inauguration of the free-standing house of ‘Freud’: psychoanalysis properly begins with the name of Sigmund Freud, SF. SF betting on SF. Interweaving the emergence of the field and the legacy of its progenitor – taking shape beneath the ‘same roof’, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” becomes autobiography by another name.[[14]](#endnote-14) Perhaps that other name is SF, or the constitutive ‘becoming literary of the literal’ that Derrida advocated in “Freud and the Scene of Writing.”[[15]](#endnote-15) If the ‘greater pleasure was attached to the second act,’ as Freud remarks regarding his nephew’s infamous game, that second act or return is both the rewarding logic of *re*presentation for which, in Derrida’s reading, *fort-da* is the minimal unit, and the dangerous revival of the inorganic.[[16]](#endnote-16) For the uncanny life of psychoanalysis is such that the devil of the death drive can never be driven out and thus this autobiographical gesture is also auto-thanatographical.[[17]](#endnote-17) The ensuing two-step of what Derrida casts as ‘life death,’ without diacritical instruction or necessarily successive pattern of *fort* then *da*, troubles the securing of any new position. If ‘beyond’ there be, it is of a wholly other order.[[18]](#endnote-18) Indeed Derrida refers to Freud’s text not as a thesis and not as antithesis, nor yet a synthesis, but rather as an *athesis*.[[19]](#endnote-19) The gambit of speculation falls short.

SF is also Sándor Ferenczi. Like the Freud of *Totem and Taboo*, Ferenczi also draws on fabulation to embed his theory in a legend: the closing pages of *Thalassa* name the speculations of SF precisely as a ‘fairy tale’.[[20]](#endnote-20) Yet SF lives in fear of SF. For nine years, Ferenczi ‘confesses’ through a rhetoric inescapably evocative of the uncanny, the material eventually published under the title *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality* lay ‘buried in [his] desk’ until he ‘g[ave] birth’ to it.[[21]](#endnote-21) During this time, when *Thalassa* was buried alive, Freud published “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”.[[22]](#endnote-22) In one of series of articles re-examining the less well travelled archives of psychoanalysis Elizabeth A. Wilson notes the agonised relation between Ferenczi and Freud detailed in their correspondence, as their work overlapped but also significantly parted ways. [[23]](#endnote-23) For Wilson’s interest this discrepancy rests on the status of the biological – the terrain that she wishes to reactivate. In light of Derrida’s emphasis on filiation in psychoanalysis we can see that Ferenczi’s position as a much junior colleague, and thus an ostensible legatee, made his departure from the canon- from the house of SF - all the more alarming. Anxiety regarding this departure hampers Ferenczi’s own attempt to step ‘beyond’; beyond Freud his intellectual master, beyond the pleasure principle, indeed beyond the ‘PP’ as Derrida’s capacious abbreviation has it. As silently as the death drive, this ‘PP’, in Derrida’s hands, also slips in the ‘postal principle’. Again any speculative security of the concept comes under the intrinsic threat of getting lost in the post. Today the private correspondence between SF and SF is publically available for anyone to read; for anyone radically unforeseen to become the addressee, for example Elizabeth A. Wilson.[[24]](#endnote-24)

Alongside drawing out the dynamism that Wilson finds in the Ferenczian body, and one that dares embrace the name ‘bioanalysis’ (rather than psychoanalysis), this chapter turns to two related topics.[[25]](#endnote-25) One is the version of the death drive surfacing in *Thalassa* in the guise of a death *dive*, that is to say the SF desire to return to life in water. This return invokes both ontogenesis, in terms of individual explusion from amniotic fluid, and phylogenesis, in terms of the seas and the evolutionary remembrance of swimming amongst other species. The other is the still pressing, still vexacious matter of sexual difference, or in a more Derridean light, sexual differences. Given Wilson’s strong situation of Ferenczi within her project of ‘Gut *Feminism’* readers might expect more of a forthright engagement with the sexual.[[26]](#endnote-26) It may be that by significantly shifting attention to the stomach, or the ‘brain in the gut’ as she calls it in her 2004 book *Psychosomatic*, for the purpose of dramatically rethinking what happens and where it happens when we are depressed that sexually differentiated Oedipal complexes have ceased to organise Wilson’s focus.[[27]](#endnote-27) It may be that the stomach is participant in sexuality in ways that are yet to be set forth (she invokes the contractions of peristalsis and antiperistalsis that Ferenczi traces phylogenetically to the ‘same digestive tube’).[[28]](#endnote-28) It may also be – to continue this speculation – that she avoids the unpleasure of trawling back through frequently frustrating material in the psychoanalytic canon, material that endures amongst Ferenczi’s problematically radical thought. Bridging her insistence on the gut she quotes Ferenczi’s highly suggestive reframing of ‘the genital’ in the opening pages of *Thalassa*, yet without speculating upon its possible consequences for sexuality. This genital

[…] would then no longer be the unique and incomparable magic wand which conjures eroticisms from all the organs of the body; on the contrary, genital amphimixis would merely be one particular instance out of the many in which such fusion of eroticisms takes place.[[29]](#endnote-29)

Whether Ferenczi himself follows through on disbanding this ‘magic wand’, as this selective quotation implies, is another question.

**Damp squibs**

Excavating the ‘Freudian Crypt’ with Todd Dufresne would be enough to put off many readers - particularly feminist ones - from supposing that there may be any room for manoeuvre in SF. Admittedly, Dufresne entertains short shrift with the Freudian legend tout court, advising that we let it die rather than symptomatically induce psychoanalytic persistence in mimesis of the PP through the stimulating effect of criticism (albeit in the form of a book length disquisition on the subject). In acknowledgement of Derrida’s situation of Freud’s writing as that which itself carries out his ostensible topic, Dufresne says no too to deconstruction by missing the possibility that repetition can always be an alteration; that gone can really mean gone; that traces can always be erased or wiped away. Dufresne’s derision sparks at the junctures proximate to those which Wilson finds enabling. In reference to SF, Dufresne only finds ‘ridiculous’ passages, even ‘especially ridiculous’ ones that narrate a too familiar battle of the sexes retrofitting the seemingly inevitable domination of women into our phylogenetic makeup: biology – ‘Biological Frenzy’ no less – appears as origin and destiny in one.[[30]](#endnote-30) When Dufresne reads of this frenzy in psychoanalysis it is only ever recourse to ‘blatant biologism’.[[31]](#endnote-31) Nevertheless, I find the trace of a different argument.

In contrast to Freud and Josef Breuer’s development of the concept of conversion hysteria as that which was played out upon the bodies of female patients in their *Studies on Hysteria, Thalassa* clinically begins with male sexual dysfunction.[[32]](#endnote-32) Comparing the functioning of premature ejaculation with that of men who virtually refuse to ejaculate, Ferenczi comes to the speculative conclusion that even in ‘normal ejaculation’ a ‘synergetic harmony of anal and urethral innervations is essential’.[[33]](#endnote-33) That is to say, rather than the cumulative achievement of phallic sexuality, Ferenczi supposes that ejaculation is always helped or hindered by the tendencies to expel or to retain. This physical rhythm of what we might call the PP as *fort* and *da* is effectively tutored by the urethra or anal sphincter respectively. Ferenczi calls the group work of this organic ensemble ‘amphimixis’, a term otherwise medically used in reference to the merging of gametes in sexual reproduction. Not only do the genitals, urinary and excretory organs work in communication with each other, but, as the earlier quotation from Ferenczi suggests, this is merely one instance out of ‘many’. Beginning with phallic fallibility, Ferenczi appears to disperse the apparently singular end point of the phallic phase by sharing it out amongst other organs and rendering this dispersal comparable to many other bodily contexts. This group work is both physical and cathected. For Wilson, this departure from a utilitarian biology that might assign each organ an individual task habituated to ‘their utility for the preservation of life’ allows not just for a dynamic understanding of the body but also for the SF body to engage in the ‘expression of wishes’ and even ‘complicated thought’.[[34]](#endnote-34) From here she leaves the letter of *Thalassa* to turn toward the belly of the bulimic as participant rather than puppet in the thought processes of depression. In line with Ferenczi this participation does not award a consciousness to any alternative organ but suggests the phylogenetic sedimentation of what he calls a ‘biological unconscious’ throughout the body rendering that body amenable to analysis.[[35]](#endnote-35)

Given the affirmation of this dynamic material, bodily, biological capacity, detached from exclusively preserving life that we find in Wilson, it is remarkable how single-minded the thought of this SF body becomes in the subsequent pages of *Thalassa*, subjected to what Ferenczi calls the ‘thalassal trend’.

**Lost at Sea**

In her account of the dynamic possibilities of the SF body in *Thalassa*, Wilson accentuates the disseminative effect of amphimixis on the erstwhile magic wand to produce a reading significantly less conservative from the more apparent one given by the text. She virtually obliges Ferenczi to follow through on his own intuition. Or rather, as I would like to think, it is as if the explicit engagement with Derrida that she brought to her first book *Neural Geographies* has already been activated in the pages of “Gut Feminism,” yet silently, without the signposts of argument as such.[[36]](#endnote-36) Derrida’s work only warrants a handful of acknowledgements in *Psychosomatic*, but they are telling in light of what she might have spelled out in “Gut Feminism”. Early in that book Wilson reassures the reader that the ‘circuit of nerves-penis-cortex-psyche’ found in Freud’s writing on neurasthenia need not equate to ‘self-contained elements arranged in determinable relations of cause and effect’.[[37]](#endnote-37) While her argument zones in on the question of how trauma and specifically mourning registers not just at the level of the psyche but in ‘serotonergic pathways,’ the theoretical flashpoint turns on decentring the penis as a supposedly discrete agent. The structure she advances in her distinctive reading of Freud

could be called a relational or distributed network only when certain ontological conditions have been met. […] a logic of distribution is critically valuable only as it approximates a Derridean notion of dissemination or *différance*-that is a distribution or relationality that is constitutive of its component elements.[[38]](#endnote-38)

As with the biology emerging in ‘Gut Feminism’ any sense of the utilitarian or instrumentation of individual organs dissipates. Following Wilson’s implication, if not her argument, regarding *Thalassa,* an other kind of SF body must come forth.

Returning to the pages of *Thalassa,* however, we find less distribution of the erotic than synthesis. SF remains loyal to SF when it comes to ‘genital primacy’ in sexuality. Indeed the first indication of amphimixis in *Thalassa* ties it in to a teleological formation in which two or more erotisms synthesise into a ‘higher unity’.[[39]](#endnote-39) While opening up the terrain of the biological, SF nevertheless concedes to ‘harmonis[ation]’ with canonical sexual theory.[[40]](#endnote-40) Indeed the pleasure principle is legible as the motivational circuit of compensation as to why organs such as urethra and anus should communicate. In what Ferenczi calls ‘pregenital amphimixis’ the would-be liberal pee pee learns restraint from the pleasures of retention, the retentive bowel learns to expel ‘by borrowing the urethral pleasure in voiding’.[[41]](#endnote-41) In such an exchange no pleasures are lost, no tensions remain, equilibrium is maintained. Except, when SF casually mentions the clitoris it is to locate a proper displacement of pleasure to the vagina rather than entertain any amphimictic constellation.[[42]](#endnote-42) The traffic in pleasure in this case filters it away from the clitoris, famously rendered as the analogue of the male organ by Freud, and toward the vagina, which again he famously claimed as ‘the female organ proper’ in spite of its ‘virtual non-existen[ce]’ for ‘several years’.[[43]](#endnote-43) A slightly more complex if no less vexed story emerges in the third chapter of *Thalassa,* which wrestles with proper feminine sexuality again in line with SF authority.

Reading SF in a very forgiving light we might understand the clitoris as so profoundly generous that it shares its pleasures not only with the vagina but with ‘other parts of the body […] in particular the nipple and the surrounding area.’[[44]](#endnote-44) While SF describes this displacement in comparison to hysteria, Wilson would remind us that the soma of SF hysteria renders the body as participant in displaced affects: it is not simply hijacked by a foreign agent. The body is widely eroticised because it can be rather than is obliged to be. However, unlike the organisation evoked by Gayatri Spivak in which ‘[t]he clitoris escapes reproductive framing’ and might therefore speak to an economy of pleasure alone unbound to function, SF is blind to that possibility and tightly binds this vector of escape.[[45]](#endnote-45) Amphimixis shows up. However the ends of reproduction are served by expelling expulsion from feminine rhythms. In SF, the vagina may borrow ‘considerable amounts’ of erotism from elsewhere - peristalsis from oral ingestion and retention from the anus, but this is all in the service of retaining semen and ‘sheltering’ the vulnerable penis in coitus.[[46]](#endnote-46) ‘There/there (*da/da*)’ her rhythms might mutter. The urethra is virtually as forsaken as the clitoris in this story. Yet the SF endorsement of the desire to return to life in water remains to be taken into account. This is only configured for the woman by virtue of introducing a more categorical split between the psycho- and the bio- analytic: she retains ‘at any rate in the psychic sphere’ a masculine wish to return to the womb achievable through identification with the ‘penis-possessing male’ as well as his symbolic equivalent – the ‘child that she harbors within her own body’ who has apparently successfully made that trip (and negated any feminine material or symbol).[[47]](#endnote-47) Amphimixis again makes an appearance in a further convolution. Her ‘female penis’ as former but not ‘pre-‘ genital prior to the proper adoption of feminine passivity was itself consolidated through amphimixis – we can only assume along the same *fort/da* pulsions at play in the masculine model since symmetry is being invoked – only to retract or ‘regress’ into her ‘whole body’ and ‘whole ego’.[[48]](#endnote-48)

The success story of genital amphimixis turns out to be the speculation of the penis and the phallus (since body and symbol are both invoked). Coitus is the stage upon which to bet on its safe return. With a singularly SF flourish, this return is not only bound to the phallogocentric economy of representation - an economy that Luce Irigaray specifically addresses and offsets with her concave *Speculum*.[[49]](#endnote-49)

If woman had desires other than ‘penis-envy,’ this would call into question the unity, the uniqueness, the simplicity of the mirror charged with sending man’s image back to him-albeit inverted. Call into question its flatness. The specularization, and speculation, of the purpose of (his) desire could no longer be two-dimensional.[[50]](#endnote-50)

Man’s anxieties over the safety of his ‘most precious organ’ during coitus are mollified by his ‘introjection’ of ‘the organ of the woman’ (we are not told which one).[[51]](#endnote-51) With such a capture in place the terrifying sexual other is annulled while his organ does not really go anywhere, or undergo any change, in which it might ‘get lost’.[[52]](#endnote-52) Having ventured the safety of the environment however, Ferenczi returns to the amphimixic labours of ejaculation and the fortification of that secretion. Again identification steps in, now unifying the whole of the – masculine – organism with firstly his genital, secondly his female partner (*Thalassa* swims in heteronormative waters) and thirdly his emission.[[53]](#endnote-53) This deposit must be secured. SF banks on the uterus: where else would be free of discord, free of enervating stimuli? Free of difference? While the organism and the organ achieve ‘hallucinatory’ or partial identification with this return, the best is saved for the third term. In SF ‘the sexual secretion’ alone achieves reunion ‘*in reality* to the womb of the mother.’[[54]](#endnote-54) Whereas he suggests that *all* (human) beings desire to return to the peace of intrauterine life, and *all* mammalian life desires to return to life in water, only one entity manages to ‘*in reality’* regain this state.[[55]](#endnote-55) Insemination is homeward bound. With so many steps set up to secure safe passage including the specular elimination of the sexual other such that she only reflects ‘the same,’ as Irigaray would say, Ferenczi neither steps beyond Freud nor into the warm thalassal seas that are ostensibly the object of desire.

This over-valuation and fierce protection of seminal fluid is all the more ironic given the success of its arrival, assuming, with SF, that this is so. Reuniting with the uterus would serve only to set this game little gamete in a sea of searching for the ovum, since however jubilant in its homecoming the sperm may be, the reproducibility that is supposed to motivate this return is pointless without amphimixis in the strict sense.[[56]](#endnote-56) The ovum evades any identification, any speculation at all. We do not even know if *this* germ plasm is prized at all. If the tale of a violent and oppositional sexual difference whether Oedipally or phylogenetically inscribed afforded by Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi were to be our only story we would stop forthwith. The SF solution effectively produces the intrauterine environment as one entity, as liquid behaving like a solid, as *da,* when it might otherwise enjoy the differentiated consistency of a spa. ‘Spa’ here speaks to what we might, after Irigaray, call a poetics of fluids that, in light of both Irigaray and Derrida, refuse speculative recuperation.[[57]](#endnote-57) That is to say, fluids can always wash and be washed away. Fluids do not seal a single point of origin, as Astrida Neimanis insists ‘*We are all* [always and already] *bodies of water*.’[[58]](#endnote-58) Water remains our condition of possibility, our mutable common ‘ground’. This poetics might also sustain a more hospitable address to biology – an address that is a long way from the biological essentialism of which Irigaray has frequently and mistakenly been accused.[[59]](#endnote-59)

**Sea Food**

From *Psychosomatic’s* insistence on the Enteric Nervous System (the stomach) as supplement to the Central Nervous System (the brain) to the retrieval of Melanie Klein in “Underbelly,’”Wilson has been occupied with the gut. It is all the more intriguing then, that what escapes her attention in SF is the brief address to a primal mode of ingestion that effectively prevents the imagined environment desired in *Thalassa* from holding watertight. Ingestion emerges in the pages that most directly acknowledge “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”. It follows on from Ferenczi’s evocation of the ‘poetic fantasy’ in Plato’s *Symposium* as the scene of a catastrophic division of matter into two halves ‘leaving it with an impulsion to reunite wherein organic life had its earliest inception.’[[60]](#endnote-60) It follows on too from the confession that Ferenczi’s earlier account of coitus may be ‘inadequate and unsatisfying’ precisely at the level of fertilisation, albeit unsatisfying in terms of his fear that reproductive practicality (a flat biology of the need to reproduce the species) will trump thalassal regression (the bioanalysis of the desire to return to an earlier state).[[61]](#endnote-61) Claiming further differentiation than Freud, Ferenczi suggests two catastrophes – the first prompts a division between inorganic and organic, the second introduces that of sexual difference. SF tries again invoking the ‘fanciful’ ideas of Wilhelm Bölsche who speculated that ‘[w]ith the firstlings of life there was no opposition between eating and love; eating was a purely logical condition of love.’[[62]](#endnote-62) In the race to the land before the pleasure principle, Ferenczi hypothesises an ‘even more archaic cataclysm’ - more archaic than coitus – that obliged ‘unicellular organisms […] to eat each other up, in such a manner that no one of the participants in the struggle succeeded in annihilating its opponent.’[[63]](#endnote-63) Finessing Bölsche’s incorporation of Ernst Haeckel’s ‘gastraea’ or primitive stomach produced through the invagination of the zygote of multicellular organisms, Ferenczi conjures this mutually beneficial commensality as a prelude to the production of sexually differentiated cells - germ cells, though what pressures this production he does not say.[[64]](#endnote-64) This ‘more archaic’ cataclysm that obliges entities to eat each other does so without murder, miraculously enough for an origin story. Yet it is framed as the anticipation of sexual reproduction and one whose struggle, as accounted for in *Thalassa*, is far less agreeable.

More curiously, eating figures again in the book’s final chapter. After passages that offer greater consonance with the athetic non-oppositional relation of life and death on which Derrida speculates –

What if […] death and dying were not anything absolute, if germs of life and regressive tendencies lay hidden even within inorganic matter […] we should have to drop once and for all the question of the beginning and end of life, and conceive the whole inorganic and organic world as a perpetual oscillating between the will to live and the will to die in which an absolute hegemony on the part of either of life or of death is never attained[[65]](#endnote-65)

– and immediately preceding the summation of SF in his fairy tale, Ferenczi blurts out: ‘[A]ppetite comes with eating!’[[66]](#endnote-66) This –whatever this is – is immediately retracted for fear of the ‘unacceptability’ of ‘piling hypothesis upon hypothesis’, even as the pleasures of which the proverb speaks confirms the PP, while exceeding the peepee. Its unclear whether SF refers to the ingestion of food, or whether the proverb is meant only to operate metaphorically and eating serves as a figure for any pleasure. Whether eating could sustain a distinction between the literal and the figural, however, is something that both Derrida and Wilson put into doubt.

**Breach**

“Underbelly” parallels the project of “Gut Feminism” in that Wilson rehearses the denigration of the body in second wave feminism only to find a surprisingly subtle rejoinder in the work of Melanie Klein (one of Ferenczi’s ‘most famous analysands,’ as she remarks, and as such breaches the house of SF herself).[[67]](#endnote-67) Gayle Rubin’s influential work on the ‘sex/gender’ distinction serves Wilson with a classic anthropological division between simple hunger and complex cuisine.[[68]](#endnote-68) Through Klein, Wilson finds it possible and desirable to argue for the belly’s complexity and participation in psychic life. Again this speaks to a kind of bioanalysis in which the material frequently merely assumed to support a complex structure such as phantasy is implicated with it instead. Wilson position’s the belly in Klein as ‘psychically alive’ to the infant, full of good and bad objects introjected from the first.[[69]](#endnote-69) Klein writes:

…the child receives his main satisfaction through his mouth, which therefore becomes the main channel through which the child takes in not only his food, but also in his phantasy, the whole world outside him. Not only the mouth, but to a certain degree the whole body with all its senses and functions, performs this ‘taking in’ process [...] the child breathes in, takes in through his eyes, his ears, through touch and so on.[[70]](#endnote-70)

Klein continues to activate the breast as the first object of introjection, but her ‘not only’ has already opened a path. While Wilson maintains her focus upon the oral-entomological transit as home to numerous objects (both phantastic and pharmaceutical), albeit in a manner that is crucially ‘impurely, relationally constituted,’ Derrida revises this path.[[71]](#endnote-71)

In the enigmatic closing paragraphs of “Freud and the Scene of Writing” Derrida gestures to ‘what might be called a new *psychoanalytic graphology’* and suggests that ‘Klein perhaps opens the way’.[[72]](#endnote-72) Derrida’s phrasing is evocative given his preceding discussion on breaching as a ‘ciphered spacing,’ as that event of writing that upsets classical models of inside and outside, time and space, before and beyond.[[73]](#endnote-73) While few scholars have so much as noticed this reference to Klein, compare the following citation from his interview on “Eating Well”:

For everything that happens at the edge of the orifices (of orality, but also of the ear, the eye-and all the ‘senses’ in general) the metonymy of ‘eating well’ (*bien manger*) would always be the rule.[[74]](#endnote-74)

Though they are not named in this interview, Derrida’s metonymy of eating well and its relation to introjection is developed in relation to the work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok.[[75]](#endnote-75) A certain kind of genealogy of the notion of introjection shapes the house of SF, passing between Ferenczi, Freud, Klein, Karl Abraham, Abraham and Torok, and Derrida.[[76]](#endnote-76) In a figural peristalsis, introjection undergoes a tighter and looser grip on its subjects and on itself. Even though Derrida ostensibly supplied a ‘Foreword’ to Abraham and Torok’s book *The Wolf Man’s Magic Word* and one that magnified the uncanny architecture of their ‘crypt’ from the outset of its idiosyncratic title - ‘*Fors’*, his work radicalises the path of introjection.[[77]](#endnote-77) Soliciting all the senses in general, Derrida detaches psychic ingestion from the mouth, insists on the metonymical quality of eating, and drops the teleological anticipation of speech as the zone of the human (habitual to psychoanalysis and philosophy). While SF interjects ‘[A]ppetite comes with eating!’ and common sense might attribute his meaning to the purely figural, Derrida quite seriously asks ‘What is eating?’ shattering its supposedly simple expression of a basic need and posing it as always and already enmeshed in the ‘becoming-literary of the literal.’[[78]](#endnote-78) Introjection is not the action of an intending subject that can appropriate the other like a tool. Psychoanalytic graphology speaks to bioanalysis insofar as the body is breached. Regression cannot compel the same phantasy, only repetition that can expunge in the same gesture. This can only be sustained by bringing the trace to the fore.

1. Jacques Derrida, “To Speculate-on ‘Freud’” in *The Postcard: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, Alan Bass, trans. (Chicago University Press, 1987), 288 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Sándor Ferenczi, from his *Clinical Diary*, qtd in Elizabeth A. Wilson, “Gut Feminism” in *differences: a journal of feminist cultural studies* 15.3. (2004): 75. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. For ‘material feminism’ see Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, eds. *Material Feminisms* (Indianopolis: Indiana University Press, 2007). Jacques Derrida, “Freud and the Scene of Writing” in *Writing and Difference*, Alan Bass, trans. (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1978) 196-231. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Eric PRenowitz, trans. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: a selection* Alan Sheridan, trans. (New York and London: Routledge, 2001). For examples of this moment in feminist theory see, Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, (London: Verso, 1986). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. See for example, Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Though it is beyond the remit of this chapter, speculation has returned with some vigor in recent years under the name ‘Speculative Realism.’ For a critique of this return see Johnny Golding, “Ecce Homo Sexual: Ontology and Eros in the Age of Incompleteness and Entanglement” in *parallax* 20.3 (2014): 217-230. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Freud writes:

   […] the juxtaposition ‘feminine libido’ is without any justification. Furthermore, it is our impression that more constraint has been applied to the libido when it is pressed into the service of the feminine function, and that – *to speak teleologically* – Nature takes less careful account of its [that function’s] demands than in the case of masculinity. And the reason for this may lie – thinking once again *teleologically* – in the fact that the accomplishment of the aim of biology has been entrusted to the aggressiveness of men and has been made to some extent independent of women’s consent. (my emphasis) “Femininity” in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, V 2 in The Penguin Freud Library, James Strachey, trans. (London: Penguin, 1991) 166 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. See Donna Haraway’s Pilgrim Award acceptance comments: “SF: Science Fiction, Speculative Fabulation, String Figures, So Far,” in *SFRA* *Review* 297 (2011): 12-19. Her work frequently appeals to feminist science fiction such as that of Octavia Butler or Ursula LeGuin. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. I roughly and provisionally distinguish between those scholars associated strongly with deconstruction who have also foregrounded feminist questions such as Peggy Kamuf or Elissa Marder, from feminist theorists who also incorporate strong readings of Derrida. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” 334. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” 275. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” 275. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Derrida, “To Speculate,” 293. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Derrida, “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” 230. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Derrida, “To Speculate,” 317. See Freud “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” 284. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Derrida, “To Speculate,” 393. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. David Wills suggests it is an “Order Catastrophically Unknown” in *Mosaic: a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature* 44.4 (2011): 21-41. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Derrida, “To Speculate” 259. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. For Freud’s famous summation of the primal feast as murder and cannibalism of the father see, *Totem and Taboo: some points of agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, James Strachey, trans. (London: Routledge, 2001) 164. Sándor Ferenczi, *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality,* Henry Alden Bunker*,* trans. (London: Karnac, 2005) 99. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Ferenczi, *Thalassa*, 5 [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Ferenczi dates his introduction ‘1923’, Freud’s ‘Beyond’ was first published in 1920. Todd Dufresne notes Ferenczi’s claims to priority, see *Tales From the Freudian Crypt: The Death Drive in Text and Context* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) 62. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Wilson, “Gut Feminism,” in *differences: a journal of feminist cultural studies*, 15.3. 2004, 70. Wilson also remarks on the scant attention to *Thalassa*, however we should note the affirmative introduction written for the French edition by Nicolas Abraham in 1962 (Editions Payot, 1968). [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Wilson cites the correspondence published as: Ferenczi, Sándor, and Sigmund Freud. *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi: Vol. 2, 1914–1919*, Ernst Falzeder and Eva Brandt, eds. Peter T. Hoffer, trans. (Cambridge: Belknap, 1996). The citation ironically shows up the hierarchy between these proper names when Freud comes before Ferenczi. Wilson’s own publications show, also ironically, her efforts to identify herself by virtue of the middle initial, given the host of other established academics also publishing in the humanities under the name ‘Elizabeth Wilson’. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Ferenczi, *Thalassa,* 19. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Emphasis mine. Notes to the essay “Gut Feminism” inform the reader that this is the name of a wider project, which includes her later essay published as “Underbelly”. The other major feminist engagement with Ferenczi, by She Hawke and Anna Gibbs, similarly avoids his heteronormative retrofitting of the thalassal trend even as they connect this trend with Elaine Morgan’s subsequent work on *The Aquatic Ape Hypothesis* (1988), see their essay “The Currency of Water: Ferenczi’s Thalassal Trend, the Evolution of Tears and the Role of Affect in the Psychosomatic Relation” in *Thalassa: The Hungarian Journal of Psychoanalysis* 19.1 (2008): 37-57, accessed here: https://www.academia.edu/769475/Ferenczis\_Thalssal\_Trend\_The\_Evolution\_of\_Tears\_and\_the\_Role\_of\_Affect\_in\_the\_Psychosomatic\_Relation\_t [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Wilson, “The Brain in the Gut” in *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) 31-48. In an interview Wilson indicates her work as feminist inquiry yet not necessarily governed by a focus on ‘gender and sex’, see “A Conversation with Vicki Kirby and Elizabeth A. Wilson” in *Feminist Theory* 12.2 (2012): 227. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Wilson, “Gut Feminism,” 79, Ferenczi, *Thalassa*, 86. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Ferenczi qtd in Wilson, “Gut Feminism,” 81, see Ferenczi, *Thalassa*, 12. This is all the more entertaining for those contemporary readers aware of a particular type of American ‘personal massager’ known precisely as the ‘Magic Wand’. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Dufresne, 34, 57, 61. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Dufresne, xv and passim. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria* V 3 in The Penguin Freud Library, James Strachey, trans. (London: Penguin, 1991). [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Ferenczi, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Wilson, “Gut Feminism,” 76. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Wilson, “Gut Feminism,” 77. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Neural Geographies: Feminism and the Microstructure of Cognition,* London: Routledge, 1998 [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Wilson, *Psychosomatic*, 19. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Wilson, *Psychosomatic*, 20. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Ferenczi, 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Ferenczi, 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Ferenczi, 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Ferenczi, 14, 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Freud, “Femininity,” 374. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Ferenczi, 24 [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Gayatri Spivak, “French Feminism in an International Frame” in *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981): 118. Spivak finds the insistence on feminine *jouissance* to be the greatest gift of ‘French Feminism’. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Ferenczi, 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Ferenczi, 24-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Ferenczi, 25. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. See Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* and also, on ‘*fort-da’* as a specifically masculine defence reaction, see her “Gesture in Psychoanalysis” [1985] in *Between Feminism & Psychoanalysis* Teresa Brennan, ed. (New York & London: Routledge, 1989): 127-138. I discuss Irigaray’s uncanny repetition of the speculative endeavours of Freud – in terms of the forecasting of a legacy of her own, in “Unhoming Pigeons: the Postal Principle in Lynn Hershmann-Leeson and Hussein Chalayan” in *Derrida Today* 5.1 (2012): 92-110. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Luce Irigaray, “The Blindspot in an Old Dream of Symmetry” in *Speculum of the Other Woman* [1974] Gillian C. Gill, trans. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985): 51. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Ferenczi, 17. ‘Introjection’ is the concept through which Ferenczi’s work is more broadly known and appreciated. Nicolas Abraham – who was subsequently to finesse this concept in tandem with Maria Torok – wrote the introduction to the French edition of *Thalassa* (Paris: Payot, 1969). [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Ferenczi, 17. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. Ferenczi, 18. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Ferenczi, 18, italics original. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Some mammals have already returned to the waters. Their return, however, is not a simple regression. In their recent book, Hal Whitehead and Luke Rendell note that the cetacean return to the sea was radically reshaped by their evolutionary advantage of breathing air, a capacity that supports both speed, by virtue of oxygenation, and vocal communication. See *The Cultural Lives of Whales and Dolphins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Emily Martin challenges the persistent sexual imaginary of active sperm and passive egg in her article “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles” in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16.3 (1991): 485-501. Derrida readdresses the philosophical imaginary of sperm in *Dissemination*, Barbara Johnson, trans. (London: Athlone, 1981). [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. See Irigaray’s essay “The Mechanics of Fluids” in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Catherine Porter, trans. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985): 106-118. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Astrida Neimanis is developing a poetics that is also an ecologic of water (albeit one without any psychoanalytic investment), see her “Feminist Subjectivity, Watered” in *feminist review* 103 (2013): 24, italics as original. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. While Irigaray’s poetics speak to the phenomenological feminine body thus refusing its philosophical negation, it is Irina Aristarkhova that insists on more detailed traffic between the biology of the uterus (against its frequent misleading abstraction into an undifferentiated space) and the philosophical concept of *chora*, see her *Hospitality of the Matrix: Philosophy, Biomedicine, Culture,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2012 [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Ferenczi, 61. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Ferenczi, 60. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Wilhelm Bolsche, qtd in Frank J. Sulloway, Freud, *Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legacy* (Harvard University Press, 1992): 262. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Ferenczi, 62. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. See Sulloway, 261-263. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. Ferenczi, 94-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. Ferenczi, 99. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. Wilson, “Underbelly,” 202. Dufresne notes that Klein supported Ferenczi’s interest in phylogenesis and notion of the ‘thalassal trend’ (See Dufresne, 76). [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Wilson cites Rubin from her 1975 text “The Traffic in Women”: ‘The belly’s hunger gives no clues as to the complexities of cuisine,’ 194 [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Wilson, Underbelly,” 204. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. Melanie Klein, “Weaning” [1936] in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945* (London: Vintage, 1998): 291. Wilson splits up this citation, and uses a previous translation published by the Free Press, 203-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. Wilson, “Underbelly,” 204. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Derrida, “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” 231, emphasis as original. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. Derrida, “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” 203. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. Jacques Derrida, “Eating Well' or the Calculation of the Subject,” in *Points*…*Interviews 1974-1994* Elizabeth Weber, ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995): 281. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Prior to “Eating Well,” Derrida had already published “Foreword: *Fors*: The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok” in *The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonomy* Nicholas Rand, trans. (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1986): xi-xlvii. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. Indexed by Derrida, “*Fors,*”xvi. ‘Introjection’ doubtless exceeds this genealogy – I merely indicate those most pertinent to this chapter. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. See my ‘Animal Melancholia: on the Scent of Dean Spanley’ in *Animality and the Moving Image*, Laura Macmahon and Michael Lawrence, eds. (London: BFI, 2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. Derrida, “Eating Well,” 282. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)