2 The body

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2.1 The body

Geographers have focused on the body as a space. Adrienne Rich (1986: 212) describes the body as 'the geography closest in'. It marks a *boundary* between self and other, both in a literal physiological sense but also in a social sense. It is a personal *space*. A sensuous organ, the site of pleasure and pain around which social definitions of wellbeing, illness, happiness and health are constructed, it is our means for connecting with, and experiencing, other spaces. It is the primary *location* where our personal identities are constituted and social knowledges and meanings inscribed. For example, social identities and differences are constructed around bodily differences such as gender, race, age, and ability (Smith 1993). These can form the basis for exclusion and oppression (Young 1990a). The body then is also a *site* of struggle and contestation. Access to our bodies, control over what can be done to them, how they move, and where they can or cannot go, are the source of regulation and dispute between household members, at work, within communities, at the level of the state, and even the globe (see Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 9). The following sections of this chapter outline geographical work in relation to each of these different dimensions of the body.

The chapter begins by exploring debates about the nature of the body, focusing specifically on understandings about the relationship between the body and mind and whether the body is a 'natural' or social entity. Second, it examines the body

as a space – a space made up of surface, senses and psyche. Third, it explores tensions between the body as an individual project over which we have control versus the body as a site regulated or inflected by other regimes of power. Fourth, it considers how bodies take up space by looking at how we physically occupy and connect with surrounding spatial fields. Fifth, it addresses how our bodies make a difference to our experience of place, examining how corporeal difference can become the basis of discrimination and oppression. Sixth, it focuses on the social construction of age. Finally, it examines how the development of new technologies and possibilities for medical intervention in the body are producing new uncertainties about what the body is and what future it has.

2.2 What is the body?

From the ancient Greeks and the Romans, through Judaeo-Christian thought, from the Renaissance to the present, the body has fascinated and preoccupied philosophers. There is even no universal agreement about where the body begins and ends (Synott 1993). Anthony Synott (1993) asks, for example, whether the shadow is part of the body and what about nail clippings and faeces – are they merely the body in another place? Neither is there is any consensus about the meanings of the body. Different philosophers throughout the ages have defined the body 'as good or bad; tomb or temple; machine or garden; cloak or prison; sacred or secular; friend or enemy; cosmic or mystical; at one with mind and soul or separate; private or public; personal or the property of the state; clock or car; to varying degrees plastic, bionic, communal; selected from a catalogue, engineered; material or spiritual; a corpse or a self' (Synott 1993: 37). These different understandings of corporeality are not confined to particular moments in time, but rather have been (re)produced as competing, sometimes complementary and often contradictory paradigms.

Of all these philosophical debates about the meaning and nature of the body, two in particular are important to understanding how geographers have looked at, and thought about, the body: the relationship between the mind and the body; and whether the body is a 'natural' or social entity.

2.2.1 Mind/body dualism

The seventeenth-century philosopher Descartes established a dualistic concept of mind and body. He argued that only the mind had the power of intelligence, spirituality, and therefore selfhood. The corporeal body was nothing but a machine (akin to a car or a clock) directed by the soul (Turner 1996). His philosophy is captured in his famous phrase: *Cogito ergo sum* – I think therefore I am. Although his view was contested by other philosophers both at the time and since, the Cartesian division and subordination of the body to the mind and the emphasis placed on dualistic thinking

and scientific rationalization had a profound impact on Western thought. Indeed, the Cartesian view of the world is said to have laid the foundations for the development of modern science and, in particular, medicine by establishing the body as a site of **objective** intervention to be mapped, measured and experimented on (Turner 1996).

This distinction between the mind and the body has been gendered. Whereas the mind has been associated with positive terms such as rationality, consciousness, reason and masculinity, the body has been associated with negative terms such as emotionality, nature, irrationality and femininity. Although both men and women have bodies, in Western culture, white men transcend their **embodiment** (or at least have their bodily needs met by others) by regarding the body as merely the container of their consciousness (Longhurst 1997). In contrast, women have been understood as being more closely tied to, and ruled by, their bodies because of natural cycles of menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth. Whereas Man is assumed to be able to separate himself from his emotions, experiences and so on, Woman has been presumed to be 'a victim of the vagaries of her emotions, a creature who can't think straight as a consequence' (Kirby 1992: 12–13).

Feminist geographers such as Gillian Rose (1993) and Robyn Longhurst (1997) have argued that these dualisms are important because they have shaped geographers' understandings of society and space and the way geographical knowledge has been produced. Drawing on the work of feminists such as Michele Le Doeuff (1991), Rose (1993) suggests that theorists from Descartes onwards have defined rational knowledge as a form of knowledge which is masculinist. It 'assumes a knower who believes he can separate himself from his body, emotions, values and past experiences so that he and his thought are autonomous, context-free and objective' (Rose 1993: 7). As a result of this belief in the objectivity of masculinist rationality – that it is untainted by bodily identity and experience – Rose claims that it is assumed to be universal, the only form of knowledge available. In other words, she argues that white, bourgeois, heterosexual man tends to see other people who are not like himself only in relation to himself. She writes: 'He understands femininity, for example, only in terms of its difference from masculinity. He sees other identities only in terms of his own self-perception; he sees them as what I shall term his Other' (Rose 1993: 6).

Applying these arguments to geography, Rose (1993) shows how white, heterosexual men have tended to exclude or marginalize women as producers of geographical knowledge, and what are considered women's issues as topics to study. The mind/body dualism has therefore played a key role in determining what counts as legitimate knowledge in geography with the consequence that topics such as embodiment and sexuality were, until the mid–late 1990s, regarded as inappropriate topics to teach and research. They have been 'othered' within the discipline (Longhurst 1997).

Fortunately, these sorts of critiques have played an important part in stimulating geographers at the end of the twentieth, and at the beginning of the twenty-first, centuries to challenge the privileging of the mind over the body within the discipline. As a result, what Longhurst (1997: 494) terms 'dirty topics' are being put on

the map and geographers are beginning to think about ways of writing (for example, using autobiographical material and personal testimonies) and methodological practices which recognize that all knowledges are embodied and situated (Rose 1997).

2.2.2 The natural and the social

Historically, women have been stereotypically defined in terms of their biology. The notion that women were closer to nature and the animal world than men because they menstruate and give birth gained important currency in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Women's periods were read as signs of women's inherent lack of control over their bodies. Women leaked, while men were self-contained (although see Grosz's 1994 discussion of seminal fluid). Their role in reproduction was also understood to mean that they were 'naturally' more nurturing and therefore more closely linked to Mother Earth than men. The other side of this association between women and nature was an assumption that, just as nature was wild and potentially uncontrollable (except by rational male science), so women were less able to control their emotions and passions than men (Merchant 1990). Indeed, women's unstable bodies were considered to be a threat to their minds (Jordanova 1989). In the late nineteenth century, when the suffragette movement with its campaigns for women's right to vote and to education began to gain momentum, opponents used scientific claims that women had naturally smaller brains than men and that education might damage their ovaries to justify excluding them from public life (Shilling 1993). In other words, women's bodies were used to justify what was regarded as a 'natural inequality' between the sexes.

These notions that women's bodies are both different and inferior to men's persisted into the twentieth century (see also Chapter 5). Chris Shilling (1993) notes that even in the 1960s, the argument that women's hormones meant that they were inherently intellectually and emotionally unstable was used to prevent women being allowed to train as pilots in Australia. He writes:

> There have been repeated attempts to limit women's civil, social and political rights by taking the male body, however defined, as 'complete' and the norm and by defining women as different and inferior as a result of their unstable bodies. Women were supposedly confined by their biological limitations to the private sphere, while only men were corporeally fit for participating in public life (Shilling 1993: 55).

Similar naturalistic views have been used to legitimize the subordination of black bodies. Like women, black people have also been defined through their bodies. The black body has been understood to be pre-social, to be driven by biology, in opposition to the civilized and rational white body (Shilling 1993). In particular, colonialization and slavery have played an important part in defining and developing understandings of black bodies as driven by insatiable sexual appetites, 'dangerous', uncivilized, uncontrollable, and a threat to whites (Mercer and Race 1988). For

example, Shilling (1993: 57) argues that in the USA white slave owners developed myths about animal nature and black sexuality to justify the atrocities perpetuated against black people; 'defining the worth of black people through their bodies was also used to justify the treatment of blacks as commodities and the use of black women for slave breeding'. He notes, for example, that one in three of all the black men lynched in the USA between 1885 and 1900 were accused of rape.

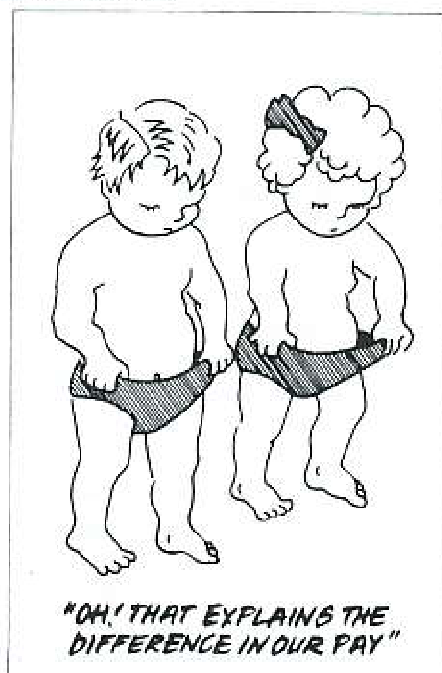
These claims about the 'natural' differences between men and women, white and black, are what are known as **essentialist** arguments. They assume that sexual and racial differences are determined by biology, that bodies are 'natural' or pre-discursive entities – in other words, that bodies have particular stable, fixed properties or 'essences' (Fuss 1990). Essentialist explanations have been challenged by social constructionists. They argue that there is no 'natural' body, rather, the body is always 'culturally mapped; it never exists in a pure or uncoded state' (Fuss 1990: 6), so that what essentialists 'naturalize' or portray as 'essence' is actually socially constructed difference. These differences are produced through material and social practices, discourses and systems of representation rather than biology. Social constructionists demonstrate this by pointing to the fact that what is understood by 'man' and 'woman', 'black' and 'white' (for discussions of whiteness see Chapter 7 and Chapter 9) varies historically and in different cultural contexts.

Feminists have made a distinction between *sex* – the biological difference between men and women – and *gender* (masculinity and femininity) – the social meanings which are ascribed to men and women (see Women and Geography Study Group 1997, Laurie *et al.* 1999). The term 'gender' incorporates a recognition of the way differences between the sexes are socially constructed in a hierarchical way (see Figure 2.1). Likewise, other writers have argued that meanings ascribed to black and white bodies are also socially produced in ways which exaggerate and hierarchize the differences between them. Focusing on the wider associations of blackness in white societies, David Sibley (1995a) points out how black is used to describe dirt, disease, death and decay. These associations not only emphasize the threatening quality of blackness but also carry implicit suggestions of contamination. This fear of infection, that racialized minority groups carry disease and threaten white society, was evident in 'moral panics' (see also Chapter 6) which occurred in the UK in 1905 following an outbreak of smallpox amongst Pakistani immigrants (Shilling 1993). More recently, the same anxieties about the black body have been reproduced in racist claims that AIDS originated from Africa.

Another example is found in the work of Vron Ware (1992: 3) who opens her book *Beyond the Pale* with the following 'story' or urban myth about a white English woman holidaying in New York, USA:

> Nervous about travelling as a single woman and alarmed at the prospect of being in a city renowned for violent crime, she booked into an expensive hotel where she thought she would be safe. One day she stepped into an empty elevator to go up to her room, and was startled when a tall black man accompanied by a large ferocious-looking dog came in and stood besides her just as the lift doors were closing. Since he was wearing

Figure 2.1 Gender incorporates a recognition of the way differences between the sexes are socially constructed in a hierarchical way



Source: LIBERTY

> shades she could not be sure whether he was looking at her, but she nearly leapt out of his skin when she heard his voice: 'Lady, lie down'. Terrified, she moved to obey him, praying that someone would call the elevator and rescue her in time. But instead of touching her the man stepped back in confusion. 'I was talking to my dog', he explained, almost as embarrassed as she was' . . . later it transpires the man in the lift was Lionel Ritchie.

This 'story' shows how the black body continues to be constructed as an object of dread by white women (see also Chapter 6). Ware (1992) unpacks why this is so, explaining how this anecdote can only be understood within the context of slavery and colonialism. She argues that colonial ideologies about black masculinity (as dangerous, criminal and uncontrollable) and white femininity (pure, vulnerable, etc) continue to underpin social relations between black men and white women in contemporary Western societies.

In the same way, if you go back and reread the examples above about the suffragettes, Australian women pilots, and black masculinity, you should be able to see how these understandings of the female and the black male body are also a product of discourses, representations and material practices rather than being the product of 'natural' essences.

It is important to note, however, that although essentialist explanations for sexual and racial differences have often been used to justify sexism and racism, radical feminists and the black power movement have also celebrated women's closeness to nature and black corporeality respectively (Shilling 1993). For example, in the 1970s radical feminists countered the way essentialist arguments about women's closeness to nature were used to subordinate women by employing similar essentialist arguments but reversing their meaning. They celebrated the power of women's biology, their connectedness to Mother Earth, arguing that women's reproductive role provided them with privileged knowledge and power (Griffin 1978, O'Brien 1989). Their goal was not to achieve equality with men by challenging and changing the social meanings of masculinity and femininity; rather they sought to achieve complete autonomy from men and the man-made world by creating women-only communities (see Chapter 8).

Other groups have employed what is termed 'strategic essentialism'. They have mobilized a belief in a shared identity and experience in order to achieve a particular political aim. This tactic involves recognizing, but suspending, differences between those involved in order to form a strategic alliance. For example, lesbian and gay activists have sometimes used the argument that their sexuality is a product of a gay gene rather than being a social choice (even though they believe this to be untrue) in order to establish lesbians and gay men as a legitimate minority group that deserve the same protection and civil rights as ethnic minorities (Epstein 1987). The danger of adopting such an approach, however, is that it imposes an assumption of homogeneity on lesbians and gay men which obscures other differences (such as gender, class, age, ethnicity) between them; and it also makes lesbians and gay men a more visible, and therefore easier, target for opponents (Epstein 1987).

The debate between essentialism and constructionism has gradually been overtaken by a recognition that the distinction between biology and social meanings – between sex and gender – does not hold up. Julia Cream (1995) identifies three bodies which disrupt traditionally accepted notions of sex and gender: the *transsexual*, the *intersex baby* and the *XXY female*.

- *Transsexuals* believe their body does not correspond with their gender identity. They believe themselves to be either women trapped in men's bodies or men trapped in women's bodies. The development of medical technologies has enabled transsexuals to change their sexed bodies to fit their gender identities (see Ekins and King 1999).

- *Intersexed babies* have genitals which are neither clearly male nor female. Usually, doctors assign these children a sex soon after birth according to the best genital fit. In this way, the anomalous body is made to conform in order to maintain the fiction of a binary distinction between male and female.

- *XXY females* are women who have XXY chromosomes rather than XX chromosomes which women are assumed to carry, or XY chromosomes which

men are assumed to have. This chromosome pattern, which disrupts the assumed male/female binary, first came to light when chromosome or what was termed 'sex testing' was introduced at the Olympics to prevent men competing in women's events. It led to suggestions that perhaps women with XXY chromosomes were 'really' men.

Cream's (1995) three examples neatly demonstrate that we do not all necessarily fit into one of only two bodies: male or female. There are no coherent 'natural' categories: man/woman. Yet, despite all the biological ambiguity evident in Cream's examples, our bodies are still allowed to be one of two sexes only. Ambiguous bodies such as transsexuals, intersex babies and XXY females are contained and medicalized in order to conform to our culture's demand for only two categories of sex (male/female) and to confirm or maintain the association between gender and sex (Cream 1995). For example, intersex babies are usually operated on soon after birth so that they can be identified as either male or female. 'What this means is that our understanding of gender (man and woman) is not determined by sex (male and female) but that our understandings of sex itself are dictated by an understanding that man and woman should inhabit distinct and separate bodies. So, sex does not make gender; gender makes sex' (Women and Geography Study Group 1997: 195). In other words, the dichotomous distinction (outlined earlier) which some academics have made between sex (biological or essentialist) and gender (social) is collapsed; both are exposed as social. The body can never be understood as a pure, neutral or presocial form onto which social meanings are projected. It is always a social and discursive object (Grosz 1994).

Understandings of gender have been fundamentally challenged and reworked by the philosopher Judith Butler (1990, 1993a). She rejects the notion that biology is a bedrock which underlies the categories of gender and sex. Rather, she theorizes gender (and implicitly other identities too) as performative, arguing that 'gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being' (Butler 1990: 33). In other words, gender is an *effect* of dominant discourses and matrices of power. There is no 'real' or original identity behind any gender performance. Butler (1993a) suggests that social and political change within the performance of identity lies in the possible displacement of dominant discourses. In a reading of drag balls she argues that the parodic repetition and mimicry of heterosexual identities at these events disrupts dominant sex and gender identities because the performers' supposed 'natural' identities (as male) do not correspond with the signs produced within the performance (e.g. feminine body language and dress). '[B]y disrupting the assumed correspondence between a 'real' interior and its surface markers (clothes, walk, hair, etc), drag balls make explicit the way in which all gender and sexual identifications are ritually performed in daily life' (Nelson 1999: 339). In other words, they expose the fact that all identities are fragile and unstable fictions.

Butler's (1990) writing has become important within social and cultural geography. The notion of performativity has been used to frame geographical studies, and to talk, not only about bodily identities, but also about space (e.g. Bell *et al.* 1994, McDowell and Court 1994, Sharp 1996, Kirby 1996, Lewis and Pile 1996, Valentine 1996a, Rose 1997 and Delph-Januirek 1999). Instead of thinking about space and place as pre-existing sites in which performances occur, some of these studies argue that bodily performances themselves constitute or (re)produce space and place. However, geographers have also been criticized for overlooking the problematic aspects of Butler's work (particularly in relation to her assumptions about **subjectivity**, agency and change) when employing her theorization of performativity (Walker 1995, Nelson 1999).

Summary

- The Cartesian division and subordination of the body to the mind has shaped geographers' understandings of society and space.
- Historically, the notion that women's bodies are different from, and inferior to, men's has been used to justify their limited participation in public space.
- Similar 'naturalistic' views have also been used to legitimate the subordination of black bodies.
- Arguments that assume sexual and racial differences are a product of biology or natural essences are termed essentialist.
- Essentialist explanations have been contested by social constructionists, who argue that bodies are the product of discourses, representations and material practices rather than biology.
- A distinction has been made between *sex* (a natural category based on biological difference) and *gender* (the social meanings ascribed to sex).
- Geographers, however, are now moving away from thinking about sex and gender in this way. Instead the focus is on embodied performance.

2.3 The body as a space

Adrienne Rich describes the body as 'the geography closest in'. The body is not just in space, it *is a space*. There are three ways in which we can think of the body as a space. It is a surface which is marked and transformed by our culture. It is a sensuous being, the material basis for our connection with, and experience of, the world. It is what bounds the space of the psychic.

2.3.1 Surface

The body is a surface of inscription – a surface on which we inscribe our identities, and a surface upon which cultural values, morality and social laws are written, marked, scarred or transformed by various institutional regimes. This process Elizabeth Grosz (1993: 12) has termed 'social tattooing'. She writes:

> In our own culture, inscriptions occur both violently and in more subtle forms. In the first case, violence is demonstrable in social institutions, keeping the body confined, constrained, supervised, and regimented, marked by implements such as handcuffs . . . the straitjacket, the regimen of drug habituation and rehabilitation, chronologically regulated time and labor divisions, cellular and solitary confinement, the deprivation of mobility, the bruising of bodies in police interrogations, etc. Less openly violent but no less coercive are the inscriptions of cultural and personal values, norms, and commitments according to the morphology and categorization of the body into socially significant groups – male and female, black and white, and so on. The body is involuntarily marked, but it is also incised through 'voluntary' procedures, life-styles, habits, and behaviours. Makeup, stilettos, bras, hair sprays, clothing, underclothing mark women's bodies, whether black or white, in ways in which hair styles, professional training, personal grooming, gait, posture, body building, and sports may mark men's. There is nothing natural or ahistorical about these modes of corporeal inscription. Through them, bodies are made amenable to the prevailing exigencies of power. They make the flesh into a particular type of body – pagan, primitive, medieval, capitalist, Italian, American, Australian. What is sometimes loosely called body language is a not inappropriate description of the ways in which culturally specific grids of power, regulation, and force condition and provide techniques for the formation of particular bodies (Grosz 1994: 141–2).

The work of three social theorists – Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault – has been particularly important in helping social scientists to think about the body as a surface which is inscribed and regulated.

2.3.1.1 Elias: the civilized body

From the Middle Ages to the present there have been fundamental changes in what are considered appropriate forms of bodily expression. In medieval times life was short, food was scarce, emotions were freely expressed, people even took pleasure from watching the torture and mutilation of others. There were few social prohibitions about appropriate bodily behaviour – it was commonplace for people to eat, belch, fart, shit and spit in public. The emphasis was on satiating the self, not on moderation or self-restraint. Then, in 1530, Erasmus produced a short treatise on manners, *De Civilitate Morum Puerilium*, which set out new codes of bodily propriety which required that the body should be controlled and hidden and that all signs of bodily functions should take place in 'private' rather than 'public' space.

According to the German sociologist Norbert Elias (1978/1982), this marked a gradual but fundamental shift in public behaviour. Body management and control of the emotions increased as taboos developed around bodily functions such as spitting and defecating, culminating in the emergence of concepts such as self-restraint, embarrassment and shame. Elias documents the role of Renaissance court society in promoting 'civility'. He argues that an individual's survival in court depended not on their physical force or strength but on their impression management and etiquette. An individual's social identity or status could be read from their bodily deportment and manners. Those who regarded themselves as socially superior attempted to distinguish themselves from others through their superior bodily control, while those who wanted to be climb the social ladder had to imitate their superiors. These moral 'codes' eventually trickled down the social strata and became practised to different degrees by all citizens, becoming part of accepted everyday behaviour. Thus parents have to 'civilize' children by teaching them how to manage their bodies, to use the toilet, not to spit, and so on. Through such processes children's bodies are turned into adult bodies (see also Chapter 5). As Elias (1982: 38) notes, contemporary children now have 'in the space of a few years to attain the advanced level of shame and revulsion that [adults have] developed over many centuries'.

This gradual civilizing of the body has produced five significant cultural shifts: first, in the nature of fear. While individuals in unregulated medieval societies feared attack, in modern societies social fears of shame and embarrassment are, for most people, more pressing everyday concerns. The second shift is in the construction of the social in opposition to biology/nature: by controlling our bodies we suppress our 'nature', transcend our animality and emphasize our humanness. The third lies in the importance of rational thought and the control of emotions. The fourth is in social differentiation, namely that increased emphasis on self-control has encouraged greater reflexivity about our bodies, individualization, and a desire to distance ourselves from others. The fifth shift is in the social distance which has developed between adults and children (Shilling 1993).

2.3.1.2 Bourdieu: the body as the bearer of symbolic value

In a famous book titled *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1994: 190) argues that 'the body is the most indisputable materialization of class taste'. He suggests that class becomes imprinted upon our bodies in three ways (Shilling 1993). First, through our *social location* in that our material circumstances shape the way we can look after our bodies, dress, etc. Second, through what he termed ***habitus***. This is the class-oriented, unintentional pre-disposed ways we have of behaving which often betray our class origins. Bourdieu argues that every aspect of our embodiment, from the way we hold our cutlery to the way we walk, articulates and reproduces our social location in this way. Third, through *taste*. This refers to 'the processes whereby

individuals appropriate as voluntary choices and preferences, lifestyles which are actually rooted in material constraints' (Shilling 1993: 129). Thus Shilling (1993: 129) argues, 'The development of taste, which can be seen as a conscious manifestation of habitus, is embodied and deeply affects people's orientations to their bodies.' For example, working-class people usually have limited material resources to spend on food so they tend to buy cheaper foods. These are commonly foods that are high in fat. In turn, their preference for and consumption of these foods affect their bodily shape, health and ultimately mortality.

Bourdieu's (1984) work clearly shows how different classes produce different bodily forms. For example, the working classes have little free time and so the body is for them a means to an end. Working-class sports, such as boxing, football and weightlifting, reflect this in that they are about excitement – a temporary release from the tensions of everyday life – and involve developing strength and skills which are oriented towards manual work (Shilling 1993). In contrast, the middle classes have more leisure time and resources to invest in the body as a project. Their emphasis is often on slimness and looking good because appearance or presentation rather than strength is important in many middle-class occupations (see Chapter 5). There is also significant differentiation within the middle classes, with different groups being oriented differently towards their bodies. While the upwardly mobile middle class tend towards activities such as fitness training, the elite bourgeoisie tend to engage in leisure pursuits such as polo, riding, yachting or golf, which combine sport with socializing. These activities develop physical, social and **cultural capital**.

The distinct bodily forms produced through the different relationships the working classes and middle classes have with their bodies are important because they are valued differently and, so Bourdieu (1984) argues, contribute to the development of social inequalities. The physical capital of the working classes has less economic value than that of the middle classes. Likewise, the working classes find it more difficult to convert their cultural capital into other resources because their bodily comportment (in terms of manners, ways of speaking, etc) is often judged as negative at employment interviews. Shilling (1993) suggests that, in the case of social capital, the aggressive management of bodies which enables young working-class men to gain respect amongst their peers is not valued in other contexts. In contrast, the middle classes, especially the elite, have more opportunities to turn physical capital into other resources. For example, elite sports which have strict codes of etiquette enable individuals to acquire or demonstrate that they have the sort of bodily competence which is often crucial in employment and educational selection processes. These sports can also enable individuals to develop social networks which may allow them to make important professional contacts and to meet appropriate partners (Shilling 1993).

There are two further important points to note about Bourdieu's analysis of the body as the bearer of symbolic value. Firstly, social differences in bodily forms are often mistakenly assumed to be 'natural' differences. Secondly, the value attached to different bodily forms is not fixed, but rather there are struggles and conflicts between and within social groups to define and control which bodily forms are valued.

Geographers have drawn on Bourdieu's work specifically in relation to studies of consumption (e.g. Bell and Valentine 1997), and of gentrification and middle-class formation (e.g. Savage *et al.* 1993, Ley 1996) (see Chapter 7).

2.3.1.3 Foucault: the disciplining gaze

Michel Foucault is a French philosopher whose work has been particularly influential in shaping understandings of how the body is produced by, and exists in, discourse and how it has historically been disciplined and subdued (Driver 1985). He coined the term 'biopower' (power over life) to describe a diverse range of techniques through which bodies are subjugated and populations controlled (Foucault 1978).

In his work on sexuality Foucault (1978) argued that sex is not a 'natural' or biological urge (see also section 2.2.2) but rather is an historical construct. He traced the history of the way sexualities have been produced through discourses, identifying how heterosexual relations have been produced as the 'norm' and other forms of sexuality classified as 'deviant'. In this way, Foucault showed how these discourses have played an important role not only in controlling individual bodies but also in the management of whole populations.

Foucault also had a particular interest in the regulation of populations and societies through the discipling power of the surveillant gaze. His book *Discipline and Punish* (1977) opens with a graphic description of an eighteenth-century prisoner being tortured to death. Foucault uses this example to explain how in traditional societies the body was the target of penal repression. Punishment for social wrongdoing was literally acted out on the body of individual prisoners through these public acts of ritual torture. Foucault then goes on to trace the development of penology and to show how, following penal reform in the eighteenth century, more subtle tactics and new technologies of power were used to punish offenders, which relied on using institutional space as a way of controlling prisoners. Foucault focuses on the example of a prison designed by Jeremy Bentham. Known as Bentham's **Panopticon**, this prison had a circular design to ensure that all the cells were under potential constant surveillance from a central watchtower, although the occupants of the cells could not tell if, or when, they were actually being watched. (There is some dispute, however, as to whether such a prison was ever built.)

Foucault (1977: 177) argued that the fact of being able always to be seen meant that individuals would exercise self-surveillance and self-discipline. He writes: '[T]here is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising surveillance over and against himself' (Foucault 1977: 155). Through this control and regulation of movements, time and everyday activities, Foucault argues, the body becomes invested with relations of power and domination, resulting in obedient 'docile bodies' (Foucault 1977: 177). He also pointed out, though, that where there is power

there is always resistance. These ideas have been applied by social scientists beyond the realm of institutional settings such as prisons, to think about the ways 'normal' social life and activities takes place within a system of 'imperfect Panopticism' (Hannah 1997).

Foucault's work has therefore become very important in the social sciences. First, it demonstrates that the body is constituted within discourse and that different discursive regimes produce different bodies. Second, it demonstrates that the transition from traditional to modern societies was marked by a shift in the *target of discourse* away from controlling the body through brute force towards the use of the mind as the surface of the inscription of power. Third, it reveals a shift in the *scope of discourse*, away from controlling individual bodies towards controlling the population as a whole. Fourth, it emphasizes the individual body as the effect of an endless circulation of power and knowledge. In doing so it makes an important connection between everyday practices and the operation of power at a wider scale (Shilling 1993).

Geographers in particular have used Foucault's ideas to think about the way bodies are disciplined in a range of spatial contexts, for example: the asylum (Philo 1989), the workhouse (Driver 1993), the workplace (McDowell 1995), the prison (see Valentine 1998), and the state (Robinson 1990) (see Chapter 5). They have also drawn upon the concept of 'imperfect Panopticism' (Hannah 1997) in discussing new technologies (such as CCTV) and the emergence of a surveillance society (Hannah 1997, Fyfe and Bannister 1998, Graham 1998) (see Chapter 6).

2.3.2 The sensuous body

Section 2.3.1 focused on how the body is produced through discourse. However, Bryan Turner (1984: 245) argues that such work ignores the material body. He writes that the 'immediacy of personal sensuous experience of embodiment which is involved in the notion of *my* body receives scant attention. My authority, possession and occupation of a personalised body through sensuous experience are minimised in favour of an emphasis on the regulatory controls exercised from outside.'

Among those who have focused on the lived body is the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (1962). For Merleau-Ponty (1962) subjectivity is located in the body rather than the mind. He argues that the body is the locus of experience, it exists prior to all reflection and knowledge. The body, and the way it acts and orientates itself to its surroundings, is the basis of everything else (Young 1990b). His emphasis is therefore on perception. The subject exists for him insofar as the body can approach and connect with its surroundings and thus bring them into being (Young 1990b). As Langer (1989: 41) writes, 'my awareness of my body is inseparable from the world of my perception. The things which I perceive, I perceive always in reference to my body, and this is so only because I have an immediate awareness of

my body itself as it exists "*towards them*".' In other words, for Merleau-Ponty, the mind 'is always embodied, always based on corporeal and sensory relations' (Grosz 1994: 86).

For Merleau-Ponty (1962) the body is the subject that constitutes space because without the body there would be no space, but it is also the object of spatial relations. He grants the body intentionality, arguing that bodily movements can be directed by the body's intelligent connections with the world which surrounds it.

The geographer David Seamon (1979) has drawn on Merleau-Ponty's work to understand the everyday nature of environmental experience. Using focus groups conducted with students, he explored the way in which people move through and occupy everyday spaces. Like Merleau-Ponty, Seamon does not conceive of the body as a passive object, but rather as capable of its own thought and action. To illustrate this he draws on extracts from his focus group discussions in which participants describe how they would do things 'automatically', such as walking home without thinking about the route they were taking or reaching for a clean towel under the sink before they have remembered there is not one there (Box 2.1). Seamon (1979: 56) argues that underlying and guiding these everyday movements is a bodily intentionality which he terms 'body subject'. He describes this as 'the inherent capacity of the body to direct behaviours of the person intelligently, and thus function as a special kind of subject which expresses itself in a preconscious way usually described by such words as "automatic", "habitual", "involuntary" and "mechanical"' (Seamon 1979: 41).

Developing the theme of habitual movement, Seamon (1979: 55) goes on to argue that individuals build up 'time–space routines'. This is the series of behaviours or rituals of everyday life we habitually repeat as part of daily or weekly schedules – for example, getting up at 7.30 a.m., having a bath, dressing, having breakfast, leaving the home at a set time, buying a paper from the nearby store, catching the same bus to work, and so on. Where many individuals' time–space routines come together they fuse to create 'place ballets' (Seamon 1979: 56). These can occur in all sorts of environments from the street, to the university, a marketplace or a station. For Seamon (1979) the power of place ballets to generate a sense of place has important implications for planning and design.

While Seamon's work focuses on the way bodies move through and occupy space, other geographers have been concerned with the role of the senses in forming a dialogue between the body and its surroundings (Rodaway 1994). According to Rodaway (1994: 31), there are four dimensions to understanding the sensuous geography of the body. First, the body's geometry (awareness of front, back, up, down, etc) and its senses give us an *orientation* in the world. Second, the senses provide a *measure* of the world in that they enable us to appreciate distance, scale, etc. Third, the *locomotion* of the body enables us to explore and evaluate our surroundings with all our senses. Fourth, the body is a *coherent system* integrating and coordinating the information and experiences gathered by each of the senses.

Box 2.1: Bodily intentionality

'When I was living at home and going to school, I couldn't drive to the university directly – I had to go around one way or the other. I once remembered becoming vividly aware of the fact that I always went there by one route and back the other – I'd practically always do it. And the funny thing was that I didn't have to tell myself to go there one way and back the other. Something in me would do it automatically; I didn't have much choice in the matter.'

'I know where the string switches to the lights in my apartment are now. In the kitchen, even in the dark, I walk in, take a few steps, my hand reaches for the string, pulls and the light is on. The hand knows exactly what to do. It happens fast and effortlessly – I don't have to think about it at all.'

'Sometimes for an early class I'll get to the class and wonder how I got there – you do it so mechanically. You don't remember walking there. You get up and go without thinking – you know exactly where you have to go and you get there but you don't think about getting there while you're on the way.'

'I operated an ice-cream truck this past summer. On busy days I'd work as fast as I could . . . As I worked, I'd get into a rhythm of getting ice cream and giving change. My actions would flow, and I'd feel good. I had about twenty kinds of ice cream in my truck. Someone would order, and automatically I would reach for the right container, make what the customer wanted, and take his [*sic*] money. Most of the time I didn't have to think about what I was doing. It all became routine.'

Cited in Seamon 1979: 163–4, 165, 170.

While everyday perception is, for most people, multi-sensual, involving some combination of touch, taste, hearing, smell and sight (though see geographical work on sensory impairment, notably the experiences of the visually impaired and blind: Butler 1994, Butler and Bowlby 1997), geographers have tended to privilege the visual over the other senses. The emphasis has often been on how bodies are dressed and on how they appear as they move through and occupy space. The 'surveillant gaze' (see section 2.3.1.3 above) has been an important means through which bodies are interpreted and regulated. Recently, however, some geographers (e.g. Thrift 1996) have begun to stress the importance of valorizing all the senses and forms of social knowledge, not just the visual and the act of looking. Our understandings of our bodies and our attempts to manage them are based not just on visual information but also other sensual information. Space and time are perceived through all the different senses of the body. Our bodies might look active, young and dynamic, yet we might

feel heavy, slow, immobile, have an inhibited sense of our own spatiality – or vice-versa (Valentine 1999a).

The body may also be considered as a site of pleasure. Lynda Johnston's (1998) work on women body builders captures some of the corporeal pleasures of pumping iron (see also section 2.4.1.1) while David Crouch (1999) describes some of the physical and sensual pleasures of caravanning. Yet, this is not to forget that the body is also a site of pain. Liz Crow (1996) warns that by focusing on the social construction of disability and challenging stereotypes of the disabled as dependent or vulnerable, researchers are in danger of ignoring the very real bodily experiences of pain that an illness or impairment can cause. The complex and contradictory bodily realities of a chronic illness are evident in Pam Moss and Isabel Dyck's (1999) study of women with *myalgic encephalomyelitis* (ME). Here, they describe how the women's experiences of fatigue, pain and cognitive dysfunction may be followed by days of being symptom-free, showing how these contradictory bodily experiences can position the women as simultaneously 'ill' and 'healthy'. This theme is also pursued in Moss's (1999) autobiographical account of having ME, while elsewhere Dyck (1999) considers how women with multiple sclerosis (MS) negotiate changes in their bodies' corporeality.

2.3.3 The psyche

The previous sections have distinguished between surface presentations – how we might appear – and sensuous experiences – how we might feel. This section pursues the distinction between 'surface' and 'depth' or 'inside' and 'outside' further by focusing on the psyche – how we really feel (Kirby 1996: 14).

Geographers have used psychoanalytical theory and its concern with the unconscious to try to understand the relationship between the individual and the external world. Analysts believe that it is the unconscious (mental processes of which we are unaware) which generates the thoughts and feelings which motivate or inhibit our actions. Consequently, it is the unconscious, rather than consciousness, which they regard as the key to understanding individual and group behaviour (Pile 1996). In summarizing the complex and highly contested 'notion' of the unconscious, Steve Pile (1996: 7) explains that 'For most analysts . . . the unconscious is made up of residues of infantile experiences and the representatives of the person's (particular sexual) drives. Although there is considerable disagreement about how children develop increasingly intricate and dynamic psychological structures, the experiences of early childhood are generally accepted to be critical.' He goes on to explain that we cope with early upsetting or painful experiences by repressing them from our consciousness. This causes a split within the mind into the conscious and the unconscious. Although the unconscious does not dictate what goes on in the mind, it does continually struggle to express itself, for example through dreams.

There are many different schools of psychoanalytic thought, each of which is highly contested. Geographers have drawn on a range of approaches, including the work of Freud, Lacan, Winnicott, Kristeva and Klein, in order think about the relationships between subjectivity, society and space (see for example: Aitken and Herman 1997, Blum and Nast 1996, Bondi 1997, Pile 1996, Rose 1996). David Sibley's work (1995a, 1995b) is a particularly good example of how psychoanalytic theory can be used to understand how we locate ourselves and others in the world.

In his book *Geographies of Exclusion* David Sibley (1995a) examines why some groups, including gypsies, children, lesbian and gay men and ethnic minorities, are both socially and spatially marginalized. He argues that each of these groups is feared or loathed and goes on to shows how this attitude to cultural difference is played out in space, giving examples of how each of these groups has been subject to spatial regulation and segregation. In trying to understand why these groups are feared and how socio-spatial boundaries are constructed along axes of difference such as race and sexuality Sibley (1995a, 1995b) draws on the work of object relations psychoanalysists such as Melanie Klein and Julia Kristeva. He uses their work to understand how people make the distinction, and mark boundaries between self and other.

Pile (1996) explains – in his own words, very crudely – that in object relations theory the child's sense of itself is developed through its relation to objects (which include the mother, toys, etc). Specifically, the child develops a sense of itself as a single bounded identity as a result of its gradual recognition that it has a separate body from that of its mother. The mother is both a 'good' object because she gives the child food, love, and so on, and a 'bad' object because she is not always available or does not always respond to the child's desires. This tension between these experiences of desire and insecurity produces a sense of ambivalence within the child towards the mother (Pile 1996). Sibley (1995b: 125) writes: 'Aversion and desire, repulsion and attraction, play against each other in defining the border which gives the self identity and, importantly, these opposed feelings are transferred to others during childhood.'

Sibley then uses Kristeva's concept of abjection to explain this displacement of these contradictory feelings onto those regarded as different. For Kristeva, the subject feels a sense of repulsion at its own bodily residues (excrement, decay, etc). To maintain the purity of the self, the boundaries of the body must be constantly defended against the impure. Sibley (1995a: 8) argues that the 'urge to make separations between clean and dirty, ordered and disordered, "us" and "them", that is, to expel the abject, is encouraged in western cultures, creating feelings of anxiety because such separations can never be finally achieved' (Sibley 1995a: 14). Sibley goes on to examine the relationship between these processes and organization of space, social values, and power relations. He shows how cultural and social values in Western society construct particular groups (such as gypsies, lesbians and gay men, ethnic minorities, and so on) as 'dirty' or polluting. Using examples, Sibley (1995a) demonstrates how people often respond to these 'abject others' with hatred, attempting to create social and spatial boundaries to exclude or expel them. Through this literal mapping

of power relations and rejection Sibley argues that particular exclusionary landscapes are developed in different times and places (see also Chapter 6).

Summary

- The body is a surface upon which cultural values, morality and institutional regimes are inscribed.
- It is constituted within discourse. Different discursive regimes produce different bodies.
- The body is also a sensuous being, the material basis for our connection with, and experience of, our environment.
- Some geographers have used psychoanalytical theory to try to understand the relationship between the individual and the external world.

2.4 The body as a project

2.4.1 The individual body

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries affluent Western societies have been marked by a growth in mass consumption, the democratization of culture, a decline in religious morality and a postindustrial emphasis on hedonism and pleasure (Turner 1992). In this context, the body has emerged in consumer culture as an important bearer of symbolic value (see section 2.3.1.2) and as constitutive of our self-identities. As Chris Shilling (1993: 3) explains: 'For those who have lost their faith in religious authorities and grand political narratives, and are no longer provided with a clear world view or self-identity by these trans-personal meaning structures, at least the body initially appears to provide a firm foundation on which to reconstruct a reliable sense of the self in the modern world.' In particular, the exterior surface or appearance of the body is seen to symbolize the self.

Developments in everything from plastic surgery and laser treatments to sports science mean that we each have increasing possibilities to control and (re)construct our bodies (although this is not to say that we all have the interest, desire or resources to do so) in terms of size, appearance, shape, and so on. The body is malleable and dynamic rather than static (Lupton 1996). Therefore '[i]n the affluent West there is a tendency for the body to be seen as an entity which is in the process of becoming; a *project* which should be worked at and accomplished as part of an *individual's* self-identity' (Shilling 1993: 5). This emphasis on our individual responsibility for our bodies is evident in government health campaigns. The onset of all sorts of

illnesses (such as cancer or diabetes) and even the ageing process, we are told, can be avoided or at least delayed, if we look after our bodies properly, eat the right foods, watch our weight, exercise, do not smoke, drink in moderation and so on. The media, advertising, fashion industries, medicine and consumer culture all provide a framework of discourses within which we can each locate, evaluate and understand our own bodies (Featherstone 1991).

In this context then, where the body is a symbol of the self, an object of public display and the responsibility of its 'owner', we are expected to be vigilant about our size, shape and appearance and to discipline ourselves in order to produce our bodies in culturally desirable ways (Valentine 1999a, 1999b). Drawing on Foucault's notion of the surveillant gaze (see section 2.3.1.3), writers have argued that disciplinary power is most effective when it is not external but is exercised by, and against, the self. The failure to maintain a slim, youthful, heterosexually desirable body is thus commonly seen not only as a social, but also a personal and moral failing (Synott 1993). Anthony Synott (1993) suggests that our bodily identities are central to our life chances. People who are overweight are often stereotyped as self-indulgent, lazy, untrustworthy and non-conforming (see Chapter 5). There are many examples of organizations as diverse as The Disney Corporation, the New York City Traffic Department and City of London banks who have established their own corporate bodily norms, or fired employees for being overweight (Bell and Valentine 1997, Valentine 1999a).

There are other pay-offs too for those who treat their bodies as a project. According to Shilling (1993: 7), 'Investing in the body provides people with a means of self-expression and a way of potentially feeling good and increasing the control they have over their bodies. If one feels unable to exert influence over an increasingly complex society, at least one can have some effect on the size, shape and appearance of one's body.' More extreme forms of control – which may develop as extensions of mundane everyday bodily practices such as dieting, exercise and dress – include plastic surgery, liposuction, body building (Johnston 1998) and body modification (Bell and Valentine 1995b).

It is also important to remember that this sort of identity construction is not an option within reach of everyone, however. Mike Featherstone (1999: 5) points out, for example, that racialized bodies 'cannot be so easily reconstituted and made into a project'.

2.4.1.1 Body building

'The body builder . . . is involved in actively reinscribing the body's skeletal frame through the inscription of muscles (the calculated tearing and rebuilding of selected muscles according to the exercise chosen) and of posture and internal organs' (Grosz 1994: 143). A muscular physique has been associated in the Western tradition with the male sex (Johnston 1998). Elizabeth Grosz (1994: 224) argues that

male body building can be read as an attempt to render the whole body into the phallus, 'creating the male body as hard, impenetrable, pure muscle'. Interestingly, though, Lynda Johnston (1998) points out that the narcissistic practices of waxing, oiling and posing which this investment in the body can involve might be seen as a feminine activity.

In a paper titled 'Creating the perfect body' Lee Monaghan (1999) highlights the extent to which male body building can be a narcissistic act. He identifies a range of muscular bodies that men can potentially produce through body building, their obsessions with their ethnophysiology (separation between muscles, muscle definition, body fat, and so on) and evaluation and appreciation of other men's bodies in body building magazines and competitions. Drawing on interview material, Monaghan (1999) exposes the anxieties and dismay some men experience when they spend considerable amounts of time building bodies which they think will have sexual capital only to find that women laugh at them when they parade on the beach. One, for example, describes the horror of working his body to produce a 'rhino' or 'frog' shape (big back and shoulders, small waist, big thighs) only to find out that he should have gone for a more athletic or sleeker look, such as the 'tiger' or 'puma'. Others fret that wearing clothes over bulked up muscles makes them look fat rather than fit.

The female body builder both reinforces and destabilizes traditional notions of femininity. By exercising self-surveillance, constantly monitoring their diets and shape, and employing plenty of feminine signifiers such as lipstick and earrings, some female body builders accentuate their femininity (Aoki 1996, Johnston 1998). Others, who develop strong, muscular bodies, understand body building as a transgressive act which destabilizes a feminine bodily identity and questions women's difference from, and otherness to men (see section 2.2.2). As a consequence of diet and training women can reduce their body fat to such an extent that their breasts are reduced in size or even eliminated and menstruation can stop (Johnston 1998). By developing attributes which are usually associated with men – strength, stamina, muscularity and control – some women feel empowered. Likewise, pumping iron in itself is also a corporeal and potentially erotic sensation. The quotes in Box 2.2 capture the pleasure and pain of working out and watching the pump transform the body.

2.4.1.2 Body modification

Body modifications in the form of tattooing, multiple piercing, branding, cutting, binding, scarification and inserting implants are increasingly visible aspects of many contemporary sub-cultural styles in Western societies (Sanders 1989, Mascia-Lees and Sharpe 1992, Myers 1992). '[T]oday tattoos and body piercing have become increasingly stylish; even fashion models get delicate piercing, and modern bohemians sport pierced lips, cheeks, nipples, tongues and genitals' (Steele 1996: 160).

Many accounts by body modifiers emphasize it as a way of taking control of the body, possessing it, and expressing a self-identity. David Curry (1993: 69) explains:

Box 2.2: Body building

Pain

Fiona: 'It's not just the way you end up looking, um, it's the feel of lifting the heavy weights, I really enjoy that. There's something about it. Like this morning – I did chest this morning – just chest alone and I left and I felt all tight across here [points to her chest]. It's a really good feeling and also you get to *like* [original emphasis] the pain you get the next day. For legs you usually get sort [of] two days of pain . . . I'm still feeling it from the other day on me.'

Pleasure

Fiona: 'Yeah I feel good when I'm walking along and even covered up, um, there is some sense of feeling good and holding your head up, walking square shoulders and knowing underneath you've got this changed body that you're working on.'

Sarah: 'I used to think *no way* [original emphasis]. I'm not going to be a woman with muscles because again I envisaged this big huge thing and until you start to push a little bit of weights and notice the change in your body you start to appreciate that, you know, it looks nice.'

Johnston 1998: 255–6

'Body decoration lies at the interface between the private and the public. The skin is the actual membrane between what, on one side, is inside me and, on the other side, is outside me. It is superficially me and at the same time a surface onto which I can both consciously and unconsciously project that which is more deeply me.' In this respect, body modifications are regarded as a way of articulating individuality, of resisting the superficiality of consumer culture and of making a statement of difference. People often go to great lengths to design their own unique tattoos. One of Paul Sweetman's (1999: 68) interviewees explains '. . . it makes you feel individual . . . you know like, everyone's born with roughly the same bodies, but you've created yours in your own image [in line with] what your imagination wants your body to look like. It's like someone's given you something, and then you've made it your own, so you're not like everyone else any more.' While a man with a large-scale back tattoo feels 'I am a different person now, and I realise that in many ways, I am not the average guy on the street. On a more public level, my tattoo affirms that difference. It visually sets me apart from the masses' (Klesse 1999: 20).

In contrast to other ways of articulating a self-identity many body modifications have the advantage of permanence (although this varies as piercings and some tattoos can be removed). As one woman with a tattoo explains, 'Before, I could express myself in clothes and things like that, now it's actually something that's permanent

Plate 2.1 Body modification can be kept private by clothing or displayed at will

and that's definitely me' (Sweetman 1999: 58). In this way, body modifications can be a stronger, definitive statement of the self, 'an attempt to fix and anchor the self by permanently marking the body' (Featherstone 1999: 4). Indeed, some use them as a way of recording defining moments in their lives (e.g. a wedding) onto their bodies. As such, body modifications are a 'permanent diary that no one can take off you' (Sweetman 1999: 69). Consequently, the American tattooist Don Ed Hardy argues that it is misleading to suggest that tattoos and piercings are just fashion. He says, 'It is on your body; it's permanent; you have to live with it and it hurts' (quoted in Sweetman 1999: 72).

Although body modifications are on the exterior of the body, levels of visibility vary widely, from whole-body tattoos or piercings on the face, to discreet butterflies hidden on the buttocks (see Plate 2.1). The fact that body modifications can be kept private by clothing and displayed publicly at the will of the bearer offers one of the transgressive pleasures of adornment: the knowledge that under the smart suit is a pierced nipple (Bell and Valentine 1995b).

In contrast to those who use body modification to express individuality, others use it as a group marker. These non-mainstream body modifiers include 'Modern Primitives', a movement which originated in California, USA in the 1970s. These people claim to have primal urges to alter their bodies. Among their practices, which they term 'body play', are contortion, including foot-binding and stretching of body parts; bondage and various forms of body constriction; deprivation, including being

caged in boxes, bags, and body suits; wearing 'iron' (manacles, heavy bracelets, etc); burning, branding and shock treatment; penetration including piercing, skewering, tattooing; and various forms of suspension from different body parts (Klesse 1999). Modern Primitives seek their inspiration, and appropriate what they regard as 'primitive rituals' and body modification techniques, from indigenous traditions of Polynesia and elsewhere. Their movement emphasizes spirituality and community (see also Chapter 8, section 8.5.2). Through the creation of 'new tribes' they claim to give people a sense of belonging which they feel they have lost in contemporary society. It is a movement, however, which is widely criticized for fetishizing other cultures – most notably idealizing and essentializing primitive cultures – and for reproducing repressive gender and racialized stereotypes (Klesse 1999).

2.4.2 The connected body

The popular and academic focus on the body as a project (2.4.1 above) reflects what Chris Shilling (1993: 1) describes as 'the unprecedented *individualisation* of the body' in contemporary affluent societies. Yet, this perhaps overstates the degree of control individuals actually have over their own bodies. Writing about places, Doreen Massey (1993: 66) argues that they 'can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings' (see also Chapter 1). In the same way, it is possible to think of bodies not as bounded and discrete entities but as relational 'things', as the product of interactions, as constituted by constellations of other social relations. This means that rather than thinking about the individualization of bodily practices, geographers need to recognize the *connectedness* of bodies to other places (see also Nast and Pile 1998), and specifically, the ways in which bodies are inflected by material practices, representations, social relations and structures of political-economic power in wider locations such the home, workplace, community, state and so on.

For example, the extent to which individuals can produce the space of their bodies in accordance with their own individual desires depends upon the extent to which they feel able to demarcate ownership or control over their own bodies. Within spatial settings such as the home and the workplace our bodies can be 'open' locations that are subject to control and regulation by others. David Morgan (1996: 132) uses the term 'bodily density' to describe the ways that close proximity to a person over a period of time 'can result in knowledge, control and care of each other's bodies in numerous repeated and often unacknowledged ways'. Nowhere is this more apparent than in sexual relationships and in shared households where bodies can become contested terrain between partners, housemates, parents and children (see Box 2.3). Likewise, the role of workplaces and communities in defining how 'members' should dress and manage their bodies (Green 1991, McDowell 1995, Valentine 1999a) and the role of the state in regulating bodily behaviours, from sado-masochistic sexual practices (Bell 1995a, 1995b), to assisted suicide and abortion, further expose the limits of individuals' corporeal freedoms.

Box 2.3: Bodily density

Carol: 'I mean there are times when I say "Right I'm going to be good for the next month, cut down, you know. I know I've put on weight", and then two days later I'll be eating something and Mike [her husband] will say to me "What are you eating that for? I thought you were trying to lose some weight" and, er, it gets me mad.'

Valentine 1999a: 333

Mike: 'I worked in buying and buying was, you were always taken out for lunch by sales people who came to visit you and, er, so you know, I don't know, possibly three or four times a week really you'd be taken out for meals and go to restaurants or pubs or whatever . . . I mean five pints at lunch time was common, you know in buying . . . I started to put, well I started to put a lot of weight on because I was just eating all the time. I remember coming up to Christmas and I'd been out for 18 or 19 Christmas dinners . . . I just got, you know, a big stomach and, er, my face was fat.'

Valentine 1999a: 346

Tasmin: 'I've got good intentions but they never work. I mean, I like to go swimming but it's, like, finding the time when I can go swimming when I haven't got the children, or I haven't got to go and pick children up from nursery and things . . . just doesn't work.'

Valentine 1999a: 341

These wider locations can also frustrate individuals' attempts to discipline and manage their bodies in chosen ways. Although the bodies of workers in many professional occupations are constituted within discourses which elide slimness with success, productivity and professionalism (see Chapter 5), the cultural practice of the 'business lunch' can actually drive 'professional' bodies out of shape by making them indulge in excess consumption (see Box 2.3). Likewise, women often find it hard to diet and exercise when their corporeal freedom is limited by the need to provide meals to suit the tastes of other family members and by the time–space constraints of household routines (see Box 2.3).

The erosion or permeability of individuals' body boundaries in these ways demonstrate how little corporeal freedom we can actually have to shape our bodies according to our individual desires. Contrary to popular (and some academic) discourses about the body as an individual project, activities such as healthy eating, dress, and exercise, are not necessarily individualized practices. Rather, a focus on the 'situated interdependence' (Thrift 1996: 9) of everyday life, reveals that our bodies are better understood as porous locations which are inflected by wider socio-spatial relations (Valentine 1999a).

There is also a tendency within popular discourses and the academic literature on the body to emphasize discipline and control. Yet, there are other meanings around bodily practices such as eating and exercise which stress their pleasurable and hedonistic dimensions as well as the physical sensations and emotions such as comfort, release of stress, and happiness, which they can produce (Lupton 1996). It is these sensual pleasures that create ambivalences and tensions for individuals who, on the one hand, want to manage their bodies in line with dominant discourses around self-discipline, yet who, on the other hand, enjoy the physical sensations of eating, are sceptical about medical advice or who take a fatalistic attitude towards their body shape and appearance (Lupton 1996, Valentine 1999a).

Indeed, individuals may sometimes experience competing understandings of how they should be producing the space of their bodies in different locations in which their body is sometimes constructed as a 'public' location and sometimes a 'private location' (Valentine 1999a) – for example, encountering pressure from employers and colleagues at work to diet, while at home taking pleasure from cooking for, and dining with others, or relaxing and comfort eating alone. Consequently, individuals' bodies are rarely completely disciplined or, in Foucault's term, 'docile' (see section 2.3.1.3) yet neither are they completely free from the shadow of ascetic discourses about self-discipline and individual responsibility. As Deborah Lupton (1996: 153) writes, 'In consumer culture there is, therefore, a continual dialectic between the pleasures of consumption and the ethic of asceticism as means of constructing the self.'

Summary

- The body has emerged in contemporary consumer culture as a project which should be worked at and accomplished as part of an individual's self-identity.
- Individuals are expected to take responsibility for their own bodies by exercising vigilance and self-discipline.
- The popular and academic emphasis on self-discipline can overstate the degree of corporeal freedom or control individuals may have.
- Bodies are inflected by material practices, representations, social relations and structures of political-economic power in wider locations.
- In addition to ascetic discourses there are other meanings around bodily practices which stress their pleasurable and hedonistic dimensions.
- In consumer culture there is a continual tension between the bodily pleasures of consumption and the ethic of asceticism as means of constituting self-identities.
- Our bodies are rarely completely disciplined, yet neither are they completely free from the shadow of these ascetic discourses.

2.5 Bodies taking up space

This section examines how we physically occupy space, connect with surrounding spatial fields and take up space through our size and appearance (2.5.1) and bodily comportment (2.5.2). Both examples emphasize how women's bodies are expected to occupy less space than men's.

2.5.1 Size and appearance

Research suggests that the citizens of contemporary Western societies are getting fatter, yet slimness is the aesthetic ideal promoted by the media, fashion and consumer industries. Being thin is equated with health and sexual attractiveness in what Deborah Lupton (1996: 137) terms the food/health/beauty triplex. Although there is some evidence that men are increasingly coming under pressure to watch their weight and take care of their bodies (Bocock 1993), it is women who have traditionally been expected to pursue what Susan Bordo (1993: 166) describes as the 'ever changing, homogenizing, elusive ideal of femininity'. She writes: 'Through the exacting and normalising disciplines of diet, make-up and dress – central organising principles of time and space in the day of many women – we are rendered less socially oriented and more centripetally focused on self-modification. Through these disciplines, we continue to memorise on our bodies the feel and conviction of lack, of insufficiency, of never being good enough' (Bordo 1993: 166).

While not all women pursue this commodified ideal, and some women deliberately reject it (Orbach 1988), the 1980s onwards have witnessed a growth in eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. A number of feminist writers have argued that eating disorders are an indictment of women's position in society. They suggest that many women willingly accept the bodily 'norms' they are encouraged to aspire to because, through dieting, women are able to experience a sense of control and power (traditionally coded as male) and independence which they do not have in other aspects of their lives and in return they receive admiration (both for their self-control and for their shape) from a world where they often feel excluded and undervalued (Orbach 1988). For some women these rewards become so addictive that they take the issue of controlling their body's demands for food to the extreme where they seek to kill off its needs altogether. Jenefer Shute (1993), in her fictional account of a woman's battle with anorexia, *Life Size* describes how her character, Josie, struggles to lose weight and so minimize the space she takes up, while sneering at those she thinks are too fat and are occupying too much space.

Bordo (1993) suggests that dieting to the point where a woman loses her feminine curves and develops a 'boyish' body represents for some women a way of escaping the vulnerability (both social and sexual) which is associated with having a female body and of entering a male world. However, she argues that the sense of power or control this may induce is illusionary. For feminist writers such as Bordo (1993: 175) anorexia is not a product of individual psychopathy or dysfunction but rather is a

form of embodied protest against women's social and cultural position. She writes: 'It is unconscious, inchoate, and counterproductive *protest* without an effective language, voice, or politics, but protest nonetheless.'

In contrast, those who are overweight are often accused of taking up too much space. Schwartz (1986: 328) observes how everyday environments are designed to accommodate only certain body shapes and sizes: 'Airplane seats, subway turnstiles, steering wheels in cars are designed to make fat people uncomfortable.' In the face of unaccommodating environments, the hostile gaze of slim bodies, and sometimes even overt discrimination, overweight bodies can feel pressurized into self-concealment and be inhibited in everyday spaces from the restaurant to the beach (Cline 1990).

Not surprisingly, the body (fat and thin) has also become a site of resistance. In response to fat discrimination in the USA the National Association to Aid Fat Americans held a Fat-In in New York in 1967. Fat is also, as Orbach (1988) famously declared, a feminist issue. In the 1970s and 1980s feminists argued that bodily practices such as dieting, wearing make-up and shaving legs were aimed at pleasing men. Women were encouraged to give up all forms of body maintenance and concerns about their appearance (Green 1991). At the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, there has been a backlash against what became seen as oppressive attempts by feminism to police women's bodies. Rather the emphasis is now on re-engaging with femininity on new terms (Bell *et al.* 1994).

2.5.2 Bodily comportment

In an essay titled 'Throwing like a girl' Iris Marion Young (1990) argues that women are alienated from their bodies and, as a result, occupy and use space in an inhibited way compared to men. She begins her analysis by drawing on the observations of the writer Erwin Strauss about the different way that boys and girls throw a ball. Whereas boys use their whole bodies to throw, leaning back, twisting and reaching forward, girls, Strauss noted, tend to be relatively stiff and immobile, only using their arms to produce a throwing action. Young (1990) argues that women demonstrate similar restricted body movements and inhibited comportment in other physical activities too. For example, women tend to sit with their legs crossed and their arms across themselves, whereas men tend to sit with their legs open and using their hands in gestures. In other words, Young (1990) claims that women do not make full use of their bodies' spatial potentialities. This is not because women are inherently weaker than men but rather it is to do with the different way that men and women approach tasks. Women think they are incapable of throwing, lifting, pushing and so on, and so when they try these sorts of activities they are inhibited and do not put their whole bodies into the task with the same ease as men (for example, only using their arms to throw). Young (1990: 148) describes this as 'inhibited intentionality'. It is a bodily comportment which is learned. A number of writers have

argued, for example, that teenage girls give up sport and leisure activities in order to spend time with boys (Griffin 1985), whereas schools promote physicality amongst boys through sport (Mac an Ghail 1996).

Not only do women underestimate their physical abilities and lack self-confidence, but they also fear getting hurt. Describing women as experiencing their bodies as a 'fragile encumbrance', Young (1990: 147) writes that 'she often lives her body as a burden which must be dragged and prodded along and at the same time protected'. Women also experience their bodies as fragile in another sense too, in that their bodies are the object of the male gaze. Young (1990) suggests that it is acceptable for men to look at, comment on or touch women's bodies in public space and that, as a result, women are fearful that their body space may be invaded by men in the form of wolf whistles, minor sexual harassment or even rape (see also Chapter 6). As part of a defence against this fear of invasion, women experience their bodies as enclosed and disconnected from the outlaying spatial field. Young (1990: 146) writes, 'For many women as they move . . . a space surrounds us in imagination that we are not free to move beyond; the space available to our movement is a constricted space.' It is important to note, however, that Young (1990) does point out that her observations apply to the way women typically move but not to all women or all of the time.

In contrast to women, men learn to experience a connectedness between their bodies and their surrounding spatial field and to view the world as constituted by their own intentions. Bob Connell (1983), for example, argues that whereas women are valued for their appearance, men are expected to demonstrate bodily skill in terms of their competence to operate on space, or the objects in it, and to be a bodily force in terms of their ability to occupy space. This competence is developed through cults of physicality, sport (formal and informal), drinking, fighting, work and so on. For instance, certain forms of manual labour like lifting, digging, carrying are closely linked to some sense of bodily force in masculinity. Although economic restructuring means the stress on pure labouring has declined, the social meanings and relations of physical labour and bodily capacity to masculinity have not (Connell 1995). According to Young (1990), men live their bodies in an open way. They feel about to move out and master the world. Connell (1983: 19) explains: 'To be an adult male is distinctly to occupy space, to have a physical presence in the world. Walking down the street, I square my shoulders and covertly measure myself against other men. Walking past a group of punk youths late at night, I wonder if I look formidable enough.'

The difference in the meanings of men and women's physicality is evident in relation to naked bodies. Whereas a male stranger's naked body is seen as a sign of aggression and as frightening or threatening to women, a female stranger's body is not read in the same way by men. Men do not feel assaulted or threatened by seeing an unknown woman naked. It is assumed that men want to look at the nude bodies of women because they are an opportunity for pleasure. Consequently, in the eyes of the law women cannot commit the crime of 'flashing' because, in contrast to men,

their naked bodies are regarded as non-aggressive and not sexually threatening, being read instead as entertaining. The only time a woman can be arrested for indecent exposure is if her actions are understood to be an offence against public sensibilities (Kirby 1995).

Summary

- We physically occupy space, connect with surrounding spatial fields and take up space through our bodily size and appearance and bodily comportment.
- Women's bodies are expected to occupy less space than men's.
- Fat and thin bodies have become political issues and sites of resistance.

2.6 Bodies in space

Adrienne Rich (1986) observes that our material bodies are the basis of our experience of everyday spaces. Our bodies are what people react to; we read into them stories of people's age, lifestyle, politics, identity, and so on. They connect us with other people and places but they also serve to mark us out as different from other people and as 'out of place' (Cresswell 1996). Reflecting on how people have viewed and treated her because she is white and female, Rich (1986: 216) writes that to locate herself in her own body means recognizing 'the places it [her body] has taken me, the places it has not let me go'.

'[O]*ur bodies make a difference to our experience of places*: whether we are young or old, able-bodied or disabled, Black or White in appearance does, at least partly, determine collective responses to our bodies . . .' (Laws 1997a: 49). Corporeal differences are the basis of prejudice, discrimination, social oppression and cultural imperialism (Young 1990b). These exclusionary geographies operate at every scale from the individual to the nation, discursively defining what different bodies can and cannot do, dividing conceptual space and operating materially to structure physical and institutional spaces (Young 1990b). 'Bodily differences open and close spaces of opportunity: because their bodies are sexed female and thereby subject to the threat of violence, many women will not travel alone at night; because they are old, some women will avoid certain parts of town; because of their skin color, some people find it difficult (if not impossible) to join certain clubs' (Laws 1997a: 49).

Within geography there is a significant amount of work on 'bodies in space' which explores how different bodies, most notably those of pregnant women (Longhurst 1996), lesbians, gay men and bisexuals (Bell and Valentine 1995a), ethnic minorities (Davis 1990), children (Philo 1992, Valentine 1996b), 'Gypsies' (Sibley 1995a), the

sick (Moss and Dyck 1996), the disabled (Butler and Parr 1999) and the mentally ill (Parr 1997) are defined as 'other' and are marginalized and excluded within a range of spatial contexts (see, for example, section 2.3.1 above, Chapter 6 and Chapter 8). Such oppressions can be produced through formal laws or policy, but more often are the product of informal everyday talk, evaluation, judgements, jokes, stereotyping, and so on.

2.6.1 The disabled body

Understandings of disability have, until recently, focused on the physical body. In biomedical models of disability individual bodies are defined, usually by medical institutions, as 'disabled' because they do not meet clinically defined 'norms' of form, mobility or ability. The medical and social significance which is accorded to bodily 'normality' means that 'disabled' individuals are further categorized as socially inferior and as a 'problem' for society. (A more detailed outline of the medical model and its critique is found in Parr and Butler 1999.) Bodily and sensory technologies (such as hearing aids, wheelchairs, and so on) are regarded as the solution to the problem of the 'deviant body'.

Disability theorists, however, have challenged this biomedical model of disability (examples of such work within geography include Brown 1995, Chouniard 1997, Dorn and Laws 1994, Gleeson 1996, Hahn 1986, Laws 1994, etc). In the social model of disability, they shift the focus from the physical body to emphasize the role of society in creating disability (see Parr and Butler 1999). While illness and accidents cause bodily impairments it is everyday socio-spatial environments which dis-able people by marginalizing them economically, socially and politically (Chouniard 1997, Dyck 1995, Laws 1994) (see Box 2.4). Disability theorists are critical of the economy for excluding and devaluing bodies that cannot meet the demands of capitalist work regimes (see, for example, Hall 1999). Likewise, urban planning is blamed for constructing environments that are designed for, and prioritize the needs and abilities of the able-bodied and so restrict the mobility of those with physical impairments (Imrie 1996). Commenting on a wheelchair user's description of Los Angeles as 'a vast desert containing a few oases', Hahn (1986: 280) describes the city as having an 'impenetrable geography'.

In the past, because the problems disabled people experienced in finding paid employment and navigating environmental obstacles were regarded as a product of their individual functional limitations (i.e., their unspoken biological inferiority), rather than as a shared or political problem, many disabled individuals withdrew from public life or were confined to relatively barrier-free environments (Hahn 1986). In this way, they were further marginalized. Paterson (1998) describes the impaired body as 'dys-appearing' in everyday environments because it does not fit in either functionally or aesthetically. Nevertheless, disability activists are now challenging the laws and policies which produce dis-abling landscapes. They imagine a city where all spatial barriers are eliminated and where there are residential environments which

Box 2.4: The dis-abled body

'In 1984, after walking on crutches for more than thirty years, I finally made the transition to a wheelchair. Many friends obviously felt that this decision implied a reduction in status, but I regarded it initially as a liberating experience. Small pleasures such as having lunch, which I had previously passed, were suddenly open to me. And yet, as I ventured into the major thoroughfares of Los Angeles, which are less accessible than Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington but more accessible than Broadway in New York, or Michigan Avenue in Chicago, or most of the major streets in European or third world countries, I gained an enhanced appreciation of the importance of simple measures such as curbcuts to freedom of movement. Frequently, I found that I simply could not "get there from here". The chair did have some compensating advantages. I discovered again the pleasures of washing my hands, which was nearly impossible on crutches. But the search for accessible rest-rooms, the frustration of encountering steps in front of buildings that I wanted to enter, and similar barriers gradually curtailed my sense of adventure . . . Often I travelled countless blocks in a futile search for an accessible route to my destination. And the inability to maintain eye contact while seated in my chair places me at a serious disadvantage in personal conversations. Sometimes I have found paths formed by skateboards, baby carriages, and shopping carts. These modifications suggest that others also may have difficulty in moving through the environment. But I suspect that, until they learn about the benefits of having their own "scooter chairs", the effort to change the environment is going to entail a major struggle.'

Hahn 1985: 3

can suit individual notions of independent living, arguing that environments which enable expanded contact between the able-bodied and the disabled may also help to reduce or eliminate discrimination and prejudice. (However, there are some debates amongst disabled groups about whether to seek integration in able-bodied communities or whether to aim for separate residential communities where members might provide mutual support and protection for each other – see, for example, De Jong 1983.)

Campaigners in both the USA and the UK have taken non-violent direct action, such as handcuffing themselves to buses and trains, blocking roads and occupying public offices with wheelchairs, in order to disrupt able-bodied space and to draw attention to the dis-abling effects of the environment. In 1990 the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) which makes it mandatory for public buildings to be accessible to disabled people came into effect and in 1995 the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DDA) was passed in the UK.

Figure 2.2 The disability movement has campaigned against discrimination (© Angela Martin)

Accessible environments are, however, only a small part of the concerns of the disabled. It is not enough to change the built environment if discriminatory attitudes persist. Contemporary Western cultural values emphasize corporeal perfectibility (Hahn 1986). Yet physical impairments are often regarded as 'ugly' or may produce involuntary bodily movements or noises that are considered socially inappropriate (Butler 1998). As a result, Tom Shakespeare (1994: 296) argues, disability is often seen to represent 'the physicality and animality of human existence'. He goes on to suggest that the disabled are often objectified through the gaze of the able-bodied in a similar manner to the way that women are objectified by the gaze of men. As Morris explains, 'It is not only physical limitations that restrict us to our homes and those whom we know. It is the knowledge that each entry into the public world will be dominated by stares, by condescension, by pity and by hostility' (Morris 1991: 25, quoted in Butler and Bowlby 1997: 411).

The disability movement has therefore not only campaigned to change the physical environment but to challenge the hostility, patronizing behaviour, misunderstandings and discrimination experienced by disabled people in everyday spaces (see Figure 2.2). It has sought to encourage people not to be ashamed of their impairments, criticized representations of the disabled as dependent and in need of

help, and mobilized people with impairments to recognize oppression and to fight for their civil rights (Butler and Bowlby 1997, Parr and Butler 1999). In turn, however, the disability movement has itself been criticized for being the domain of white, heterosexual men, for failing to acknowledge the heterogeneity of different forms of impairment (e.g. deafness, spinal injuries, and so on) and the way that other axes of difference such as gender and class intersect with a disabled identity (Butler and Bowlby 1997, Parr and Butler 1999). Writing about the experiences of disabled lesbians and gay men, Ruth Butler (1999) observes how they encounter 'ableism' in the lesbian and gay 'community' and homophobia amongst the disabled 'community', while Vera Chouniard (1999) highlights the efforts of disabled lesbian and heterosexual women activists in Canada to challenge their political invisibility.

Recently, disability theorists have argued that illness should be considered alongside impairment because those who are sick also experience the dis-abling effects of physical environments and encounter the sort of social attitudes described above (see, for example, Moss and Dyck 1996, 1999). Indeed, Hester Parr and Ruth Butler (1999) argue that categories of health/illness and ability/disability are leaky and unstable. They point out that the healthy majority may only temporarily occupy able bodies. At different times and in different spaces we may each experience different states of physical and mental illness/wellbeing (for example as a result of ageing, pregnancy, accidents, and so on). Thus, the problems disabled and ill bodies encounter in everyday spaces are not just a concern for so-called 'deviant bodies' but are potentially an issue for everyone. In this way, the body is being seen as an important site of resistance and emancipatory politics (Brown 1997a, Dorn and Laws 1994, Dyck 1995).

Summary

- Our bodies make a difference to our experience of places. They – at least partly – determine collective responses to us.
- Corporeal differences are the basis of prejudice, discrimination and oppression. Geographical work examines why/how particular bodies are defined as 'other' and marginalized.
- In biomedical models of disability individual bodies are defined by medical institutions as 'disabled' because they do not meet clinically defined 'norms' of form, mobility or ability.
- Contemporary theorists challenge the biomedical model. In the social model of disability, they emphasize the role of society in creating disability.

2.7 The body and time

Age is important to understanding our social world. The medical model of ageing, like the medical model of disability, is being challenged by those who recognize that age, like gender, race and disability, is a social rather than a biological category (Featherstone and Wernick 1995) (see section 2.6.1). Bodies are marked by social norms and expectations which shape what we think they can and cannot do at different ages, what they should or should not be doing, where they should or should not be going and how they should or should not be dressed (Harper and Laws 1995). For example, the menopause is supposed to mark the age at which a woman is too old to cope with the responsibility of looking after a dependent child, yet women of this age are routinely expected to care full-time for dependent elderly relatives (Laws 1997a). Expectations about young–old bodies, then, are not predicated on biology but are actively socially constructed in discursive practices which vary across space and time. They have important consequences because they shape individual opportunities, structure collective experiences, and have spatial ramifications (see sections 2.7.1 and 2.7.2 below) (Harper and Laws 1995, Katz and Monk 1993).

People are often expected to follow a linear sequence through the lifecourse, spending their childhood and youth in education, adulthood in paid employment and old age in retirement. Yet this model is increasingly being challenged as people live more individualized and diverse lifestyles, in which the body becomes a project to be worked at, and identities are defined more by consumption than production (see section 2.4.1). For example, older people may be retiring from work but are then taking up part-time work or returning to education (Harper and Laws 1995, Featherstone and Wernick 1995). These complexities and multiple understandings of what it means to have a body of a different age are beginning to challenge some of the stereotypical images and forms of discrimination which are based on assumptions about the inherent bodily characteristics of different age groups (which bear striking similarities to assumptions made about female bodies and black bodies, see section 2.2.2): notably the young and the old.

2.7.1 Young bodies

Western thought has imagined the child's body in two ways: as 'innocent' and as 'evil' (Valentine 1996c, Holloway and Valentine 2000). In the romantic images of poets and artists such as Blake and Wordsworth children are imagined as innately good. The eighteenth-century writer Rousseau, in particular, contributed to this 'Apollonian' (Jenks 1996) view of childhood in which children are imagined as 'pure' and 'innocent' in contrast to the ugliness and violence of the adult world from which they must be protected. This discourse of the 'innocent child' which emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries laid the foundations for child-centred education,

concerns about children's safety and vulnerability and the belief that children should be the concern of everyone because they represent the future (James, Jenks and Prout 1998). Allison James, Chris Jenks and Alan Prout (1998: 152) note that this imagining of childhood explains the horror and outrage child abuse engenders in adults. They write, 'Children's bodies are to be preserved at all costs, any violation signifying a transgressive act of almost unimaginable dimensions. To strike a child is to attack the repository of social sentiment and the very embodiment of "goodness".'

It is important to remember, however, that the Apollonian view of childhood is an imagining of childhood rather than the reality experienced by most children. The experience of childhood has never been universal; rather, what it means to be a particular age intersects with other identities so that experiences of poverty, ill health, disability, having to care for a sick parent, or being taken into care have all denied many children this idealized time of innocence and dependence (see, for example, Stables and Smith's 1999 account of the lives of young carers).

In contrast to the Apollonian view of childhood, the Dionysian (Jenks 1996) imagining of childhood stems from the notion of original sin, in which 'evil, corruption and baseness are primary elements in the constitution of "the child"' (James, Jenks and Prout 1998: 10). The evil child threatens the stability of the adult world and is in need of education and discipline in order to develop sufficient bodily control to be civilized into membership of the human race (see also Chapter 5). It is an imagining of childhood evident in books such as *Lord of the Flies* and in contemporary constructions of teenagers as troublesome and dangerous (see Chapter 6).

While both the Apollonian and Dionysian understandings of childhood are always present in children's complex and diverse experiences, at different historical moments one or the other of these binary conceptualizations often appears to dominate the popular imagination. At these times, other meanings of childhood can be overlooked or forgotten, before being periodically rediscovered (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 1992).

Both these understandings of childhood have been used to justify children's exclusion from public space. The Apollonian understanding constructs children as less knowledgeable, less competent and less able than adults and therefore as vulnerable and in need of protection from adults and the adult world (see Chapter 6), while the Dionysian understanding constructs children as dangerous, unruly and potentially out of control in adultist public space (Valentine 1996b, 1996c).

The child's body has not just been understood in terms of these discursive constructions, but has also been the subject of ethnographic studies in both sociology and geography which have sought to understand the body as entity experienced by children within the spaces of their own social worlds and cultures (see, for example, James, Jenks and Prout 1998, Holloway and Valentine 2000, Valentine 2000). In a study of the body in children's everyday lives Allison James (1993) points out that 'children's perceptions of their own and Other bodies constitute an important source of their identity and personhood'. She argues that a ruthlessly patterned hierarchy characterizes children's cultures. While there is no necessary relation between

physical difference and marginality or outsiderhood, different bodily forms are given significance in terms of social identity by other children. James (1993) identifies five aspects of the body that have significance for children's identities: *height* (specifically, the importance of physical development – where size marks social independence and 'titch' is a form of abuse), *shape*, *appearance*, *gender* (shape, appearance and gender are all based on adult, heterosexual notions of desirability and issues of morality), and *performance* (this includes dynamic aspects such as gracefulness of bodily movement and sporting prowess or ability). While some differences may be temporary – a growth spurt might can help to shake off the nickname 'titch' – others produce more permanent stigmatized identities.

James (1993) further explores how children have to negotiate their changing bodies within the context of changing institutional settings in which the meanings of their bodies change drastically. Summarizing her work, she and two co-authors explain (James, Jenks and Prout 1998: 156):

> in the later stages of nursery school children came to think of themselves as 'big'; their apprehension of the difference between themselves and children just entering the nursery plus the significance of the impending transition to primary school signalled their identity. But once they had made the transition and were at the beginning of their career in primary school, they were catapulted back into being 'small' once again. This relativity produced a fluidity in their understanding of the relationship between size and status, generating what James identifies as a typical 'edginess' among children about body meanings. The body in childhood is a crucial resource for making and breaking identity precisely because of its unstable materiality.

In the adult world children's bodies are socially and spatially segregated from grown-ups through the schooling system (see Chapter 5) and through laws, curfews and informal regulations which bar them from certain public spaces at specific times (e.g. bars, cinemas, the street, shops) (see also Chapter 6). It is worth noting, though, that children can and do (re)negotiate the meanings of their biological age (see Chapter 3, section 3.6). David Sibley (1995a) notes how, further up the age scale, the bodies of youth are ambiguously wedged between childhood and adulthood because the legal classifications of where childhood ends and adulthood begins are notoriously vague. The age at which young people can drink alcohol, learn to drive, earn money, consent to sex or join the armed forces varies widely in different spatial and historical contexts. This point is also made by Cindi Katz and Jan Monk (1993), whose edited book *Full Circles: Geographies of the Lifecourse* demonstrates how young people's spatial freedoms vary considerably according to their age, gender, environmental setting and household type.

2.7.2 Older bodies

Like the meanings of childhood, the meanings of older bodies are not static but change over time and space. In some cultures elderly people are respected for their life

Box 2.5: When I am an old woman

Warning

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me,
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells
And run my stick along the public railings
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain
And pick the flowers in other people's gardens
And learn to spit.

You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go
Or only bread and pickle for a week
And hoard pens and pencils and beermats and things in boxes.

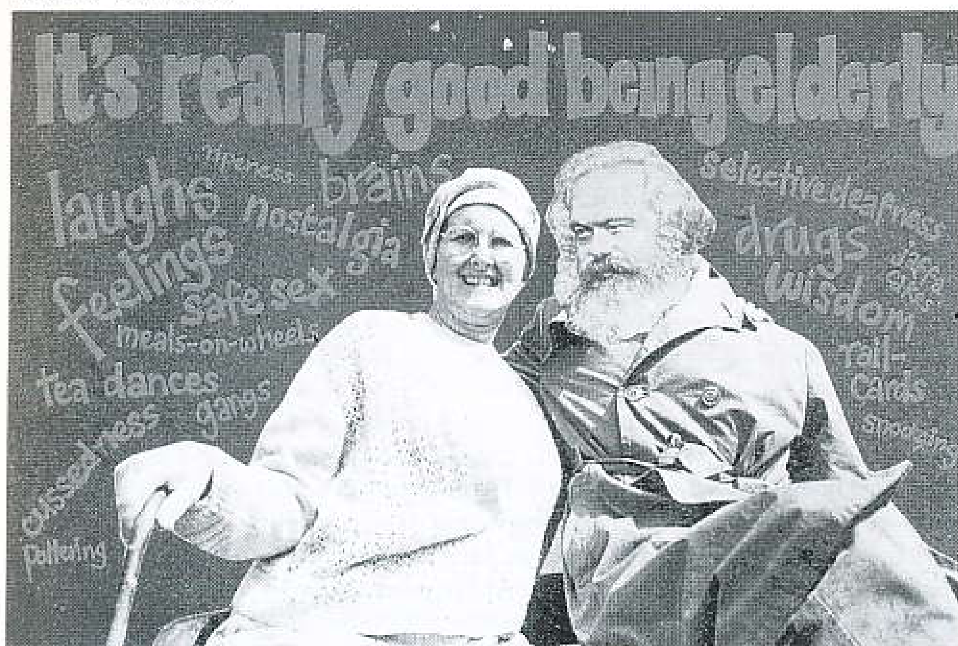
But now we must have clothes that keep us dry
And pay our rent and not swear in the street
And set a good example for the children.
We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.

But maybe I ought to practise a little now?
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.

Joseph 1996

experience and wisdom. However, in contemporary Western societies older bodies are often not valued because, as non-participants in the labour market, and as past the age of reproduction (for women at least), they are deemed to have no economic or social worth and are stigmatized and disempowered (Featherstone and Wernick 1995, Hugman 1999). The state creates structured dependency among older people by establishing retirement ages and defining resources and services for them. Yet, while 60–65 years old is commonly defined as retirement age in the affluent West, this definition of 'old age' does not necessarily accord with specific biological markers of ageing, nor with the diverse experiences of this age group. While some elderly people are frail, housebound and relatively dependent on others socially and economically, others are fit, active, mobile and possibly still working or travelling (see Box 2.5, Plate 2.2). Richard Hugman (1999) claims that less than one-third of the population

Plate 2.2 'Gray power'



aged over 65 are actually frail or unwell enough to need professional care or support in their everyday lives. Graham Rowles (1983) makes a distinction between the 'old-old' who are physically frail and isolated and the 'young-old' who are more mobile and adept at drawing on support beyond their immediate community.

In both the USA and Australia some retirees have begun to emerge as a significant social force, dubbed 'gray power'. As a group, despite no longer being in paid employment, some older people have a higher than average income (from pensions, savings and investments) and have begun to establish homogeneous, relatively small communities, such as 'Sun City' (in California, Arizona, Nevada and Florida, USA) based on single-family houses and condo developments in accessible locations such as the edge of cities or highways (Laws 1995, Laws 1997b). These are usually based around a golf course and often have recreation or arts and craft centres. They are landscapes of consumption rather than production and are promoted as ideal and harmonious 'communities' away from the problems of city life. In effect, they are quite self-contained, security-conscious and sometimes gated communities in which outsiders, particularly those aged under 50, both stand out and are not welcome (see also Chapter 4 and Chapter 6). Glenda Laws (1995: 26) argues that the emergence of these types of age-segregated retirement communities – which she describes as 'embodied built environments' – reflects the inhospitable nature of cities for older bodies who may be relatively immobile and frail, and the

extent to which these bodies are socially marginalized in everyday spaces. Laws (1995: 26) further argues that, in turn, these embodied built environments contribute to the further social and spatial differentiation of society according to age, while what she terms the 'emplaced bodies' within them also contribute to the construction of particular social identities.

These sorts of communities stand in stark contrast to institutional forms of residential care for the elderly, which are variously labelled 'nursing homes', 'old people's homes', 'rest homes', 'aged-care hostels', etc (Hugman 1999). Such institutions have been critiqued for spatially segregating the elderly from the rest of society in such a way that they may also lose contact with family and friends, for depriving individuals of the right to determine their own use of space and time, and for (re)producing the older body as dependent and docile. In this sense, and because residents may not have chosen to be there or feel 'at home' there (see Chapter 3), residential care institutions are often compared with other total institutions such as prisons and asylums (Hugman 1994, 1999, Laws 1997b; see also Chapter 5).

As our bodies age we accumulate different experiences that shape our perceptions of space and place (Laws 1995). In two studies of elderly people, one group of whom had lived in an old industrial town in New England, USA (given the pseudonym 'Lancaster') for more than 30 years, and the other group of whom lived in a rural town in Appalachia, USA (given the pseudonym 'Colton'), Rowles (1978, 1983) found that as the respondents' bodies had aged, so their investment in the places in which they lived had changed. As they became more physically immobile and their activities were inhibited, they invested more emotionally and psychologically in their homes. What he terms the 'surveillance zone' – the field of vision around their home – became an important source of support in which certain supportive, if transitory, relationships developed. For example, he explains, 'observing the daily routine of neighbours, chastising the children for overly zealous play in the path outside and watching those who regularly pass by, provides support through a sense of ongoing social involvement' (Rowles 1983: 120).

His rural participants claimed to have a strong sense of 'insiderness' in Colton because of their familiarity with the place. Rowles (1983: 114) explains: 'Repeated use of the same route in the journey to the store, or to church over a period of several decades means that these paths become ingrained within the participants' inherent awareness of the setting . . . The old person comes to wear the setting like a glove.' For both the urban and rural elderly, the places where they lived had become a landscape of memories which provided them with a sense of identity: where a child was born, a husband was met or a first job was obtained (Rowles 1983). In this sense, Rowles (1983) suggests that, for some elderly people, it is still as if rooms or the neighbourhood are inhabited by missing people (the dead, their children who were now grown up and had left home) because they can still visualize them there. For these people, retreating in their imaginations into the past becomes an escape from bodies that are relatively confined in space by physical limitations. Thus, he argues, their lives become lived in their minds rather than their bodies.

Summary

- Age is a social rather than a biological category.
- Expectations about young–old bodies are socially constructed in discursive practices which vary across space and time.
- These social norms matter because they shape individual opportunities, structure collective experiences, and have spatial ramifications.
- Multiple understandings of what it means to be a particular age are beginning to challenge stereotypical images and forms of discrimination which are based on assumptions about the inherent bodily characteristics of particular ages.

2.8 Future bodies?

Some commentators argue that we are on the edge of undergoing a third technological revolution. The first involved *transport* (steam engine, car, aircraft), the second *transmission* (radio, television, Internet) and the third will involve *miniaturization* (the transplant revolution). Both the second and third of these revolutions have the potential to transform the human body. The emergence of new information and communication technologies (ICT) and the development of new possibilities for medical interventions in the body (biotechnologies such as transplants, in vitro fertilization and plastic surgery and nanotechnologies and miniaturization) are thus producing new uncertainties about what the body is, what is 'natural', and which scientific or medical bodily interventions should be allowed. All these are alleged to be leading to a crisis in the body's meaning. First, ICT, which is regarded as a *disembodied* form of communication, offers a vision of the future in which we can do away with the body altogether. Second, there is speculation about the extent to which the body is being merged with technology: *the cyborg*.

2.8.1 Disembodiment

Dubbed 'meat' or 'wetware trash' by cyberenthusiasts, the body is regarded as a nuisance. Morse (1994: 86, in Lupton 1995: 100) writes: 'For couch potatoes, video games addicts and surrogate travellers of cyberspace alike, an organic body just gets in the way.' Its demands to be fed, to be washed, to sleep and so on, interrupt cyberpursuits and interactions. Writers such as Barlow (1990) imagine a utopian vision of a future *post-biological world* where we will be able to escape the 'meat', for

example, by transferring our memories into computers or robots (Kitchin 1998). 'The idealized virtual body does not eat, drink, urinate or defecate; it does not get tired; it does not become ill; it does not die' (Lupton 1995: 100). In this sense, the desire of cyberutopians to have 'your everything amputated' (Barlow 1990: 42) harks back to the Cartesian division and subordination of the body to the mind (see section 2.2.1), in which the mind is considered to be the 'authentic' self.

While technology does not yet offer us the possibility of achieving the desire of the utopians to be completely liberated from our bodies, ICT is claimed by some writers to offer disembodied forms of communication that enable us to be freed from some of the constraints of our bodies. Most famously, it is argued that because of the meanings which are read off from our physical bodies and the judgements which are made about particular bodily characteristics such as age, health, race and gender (see section 2.6), the body can act as a social barrier to some relationships (Van Gelder 1996). ICT therefore offers a cloak of anonymity. As Turkle's informant (1996: 158) argues, 'You don't have to worry about the slots other people put you in as much. It's easier to change the way people perceive you because all they've got is what you show them. They don't look at your body and make assumptions. They don't hear your accent and make assumptions. All they see is your words.' The advantage of ICT, then, is that it potentially enables individuals to construct one or multiple on-line identities for themselves which may bear no relation to their physicality. There are many famous examples of men claiming to be women on-line, the able-bodied to be disabled, and so on (Slouka 1996).

This practice of creating multiple alternative identities which are played with and then forgotten is termed 'cycling through' (Turkle 1996). It is often promoted as appealing to those – such as the young, the old and the disabled – who want to escape off-line bodies which are commonly regarded as incompetent and undesirable (Valentine and Holloway 2000).

Yet, this discourse of disembodiment has been subject to critique. A number of writers have argued that on-line textual persona cannot be separated from the off-line physical person who constructs them. Rather, disembodied identities and conversations are commonly based on embodied off-line identities. For example, in Box 2.6 Francesca describes how she uses her off-line interests as a basis of her on-line identity and friendships. Even when individuals make up new personas, these on-line identities are often chosen because of off-line experiences – in other words, because they are a way of resisting or overcoming the problems of off-line bodies. In Box 2.6 Andy and Steve describe how they try to 'pass' as adults by pretending to be bouncers or to go to pubs (Valentine and Holloway 2000). In this way their on-line identities are a product of their dis-identification with their off-line bodies.

Not surprisingly, many of the practices and structures which shape off-line lives also mediate on-line interactions (Kitchin 1998). Most notably, cyberspace has been critiqued as the domain of white males (although there is a significant feminist and lesbian on-line culture). There are many well-known accounts of women being harassed and even 'raped' on-line (Gilbert 1996).

Box 2.6: Disembodied identities

Francine: I just have a couple of handles that I use from books that I've read that I like, people's names and stuff. I think it's kind of fun, but I don't have an alter ego or anything, you know, I just go on there and talk about stuff that I'm, I, me actually I'm interested in. I know you get people on there who pretend they're models or whatever but I don't really see it like that.

Interviewer: How do you kind of represent yourself on screen [in relation to a conversation about a Teen Chat Room]? You just give yourself a nickname of something like that, is that how it works?
Andy: Well you just give yourself a name, just make something up and then just describe yourself or whatever.
Interviewer: And so you can just pretend to be somebody else?
Andy: Yeah
Interviewer: Do, have you done that, have you pretended to be?
Andy: Yeah
Interviewer: What have you done?
Andy: I posed to be a bouncer. [laughs]
Interviewer: A bouncer?
Andy: Yeah.
Interviewer: Why was that?
Andy: Oh, I don't know. It was just that I was in this erm, the Teen Chat one, and there was this, there's girls on it, so, so I pretended to be a bouncer of 22.

Steve: Oh me and a friend acted we were 17 years old.
Interviewer: 17?
Steve: Yeah and it was like we was drunk and we kept writing different things, like strange things.
Interviewer: You were drunk or were pretending to be drunk?
Steve: Pretending . . .
[edit]
Interviewer: Why was it, why did you enjoy pretending to be older than you are?
Steve: Because you can write about all different things and just normal games. You can write about sort of like going to the pub and all that.

Valentine and Holloway 2000: 10

For Vivenne Sobchack the impossibility of escaping her material body on-line was brought home to her when she had to have major surgery for cancer. Referring to her experience of physical pain while reading about discourses of disembodiment, she writes, 'there is nothing like a little pain to bring us back to our senses, nothing like a real (not imagined) mark or wound to counter the romanticism and

fantasies of techno-sexual transcendence that characterise so much of the current discourse on the techno-body that is thought to occupy the cyberspaces of post-modernity' (Sobchack 1995: 207). Sobchack's experience is an important reminder that – certainly at the current level of technology – the discourse of disembodiment is something of a misnomer. Cyberspace is always entered into and interacted with from the site of the body, the body is always present. '[W]e do not just have bodies, but . . . we are our bodies. Bodies cannot be transcended; rather, they are a fundamental constituent of us, of being' (Kitchin 1998: 83).

2.8.2 The cyborg

In a 1985 (republished in 1990) paper titled *A Manifesto for Cyborgs* the feminist historian of science Donna Haraway argued that the body and technology are merging or coalescing into what she termed 'the cyborg': a 'hybrid of machine and organism' (Haraway 1990: 191) where technology is a substitute or supplement for the flesh.

Contemporary science fiction contains many imaginings of creatures who are part-human or animal, part-machine (see, for example, the writing of William Gibson, Octavia Butler, Vonda McIntyre, and so on). The cyborg has also been popularized in films such as *Blade Runner*, *Robocop*, and *Terminator*, where it is represented as stronger than the more fallible and vulnerable human body, immune to pain and able to repair any injury or damage to itself and so cheat 'death' (Lupton 1995). In these movies '[T]he cyborg body is constituted of a hard endoskeleton covered by soft flesh, the inverse of the human body, in which the skin is a vulnerable and easily broken barrier between 'inside' and 'outside' (Jones 1993: 84, quoted in Lupton 1995: 101).

Yet the cyborg is not only fiction or image but also partly fact. Modern medicine and biotechnologies are increasingly transforming and recreating the human body. Technology is already built into human bodies, from assistive technologies to replace or supplement organs, limbs and sense (such as plastic heart values, prostheses and cochlea implants) to gene therapy, trans-species transplants and trans-genetic organisms. In Haraway's (1990, 1991, 1997) terms therefore we are all cyborgs – fabricated hybrids of machine and organism. All predictions suggest that the future will only bring a further merging of bodies and technologies.

Nanotechnology, for example, offers possibilities of inner body interventions with 'molecular machines roving the bloodstream to search and destroy viruses' (Featherstone 1999: 2) and smart pills that will be able to transmit information about our nerves or our blood to external monitors. Other visions, of a future in which we will be able to plug our bodies into cybersystems and machines so that they will function more powerfully and precisely, further modify the horizons of what the body can be. The cybercritic Paul Virilio (1997: 53) imagines a nightmare future scenario of a body colonized by machines – a 'citizen terminal' in which the body becomes not a site but a collection of parts:

> this citizen-terminal soon to be decked out to the eyeballs with interactive prostheses based on the pathological model of the 'spastic' [*sic*]; wired to control his/her domestic environment without having physically to stir: the catastrophic figure of an individual who has lost the capacity for immediate intervention along with natural moticity and who abandons himself [*sic*] for want of anything better, to the capabilities of captors, sensors and other remote control scanners that turn him into a being controlled by the machine with which they say, he talks.

In writing about the cyborg Haraway argues that technology is breaching three rather leaky boundaries:

- *The boundary between humans and animals.* Trans-genetic organisms such as Onco mouse, and trans-species, such as pig–human, organ transplants (Haraway 1997) suggest that '[f]ar from signalling a walling off of people from other living things, cyborgs signal disturbingly and pleasurably tight couplings' (Haraway 1990: 193).
- *The boundary between organism (animal-human) and machine.* Distinctions between what aspects of the body are 'natural' or 'artificial' and what is self-developing rather than externally designed (e.g. through gene therapy) are becoming more ambiguous so that it is increasingly difficult to be certain about what counts as 'nature' or 'natural'.
- *The boundary between physical and non-physical.* High technology and scientific culture are producing machines which are increasingly fluid, portable, mobile, and even opaque or invisible. 'Our best machines . . . are nothing but signals, electromagnetic waves, a section of a spectrum' (Haraway 1990: 195).

The cyborg is unsettling because it disrupts our sense of these boundaries, particularly the distinction between humans and other living and non-living things. As Haraway (1990: 219) says, it is not clear 'who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine'. Yet, she argues that we should take pleasure in the confusion or transgression of these boundaries and the potent fusions and possibilities they offer. The world, she suggests, is being restructured through social relations of science and technology; communication technologies and biotechnologies are creating new moments for recrafting bodies and therefore opening up possibilities for new social relations. She sees cyborg imagery as important because it challenges universal totalizing theory and assumptions about purity and identity, and it offers a way out of dualistic Western thought (human–animal; mind–body; male–female; internal–external, nature–culture, self–other, etc) by producing and destroying identities, categories, relationships, spaces, and so on.

This has appealed to some feminists because, by making cultural categories and bodily boundaries indeterminate and fluid, the cyborg offers us possibilities for escaping the limitations of gender and other stereotypes. Female embodiment is traditionally seen as organic (see section 2.2.2), but because cyborg embodiment is dynamic, fluid and partial rather than given or waiting to be reinscribed, women have the chance to re-code the self and the body, to replace patriarchal dualisms and to re-appropriate

and contest new social relations (Lupton 1995). 'The cyborg is Haraway's figuration of a possible feminist and posthumanist subjectivity' (Prins 1995: 360).

However, some time after writing the *Cyborg Manifesto*, Haraway warned against the liberatory cyborg she promoted, pointing out that it denies mortality, that 'we really do die, that we really do wound each other, that the earth really is finite, that there aren't any other planets out there that we know we can live on, that escape-velocity is a deadly fantasy' (Penley and Ross 1991: 20). She has also been criticized because the cyborg life-forms she identifies are essentially organic rather than mechanical. She therefore tends to 'find kinship with animals, not machines, as well as lodge identity in creatures, not apparatuses' (Luke 1997: 1370).

Summary

- The development of technology is producing new uncertainties about what the body is, what is 'natural', and is bringing about a crisis in the body's meaning.
- Disembodied forms of communication offer a vision of the future in which we can do away with the body altogether.
- At the current level of technology the discourse of disembodiment is something of a misnomer. Cyberspace is always entered into, and interacted with, from the site of the body.
- The body and technology are merging or coalescing into what is termed the cyborg: a 'hybrid of machine and organism'.
- Cyborg imagery challenges universal, totalizing theory, and offers a way out of dualistic Western thought (body/mind; human/animal; nature/culture, etc).

Further Reading

- Useful overviews of geography and the body are provided by Longhurst's (2000) single-authored text *Bodies: explaining fluid boundaries*, Routledge, London; and a number of edited collections, including: Ainley, R. (1998) (ed.) *New Frontiers of Space, Bodies and Gender*, Routledge, London; Duncan, N. (ed.) (1996) *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, Routledge, London; Nast, H. and Pile, S. (eds) (1998) *Places Through the Body*, Routledge, London; Pile, S. and Thrift, N. (eds) (1995) *Mapping the Subject*, Routledge, London, and Teather, E.K. (ed.) (1999) *Embodied Geographies: Spaces, Bodies and Rites of Passage*, Routledge, London.

- Beyond geography's porous boundaries good overviews of the body and social theory are found in: Featherstone, M., Hepworth, M. and Turner, B.S. (eds) (1991) *The Body*, Sage, London; McNay, L. (1994) *Foucault: a Critical Introduction*, Blackwell, Oxford; Shilling, C. (1993) *The Body and Social Theory*, Sage, London; Synott, A. (1993) *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society*, Routledge, London, and Turner, B. (1996) *The Body and Society*, Sage, London.
- Influential feminist writings on the body include: Bordo, S. (1993) *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, University of California Press, Los Angeles; Grosz, E. (1994) *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, and Young, I.M. (1990b) *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis.
- Questions of embodied identities and/or socio-spatial exclusion are the subject of a number of key books, notably: Bell, D. and Valentine, G. (1995a) *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, Routledge, London; Blunt, A. and Wills, J. (2000) *Dissident Geographies*, Prentice Hall, Harlow; Bonnett, A. (2000) *White Identities*, Prentice Hall, Harlow; Butler, R. and Parr, H. (eds) (1999) *Mind and Body Spaces: Geographies of Illness, Impairment and Disability*, Routledge, London; Gleeson, B. (1999) *Geographies of Disability*, Routledge, London; Jackson, P. and Penrose, J. (eds) (1993) *Constructions of Race, Place and Nation*, UCL Press, London; James, A. (1993) *Childhood Identities*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, London; and Sibley, D. (1995a) *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*, Routledge, London. These issues also feature heavily in articles in journals such as *Body & Society*, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *Gender, Place and Culture* and *Social and Cultural Geography*.
- The best edited collection on technological embodiment is Featherstone, M. and Burrows, R. (eds) (1995) *Cyberspace, Cyberbodies and Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*, Sage, London. A useful summary of the cyberbodies literature is found in Kitchin, R. (1998) *Cyberspace*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester; while a more difficult, theoretical, but extremely influential book is: Haraway, D. (1991) *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Free Association Books, London.
- Jenefer Shute's (1993) novel *Life Size* (Mandarin paperbacks) contains reflections on the issue of taking up space in her account of anorexia; Nancy Mairs (1995) *Remembering the Bone House* (Beacon Press, Boston, MA) writes powerfully about the experience of MS; while Carol Shields *Stone Diaries* (1994, Fourth Estate, New York) explores the process of ageing. William Gibson's popular and influential science fiction is worth reading because of the way he reconfigures bodies and represents geographies of cyberspace (e.g. *Neuromancer*, 1984, Grafton, London).

Exercises

1. Keep a diary for a few days about your everyday movements and encounters. Use this to reflect on how you perform your own identity in different places, and how you think your identity is read by others. Are there places that your body will or won't let you go or where you feel 'out of place'? Are you aware of altering your dress, behaviour, and so on because of the disciplining gaze of friends, lecturers, employers, etc or of exercising self-surveillance in different spaces?
2. Drawing on the work of Seamon (1979, see section 2.3.2), with a small group of friends reflect on and discuss the everyday ways your own bodies move through and occupy everyday spaces, and the relationship of your bodies to their surroundings. To what extent do your experiences parallel those of Seamon's students? How might you criticize his work?
3. Collect a range of different women's and men's magazines. How are different bodies represented in these texts? What discourses can you identify? What are the similarities and differences in the way that men and women are encouraged to locate, evaluate and manage their bodies?
4. Spend some time in on-line chatrooms. Write a field diary about your observations as you would if you were conducting participant observation in an off-line space. Think about how people represent themselves, how you choose to construct your own identity, the nature of the social relations in these disembodied spaces, and the relationship between your on-line and off-line worlds.

Essay Titles

1. Critically evaluate Adrienne Rich's (1986) claim that the body is 'the geography closest in'.
2. Using examples, critically assess the role of the mind/body dualism in shaping the way geographical knowledge has been produced.
3. To what extent do you agree with Shilling's (1993) claim that in contemporary affluent societies we have witnessed the unprecedented individualization of the body?
4. Critically evaluate Law's concept of 'embodied built environments'.